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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Bruce Maccabee and Gulf Breeze Photos

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Wed, 29 Sep 99 22:30:23 PDT
Fwd Date: Thu, 30 Sep 1999 08:55:08 -0400
Subject: Re: Bruce Maccabee and Gulf Breeze Photos

>Date: Wed, 29 Sep 1999 12:51:54 -0400
>From: Kenny Young <ufo@fuse.net>
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>Subject: Re: Bruce Maccabee and Gulf Breeze Photos

>>From: Brian Straight <brians@mdbs.com>
>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>Subject: Re: Bruce Maccabee and Gulf Breeze Photos
>>Date: Tue, 28 Sep 1999 12:01:05 -0500

Patient and gentle listfolk:

>>Thanks for being the voice of reason here. One of the main
>>reasons why 'ufology' is so unattractive to mainstream
>>scientists is precisely this descent into ad hominem that you
>>so rightly abhor. As an amateur astronomer (with a degree in
>>astronomy), I am no stranger to controversy. However, it is
>>rare, almost unknown, for theoretical disagreements between
>>astronomers to degenerate into personal attacks in public
>>forums.

>Your contrasting theoretical disagreements between astronomers
>and dissent in ufology is highly inappropriate. Perhaps you have
>not set aside some time to apply thought to this issue. Is the
>field of astronomy brimming with crackpotism and nutcases? Does
>the field of astronomy involve claims in which private
>investigators, hypnosis and/or polygraph tests become a major
>part of investigations, and does astronomy deal with hoaxers and
>hucksters, and do the leaders in the astronomical field
>frequently and regrettably put profit ahead of truth?

What does Mr. Young mean by "private investigators"? Private
detectives? Does he think that witnesses ought to be treated as
potential criminals? I guess so, since he tells us that
"polygraph tests" -- judged virtually useless by an army of
critics in criminology and science -- are "a major part of
investigations." Along the way he perpetuates the tired and
mindless slander that ufologists are in it for the money. Hey,
guy, if you find one of those wealthy ufologists, could you
direct him my way? I sure could use a loan right now. The mere
sight of my current bank balance puts me at risk of a heart
attack.

>Yes, it is unfortunate that personal attacks go hand in hand
>with some of these ufological debates. But since you applauded
>Jerome Clark for "voice of reason" during argumentation, let's

>take a fresh look at some of his previous comments from this
>discussion so that you and the friendly reader can decide
>whether or not Clark has demonstrated himself as the keen
>officer of courtesy and civility that you proclaim.

Mr. Young goes on here to take out of context remarks made in response to unwarranted, irresponsible attacks on my and others' good names and reputations. Revealingly, it is not those attacks he objects to; it is my response to them. This is terribly sad, and sadly revealing. Like the self-righteous everywhere, he and his associates want to dish it out without having to take it.

Young, Evans, and Black demonstrate what happens when ufology is treated as an excuse to short-circuit real debate by trashing those with whom one disagrees. It was they who came on as judges, jurors, and executioners, and now they profess to be baffled and outraged when their intended victims complain about the unfairness of the trial and show up the bankruptcy of the prosecution's case.

>Straight, it seems that Jerome Clark's past comments
>to his fellow disputants could hardly be seen as an outbreak of
>courtesy, nor do his comments reflect an outstanding departure
>from the mud-flinging and finger pointing involved with
>'ufological dissent' that you would have us believe. Perhaps
>your idea of enlightened theoretical dissent is constrained only
>to the side you choose to affiliate with.

As I've said, those who go back to the exchanges Young so selectively quotes from will see that I was responding to malicious personal slurs, which Black and Evans were unable to document but which they couldn't seem not to repeat. They can't seem to understand why slanders make their intended victims angry, or why someone would resent having his motivations subject to the wild imaginings of those who don't seem much concerned with supporting evidence for same.

If, on the other hand, the argument had been about the merits of a specific case and my opponents had confined themselves to discourse on the failings of the evidence -- as opposed to the indulgence of nasty, fact-free speculations on the motives of those who presumed to hold views of which they do not approve -- I would have been out of line if I had responded with attacks on their character. In fact, I would have been behaving just as these guys have been behaving. Since all they were talking about, in fact, was the supposedly corrupt motivations of individuals none of them knows, how else to respond except to call them character assassins? If you don't want to be called a character assassination, don't assassinate characters. Got that, guys?

I am not impressed. I will fight to my last breath efforts to turn ufology into the sorry exercise Young, Black, and Evans seem to want it to be. If we are going to get anywhere, we must first acknowledge that even those who hold views unlike ours -- exasperating as they can be to us -- are far more likely to be sincere and well-intentioned than otherwise. Y, B, and E, sad to say, may never grasp this simple point, but it is one of the founding principles of a civilized society.

Jerry Clark

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