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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Kenneth Arnold sighting

From: **Dennis Stacy** <dstacy@texas.net>
Date: Sun, 13 Jun 1999 18:34:00 -0500
Fwd Date: Sun, 13 Jun 1999 20:31:34 -0400
Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold sighting

>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold sighting
>Date: Fri, 11 Jun 99 20:06:44 PDT

<snip>

>The point remains. You said there is no corroboration for
>Arnold's account, beyond his own -- to most of us who don't
>quack like anti-UFO ducks -- impressive testimony. You were
>wrong. Johnson was at the right time and the right to place to
>see Arnold's UFOs. He thought that he saw Arnold's UFOs, and an
>FBI interviewer characterized him as "a very reliable
>individual." (No doubt you know better and will let us know
>what a fruitcake and/or sociopath the man was.) The rest of you
>may be interested in a useful discussion of the relationship of
>Johnson's testimony to Arnold's; see Bruce Maccabee's article in
>IUR, May/June 1995.
>

Jerry,

Again, you're a post short. I've already retracted, qualified, amended, however you want to put it, any previous statement of mine which you continue to interpret as my calling Arnold a fruitcake. The original statement was made in the context of: one does not necessarily know when one is dealing with a fruitcake or not. Now you're adding sociopath to what I said.

But here's the point: no journalist or historian would say "Johnson was at the right time and the right to place to see Arnold's UFOs," unless they were present with him at the time. They would say Johnson said, stated, claimed, declared, insisted, allowed, alleged, vowed, vouchsafed, or whatever. However much you might wish it otherwise, Johnson's letter and FBI interview are ultimately evidence of just that -- not the claimed contents. They are two different and distinct things.

Before you get on your indignant high horse again, that's not to say, ipso facto, the contents of any statement are false by definition, as you seem to think (and persist in claiming that) I'm always saying. It's simply to say that an allegation of events is not the event itself. Never has been, never will be.

That said, Johnson said the objects passed over him at a thousand feet. I'd like to see you put a telescope on an object a thousand feet overhead going 1200 mph (or more) an hour. As with your own UFO Encyclopedia article, Maccabee's IUR article is also replete with its fair share of qualifiers as to the number of objects Johnson reported, their size, etc.

Yes, the FBI interviewer characterized Johnson "as a very reliable individual." But based on what? A 30-minute telling of his story? Again, the FBI statement is a subjective assessment, not a God-given or determined fact. But since you grant the FBI inviolate objectivity (and higher authority) in this case, presumably that means you support all other recorded FBI statements regarding the UFO phenomenon and its many witnesses? Or is it just a case of the ones you support?

>>Moreover, ufology is replete with cautionary tales.

>Ufology is also replete with puzzling, well-investigated cases >which continue to resist explanation. One of them is Arnold's. >The sorts of stories you cite below are notable in being so >rare, if one puts them in the context of UFO-reporting >generally. On the other hand, if one considers that they are >both photographic cases -- which long experience has taught us >are far more likely to be bogus than other sorts of UFO reports, >where hoaxing is relatively infrequent -- they're not rare at >all. To the contrary, the negative resolution of these claims >should not surprise any sophisticated observer.

You overlook one significant fact: photographic cases are much easier to disprove than anecdotal ones. In fact, it's extremely difficult to disprove an individual anecdote.

<snip>

>>Does this mean, ipso facto, that Arnold is in the same league? >>Of course not. Does it mean that he could be? I'll leave that >>up to you to decide.

>Let's get this straight. First you were intimating that Arnold >was a fruitcake (or that this is a reasonable possibility). Now >you're intimating that he's a hoaxer (or that this is a >reasonable possibility). Which is it?

You're still a post short. But here's my answer: Neither of us knows whether Arnold is a hoaxer or not, just as we don't know how much (or whether) he may have exaggerated his first sighting (without hoaxing). Point is, you can't eliminate either possibility with absolute certainty, as you seem to think you can. You're the one that's always arguing we have to turn away from a b&w world and confront ambiguity. Well, here's your chance.

>>By the same token, there's no compelling reason, granted Clark's >>exalted UFO theology (in which witnesses are never confused >>about anything, but always spot on), to argue that Arnold >>shouldn't ascend to ufological sainthood post haste. Hey, the >>guy was only human.

>For those of you who need a translation of the above:

>If you don't subscribe to the doctrine that UFO witnesses exist >to be trashed, however speciously, you're a theologian. One >might call this the New New Ufology, or maybe just quack logic.

Here's a better translation. For the greater part of its existence, ufology has always been, more often than not, at the mercy of the individual anecdote. That doesn't mean every account and individual that comes our way is automatically suspect and therefore (to put words in my mouth) sociopathic. It does mean you have to live with the possibility that any witness can be seriously mistaken and/or misleading, for a variety of reasons.

That's not an anti-UFO bias on my part, but a simple statement of fact.

Dennis

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