

Never Too Cold for UFOs

It all started on November 13, 1995. That's when a Liidli Ke elder named Leo Norwegian saw what he thought was the red light of a radio tower. It was just after 5 pm, and he and an eight-year-old boy were driving from Fort Simpson to a small subdivision outside of town.

"But we could see the radio tower lights, and this one wasn't part of it," Norwegian said.

They watched as the light remained stationary over the Mackenzie River and changed colours from red to blue to white to green and red again. After about a minute and a half, the light "sped away faster than any aircraft." It was "so fast, it left a trail of brilliant light behind it."

"At first, I thought it might be a plane or a helicopter, but then I knew it couldn't be because it went away so fast and because the colours of lights changed," he said.

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The UFO flap in the Northwest Territories didn't start then. Norwegian only came forward with his sighting after dozens of residents of Fort Resolution, NWT, reported seeing strange hovering lights during the first weeks of January, 1996.

I first heard about the Fort Resolution sightings on CBC radio, on the program As It Happens. They were interviewing Ewen (sp?) Hunter, the mayor of Fort Resolution. The mayor described how literally everyone in the community had noticed a bright, stationary light, hanging low just above the treetops in the southwestern sky. After a few hours, the light would drop lower to the horizon and be lost to sight. While in the sky, it flashed various colours and dazzled residents with its display.

The mayor said that the Department of National Defence had come up to investigate and also took a video of the object back to their HQ for analysis. The mayor also said that "no one" had come up with an explanation for the object.

I remember listening to this and wondering two things: one, why is evryone getting so excited about Venus?; and two, why the heck is DND investigating?

I went to my computer and used some astronomy software to plot out the night sky for the Fort Resolution area. It was simple enough to see that there were a number of bright objects about where the Fort Res UFO had been seen. One easy candidate was Venus, which was bright even in the Winnipeg city sky, and about which I had fielded several inquiries. However, according to my plot, Venus would be **very** low - perhaps too low to be seen that far north at the appropriate times.

To check this, I contacted Jay Anderson, a meteorologist with Environment Canada and a associate of mine from my terms with the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. He verified that Venus was probably the culprit, and then told me about an article which had appeared in the newspaper that same day, announcing that Venus was the Fort Resolution UFO.

The inch-high article (Winnipeg Free Press, 30 January 1996), was compiled from Canadian Press reports and said simply that astronomers had explained the UFO as Venus. This was all well and good, except that I

received a call from a Toronto TV talk show, wanting me to be on the show with Michael Strainic, MUFON's Canadian Director, to discuss the NWT cases.

Strainic, for one, wasn't buying the Venus explanation. In an article in a NWT newspaper (News/North, 29 January 1996):

"Meanwhile, the Mutual UFO Network, an international alien-tracking agency, says it has reason to believe the secret behind what everyone is seeing may be more mysterious than expected. Michael Strainic, the network's Canadian director, said ... 'We have determined that some people have seen a bona fide UFO by definition. But what that UFO is, we don't know ... I think what we're seeing here is the beginning of something much bigger.'"

Strainic was then quoted about Canadian UFO activity in 1995 - that the NWT cases came "on the heels of a British Columbia summer strewn with daylight spaceship sightings and UFO abductions. 'We got buried alive with this sort of thing last summer, and so far it looks like there's going to be more of it in 1996.'" When I called Strainic that week to ask for the 1995 Canadian UFO data, he told me the reports were unavailable and that he was still waiting to receive cases from Canadian MUFON members.

Strainic was again quoted by the paper: "The things we are beginning to hear (about UFO sightings and abductions) are completely off the wall. They almost seem like they're staged events - that something is trying to send us a message through a dramatic display. The message may already be there for us to decipher, but we may not be mentally able to understand just what the message is yet."

Mike is right about the bizarre nature of UFO reports, of course.

I wanted more facts about the cases so that I could get a better handle on what was happening up there. A new group, the Alberta UFO Research Association (AUFORA) also received media attention when it began investigating the reports via the telephone. AUFORA director Cory Sine was justifiably reserved in his interview. He explained that a star or planet could indeed be the culprit, carefully detailing atmospheric refraction and how stationary objects can appear to bob, weave and scintillate many colours. "What we'll do is collect as much data on the sightings as we possibly can. We'll look at all the possibilities and we'll forward that information to the witnesses," he said. (News/North, 22 January 1996)

One interesting point is that in its AUFORA Update 02.06.96: The NWT UFO Sightings - Special Report, the sightings are described as: "an aerial bright light usually visible just above the treeline. The magnitude of these lights has been described as staring into the high-beams of a car. The light shifts color between blue, red, green and white before leaving by accelerating straight up at an incredible speed. The sightings usually last for 1 to 6 minutes."

This is in direct contradiction with the UFOs' characteristics as described by the mayor of Fort Resolution, who said on the CBC radio interview that the objects remained visible for several *hours*, not minutes. Furthermore, only a few sightings had the UFO zip away quickly. In others, the objects remained in the sky.

One of the speedier objects was a bright fireball observed on January 17, 1996, near Hay River. In that case, the object was described as a bright white light leaving a red trail as it descended quickly over the town. It looked like a "flare" and was "falling apart." Obvious conclusion: bolide.

But, I had not seen any actual case reports. Although there had been some media attention, I still wasn't sure how many cases were involved and if any (besides Norwegian's) were more unusual than a stationary light in the sky.

Blaine Wasylikiw of Yellowknife helped me greatly by posting the newspaper articles verbatim and answering other questions via email. His website (<http://www.ssimicro.com/~ufoinfo>) has a great deal of information, including an interview with P.J. Harston, a newspaper reporter who wrote many of the UFO articles in the NWT.

Harston claimed that Mike Strainic had told him that there had been 140 UFO sightings in Canada in 1994, and more than 500 in 1995. Harston must have heard wrong, because Strainic told me that he had no such numbers or data to give me.

Harston related that "a scientist who is linked with [MUFON] saw the [UFO] .. and he doesn't know what the hell it is!" Also, Harston said that he was told "there's no record of a star or a planet being in that section" of the sky. This was odd, because both Venus *and* Saturn are in the SW sky, as well as many bright stars, of course. This was especially odd because "they've checked with observatories ... nobody has a record of a renegade star or planet or anything being in that part of the sky."

In the AUFORA report, they note that: "The military has ruled out the possibility of a planet, such as Venus, as being the cause of the lights because of the swift departure of the UFOs." (The AUFORA report can be found at URL: <http://ume.med.ucalgary.ca/aufora/nwt>)

In Harston's opinion, MUFON's most logical explanation was that "it could be the American military testing out some new gadget - which [MUFON says] has happened before and wouldn't necessarily be uncommon."

Still, I wanted some factual information about the sightings. So, I called Harston myself - and got a somewhat different picture of the NWT affair.

Harston told me that he had been deluged with calls from around North America, from media and self-styled UFO investigators. Indeed, the day I called him, I had myself received a call from a UFO buff in Akron, Ohio, who wanted information about the NWT cases. I was glad he agreed to talk with me. After all, I could have been another "UFO nut."

(No smart remarks from the peanut gallery, please!)

Harston explained how the NWT flap had unfolded. First, a few people had seen the singular stationary object near Fort Resolution, and had mentioned it to others in the town. Soon, everyone else had seen it, too, as word spread.

Among the witnesses were a group of Northern Rangers - members of the Army reserves who "were given a rugged rifle and half a dozen rounds" to patrol the north against enemy attack. It's a bit outdated, but that's how he described their original function. Anyway, they had seen the object, too, and took the witnesses' statements. Since the NRC and DND don't officially investigate UFO sightings, one can only wonder where these reports are going. Harston didn't think they had shot the video, but they had looked at it. (AUFORA says it was a Ranger who took the video.)

"But you really can't tell anything from it," he said. "It's only a light, bobbing and moving around on the screen, and you can't tell if it's the light that's moving or if it's the camera."

Harston said that when news of the original Fort Res reports spread, CBC Yellowknife did a story and it was then big news across the

North. People in widely-separated areas began reporting their sightings to media reps - and the mayor of Fort Resolution. He seemed to be the authority figure whose testimony seemed beyond reproach.

It was about this time that Leo Norwegian came forward with his story. Even though it was viewed as a confirmation of the Fort Res sightings, it was much earlier and his UFO behaved much differently from the original Fort Res UFOs.

Sightings poured in from Trout Lake, Yellowknife and other NWT towns, and even Fort Chippewa, Alberta. Harston noted that all the reports seemed to come from about the same latitude.

On Friday, January 26, 1996, a Toronto TV talk show focussed on the NWT cases. Among the guests were the mayor of Fort Res, a Canadian Press reporter who had done a story on UFOs in Canada, another media type who had "immersed" himself in the Canadian UFO subculture, and Michael Strainic. The mayor related how he had received reports from trappers who said that the UFO now had been following their snowmobiles. Some, he claimed, had told him that occasionally the UFO would hover directly over their machines, cutting out the engines, which would start mysteriously again after the UFO had moved out of sight.

But even Harston pointed out to me that these were all just rumours, and that no one had actually investigated the engine-stopping reports. He also noted that in -30C weather, snowmobiles were pretty finicky machines at the best of times. Trappers often were stranded by dead machines, UFOs or not.

Harston also elaborated on the "investigations" by DND. It seems there is a new commander in Yellowknife, named Colonel LeBlanc. Since he's new, he took the opportunity to "check into" the sighting reports as a way to meet others in the community, so he took a plane across the lake to Fort Resolution. LeBlanc's public relations liaison is a Captain Gray, who arranged several interviews with reporters and witnesses.

The word is, though, that LeBlanc openly talks about "world change" and "major upheavals" in the context of the UFO sightings. Harston said LeBlanc was "less skeptical than I am," and that he told people that contact with aliens was "the next step in the evolution of the planet." One can certainly wonder what approach he is taking in the evaluation of the UFO reports.

In other words, the NWT sightings seem much less mysterious and less substantiated than has been advertised. At this point, there are no case reports for researchers to review. It is unfortunate that the area is so distant from experienced UFO investigators. Without access to the DND investigation reports, we have only unverified claims of UFO types more complex than simple nocturnal lights, which may or may not be ascribed to astronomical objects as explanations. Accurate descriptions of altitude, direction, times and dates are still elusive. *Someone* might have this information, but it is so far unavailable.

AUFORA has been the most helpful and productive of any UFO researchers on the case, publishing its excellent report. It contains a lot of data and case information that is helping serious researchers evaluate the incidents. For a new UFO group on the scene, they are doing a very good job and showing good cooperation with other researchers. Good for them!

Still, we're left with an interesting set of UFO sightings. We still need more data to evaluate them, perhaps by obtaining the Rangers' or DND case files. Until such time, the NWT flap remains curious, but

not monumental.

O, C.D.B., I C...U F O s @ M.I.T. !

[This is a release from the enigmatic BUFO Calvin, who puts out an irregular ezine about fortean things, mostly UFO-related. Full credit to him for the following book review.]

Well, my concerns about CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FOURTH KIND by C.D.B. Bryan were unfounded. It was really quite a good book, an excellent introduction to the subject of UFOs and abductions. Mr. Bryan writes as a =reporter=, not a commentator. He attended the alien abduction conference at M.I.T. Rather than constantly tell you what he thought about it, he tries to present his impressions of it. This may, in fact, be a doomed school of journalism, but it is one I rather enjoy. You see, ever since they passed the law about five years ago that talk show hosts had to be cartoon characters, I've found =reporting= quite a bit more scarce.

The book is a great way to look at the issue without having to buy into an agenda. After the conference, Bryan went on to interview both abductees and researchers (including both Mack and Boylan). The last chapter is given over to speculating, but not in an aggressive way.

I've found it funny that some people in the press seem to be genuinely angry that Bryan didn't take a position. Oh, well, I should get used to it: even meteorologists are expected to tell you whether it's good weather or not, as opposed to just what it is.

LoC (Letter of Comment) about the last SGJ

From: (name deleted)
Subject: Re: Latest issue of the Swamp Gas Journal

I believe the UFO abductions can be explained by 2 things.

1. Those abducted have been given a powerful chemical hypnosis drug called Burandanga or Scopalamine, a derivative of the Nightshade family.
2. The abductors were dressed like UFO people.

Now my only problem is motive. The motive is complex but may include the following:

1. Testing these drugs on people.
2. Manipulation of people by giving them post-hypnotic suggestions.
3. Punishment of these people for their political beliefs.
4. Possible implantation of locator devices or something similar so these people can be subjects of energy directed audio-gram mindcontrol technology.
5. All of the above done for the purpose of making money and obtaining power

In Defense (?) of Sagan

Dean Philip Kanipe, that paragon of ufology, sent me the following exchange between UFO fan Brian Zeiler and the slightly-skeptical John Stepkowski. It's not *exactly* a defense of Carl Sagan, or is it?

From: Dean Phillip Kawipe <dpk@acpub.duke.edu>

Subject: Re: PARADE Sagan Article Disinfo (fwd)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: John Stepkowski <legion@werple.net.au> [with permission]

* Brian Zeiler writes:

>> Did you read the December 3 article by Mr. Sagan titled
>>"What's the Evidence?" What a masterpiece of disinformation!
>>He not only ignored all the scientific evidence found at the
>>sites of some crop circles but he also did his best to
>>cast a "fringite" pallor over the whole UFO question and those
>>who seek answers.
>>Why is he misleading us like this?
> He's a modern-day Menzel.

Just for a moment, Brian, kick off those Nikes, try on a pair of Gucci loafers, and step into Sagan's shoes...

You're asked to write an article highlighting all the scientific evidence for a "genuine crop circle" phenomenon.

So where do you start?

You look in Nature. Anything in there about "polyembryony", "scroll wave theory", "cellular anomalies"? Nope. How about Science? No, nothing there. Scientific American? Nope. Reader's Digest? Uh-uh. You try the JSE. A-ha! An article by Levensgood and Burke! But it's about their claims that they found meteoric iron in a "crop circle". You know they've refused to allow their sample to be independently tested, and you know that Levensgood believes that "double-blind testing" is for amateurs and hasn't had any of his findings independently evaluated. You're a little worried about using him as a source. You look elsewhere.

You try the UFO literature. Lots of articles by Colin Andrews, and as you read them you note how Andrews has changed his claims over the years. You go from his first book, Circular Evidence, where his standard of proof was to claim that crop circles were genuine because "no humans could make formations like these," to his own Winter '94 CPR Newsletter where he conceded that humans really could make such formations after all, and that his expert plant wizard, Dr. Levensgood, had even "authenticated" proven man-made formations. Man-made formations? Hmm... you decide to look into the claims of Doug and Dave.

After a thorough check of newspapers, books, magazines and television transcripts, you fail to find a single quote from either Doug or Dave that they were responsible for all the formations ever made. You note that the CC press make this claim all the time in an attempt to "debunk" the idea that "crop circles" are made by humans, but they never provide any evidence by way of a direct quote that D&D actually said this.

Another thing you notice in the CC literature is that the various circle groups have many "enemies". The constantly attack circle-makers like Rob and John and Rod and UBI and Pam and Julian and Paul and... What?! You mean there are lots of known circle-makers?! You're surprised because you've only ever heard people attacking D&D! You had no idea there was a veritable community of circle-makers out there. Gee, just like the world-wide armies of graffiti artists who spend an incredible amount of time and energy spray-painting subways, trains, pavements and buildings. Why do they do it? Why spend so much time and money doing something so pointless? You conclude that people do some weird things in their spare time...

Don't human circle-makers damage the crops and leave tell-tale signs that the experts can easily detect? You re-read Colin Andrews' Winter '94 CPR Newsletter and find that no, (embarrassingly), lots of human-made formations have been authenticated by "experts", some even on camera! So humans can make formations without severely damaging crops...

How about the size of the formations? They must take days to produce, right? Well, no... You view the "Crop Circle Communique II" video and see D&D making a 65 ft component of the '92 East Meon formation in less than 12 minutes. When D&D tell you it only took a couple of hours (including time for a break of coffee and ham rolls), to make some of their biggest creations, it's hard to argue with them. You also wonder how long it would take a group of three or four much younger circle-makers to produce some of their "field art".

Ah! What about the numbers of "crop circles"?! There must be thousands and thousands of them, right? Wrong... You do a little reading and discover that until the 92-93 season, CC groups counted individual "events" within a formation as one complete "circle". So a typical "quintuplet" would be counted as 5 separate circles rather than as one formation. You realize that this sort of counting would inflate the numbers very quickly...

Wasn't there a big scientific research project known as 'Argus'? Yes, there was. So you read up on it. Maybe you even find a breathless press release from the CCCS announcing - prematurely - that the first Argus project had found short-lived radioactive isotopes in a formation! Wow! That's more like it! How could a couple of guys making formations with planks and garden rollers produce exotic isotopes?! You read many, many articles, all claiming these radioactive traces were found, but you're struck by the fact that these claims are never elaborated upon. Where's the background analysis of these "traces"? Why hasn't this finding been written up in the literature? You're puzzled by this case of the disappearing isotopes... You vow to look for more details later, but in the meantime, you find the results of the second Argus project! No doubt this will contain all the "juicy" details of the amazing isotope discovery!

After wading through over a hundred pages of solid and impressive information about fungal growths that blacken crops, and speculation about possible future areas of investigation, you get to the summary:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Project Argus has not, at this writing, found the "smoking gun" clearly showing that some crop circles are not the product of human activity.

Huh? What about the radiation, the claims of deuteron beams and exotic isotopes found during the first Argus project? Weren't they found during the second Argus project, too? You read a little further...

B. No evidence of anomalous radioactive traces in any of the tested formations.

Hmmm....

You find an article by Michael Chorost (of Argus) in the MUFON UFO Journal #304, where he writes about the second Argus project:

Indications that there might be such effects in the form of short-lived radioactive residues in the soil and significant changes to the crops had turned up late in 1991, thanks largely to the dedicated work of Marshall Dudley and Dr. W.C. Levengood. Slenderly based though these indications were, it was a scientific imperative to follow them up on as large a scale as could be managed, using better equipment and a more exhaustive methodology.

"Indications that there might be such effects ... were slenderly based"? And these "effects" were not substantiated in the second, more "exhaustive" research project?! You scratch your head and wonder why people keep bringing up such long-discredited claims, especially since the CC field is awash with scientific evidence, or so it's claimed...

You ask several people in the CC research community about this and they tell you that the initial claims of radiation traces were withdrawn by the Argus team. So despite being led a merry dance by the CC publications, there has been, and remains, no independently verified evidence of "anomalous" radiation in "crop circles".

But what about famous cases like Trans-en-Provence? Didn't that "crop circle" provide scientists with some fascinating and unusual findings? Yes, it did. But as you read up on Trans-en-Provence you note that it was a "ground trace" case of the sort you'll often find in the UFO literature. The formation itself was a very plain-looking ring, which definitely didn't fit the profile of the more exotic "pictograms". Fancy and complex "crop circles" are more "photogenic" than trace cases like Trans-en-Provence, but you find they have no pedigree when it comes to authenticated anomalous findings.

You've heard about "mysterious" cellular changes in crop circle samples. You might have even seen close-ups of amazing "crystalline" changes found in crop circle samples on TV shows like "Beyond 2000". Ah! This could be something... But then you learn that these "samples" were actually processed at HSC labs using alchemical techniques dating back hundreds of years, and previously used only to analyse human blood. The reason for the "crystalline" changes is that at HSC they mashed the crop samples in a big food blender, reduced the sample to an anhydrous mass, and then doused it with liquid starches. When the starch dried it left a crystal coating which was then "analysed" for its "shape". This is known as "spagyric" analysis, and Colin Andrews used these slides at his lectures for a couple of years without telling his audience that they were looking at processed crop samples, and not samples taken straight from the field! Naturally, even though these pictures look pretty impressive, you can't use them.

But what about cellular changes in crops? You call Dr John Graham and learn that plants subjected to mechanical stress produce precisely the sort of cellular "stretching" that is found in crop circles. The cellular changes are artifacts of the crop being pushed over and attempting to return to the upright position. What about the "swollen nodes"? Aren't these evidence of mysterious forces at work? No, the nodes swell as they attempt to return the crop to the vertical. Nothing more.

You've seen pictures of military helicopters flying over "crop circles". Hmmm... Could this be evidence of some secret military

interest in "crop circles"? You call the Land Army HQ and demand an answer! You're informed that, contrary to the claims of certain "crop circle" researchers, military helicopters have always been active in the "heart" of what has become "crop circle" country. This area is known as LFA 1A and extends from Salisbury Plain, to Devizes, the M4 and the A34, and has been a designated low-flying zone for U.K. and NATO helicopters for over 20 years, long before the modern "crop circle" phenomenon ever arrived.

What do you do next? You comb the 'Net. You read the Swamp Gas Journal and North American Institute for Crop Circle Research database and find ... no reported radiation or magnetic anomalies. You do, however, find lots of other "interesting" articles about how crop circles are doorways into other dimensional realities, how they're made by aliens as a warning to humans to eat less fatty foods, etc., but you note that these claims are based solely on subjective assessments of crop circle geometry. One person looks at a formation and sees a greeting from the Earth Spirits, another will look at the same formation and see lots of lines and circles... You need something a little more substantial, so...

You call up a crop circle research group! You ask them how their scientific studies in "crop circles" are going. They tell you their Chairman wants to hold hands with you and channel his "space friend" so that he can ask the "non-human" circle-makers why they're making them. Great... Some other people will tell you about anomalous experiences with mobile phones, seeing lights in the sky, their tape recorder not working, and so on. Interesting, you say, but what about this "knock-'em-dead, Take-That! you-Evil-Skeptics" scientific evidence that "crop circles" could not be made by humans? You wait... They tell you, that, um, they don't actually, er, have any such evidence yet, but they're confident they will have, er ... one day. You thank them politely and hang up.

You've still got that article to write, but you don't have a single piece of scientific evidence for the non-human causation of "crop circles". You're going to have to present the "data" that is available, because, well, what else can you do? The proponents of non-human causation simply have not presented any independently verifiable evidence for their claims. They'll tell you it's coming, but so is Christmas, and in the meantime, you've got that article to turn in. So you write it based on the available (lack of) evidence. And what happens? You get hammered for "debunking".

> What Sagan spews MUST be true, right?

Not necessarily, but based on what we've seen quoted from the article, he has accurately reflected the current state of Cereology - a lot of wishful thinking and no hard evidence. - John

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Alien Shrapnel

A really hot topic in UFOdom these days is the analyses of alien "implants." The theory is that the aliens are somehow keeping track of their victims by inserting microtransmitters into us. The ideal situation was a subplot in the cliffhanger opener of the X-Files this season, when a microchip was discovered in Scully's back.

In reality, though, the implants are not that impressive. I've

read through Derrel Sims' articles in HUFON Report, and they haven't knocked my socks off, to put it mildly.

Sheldon Wernikoff and I have discussed this at length, and we have agreed on a few basic points. The radiograms show irregular orts of varying consistency, texture and materials, taken from different parts of peoples' bodies. There is little likelihood they are alien implants or tracking devices or whatever.

Radiologists who had seen copies of one abductee's x-rays said they were similar to those from patients who had stepped on a needle or metal fragment which later migrated to another location, becoming encapsulated in mineral deposits and tissue.

I haven't made it widely public, but I have examined an "implant" taken out of an abductee who came to UFOROM seeking help. It was a metal shaving, about 1 mm in diameter, irregularly-shaped and with a bit of calcification from being in the body for so long. It was dug out of an abductee's hand, where it was found after an x-ray (for another problem) discovered it by accident.

No, we didn't have it analyzed with an electron microscope a la X-Files. (No money, and no technician we spoke with would do it for us gratis.) Further, I don't imagine anything would have been gained. Certainly nothing that Sims has produced suggests that intensive analysis is worthwhile.

I had been puzzled by Sims' fascination with the implants, as I had heard he was an MD with a keen interest in UFOs. However, posted to the internet was the following note about Sims:

"He was a former Military Police officer, and holds a host of "degrees" <g> from various hypnotherapy institutes, but I don't believe he holds even an undergrad degree from an accredited university. Funny... his business card credits him as being a "doctoral candidate". He runs Saber Enterprises, which is the investigative branch of HUFON and supposedly is a consultant in the field of personal development and corporate human resources."

So, are the implants credible? I don't know. I hear different stories, depending with whom I speak.

Scathing Scandinavian Scandal

Ole Johnny, who some have described as a bit of a rabble-rouser, posted the following rant (I mean, notice) in the various Internet newsgroups. It concerns a ufologist with good credentials, but apparently low credibility.

From: Ole Jonny <brenne@norconnect.no>
Subject: MUFON uses contactee on advisory board.

**MUFON USES SCANDINAVIAN CONTACTEE ON ITS ADVISORY BOARD OF CONSULTANTS:
RAUNI-LEENA LUUKANEN.**
by Ole Jonny Brenne, UFO-Norway.

Rauni-Leena Luukanen is a Finnish-born doctor of medicine who retired in 1986 after a car accident in which she claims to have been rescued by extraterrestrials. In the early 1980s she wrote a book on life after death. Since then, she has written three books on UFOs. She currently resides in the southeastern part of Norway. In my opinion, has been actively

spreading disinformation and dubious assertions during her lecture tours and media exposures. UFO-Norway have been receiving quite a lot of inquiries about Luukanen and her claims, so we feel it's time to respond.

1. Luukanen often promotes stories most UFO researchers consider to be already resolved or identified as hoaxes. It makes us wonder if she really has, or wants to have, access to reliable information or if she is just writing books to make as much money as possible on naive persons.

Examples of stories in her books are the "object which crashed on Svalbard/Spitsbergen in 1952" and the "UFO shot down by jet fighters over South Africa". The 1952 Spitsbergen story has been found to be nothing more than a cheap journalistic hoax. The so-called South African crash of 1989 has been thoroughly dismissed also in various journals.

Luukanen never describes the stories completely, but only relates the most sensational parts. Details seem not to be important. In this way, she is contributing to the creation of myths around the UFO phenomenon, whether it be consciously or unconsciously.

2. I quote from one of Luukanen's books: "A representative of a Norwegian UFO organisation once told me that the organisation had in vain tried to get the Norwegian Defense to show an interest in UFO research. Still the Norwegian Defense have unofficially assisted in UFO research, among other things in the well-known Hessdalen valley, [where there have been] numerous UFO observations. UFO researchers kept guard night and day, took photographs and sent light signals into space, and in some cases also received an answer."

This is totally false and completely out of context. As UFO-Norway is the only UFO organisation in Norway, we have to assume it is us she refers to. Aside from the fact that no representative of UFO-Norway ever told Luukanen any of the above, UFO-Norway have not ever sent any light signals out into space, and we have never received any answers, either.

3. Luukanen claims to have given a lecture at the UN. This is not quite right either. She has given a lecture at the United Nations Parapsychological Society, which is a club and has nothing to do with the UN itself - other than that the members are UN employees. At best, it is half a truth.

4. Luukanen also claims that pilots, astronauts, and cosmonauts are forbidden to talk on the subject of having observed UFOs. If they do this they are subject to 10 years imprisonment and a 10,000 dollar fine.

In Russia, among others, Vladimir Kovaljonok (Sojuz 6) has publicly spoken of his observation in 1981. In USA, James McDivitt even filmed a UFO (Gemini 4, 1965). Gordon Cooper has described, his UFO observations of 1951. There are no known incidents where a pilot, astronaut, or cosmonaut has been punished for statements on UFOs.

5. Luukanen signs her letters with "MD, DT, MH, DPH, DHA, and author" after her name. It must be assuring to be able to impress people with all these titles, but not everyone falls for that. She doesn't investigate any reports herself, but only passes on various rumours, allegations, statements, and stories. MD means Doctor of Medicine of course, and that is fair enough. But at least one of the titles above can be purchased from The New York Academy Of Sciences for only US\$80.

6. Luukanen claims her books are written by a process known as automatic writing - often accompanied by claims of "it only took 70 hours to write this". It seems like the contents of a book is legitimated or "proven" in certain New Age circles if it is claimed to have been written by automatic writing. Psychologists and psychiatrists are generally in agreement that this phenomenon originates in the human subconscious. Why has no original information ever surfaced this way? Why are the contents always infested with misunderstandings and errors?

7. Luukanen claims the aliens she is in contact with are here to help us, and are ready to rescue us out of "the last great catastrophe". It's probably safe and reassuring to have some cosmic friends standing by to fix things if the situation becomes too bad. This is a very dangerous attitude/belief. Where were the aliens during the mediaeval crusades, world war 2, the Vietnam war, etc etc. It is probably most sane to try and fix things on our own, instead of waiting for cosmic salvation.

8. Luukanen claimed in several of her lectures during 1992, that former US president George Bush would announce the rumoured cooperation between the US and the extraterrestrials - in an attempt to save himself as president. Bush obviously forgot it - he lost the election.

9. Luukanen claims to be in telepathic contact with extraterrestrials and also having paranormal abilities. It is characteristic that these abilities have never been demonstrated - they probably never will.

10. In another quote from one of her books: "It's real easy to see how 'skeptics' have captured central positions in certain American, Russian, Swedish and even Norwegian UFO organisations, whereby it is easy to spread coordinated disinformation through the most important media with the aid of certain skeptic journalists."

Well, personally, I am content with being named a skeptic - especially by Luukanen. That is exactly what I aim to be. The allegation of UFO-Norway spreading disinformation is way off the mark. Anyone accepting that can't possibly have been reading anything produced by us or subscribed to our journals. It would be of great advantage if Luukanen could have enough guts to point out more specific examples in stead of just a general accusation. One has to be skeptical (especially with regard to the UFO phenomenon) if one should have a chance of avoiding to swallow everything hook, line and sinker - like Luukanen has done.

11. Luukanen constantly claims these extraterrestrials are really kind beings and wish us all good - everything they do is for our own good. It doesn't appear all rosy and good. How is Luukanen able to reach such a conclusion on the basis of available abduction material, is beyond me. Most reports of that kind indicate - according to the experiencers' reactions and feelings - quite the opposite. Whether the aliens are good or bad is a question we so far are unable to establish.

12. Luukanen keep talking about "UFOs". Why? She refers to spaceships, so why not say spaceships then, not UFOs? Spaceships have nothing to do with the acronym UFO, which by definition is unidentified - unknown. This only contributes to even more confusion - and more disinformation.

13. In several of her lectures, Luukanen claims that Kurt Waldheim, in November 1978, stated that "Sweden, Norway, the Philippines, Grenada and France have officially recognised UFOs".

What she has done here is to uncritically pass on the rumour stated by the Earl of Kimberley during the three-hour long debate in the British House of Lords on 18 January 1979. ("Ten Governments now openly admit that UFOs exist and are real: France, Norway, Sweden, Brazil, the Argentine, Venezuela, Mexico, the Philippines, Peru and Grenada.") Apparently, the fact that the Earl of Kimberley was wrong, doesn't bother Luukanen much at all.

14. Luukanen claims the extraterrestrials have a "horizontal circulation" (of the blood). It should be interesting to hear a medical doctor explain how this works.

15. Luukanen often claims to give lectures at and exchanging top secret information at numerous UFO conferences with scientists and military personnel. The largest UFO conferences are the MUFON and BUFORA conferences held each year. Luukanen has never given any lecture at these conferences - at least she is totally absent from the proceedings. We have as yet not all the proceedings of all the other conferences she claims to visit, but one of the important ones is the Abduction Study Conference at MIT, 13-17 June 1992. The proceedings are called "Alien Discussions" and is at approx US\$70. Luukanen is not mentioned in this close-to-700 page book, nor in the 476-page book by C.D.B. Bryan. Proceedings of the TREAT conferences are also available, but these are not secret.

In summary, we can say that UFO-Norway and Luukanen have two diametrically opposite views of the UFO phenomenon.

Luukanen is not much concerned with scientific research - the inner voice and the inner experiences are more important. She distorts and disinform on the subject - sometimes so much that we wonder if it is a conscious act.

UFO-Norway is concerned that these UFO phenomena are placed under competent scientific research, where the phenomena are measured and registered in every way possible. At the same time we recognise that the material we have available today does not validate the promotion of any specific theory.

Too bad MUFON doesn't share those views.

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[Editor's note: I don't think Ole is a fan of MUFON.]

Shaggy UFO Story

Finally, a note about a mysterious UFO crash off the coast of Nova Scotia. Known as the Shag Harbour case, the story was generally ignored until a persevering ufologist named Chris Stiles began chasing it in the early 90s. His work attracted the attention of some tabloid shows, and it suddenly is front and center in the list of mystery UFO crashes.

Recently, Discovery Canada (a Canadian version of the Discovery Channel) ran "Alien Week," a series of UFO-related programs and documentaries. Much of the programming was all-new interviews and stories. I was filmed for the series, as were Errol Bruce-Knapp, Tom Theofanous, Laurie Vassos and several others. The "skeptical scientist"

role was played well by Dr. John Caldwell, an astrophysicist, who had never investigated any sightings, read relevant publications or spoken with knowledgeable ufologists. He explained that it was unlikely that aliens were travelling to Earth from distant planets because of the enormous amount of money such trips would cost.

But I digress. Also on the show was a segment about the Shag Harbour crash. Not knowing much about the case since there really isn't much available yet, I thought it was interesting. Basically, in 1967, an object was seen to fall into the ocean. Navy divers were sent to retrieve it, but the official story was that nothing was located. A "green foam" was seen floating on the water in the area, but it was never sampled. The rumour was that they really did find something but that it was covered up. Stiles has apparently found documents showing a great deal of official interest in the event, suggesting something remarkable had in fact fallen into the harbour.

Anyway, I was cc'd a copy of a letter sent to Discovery Canada by an angry viewer who had offered them a slightly different version of the story. I'll delete the name, but here's the letter:

To: comment@discovery.ca
Subject: Re: Shag Harbour UFO sighting in 1967
CC: rutkows

I noticed that you repeated the item by Jay regarding UFO mysteries in Canada, quoting the Shag Harbour incident in 1967. I am amazed that you did not bother to follow up on my mail message sent to you Jan 10 and repeated below. Are you not interested in getting at the truth??

I offered you an exclusive UFO news scoop and you ignored it. I am puzzled - why would you do that? It makes me wonder if you are really interested in scientific investigation or are just using the programming material to sell more beer. Perhaps Chris Rutkowski will be more interested.

(name deleted)

> Begin forwarded message

> To: connectn@discovery.ca

> Subject: Shag Harbour UFO sighting in 1967

> On Oct 4 and again on Oct 11, 1967 three men doing nightwatch at the
> rock-weed processing plant just north of Shag Harbour in Woods Harbour,
> set off signal flares, which arched southward out over the water west of
> Shag Harbour. These were observed and interpreted as UFO's. When the
> controversy arose, the men were afraid to confess for fear of losing their
> jobs. (There may have been liquor involved as well.)
> One of the men confessed this information to my father-in-law when they were
> both in hospital some time ago. My father in law is in his eightys. Two of
> the participants have since died and the remaining one is not in good
> health.
> I believe that the one remaining could be convinced to confess for the
> record, if he were assured that he would not suffer ill consequences. I
> would be willing to make introductions in the event that someone were
> interested in conducting a legitimate investigation without excessive
> publicity.
> [xxx] was the fisherman who took the RCMP out to
> investigate the night of the sighting. I remember him commenting on the

> unusual greenish foam streak on the water in the vicinity of the sighting
> that night. Unfortunately, no one thought to take a water/foam sample at
> that time.

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I immediately sent a reply to the sender, asking for more info. I also asked other ufologists about it. The trend is to be wary of such a claim, because Stiles is reported to have some remarkable documents that support something more than just a flare. It's also odd that it took so long for this story to surface. Also, it's possible that the events took place in the reverse order - the UFO was seen to crash and that was what sparked the men to send up the flares. I don't know; it was a long time ago.

You know, when I started getting interested in this stuff, back in the early 1970s - things seemed a lot simpler.

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