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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re:

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Wed, 09 Jun 99 09:30:39 PDT
Fwd Date: Wed, 09 Jun 1999 18:37:37 -0400
Subject: Re:

>From: Jerry Black <blackhole60@hotmail.com>
>To: updates@globalserve.net
>Subject: Ufology: What have we really learned?
>Date: Tue, 08 Jun 1999 10:58:06 PDT

Patient and gentle listfolk:

>"Yes sir," I said. "No, I will not be throwing any parties. For
>one thing, what have we -as a UFO community- accomplished in the
>last 50-years? In the last 20-years, I have watched ufology take
>a step backwards almost every year."

Ufology has many problems. One of them is the sort of
simplistic, chest-beating polemic with which Jerry Black has
decided, yet again, to bless us. Fortunately, for all its
faults ufology -- unlike, say, its critics --has a long,
honorable tradition of self-criticism. Unfortunately, the sort
we encounter here tells us more about Black than about the
field. His characteristically personality-centered approach is
singularly unhelpful.

>"Our self-proclaimed 'leaders of ufology' have let the whole UFO
>community down. They seem more concerned with writing books, "I
>told the reporter," and staying in the public eye than they are
>with finding out the answers to the UFO phenomenon.

Let's have some specific names here, and even before that, this:
Exactly who have proclaimed themselves "leaders of ufology"?
Names and quotes, please.

In my experience, all kinds of people write books on UFOs, for
all kinds of motives. Most, I have no doubt, are sincere and
well meaning, even if many of their books are not very good.
One can criticize the failings of these works without slandering
their authors, unless one believes, as apparently Black does,
that ufology's problems can be solved if we focus on the
personalities (or at least what we imagine to be the
personalities) of those with whom we disagree.

>"And these are the people who have been entrusted with keeping
>the people informed as to what's going on in the UFO community.

And some of them have done a damned good job of it, and
virtually none have received the recognition, appreciation, or
(for that matter) financial reward they deserve. Some -- such
as, to cite but one example, the heroic Jenny Randles -- are on
this very list.

>"Also," I said to the reporter, "people have been writing books
>about their UFO and abduction experiences, and most of these
>books have gone unchallenged. Nobody has made an objective,
>scientific attempt to analyze the people who have written these
>books, it basically seems 'up to the public' to decide whether
>or not these people are telling the truth.

Sadly, Black, who seems not to have read many of the "objective,
scientific attempts" to analyze UFO cases, believes that
"objective, scientific attempts" really should be devoted to the
analysis of personalities and motivations of UFO researchers. A
bizarre reading of what ufology is about, and an invitation for
the field to collapse into navel-gazing irrelevance. Ufology, at
least to most of us, is not the study of ufologists.

>"In my opinion, it is the responsibility of the UFO community to
>critique these books when they come out, and let the general
>public know where they stand after they have performed a
>comprehensive and objective investigation.

"Objective" apparently is Black's favorite word, even if
objectivity as such is not much in evidence in his polemics --
unless, of course, he defines objectivity as whatever he chooses
to believe at any given moment.

In fact, UFO books are regularly reviewed in the UFO press and
pronouncements favorable, unfavorable, or in-between regularly
rendered. What he says here is rank nonsense, though I can
think of a less polite term. But being a polite sort of guy, I
won't use it here. I'll just let the rest of you think it.

>"None of these things are being done," I said to the gentleman.
>"So there is no reason for any celebration about the fiftieth
>anniversary of the modern-era of ufology."

Maybe if Black actually started reading UFO literature....
Nah, he's too busy patting himself on the back and trashing
everybody else.

>I think it is a disgrace that the Whitley Strieber case has
>never been investigated. The responsibility for that lies on the
>two major groups, in my opinion. I believe that Mr. Walt Andrus
>and Mr. Jerome Clark are responsible to scientifically and
>objectively investigate any major case that makes network news -
>or to which a book has been written about. There haven't been
>that many cases which have appeared in the last 15 to 20-years
>to be concerned with, but there have been a few. These few have
>been allowed to 'run amuck' out there with these people making
>money without any serious challenge being made to them.

This has got to be a first: Walt Andrus and me being mentioned
in the same sentence. I want to thank Black for giving me the
best chuckle I've had in a while.

Actually, I have neither time nor inclination to "investigate
any major case that makes network news." I am practically never
asked by reporters (with whom I speak rarely, in any case) about
current cases. On those infrequent occasions I am asked about
UFO matters by media types, it is almost always about historical
ufology, a subject on which, as author of The UFO Encyclopedia,
I think I can speak with some degree of authority (though not,
of course, infallibility). Were I to be asked about those
exceedingly rare sightings that "make network news," I would
either decline comment or point to possible historical
precedents.

The last time I recall being asked about a current UFO claim was
by BBC, when the alien-autopsy film was getting its first
publicity. I said I knew only a little about it but suspected a
hoax; I then turned the discussion to earlier UFO hoaxing.

>And while Jerome Clark and The Center for UFO Studies say that
>there are certainly problems with the Gulf Breeze and Whitley
>Strieber cases, what have they truly done to make a critical
>investigation of either case?

Actually, IUR ran a number of critical articles on the case in
the late 1980s and early 1990s and even published a 1990
monograph by Zan Overall. CUFOS' investigator Bob Boyd was
among the first to look into the case, and the organization sold

and distributed his paper on the episode, Failure at Science (1988).

>Realizing that MUFON was investigating Gulf Breeze, was it the
>friendship displayed by Budd Hopkins [who wrote the foreword to
>'Gulf Breeze'] or Bruce Maccabee [who has upheld Gulf Breeze so
>staunchly] that they don't want to get involved and make their
>own analysis? Each organisation, regardless of whose case it is,
>needs to take a scientific and objective look at each issue and
>write their own report.

Apparently, to the endlessly self-righteous Black, only dishonorable motives -- ones, moreover, that he can freely speculate about without ever having to document -- will do. Honorable persons, in my observation, come down on both sides of Gulf Breeze, and I know that CUFOS' skeptical stance was not affected by the contrary judgments of others. I disagree with Hopkins and Maccabee about the significance of Ed Walters's claims. At the same time I respect their views as those of thoughtful, honorable men. What grown-up believes that only those who agree with us are decent human beings?

>In the case of Whitley Strieber, I don't recall ever reading
>where MUFON or CUFOS, ever asked to set up equipment in Mr.
>Strieber's home [which he may have denied anyhow]. I don't think
>anyone has ever asked, until myself, that Strieber take a
>properly-sponsored third-party polygraph test. If MUFON or CUFOS
>have asked to stay in Mr. Strieber's home for over a week with
>this equipment, then I stand corrected. I do know, for a fact,
>that they never asked him or his wife Anne, to take a polygraph
>test.

So? CUFOS has never conducted an investigation of Strieber's claims. Nor has it promoted them. We are a volunteer organization with distinctly limited resources. It seems to us, and I suspect to most reasonable persons, that ufology would be better advised to employ what resources it has to investigate those cases that are likely to produce useful results (CE2s, most prominently). By any standard Strieber's claims are minimally evidential at best.

On the other hand, IUR and JUFOS, the two CUFOS publications (which as far as I know Black doesn't read), have carried some of the best, and most original, work on the abduction phenomenon in general, including pioneering studies of patterns in abduction data, psychological profiles of abductees, the relationship of earlier folk traditions to current abduction experiences, abduction-monitoring experiments, and physical evidence (see, for example, Bill Chalker's important article in the current IUR).

Where disciplined, scientific work on the abduction phenomenon is concerned, CUFOS not only has nothing to apologize for but has been at the forefront.

>Whitley Strieber, and now Mr. J. Reed, who alleges to have
>killed an alien and had it taken from his home, both of these
>gentlemen have taken self-sponsored polygraph tests. And why
>have they done so? Because CUFOS, by not making a comprehensive
>report, and by MUFON, courtesy of Walt Andrus' ridiculous
>investigation practices, have allowed Ed Walters' self-sponsored
>polygraph tests to stand. So consequently, Mr. Whitley Strieber
>felt -as I'm sure Mr. Reed did also- "if they approved of his,
>why can't we take ours?"

>I also think that the self-proclaimed leaders in ufology during
>the past 10 or 15-years have let the UFO community and general
>public down.

>Finally, in the last 10 or 15-years, we have had the crossovers.
>Those are investigators in other fields which may or may not be
>proven later to be related to the UFO phenomenon. One such
>crossover is Mr. Richard Hoagland. Another crossover is Mr.
>Colin Andres, and another crossover is Linda Moulton Howe. If we
>go back much farther than that, even Mr. Bruce Maccabee is a
>crossover, in which he was formerly a photographic expert to now
>feeling he has the expertise [which he has certainly shown no
>ability for] to be a UFO investigator.

Note the childish insult, repeatedly demonstrated in his recent postings, in which Black cannot help indulging himself. He continually refers to Bruce Maccabee, Ph.D. (American University, 1970), as "Mr." , as if the latter's doctoral degree came out of a diploma mill rather than from one of our country's most respected universities. Moreover, Dr. Maccabee has been a working physicist all of his professional life. It doesn't follow, of course, that therefore he's never wrong about anything (nobody is never wrong about anything), but it does tell us that Dr. Maccabee has educational and professional credentials that even his critics are obliged to respect. One gets the impression here, as elsewhere, that Black seeks to infantilize ufological discourse.

>Getting back to the three recent crossovers, they have crossed
>over from other fields and became professional UFO
>investigators. Mr. Richard Hoagland, who dealt with the Face on
>Mars, has made many predictions that have not come true. Mr.
>Whitley Strieber, who will brown-nose with anyone in ufology if
>he figures it will benefit him, has claimed that he likes a
>person like Richard Hoagland because he "lives on the edge." No,
>Mr. Strieber, he's not living on the edge. What he is hoping for
>is that one of his predictions will come true so that he could
>live off of it for years like Jeanne Dixon did with her Kennedy
>prediction. Yet none of Hoagland's predictions that he has made
>in the field of ufology have come true.

This is the first time I have ever Hoagland referred to as a ufologist. The fact that Black has to pretend that he is one in order to make his point tells us volumes. Likewise, occultist/fantasy-writer Andy Collins (of whom I doubt that any but a tiny number of non-Brit list members have heard) below:

>Andrew Collins, a few years ago, was going to surprise everyone
>with this remarkable new evidence about UFOs. He held a
>conference in which people were to pay \$30 per head at a meeting
>room at Madison Square Gardens in New York City, and when 30 to
>50 people attended, there was no 'new evidence' to be had.

I am astonished. "There was no `new evidence' to be had." I am shocked. Shocked. This has got to be one of the hugest scandals I've ever heard of in all my years as a ufologist.

>Linda Moulton Howe, who is now on the Art Bell show on a regular
>basis [along with Whitley Strieber], while she is a nice lady
>that I have had the opportunity to speak with once, can be very
>gullible at times.

Wow. Linda Howe "gullible at times"? Who would have imagined? One can only, alas, envy Jerry Black's keep grasp of the obvious.

Jerry Clark

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