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Nick Pope's Weird World

From: Georgina Bruni <georgina@easynet.co.uk>
Date: Tue, 02 Nov 1999 14:21:27 +0000
Fwd Date: Tue, 02 Nov 1999 17:21:31 -0500
Subject: Nick Pope's Weird World

Nick Pope's Weird World Hot Gossip UK November '99

<http://www.hotgossip.co.uk/pope.html>

Welcome to November's column, and the latest news and gossip about ufology, the paranormal and anything else that catches my eye.

Leeds Conference

I had planned to write an account of all the news and gossip from the Leeds conference organised by UFO Magazine, but there's already been a fair bit about it on the Internet, together with a detailed account that ran in the November/December edition of UFO Magazine itself, which hit the news-stands a couple of days ago. Accordingly, I won't say much, aside from saying that I thought it was a very good conference. UFO Magazine managed to bring speakers from Germany, America and France, as well as British speakers, and it's this that makes these events special, because there aren't too many conferences that have the resources to do this. The UFO phenomenon is a global one, but unless we have the opportunity to hear and meet researchers from overseas, we run the risk of developing an insular view of ufology. The Internet can help break this down, but there's no substitute for actually meeting these people face to face.

Ufology And Popular Culture

I'm sure many of you have seen the new television advertisement for the Ericsson T28 mobile phone. It's a slick production based around an alien abduction, with the hapless victim being taken up a beam of light and into a craft where the aliens mistake his cellphone for the intelligent life (The long version even features a cow that's been taken on board!). It's witty and visually striking, but the interesting thing is that it was made at all. Advertisements only work when they tap into something with which the audience is familiar, so it's an interesting indicator of the extent to which the basic abduction scenario is now embedded into the public psyche. Interestingly - and I don't know if the producers were aware of this - it's not the first time that the abduction scenario has been used to sell mobile phones. There was a similar advertisement that ran in America in 1992, for AT&T. It showed a golf buggy being drawn up a beam of light towards a UFO, and the slogan was "At a time like this, whose cellular phone would you rather own?". A few years later a British advert showed a car being similarly drawn up a light beam, with one of the people on the ground saying "You'd better

ring the Royal.".

Operation Thunder Child

I've been out promoting my new book, Operation Thunder Child, and have done various television, radio and other media work over the past month or so, ranging from The Big Breakfast on Channel Four, to Steve Wright's show on Radio 2. I've noticed two interesting things. First, interest in ufology among researchers, producers and presenters hasn't waned, even though the market for UFO books has slumped in the aftermath of the Summer 1997 peak. Secondly, so much more promotional work is done on the Internet these days. I've done two live Internet interviews and another interview specifically for an Internet site, in the past few weeks. In addition, a lecture I gave was publicised on the popular UFO Updates site, and a review appeared on CNI News. I hope this encourages other authors, and if I might offer one tip, it's a plea to make sure your publishers are alive to the power of the Internet when it comes to marketing your books.

My Role At The MOD

There have been several recent Internet posts about my work at the Ministry of Defence, and regrettably, some of what has been claimed is inaccurate. It all started when James Easton wrote to the MOD asking for some details about their policy and views on UFOs, and enquiring about my official research and investigation. From what I understand, Easton has only quoted selectively from the MOD's reply, and this has resulted in a misleading picture being given. The situation has been further complicated because Easton's subsequent post has been picked up by other researchers who have subjected it to their own interpretation. I thought I'd set the record straight, and to do so, we need to look at the statements in the MOD letter:

"The Ministry of Defence has not investigated a case of alien abduction, crop circle formations or animal mutilation."

I described my work with abductees in chapter 8 of The Uninvited, while my work on crop circles and animal mutilations was set out in chapters 5 and 6 of Open Skies, Closed Minds. Both books were cleared by the MOD.

"Mr Pope was employed as an Executive Officer in Secretariat(Air Staff)2. His post was designated Sec(AS)2a. The main duties of the post concerned non-operational RAF activities overseas and diplomatic clearance for military flights abroad."

I've always made it clear that I had other duties aside from those connected with the UFO phenomenon. These included work on clearing some of the books written by military personnel about their Gulf War experiences (In my previous tour of duty I'd done Gulf War-related work in the Air Force Operations Room - part of the Joint Operations Centre). While I did do some diplomatic clearance work, this was an additional task that I only acquired in the final few months of my three year tour of duty. In practice, the Administrative Officer in Sec(AS)2a did most of this work, as well as providing clerical support to my boss and me.

"A small percentage of time is spent dealing with reports from the public about alleged 'UFO' sightings and associated public correspondence."

This statement describes the current situation in Sec(AS)2a, and I couldn't possibly comment on that. What I can say is that during my tour of duty the situation was somewhat different. A considerable percentage of my time was spent investigating UFO sightings from both public and military sources. I also prepared material for media enquiries, and drafted replies for defence ministers to send to Members of Parliament who asked about MOD policy on UFOs, or enquired about particular UFO incidents.

I can't respond to every Internet post that makes misleading statements about my official research and investigations, but in this instance a genuine MOD letter was being selectively quoted from and misinterpreted. I don't know if this is because those concerned have genuinely misunderstood the position, or whether it was a deliberate attempt to downplay my role, but in either event, I hope this has cleared up any confusion.

Ed's Note:

Nick Pope's three books, *Open Skies*, *Closed Minds*, *The Uninvited* and *Operation Thunder Child* are available from all good bookshops. His UK publishers are Simon & Schuster. In America, The Overlook Press publish his books in hardback while Dell Publishing produce paperback editions.

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