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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Voyager Newsletter, Kenneth Arnold

From: David Rudiak <DRudiak@aol.com>
Date: Mon, 7 Jun 1999 00:40:29 EDT
Fwd Date: Tue, 08 Jun 1999 02:35:56 -0400
Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Kenneth Arnold

>From: James Easton <voyager@ukonline.co.uk>
>Date: Sat, 5 Jun 1999 04:19:27 +0100
>Fwd Date: Sat, 05 Jun 1999 13:23:02 -0400
>Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

Regarding:

>Date: Fri, 4 Jun 1999 09:25:15 -0400
>From: Bruce Maccabee <brumac@compuserve.com>
>Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>

Bruce wrote:

>>Date: Wed, 02 Jun 1999 19:51:19 -0500
>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>From: Dennis Stacy <dstacy@texas.net>
>>Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

>>Regarding Arnold's _first_ sighting... which has been the
>>subject of my discussion... there is no assumption that Arnold
>>was "absolutely incapable of human error." Anyone who thinks
>>there was such an assumption does not understand the nature of
>>the analysis. In fact, the arguments assume that Arnold could
>>have been in error in some places.

>Bruce,

>Surely it's not debatable whether Kenneth Arnold "could" have
>been in error in "some" places, that fact is acknowledged and
>highlighted in your paper - 'The Complete Sighting Report of
>Kenneth Arnold, with Comments and Analysis'.

Here we go again! The question isn't about whether errors could
be committed, but whether those particular errors are
significant or _plausible_ or whether they suggest some other
reasonable interpretation than non-conventional aircraft.

E.g., while flying on a parallel course at 110 mph, Arnold
reported the objects flying past him, i.e., from in back to in
front of his position. They could only do this if they were
flying _faster_ than he was, _regardless_ of their distance from
him. His distance estimate has _nothing_ to do with it.

Well James, just that one point rules out your birds, doesn't it
(though not other aircraft)? The only way it could be otherwise
is if Arnold was incapable of even the simplest of perceptions,
such as telling his front from his back and relative direction
of motion. That fails the plausibility test for error.

>>But, let's get down to the crux of the matter: which Arnold
>>statements would you like to reject or modify?

>We could start with those you have previously accepted!

>>1) Arnold says he saw flashes of sunlight on his plane. Did he
>>or didn't he? What did he see?

>So far as I can see, this claim didn't surface until Arnold's
>much later book, 'The Coming of the Saucers'.

The reason you can't see is because it seems you don't bother to
read the very sources you quote. (That also happened in a
recent debate as to whether Arnold ever referred to the objects
as disk- or saucer-shaped.) Immediately below, e.g., you quote
the following newspaper:

'Oregon Journal - June 27, 1947'

"Arnold, general manager and owner of the Great Western Fire
Control Company, said he first saw the objects when they FLASHED
in the sun low over the slopes of Mt. Rainier".

"Flashed" -- get it?

You also quote the following:

'Norman, Oklahoma Transcript - June 26, 1947'

"Arnold said the strange aircraft were skittering across the
southwest slope of Mount Rainier when he first sighted them".

...but omitted the statement from four paragraphs above:

"He landed here ... and told how he spotted the 'EXTREMELY SHINY
NICKLE-PLATED AIRCRAFT..."

Or how about the following which you also quote from:

'Pendleton, Oregon East Oregonian - June 26, 1947'

"Mr. Arnold reported he was flying east at 2:50 p.m. Tuesday
toward Mt. Rainier when the objects appeared directly in front of
him 25-30 miles away at about 10,000 feet altitude".

But OMIT the two paragraphs IMMEDIATELY above it:

"The Boise man ... described the objects as "flat like a pie pan
and somewhat bat-shaped" and SO SHINY THEY REFLECTED THE SUN
LIKE A MIRROR. He said THE REFLECTION WAS SO BRILLIANT THAT IT
BLINDED HIM 'as if someone had STARTED AN ARC LIGHT IN FRONT OF
MY EYES.'"

Since you are obviously referring to the Arnold articles posted
on the Project 1947 Web page, how could you have possibly missed
the opening paragraph of the June 25 Chicago Tribune?

"The first thing I noticed was a SERIES OF FLASHES IN MY EYES AS
IF A MIRROR WAS REFLECTING SUNLIGHT AT ME... I saw the FLASHES
as coming from a series of objects that were traveling
incredibly fast. They were SILVERY and SHINY and seemed to be
shaped like a pie plate..."

How about the Oregon Journal, June 27, last paragraph:

"They hugged the horseback between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams,
and the FLASHING THEY MADE IN THE SUN reminded me of the
REFLECTION OF A GREAT MIRROR."

Or how about that surviving radio interview (recorded either
June 25 or 26)?

" they seemed to flip and flash in the sun, just like a mirror,
and, in fact, I happened to be in an angle from the sun that
seemed to hit the tops of these peculiar looking things in such
a way that it almost blinded you when you looked at them through
your plexiglass windshield."

I think anybody who actually bothers to read the original press
reportings of the Arnold sighting can safely conclude that
Arnold's description of seeing very bright flashing from very

shiny objects date right from the beginning. Sheesh!

Furthermore, the issue of flashing or not has NOTHING whatsoever to do with the issue of whether birds can outfly airplanes.

>>2) Arnold said the initial flashes came from an area north of
>>Mt. Rainier. Did he perhaps get the direction wrong, or is there
>>something else?

>Did Arnold state this before it was claimed in his book, or did
>he originally and consistently say the objects were first seen
>over the slopes of Mount Rainier, for example:

<snip quotes repeated above>

His written report to the A.F. on July 12, 1947, has him stating he first noticed the flashes north of Mt. Rainier but he couldn't make out anything about their shapes until they were closer and passed in front of Rainier. That may explain any discrepancies with the newspaper accounts which generally have him saying he first saw them as they passed in front of Ranier.

However, in terms of your bird theory, this is again an irrelevant point. All accounts have his timing of flight and parallel flight course occurring as the objects passed by the south side of Mt. Rainier. That's when the objects flew PAST him heading south towards Arnold's front, which rules out birds.

>>3) Arnold thought the objects were a little higher than he was
>>(9,500 ft, vs his 9,200). What do you think the TRUE altitude
>>was, if you don't accept Arnold's statement?

>From your detailed analysis, I thought you had determined, "it
>appears that they were lower than 6,000 ft and that Arnold
>overestimated their altitude".

Again, a non-issue to the main point: how do birds outfly a plane on a parallel course going 110 mph? Any small error Arnold made in determining his true horizon (the difference between 9000 and 5000 feet is only about 2 degrees) has nothing to do with birds outflying airplanes.

Try for once sorting the significant and relevant from the insignificant and irrelevant.

>>4) Arnold described them as "flipping and flashing". If this is
>>not what he saw, then what do you think he saw?

>He also described them as "fluttering and sailing". Would you
>disagree that's consistent with birds and far removed from a
>'craft'?

And this has what to do with the fundamental observation that the objects outflow his plane?

>>5)Arnold claimed he looked at his dashboard clock when the first
>>one passed Mt. Rainier.... Did he get the time wrong? If so, by
>>how much?

>Although I can't see it's significant, curiously, he also claimed
>the timing was taken on his watch:

You're right, it's not significant to your bird theory.

>The question is, if Kenneth Arnold's estimate of the objects'
>altitude was in error by some 4,000-5,000 feet

More red herrings. It's obvious you have no idea of the difference between angular error and absolute linear error or of the possible significance.

The angular error was extremely small. 4000 - 5000 feet at 25 miles is the same angular error as 160 - 200 feet of a flock of "birds" only 1 mile away.

Since Arnold was flying at 9200 feet, this means your "birds" would have been about 200 feet below him, or flying at 9000 feet. The line of sight is still exactly the same whether at 1 mile or 25 miles.

This actually works AGAINST your bird hypothesis, since it is

unlikely that birds would be flying that high.

It also still has NOTHING to do with birds outflying Arnold's airplane. But I doubt if you will ever grasp that.

> - in which case the objects were only flying at about half the altitude he
>thought - then how can we have any confidence in his other
>perceptions?

The problem isn't with Arnold -- it's with you. You're completely clueless. Your arguments don't even meet the minimal level of scientific understanding. That's not meant to be mean, but a statement of fact.

>If that was so grossly mistaken, as evidenced in your analysis,
>then it MUST affect all related judgements and estimates.

One more time, James. Angular error is not the same as absolute error. It translates into different absolute altitudes at difference distances. 5000 feet at 25 miles is the same as 200 feet at 1 mile. In both cases the downward angle is about 2 degrees, a MINOR error by Arnold in judging true horizon. I seriously doubt any of this is getting through to you.

It has little or nothing to do with other related judgments and estimates nor does it have anything to do with with your big problem of explaining how birds could outfly Arnold's airplane. You won't tackle that one because you are completely out of your depth.

>>6) Arnold looked again at the clock as the last one passed
>>Rainier.... did he get the time wrong? If so, by how much?

>The timing isn't an issue, it's whether the objects were perhaps
>much closer than he guessed.

Again, it's patently obvious you don't grasp the salient issues. Even if your "birds" were 25 feet from Arnold instead of 25 miles, they can't outfly his plane. Actual distance of the objects doesn't matter.

>Obviously the closer these objects actually were, the faster they
>would appear to travel between two distant, fixed points.

If Arnold were standing still you might have an argument. But he wasn't stationary, was he? He was in an airplane flying at 110 mph and flying on a parallel course. That sets a fundamental lower limit on how fast the objects must be traveling to appear to sweep FORWARD of his position and then disappear in the direction of Mt. Adams. With Rainier about 25 miles to the east, and Mt. Adams about 50 miles to the south, we're speaking of an ANGULAR separation of roughly 60 degrees. Whatever the objects were, they moved FORWARD by a 60 degree angle in Arnold's timed period.

No matter what their distance, that means they were flying FASTER than Arnold's 110 mph. Absolute distance only matters in this situation in determining how much faster than 110 mph.

But even on steroids, your "flock of birds" couldn't begin to match Arnold's air speed.

>>7) Arnold said he turned the plane sideways and looked through
>>his open window. At this time he would have been flying south,
>>parallel to the objects. Was he wrong/lying?

>In that early radio interview, he claimed, "I turned the plane
>around and opened the window".

Why? Because he wanted some fresh air? No, because he was checking to see if they were reflections off his windshield. So he turned the plane south on a parallel course, enabling him to open his side window and see if the objects disappeared as he looked left out the open window in their direction.

>When he turned his plane "around" it was during the timing
>exercise and we don't know if he changed direction by 90 degrees,
>180 degrees, or something else.

More cluelessness. Why don't you try something called simple logic? He opened the pilot's window on the LEFT SIDE of the

plane to get a clearer view and see if the objects were caused by reflection. Now which direction would he have to be flying to view objects to his east flying south while looking left out his window? This isn't real hard.

If he turned north or completely reversed direction and flew west, then he would be heading AWAY from the objects and would have to be looking through a rear view mirror to follow them.

Maybe that's the James Easton way to track something, but the rest of humanity would turn south to follow then objects. Since they were initially east of Arnold when he turned, he could get a good look at them by looking left through his open pilot's window. As they proceeded ahead, he could still keep them in view through his windshield off to the left. Since he was using Mt. Adams and Mt St. Helens to the south as geographical landmarks for his timing, he could simultaneously keep these in view as well

See, it's not really that hard if you bother to think.

>What effect might the change of direction have had on his
>perception of the objects' speed and respective distances between
>them, his plane and the mountains?

You just don't get it do you? It has nothing to do with it or your silly bird theory.

>>The analysis of the Arnold sighting has been carried out with
>>the fulfill realization that Arnold could have been wrong on
>>some fine points. But to get a conventional explanation one has
>>to assume Arnold was wrong on some major points.

>Isn't this the conclusion of your own critique?

No. That's not the conclusion of Maccabee's critique. Learn to read.

>As you remarked:

>"So the answer is yes, he could easily have made an error of
>4,000 ft in estimating the altitude of the objects"

>How can that be a "fine point"?

Because it was a minor error in elevation angle, and has nothing whatsoever to do with the BIG problems in your bird theory that you refuse or are unable to address.

>Has that analysis examined what Kenneth Arnold reported to the
>press in the days following his sighting?

>I've been looking at this and note, for example, that the
>'Pendleton, Oregon East Oregonian' newspaper on 26 June reported,
>"Mr. Arnold admitted the angle from which he viewed the objects
>would make difficult precise estimation of their speed..."

Why not finish the quote instead of doing your usual spin editing job? "Mr Arnold admitted the angle from which he viewed the objects would make difficult precise estimation of their speed, but insisted ANY ERROR WOULD NOT BE GRAVE 'FOR THAT SPEED'"

Kenneth Arnold understood a great deal more than James Easton about simple math and error analysis.

Arnold wasn't saying he couldn't estimate the approximate speed, only that he couldn't be sure of the exact speed because of possible errors. But faster than any jet plane -- definitely!

Here's another quote from Arnold, which further clarifies what he meant (Portland Oregonian, July 11, 1947):

"It took 1 minute and 42 seconds from the southern crest of Mt. Rainier to the southern crest of Mt. Adams. That's a distance of 50 miles. Allowing for an error resulting from my angle of observation, I reported that they were flying at least 1200 miles an hour. Actually it figures out to 1381 or 1382."

Actually it figures out closer to 1600-700 mph. What you obviously don't understand is that Arnold consistently

downplayed the speed and tried to take into account possible errors on his part in his timing and estimated object travel distance. Here are some more quotes:

Associated Press story, June 26: "...he timed them at 1:42 minutes for the 47 miles from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adms. Arnold said, adding that he later figured by triangulation that their speed was 1200 miles an hour. 'I could be wrong by 200 or 300 miles an hour,' he admitted, 'but I know I never saw anything so fast.'"

Radio interview (June 25 or 26): "But when I observed the tail end of the last one passing Mt. Adams, and I was at an angle near Mt. Rainier from it, but I looked at my watch and it showed one minute and 42 seconds. Well, I felt that was pretty fast and I didn't stop to think what the distance was between the two mountains. Well, I landed at Yakima, Washington... I just kind of forgot it then, until I got down to Pendleton and I began looking at my map and taking measurements on it and the best calculation I could figure out, now even in spite of error, would be around 1200 miles an hour, because making the distance from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adams, in, we'll say approximately two minutes, it's almost, well, it'd be around 25 miles per minute. Now allowing for error, we can give them three minutes or four minutes to make it, and they're still going more than 800 miles an hour, and to my knowledge, there isn't anything that I've read about, outside of some of the German rockets, that would go that fast."

>>If you are going to "complain" that Arnold wasn't perfect, then >>specify where you think he was wrong and we can argue over >>whether or not it makes sense in the context of the sighting to >>assume he was wrong..

>I trust some relevevant points are cited above.

None of them are relevant or show that you have any scientific insight.

>Kenneth Arnold's original story is a relatively simple tale.

Which James Easton will now thoroughly mangle.

>He observed nine reflective objects which at first he thought >were geese, because their flight characteristics were similar.

Arnold then dismissed this possibility as the objects appeared to be travelling too fast, concluding they must instead be airplanes.

In fact, he said "I at first, thought they were geese because it flew like geese, but it was going so fast that I IMMEDIATELY changed my mind and decided it was a bunch of new jet planes in formation." (early radio interview).

>Yet Arnold never seems to raise any objections to the objects >being birds, other than the perceived airspeed.

No, he also thought they were flying too high. That also in one of those articles which you didn't bother to read.

(Pendleton East Oregonian, June 26): "When first sighted, he thought the objects were snow geese. 'But geese don't fly that high -- and, anyway, what would geese be doing going south for this time of year.'"

>Even in subsequent interviews, he doesn't rule out the prospect

How did you deduce that Sherlock? Can you provide even one quote from anywhere or anytime where Arnold said that he ever considered the bird hypothesis again?

He saw something unexpected and unusual: objects flying single file in reverse echelon formation. When confronted with something unusual, people almost always try to correlate it with something familiar to them. In this case, Arnold's instantaneous guess was snow geese, a thought he said he then immediately rejected for reasons of speed and altitude.

>due to what we might have assumed the most obvious conclusion - that >birds wouldn't be visible if the objects were truly some 20-30

>miles distant.

This is so obtuse that I have no idea what point Easton is trying to make.

>Arnold then decided to take this opportunity to 'clock' the
>airspeed of the 'planes'.

Well before that he said he observed them disappearing behind one of the subpeaks of Rainier, which is why he placed them at that distance. This was AFTER he had already rejected in his mind the idea that they might be geese. And even if he didn't express it explicitly in interviews, at the time it was probably one more reason for Arnold to think that they weren't birds and hypothesize jet planes.

That wasn't Arnold's only conventional hypothesis. He also considered the possibility that they might be reflections off his windshield, which is why he turned 90 degrees to his south, and opened his side window to see if the images would disappear. They didn't.

>It's perhaps crucial to appreciate that Arnold only decided to
>carry out this exercise because, as he says in the radio
>interview, "I just thought I'd see how fast they were going,
>since among pilots we argue about speed so much".

>It wasn't a result of Arnold believing the airplanes were
>travelling at an incredible speed.

Where is this going? He said he thought they might be jets and they were flying faster than anything he had ever seen before. So he decided to time how fast. After he landed and had an opportunity to do the calculations, he realized they were flying much faster than any known jet, even when assumed wide margins of error for the timing of the how long it took them to fly between Rainier and Adams. (see quotes above)

> He only concluded that after
>first carrying out a timing between two prominent landmarks and
>then later calculating how far apart those landmarks were in
>conjunction with the 'stop watch' reading.

So I guess what Easton is trying to say here, in his own inimitable way, is that because Arnold didn't realize at the time of the sighting that the speeds would turn out to be unconventional, they weren't unconventional? Is that the illogic?

>As he timed the objects' - believed to be airplanes - what then
>surprised him was a realisation that they didn't have any 'tails'.

>However, as Arnold related, he didn't give either this or the
>apparently fast airspeed too much thought at the time.

If Easton would properly present Arnold's thoughts, he was puzzled by the unusual shapes, the precise and co-ordinated weaving formation flying so close to the mountain tops while flying at high speed, their erratic flipping motion, the brilliant flashing, and the lack of tails. Still he thought they might be some sort of new aircraft he didn't know about. E.g., going through a mental checklist of conventional explanations, Arnold said he thought the tails might not be visible because they were painted. He was still puzzled by what he had seen, but thought that when he made inquiries when he landed, some other fliers would be familiar with the unknown aircraft.

>Consequently, he worked out that the distance between the two
>fixed points was some 50 miles and that if the objects had
>travelled that distance, as he thought, in the 1 minute and
>forty seconds recorded, they must have been travelling at an
>unprecedented speed.

>If, as you explained in the detailed analysis, Arnold's estimate
>of the objects' altitude was grossly mistaken

Doesn't matter -- not important at all, but Easton is too dense to realize it.

>and that when he

>apparently turned his plane around during this timing exercise,
>we don't know if he changed direction by 90, or 180 degrees, or
>something else,

What blithering nonsense! Not only is it overwhelmingly obvious he turned south from other details of the report, Arnold even said as much.

> then consequently, there can be surely be no confidence in his overall perceptions.

Easton, the perpetually clueless.

>Obviously the closer these 'fluttering' objects actually were,
>the faster they would appear to travel between two distant fixed points.

Birds on the brain Easton just can't let it go.

>When logic kicks in

Yes, when will your logic ever kick in?

>and we consider that the observation was wholly subjective,

They flew past his plane. That's all anyone with any smarts needs to know to rule out birds. Whether he timed it right or got the distances right doesn't even matter.

And James, timing with something like a watch or clock is called an instrument measurement, not a subjective observation. Arnold noting his air speed was another instrument measurement. Arnold noting his own direction of motion from landmarks and/or instruments was another measurement. Other observations using well-defined landmarks which permit calculations of angles are observational measurements. Scientists might then argue about likely margins of error in these measurements due to such things as instrument error, misperception, etc. and then see if these possible errors change the fundamental result.

In the end, the fundamental measurement that Arnold made was that the line of sight (don't even think absolute distance or speed) from his position to the objects swept south from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adams (those pesky landmarks) while he flew on an approximately parallel course at 110 mph (instrument panel reading). That means the objects FLEW PAST HIM traveling faster than 110 mph. That's the death to your bird theory right there, though I doubt you will EVER grasp this.

>has proven misconceptions and that Kenneth
>Arnold reported a subsequent sighting with similar
>characteristics and which was almost certainly of birds... at
>what point does this remotely become sustainable evidence of
>'alien spacecraft'?

The only one with proven misconceptions is James Easton. At what point do any of your preposterous arguments become sustainable evidence of birds?

If you want to argue conventional objects, then it has to be something that could outfly Arnold's plane. Some sort of airplane or jet plane might be a possibility, just like Arnold originally conjectured. So instead of perpetually arguing "birds," one could instead argue like this. If Arnold had only mediocre normal vision of around 20/20 such that he would be unable to distinguish any detail in an object measuring less than 5 min arc, then something like a period fighter plane or jet plane only 30-35 feet long might not be clearly identifiable beyond about 4 miles distance. (This is where one could argue on stronger ground about known limits of human perception.)

From this one can deduce the downward angle from true horizon using Arnold's observation that they seemed to be skimming the mountain tops. Scaling to 4 miles, they would be flying 800 feet below his altitude of 9200 feet. Now apply some sort of plausibility check. Is that a reasonable altitude? Probably.

From his observation using landmarks that the length of the formation would have been about 5 miles at 25 miles distance, one gets the angular width of the formation and the angular

separation between objects. Scaled to 4 miles, they would have been separated from each other by about 500 feet. Is this a reasonable separation for some sort of formation flying by planes? Again yes.

Now let's use his measured airspeed, and his measured clocking time and his line of sight observations for direction, from which one can deduce the angles travelled during the clocking. Again scaling to 4 miles, one can calculate that they would be flying approximately 350 mph. Again that's a reasonable and conventional number.

This doesn't explain other parts of the sighting, such as the weaving formation flying which Arnold found so screwy. But it's a decent start. It's how a real scientific argument would proceed from the existing data.

But your handwaving arguments are complete logical rubbish, an illustration that you've obviously never had any training in scientific analytic thinking. Cheap debating tricks are not a substitute, whatever they taught you with your liberal arts education.

Birds can't possibly explain the first Arnold sighting. Get it?

David Rudiak

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