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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: Two Skeptical Papers On The Trent Photos

From: Brad Sparks <[RB47Expert@aol.com](mailto:RB47Expert@aol.com)>  
Date: Thu, 6 May 1999 05:19:13 EDT  
Fwd Date: Thu, 06 May 1999 08:42:44 -0400  
Subject: Re: Two Skeptical Papers On The Trent Photos

>From: Bruce Maccabee <[brumac@compuserve.com](mailto:brumac@compuserve.com)>  
>Date: Wed, 5 May 1999 08:13:18 -0400  
>Fwd Date: Wed, 05 May 1999 14:38:51 -0400  
>Subject: Re: Two Skeptical Papers On The Trent Photos On

>>From: Keith Woodard <[kwoodard@worldnet.att.net](mailto:kwoodard@worldnet.att.net)>  
>>To: UFO UpDates <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
>>Subject: Two Skeptical Papers On The Trent Photos On Line  
>>Date: Sat, 1 May 1999 10:53:28 -0700

>>The 1999 revised version of Robert Sheaffer's unpublished "An  
>>Investigation of the McMinnville UFO Photographs" at:

>><http://hugin.imat.com/~sheaffer/texts/trent.html>

>>together with Phil Klass's 1995 "What Bruce Maccabee DOESN'T  
>>Tell You About His Investigation of the Famous McMinnville/Trent  
>>UFO-Photo Case" at:

>><http://hugin.imat.com/~sheaffer/texts/BSMtrentPJK.html>

>>will, I trust, put this "Trent" business to bed once and for all.

>Dear Keith:

>Time to get out of bed and become informed. Sheaffer's \_1969\_  
>paper (recently "revised" and put on the web) was thoroughly  
>discussed.... some might say "dismissed" .... by my work in 1976  
>and again in 1982. Sheaffer's arguments have been shown to be  
>wrong.

>As for Mr. Klass..... after all these years the strongest  
>argument he has against the Trent case seems to be that a lady  
>of "not exceptional" (!!!) intelligence could make mistakes in  
>recalling events when she was questioned 24 or more years after  
>they occurred.

>Incidentally, the Trent's have died recently: Evelyn in 1997 and  
>Paul in 1998. They were interviewed in 1995 and presented the  
>same story they told in 1950.

>When the sighting occurred these people were poor but  
>industrious farmers. During the years of interviews and numerous  
>publications of their pictures they were still poor but  
>industrious farmers (raising several children). When they died  
>they were (retired ) poor farmers.

>It was very interesting to me to see that, even though there

>were literally world famous because of their pictures, certainly  
>the most famous people in the McMinnville area, the obituaries  
>said exactly nothing (!) about their UFO sighting.

>It was certainly my impression, and I gather that also of  
>numerous others who interviewed the Trents (or were their  
>neighbors) that the UFO sighting was not of great importance to  
>them and, that the resulting publicity, etc. was a considerable  
>annoyance.

Hi Bruce,

Excellent points, well said.

The skeptics' position on the Trents' post-sighting behavior is conveniently one of damned if you do, damned if you don't. If the Trents had recognized the historic importance of their sighting and photos they would have sought publicity according to skeptics -- and then would have been condemned by skeptics as publicity-seeking, money-hungry hoaxers. If the Trents (as was actually the case) did not consider their experience very important to their lives and avoided publicity (they didn't think it was an ET spaceship but a secret military vehicle), then skeptics would condemn them as hoaxers having something to hide.

Pray tell, you skeptics out there, what should the Trents have done to avoid being branded as publicity-seeking hoaxers, on the one hand, or as publicity-avoiding hoaxers with something to hide, on the other hand? Seems to me they did the right thing as best they could, which was to answer whatever questions they were asked and make the photos available for legitimate study whenever requested, first by their hometown newspaper, then other journalists, the INS wire service, government investigators, Condon Committee, and many others over the years.

I am informed that the Trents in recent years were given the opportunity to receive automatic royalties on every photo reprint ever made of their UFO photos through a major photo archival service which has copies of their photos. The Trents did not have to lift a finger for this to occur, and the arrangement would have been completely private, no one had to know publicly. All they had to do was just say "yes." But they never did, despite their strained financial condition. They didn't want a penny from the UFO photos and in the nearly 50 years since taking the pictures in 1950 they never asked for a penny and never received a penny for them.

I would only add the following remarks to your exhaustive scientific laboratory refutations of Sheaffer's mistaken arguments which are available in your 1976 and 1988 CUFOS papers.

What troubles me is Sheaffer's wholesale misrepresentation of the weather at the time of the sighting on May 11, 1950, based on selective distortion and gross error. The weather is important because he uses it to attack the credibility of the Trents and in other writings he and other skeptics attack your findings about the sunlit cumulus cloud that evidently lit up the Trent's garage from the east. Sheaffer has tried to argue that it was the morning sun that lit up the garage from the east so therefore the Trents lied about the time of the sighting when they said it was in the evening near sunset at around 7:30 PM.

Sheaffer and Klass both brazenly assert, contrary to the weather reports in their own files, that there were "PERFECTLY CLEAR SKIES" in the evening of the sighting, so the Trents were lying about the time of day. Klass claims the photos show an "overcast or hazy sky." (Klass 1974 pp. 148-9; 1976 pp. 175-6.) Whereas Sheaffer claims the Trents themselves insisted that it was overcast.

But Sheaffer and Klass didn't bother to find out the meaning of standard weather observation symbols in the official US Weather Bureau reports, which you took the time to find out about. In one place there is a three-phase reporting symbol for cloud cover in which "0" means 0-10% and does NOT mean ZERO cloud cover or "PERFECTLY CLEAR SKIES" as Sheaffer and Klass both falsely claim, but up to 10% cloud cover. ("I" means 10-60% and "II" means 60-100%.)

Sheaffer in effect calls the Trents (and you) liars based on this incredibly dumb mistake of his own in misreading weather reporting symbols. He claims that while the skies were purportedly completely clear that "the witnesses contend[ed]" it was overcast at 5,000 feet. In fact it was a REPORTER for the Portland Oregonian for June 10, 1950, who made the undocumented and unattributed claim that, quote, "The day was dull with an overcast at about 5000 feet."

Sheaffer insinuates there were no clouds with his additional claim that "At no time is there any [cloud] ceiling recorded between 9:00 AM May 10 and 10:00 AM May 12" from the McMinnville Airport weather station. Notice how he carefully calculates to mislead by omitting the weather observations BEFORE 9 AM on May 10 and AFTER 10 AM on May 12 -- the omitted times had reported 60-100% cloud cover.

One would think from reading both Sheaffer and Klass it was "PERFECTLY CLEAR SKIES" the entire 3-day period surrounding the Trents' sighting. But in fact, there was cloud cover from 2,500 to 30,000 feet throughout most of the days of May 10, 11 and 12, according to the official weather report. And the Portland Oregon Journal for May 10 published the following weather forecasts for May 10 and 11: "Portland Area--...MOSTLY CLOUDY Thursday [May 11]... Oregon--West: MOSTLY CLOUDY [May 10].... OCCASIONAL SPRINKLES. Thursday [May 11] PARTLY CLOUDY."

Sheaffer and Klass deliberately ignore the Salem Airport weather report which is almost as close as McMinnville's (17 miles SE instead of 12 miles NE of Trent farm), and which has more complete documentation. And they have copies of the Salem report.

Salem explicitly records cumulus clouds (altocumulus) at 7:28 PM on May 11, the EXACT TIME of the Trent sighting plus or minus several minutes, thus accounting for the cumulus cloud(s) to the EAST of the Trents reflecting sunlight from the setting sun onto the Trent's Garage. Your measurements had already proven that the light source on the garage was roughly 4 to 15 times the angular size of the sun (horizontally and vertically) and obviously could not have been the sun, but a much larger cumulus cloud.

As for Sheaffer's assertion that clouds at sunset would be reddish colored and that supposedly this was not in evidence in the Trent case, reddish coloration depends on the height of the clouds and atmospheric conditions. But in my upcoming Trent Case Update I've been planning to point out that the Trents' long puzzling report of "bronze" coloration of the UFO is in fact due to the expected reddish coloration at sunset.

As for Klass' 1995 article on Sheaffer's site, Klass relies heavily on a brief photo caption to the pictures in Life magazine saying no neighbors saw the object, when such brief captions are notoriously unreliable and the claim of no other witnesses is not repeated in the body of the article or in any other article I have available. None of the stories say that the Trents were ever asked about additional witnesses, but one mentions Mrs. Trent unsuccessfully tried to phone her mother-in-law down the street during the actual sighting (Portland Oregonian, June 10, 1950).

Mrs. Trent told you on Oct 25, 1976, that her mother-in-law (Alice Bowers Trent) may have seen the UFO but that she (Mrs. Trent) didn't tell reporters because the mother-in-law was ill with CANCER at the time and she didn't want her to be bothered by reporters -- Klass omits to mention this understandable reason which he knows about since he has it in your interview notes, your July 4, 1982, letter to him, and in your 1988 CUFOS paper. Paul Trent told McDonald in 1969 and both Trents told you in the early 70's that Paul's father, John Highland Trent, did see the UFO, too. But they told you they did not tell reporters because they wanted to spare them the stress of dealing with reporters when his mother was battling cancer.

Regards,

Brad Sparks

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