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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: IFOs

From: **Jerome Clark** <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Wed, 28 Jul 99 19:01:45 PDT
Fwd Date: Thu, 29 Jul 1999 09:09:29 -0400
Subject: Re: IFOs

>From: Jenny Randles <nufon@currantbun.com>
>To: <updates@globalseve.net>
>Subject: Re: IFOs
>Date: Tue, 27 Jul 1999 17:49:32 +0100

>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalseve.net>
>>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>>Subject: Re: IFOs
>>Date: Mon, 26 Jul 99 12:22:14 PDT

>>>From: Jenny Randles <nufon@currantbun.com>
>>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalseve.net>
>>>Subject: Re: IFOs
>>>Date: Thu, 22 Jul 1999 13:24:50 +0100

Hi, Jenny,

>>>As for Stanton's facts and figures. Some of them need to be
>>>interpreted. Yes, Condon found a third unsolved. But so would I
>>>if I selected the 60 best cases from the past year rather than
>>>studied the 6000 or whatever total sightings that have happened.

>>This misrepresents what happened with the Condon Committee.
>>Hynek and McDonald wanted it to look at only the best cases.
>>Condon decided otherwise, no doubt because of his severe
>>antipathy to the UFO phenomenon, and the committee ended up
>>taking on whatever came its way, whatever the quality. (At the
>>most absurd extreme this involved Condon's going to a spot where
>>a contactee had predicted a landing.) Even so, about 30% of the
>>committee's cases ended up unexplained. According to several
>>reinvestigations (for example McDonald's) some of the explained
>>should in fact have been in the unexplained category. The great
>>irony, as Allen Hynek wrote in a piece on the Colorado Project
>>for the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (April 1969), was that
>>"the percentage of `unknowns' in the Condon report appears to be
>>even higher than in the Air Force investigation ... which led to
>>the Condon investigation in the first place."

>No, I dont think this is strictly true. During the 18 month life
>of the project Blue Book received many, many more sightings than
>are in the report. A large number of trivial LITS were clearly
>filtered out otherwise they would dominate the report as they
>dominate any sample of UFO reports. In fact the report focuses
>on a relatively small number of cases and there has to have been
>some degree of selectivity given that it contains a proto
>abduction and several photo cases (which is way over chance
>expectation levels for such a small sample). Moreover, the
>report focused on the good data from Blue Book archives - eg the
>best photos (McMinville, Great Falls, etc) and radar (eg
>Lakenheath/Bentwaters). It is very obvious that this was no

>random sample of incoming trivia; although I appreciate that
>some of this haphazardness went on (eg with Low visiting the UK
>at a time of its biggest ever wave during which dozens of police
>officers saw UFOs and he investigated none of them and went to
>interview people who looked for the Loch Ness monster instead!))
>But in essence the Condon data is bound to contain a higher than
>norm percentage of unsolved cases because it had a far higher
>than norm sample of good cases to start with. Am I seriously
>misguided here, because thats certainly how I read it.

In point of fact, it was a matter of great frustration to
outside observers -- McDonald, Hynek, Dick Hall, to name three
who got to see its operations at close range on a few occasions
-- that the committee did not select the best cases but pretty
much took what it got, regardless of quality. Condon concerned
himself largely with contactee yarns, and project coordinator
Robert Low compiled a sightings casebook in which reports of
potential scientific interest and those of no value whatever
were assembled without discrimination. This is what you do,
obviously, if you think the whole subject is nonsense, as Condon
and Low did.

Many factors, of course, went into the Colorado Project's
day-to-day operations and decisions, but I don't think it can be
seriously disputed that no effort was made to focus on the most
puzzling reports. That (as you note) some such reports did get
looked at is something of a miracle, or maybe just happy
circumstance. It certainly wasn't policy. Whatever it was, in
any event, we can all be grateful for it.

Mostly, though, the news was bad. Most knowledgeable ufologists,
I think, would agree that the Portage County, Ohio, police-car
chase is among the most important and evidential of all UFO
episodes. NICAP and its field investigator Bill Weitzel
conducted a commendably thorough inquiry into all aspects of
this complex occurrence. After Weitzel filed a detailed report,
Hall flew it to Boulder and handed it personally to Condon --
who, from all evidence, didn't even bother to read it. It's
mentioned nowhere in the Condon report. To anybody sincerely
looking for answers to the UFO mystery, the Portage County chase
would have been one of the top priorities. Condon, his cronies,
and their funders (the Air Force), as we all know, couldn't have
cared less.

Jerry Clark

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