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UFOs: Delusion or Dilemma

VARIOUS press, popular, and crackpot accounts of UFOs (unidentified flying objects, “flying saucers”) have ascribed their existence to aircraft, balloons, satellites, birds, meteors, marsh gas, quasi mystical or religious beliefs, malobservations, optical illusions, mass hysteria, hoaxes, hallucinations, or delusions. Despite the widespread interest in UFOs, little has appeared in the serious literature. Markowitz, a physicist,¹ recently reported in *Science* that UFOs “cannot be under extraterrestrial control if the laws of physics are valid.” He cited the U. S. Air Force UFO consultant, astrophysicist Allen Hynek’s² studies of “several hundred reports (in my files) which are fine brain teasers and could easily be made the subject of profitable discussion among physical and social scientists alike.” Although Markowitz alluded to Hynek’s opinion, “There is a tendency in the 20th-century to forget that there will be a 21st-century, and indeed a 30th-century, science, from which vantage point our knowledge of the universe may appear quite different,” he declared, “We, ourselves, look back on eras when many people believed in the existence of centaurs, mermaids, and fire-breathing dragons.”

The Air Force, beset for years by charges that it considered reports of UFOs to have a psychiatric, rather than an aerodynamic, basis, recently appointed and financed the distinguished physicist, Edmund U. Condon,³ as director of a no-strings UFO inquiry at the University of Colorado.

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For the most part, psychopathological or parapsy-

chological explanations for UFO phenomena are limited to those who are neither psychiatrists nor parapsychologists. An exception to this is Jung,⁴ who, in an article copyrighted in 1959, stated that, “the apparently physical nature of the UFOs create such insoluble puzzles for even the best brains, and on the other hand, has built up such an impressive legend, that one feels tempted to take them as a 99 percent psychic product and subject them accordingly to the usual psychological interpretation.” Jung compared beliefs in UFOs to a God image. He felt that UFO sightings were understandable when related to man’s eroded belief in God and his need for a redeeming supernatural event. “God in his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence is a totality symbol par excellence, something round, complete and perfect.” However, Jung later altered his position in a letter to the director of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). Shortly before his death in 1961, he wrote that UFOs appeared to be space ships.⁵

Benjamin Simon,⁶⁻⁷ a Boston psychiatrist, hypnotically treated an interracial couple who, among many other symptoms, had amnesia for an alleged harrowing two-hour experience aboard a UFO. While entranced, the couple related an encounter with humanoids aboard a UFO. Simon was less concerned with the objective existence of the UFO than with “the cumulative impact of past experiences and fantasies on their present experiences and responses.” In reference to the validity of the material produced, he stated that “hypnosis is a pathway to the truth as it is felt and understood by the patient. The truth is what he believes

to be the truth, and this may not be consonant with the ultimate nonpersonal truth.”

In twelve years of private psychiatric practice, the author, who has never personally seen a UFO, has not found them or related phenomena to be part of any derisive thinking for patients seen in consultation or psychotherapy. He has also confirmed this clinical impression by discussions with several colleagues in psychiatry. In four instances, however, patients revealed observations of possible UFOs at a great distance. In none of these cases was the patient’s psychopathology related to the alleged UFOs, which were also witnessed by other people. On informal inquiry to the executives of two of the largest commercial airlines, the writer obtained confirmation of reports by pilots who had observed UFOs. Their accounts were entirely similar to NICAP’s and other published reports.^{5,8,9}

It is the purpose of this report to give four accounts of people who had alleged first-hand experiences with UFOs and to relate them to their psychopathology and health. For each of the accounts the key participants were examined psychiatrically. In several instances other members of their families, friends, fellow employees, and attending physicians were also seen and questioned. Tape recordings were made of the descriptions and supplementary data were collected via telephone interviewing and correspondence. Hospital records were studied as described.

Case 1. Wanaque

The author, who had read newspaper accounts of UFO sightings in the Wanaque, New Jersey, area, drove there to investigate by interviewing the town physician, local police officer, two reservoir officers, and a town service station proprietor. They all suggested that he see Sergeant Benjamin Thompson of the Wanaque Reservoir Police Force.

Shortly afterward Sergeant Thompson was seen in his home and carefully studied in psychiatric examination. He was open, friendly, straightforward, and cooperative. Sergeant Thompson, a high school graduate, had been on the reservoir police force six years, and for twenty years previously he had been a security guard at an E. I. Dupont plant. Before that he had been in the U. S. Infantry, and in World War II had fought on the islands of Guam and Iwo Jima. The sergeant felt that he had been trained to observe things carefully—“Things and people. That’s what we work

with.” He was familiar with various types of aircraft. He denied use of hard liquor or unprescribed drugs and had no history for emotional or psychosomatic illness. Nor was there any history for sociopathic behavior, brain syndrome, cultural-religious, dissociative, conversion, or other psychopathological reactions that could account for his UFO experience. The Sergeant’s reputation for trustworthiness was confirmed on detailed questioning of some of his colleagues, a town police officer, a physician, and a garage proprietor.

Sergeant Thompson observed UFOs on four occasions. While on patrol car duty on the night of October 11, 1966, about 9:15 p.m., he received a radio message from a fellow police officer in a nearby community, reporting observation of a UFO. The sergeant drove to the area the UFO was approaching. In his own words: “It was diagonally 250 feet from me, out over the reservoir, as big as an automobile, or bigger. It was about 250 feet up in the air. When I got out of the police car, this thing was so bright that it blinded me so bad I couldn’t find the car. It was all white, like looking into a bulb and trying to see the socket, which you can’t do. I signed out of service [to the Ringwood Police] for twenty minutes because I couldn’t see . . . neither the fingers of my hands nor the lights on the jeep. I stood by the fence until it [vision] came back gradually. It made no sounds but left a heavy mist, as it went away: you could say it was a mist-like sort of fog. It really shook me up. When I got back into the car, switched on the red dome light and flasher, and then got out of the car and started walking toward it, it took off. It never made a sound. I would say I observed it about three minutes. I was totally blinded after the light. It took [away] my voice [no shouting] and I was hoarse for two weeks after that. I described the object as a basketball with a hole cut in it and a football set in it, so that maybe a quarter of the football was sticking out (see Figure 1). When it flew over the water, it could make a square turn. It could shoot straight up in the air—nothing like an airplane.”

On subsequent interview, nine months later, all the salient details were reviewed with Sergeant Thompson. His account was exactly as noted earlier, and his experience was confirmed upon interviewing three fellow officers. Sergeant Thompson recalled that although he did not see a physician at the approximate time of his experience, he has been in excellent general health since then. Neither he nor his colleagues have had

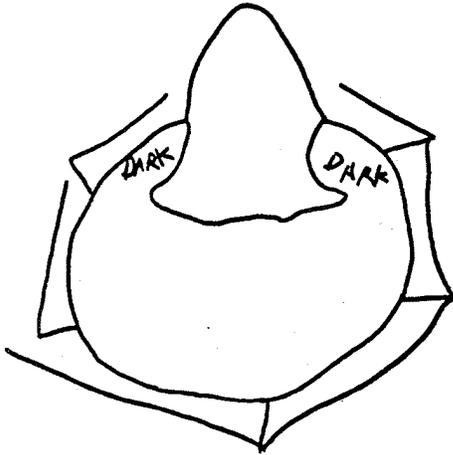


FIGURE 1 Facsimile of Sgt. Benjamin Thompson's drawing of UFO.

had any other close experience with a UFO since the one reported here.

In addition to a fellow police officer and the Sergeant, this UFO episode was also witnessed by a woman who was driving near the reservoir at that time. She told her husband, who contacted the police. All the data were recorded in the police files.

The local area police checked with the Air Force: no planes were reported in the region of Wanaque Reservoir at the time of the UFO sighting.

Lloyd Mallen,¹⁰ a well-known science writer, who had interviewed Sergeant Thompson, also attempted to determine if the overflights of many helicopters and high-performance aircraft within fifteen minutes of the UFO sighting were coincidental or were related to the UFO sighting. He checked with "U. S. Air Force officers in the Pentagon and at Project Blue Book; with officers of the U. S. Navy at Lakehurst, New Jersey; [and with] Floyd Bennett, New York, and Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, Naval Air Stations; with the Bureau of Safety of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), both at its Washington, D.C., headquarters and at its installation at JFK International Airport, New York; with the General Aviation District Office of the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) at Teterboro, New Jersey, Airport; and with the U. S. Coast Guard. The results of all (my) inquiries were negative."

Case 2. Split Rock

Jerry H. Simons, a twenty-two-year-old forester of Newfoundland, New Jersey, revealed that on Saturday

night, October 15, 1966, between 4:30 and 5:00 a.m., while camping and fishing at Split Rock Reservoir, in northern New Jersey, he had his first and only experience with a possible UFO. In an account, written the day after the experience, he stated: "I was traveling north on the road and noticed a very outstanding glow in the rear-view mirror. I thought at first that my brake light was stuck because it was a very dull glow at the time I first noticed it. I tried putting my foot under the brake pedal and pulling it up. It was at this point that I became aware of the orange-red glow becoming brighter. I did not know what to think. In fact, I don't think it entered my thoughts [that it was] anything really out of the ordinary.

"I stopped the car and lowered my window. I stuck my head out to get a clear view of the rear of my car. What I saw took me completely unawares and scared the living hell out of me. I've never been so startled in my life. It was something I could not understand. At first glance it seems to be nothing but a huge glowing light, but then I noticed a very distinct outline of what appeared to be some sort of a solid body (see Figure 2)."

"I was in doubt of my sanity for a few seconds. I couldn't accept what my eyes were seeing, but it only took a few seconds for all doubt to leave my mind and for me to understand that what I was seeing was very real. It was then that I decided to get out on the main road as fast as I could get my car over the cow path. The object was directly in back and above me and followed my car along the road. Then my car began to act abnormally. All at once the power started dying out. Then the worst thing that could have happened in my frame of mind happened. Without any warning, all the electrical equipment quit working. My headlights, dashlights and engine quit. I don't believe I have ever been so frustrated in all my life. I noticed that this object was directly over the top of my car. Then it fell back and I could go on. Three times this happened, and three times my car refused to give any electrical response until this object either moved to the rear or to one side of the car. When it was right over the top of the car, all I could do was to lock my doors and hope. I cannot, will not, try to explain what or why. I was still aware it was with me because of the glow in the trees and on the ground to the right and left of the car. The only time the glow was very distinctive in front of the car was when everything went dead and then it was all around me."

"When I got to the Charlottesville Road. I took a

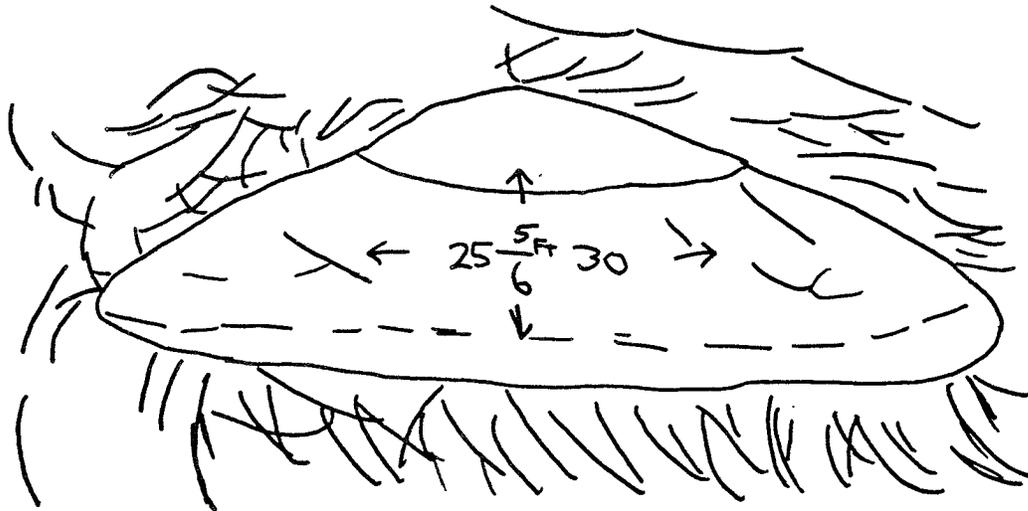


FIGURE 2 Facsimile of Jerry H. Simons' drawing of UFO made shortly after his experience. Note similarity of Sergeant Thompson's drawing in Figure 1.

split-second look, glancing up and behind me to see if it was still with me. Even though the glow was still to be seen on either side of the car, I had to be sure that the glow on the ground was not my imagination; and it wasn't. The last good look I got of it was just before reaching the dam, when it was so bright in my mirror. Now I could not see anything in the sky. I did not waste any time looking for it because I was already running toward the house."

Simons, who was working for a meteorologist at the Weather Bureau, Newark Airport, at the time of his experience at Split Rock Reservoir, drove to the home of Thomas P. Byrnes, Superintendent of the Newark Water Shed, Newfoundland, New Jersey. Upon interviewing Mr. Byrnes, who has been well known to the writer for several years, I found that he fully confirmed the forester's experience. Mr. Byrnes recalled how he contacted the West Milford, New Jersey, police, and together with Simons they all drove to the site of the UFO experience. Nothing out of the ordinary was observed. Byrnes said, "He [Simons] woke my wife and was terribly excited, almost white." Further questioning of several of the forester's friends, fellow employees, and local police officers also confirmed Simon's experience and reputation for truthfulness.

The West Milford Township Police report by Officers A. Hooper and V. Meyer at 5:54 a.m., October 15, 1966, further confirmed Simon's account in all details.

In his original notes Simons had sketched the

alleged UFO as being an estimated 25x30 feet, and at tree height. The object made no noise, and there was no odor or other sensation. He estimated that the auto motor was unresponsive for less than a minute, and then when the lights came back on he started the engine again. Although in all the excitement the total time of exposure was not noted, a conservative estimate, based on driving this rocky wood road during optimal daylight conditions, would be at least ten to fifteen minutes.

Simons parked his car at the Reservoir Office and went inside. But when he came out again, he and the man on duty, Martin Shauger, were startled to find that the car had apparently started spontaneously even though Simons thought the ignition key was in the off position. He switched the key back and forth between off and on, and the motor stopped. He later examined the motor and electrical system and found no explanation. A few weeks afterward, while Simons was driving his car, the motor exploded and was never right afterward. Simons, who had been a champion stock car racer and former employee of General Motors, was mystified.

A study of the forester's past life, gleaned in several interviews lasting many hours, led me to believe that he had never had any previous experience like this. He had never had any emotional illness. Although he tried to enlist in the U. S. Navy, he was not accepted because of a history of duodenal ulcer. He had formerly been an Eagle Scout (Troop 8, Kingsport, Tennessee). He was an experienced out-doorsman who had camped in many

of the states of the United States for some years. He was a high school graduate and had had two additional years of industrial arts. Simons did not use drugs and although he had used beer in the past, he had not taken any at the time of his experience.

Review of the *Newark Evening News* files revealed three different sightings of UFOs in the vicinity of Split Rock Reservoir on October 15, 1966. The West Milford Police files for October 14, 15, and 16, 1966, yielded no UFO reports other than the Simons' experience. An interview with the meteorologist who was formerly Simons' employer revealed that Simons mentioned the UFO experience shortly after it happened, and that although he was in good health at the time of the experience, he became ill, as described, shortly afterward.

Three months after the UFO incident (January 17, 1967), Simons was admitted to Montclair Community Hospital for a "fascinating" illness of three months duration, characterized by fatigue, anorexia, generalized soreness, and weakness of the muscles, drowsiness, chills for three or four days, and a weight loss of thirty-five pounds. The symptoms had developed shortly after the UFO experience, and at that time the acute phase had lasted three to four days. A physician diagnosed the illness as "flu." However, the acute symptoms recurred every month (three attacks) until he was hospitalized, as noted above.

Although Simons told a second physician about his UFO experience, his statement was not recorded in the hospital charts. Instead, his illness was connected to an experience which occurred a month before the UFO episode and lasted an estimated several hours over a period of one week. This experience involved cleaning a room that had been occupied by cats. At the time, five other people, in addition to Simons, were bitten, were scratched, and had contact with cat feces. DDT was sprayed in an enclosed area. Questioning of the other people who were exposed revealed that no one, including Simons, developed any difficulty. It can be supposed that Simons was in excellent health because of his roughing it while camping out and fishing during the night and early morning of October 15, 1966—the time of his UFO experience. Furthermore, a pre-employment physical examination on September 19, 1966 (after exposure to cats and before the UFO episode) revealed no mention of any recent illness. In fact, Simons was listed as having good physical health.

After "recovering" from his illness of three to four day's duration, Simons returned to work for six weeks. However, the recurrence of the soreness and weakness of his muscles and drowsiness necessitated hospitalization, and he was seen by his own physician and in consultation by a neurologist.

Physical examination revealed a young man who appeared chronically ill and who had "diffuse, moderate muscle weakness, more marked proximally and associated with cramps on contraction, and contraction fasciculations." A posterior-anterior chest X-ray revealed no pathology. Laboratory studies revealed no abnormalities. These included: hemoglobin 15.2 Gms./100 ml.; hematocrit 45%; white blood cell count of 8,500/cu. mm. with 51% neutrophils and 49% lymphocytes; erythrocyte sedimentation rate of 3 mm./hr.; LE clot test, negative; two urinalyses, negative. There was no evidence for myoglobinuria. The serum electrolyte concentrations were normal (sodium, 145 mEq/L, chlorides 107 mEq/L, carbon dioxide content, 29.8 mEq/L, calcium 5 mEq/L). The protein bound iodine was 3.3 microgm/100 ml; the serum bilirubin 0.6 mgs. %; 2 hr. postprandial blood glucose 110 mgs. %; serum alkaline phosphatase 2.5 B. U., thymol turbidity 2.0 U./100 ml.; and the blood urea nitrogen 8.4 mgs. %. The cerebrospinal fluid cell count was 2/cu. mm.; chloride, 122 mEq/L %; glucose, 73 mgs. %; colloidal gold curve negative; protein, 45 mgs. %; and culture showed no growth. The VDRL was non-reactive; lactic dehydrogenase 580 U, and the serum glutamic oxalacetic transaminase (SGOT) was 16KU, and serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase (SGPT) 16 U./ml.

Biopsy of three pieces of tissue from the biceps muscle, saphenous vein, and subcutaneous tissue, revealed no pathology. The patient had a provisional diagnosis of "diffuse inflammatory disease of muscle." Because of the bizarre nature of his illness and the difficulty in relating his experiences with DDT and the cats, arrangements were made for his admission to the National Institute of Health for special study. He chose not to go. Gradually, over a period of several months, he made a complete recovery.

Although the family physician knew of the reputed UFO experience, he did not mention it to the neurologist. When the latter was told about it by the writer months later, he vividly recalled the salient details of Simons' illness as later corroborated in the hospital records, and then asked the writer (a

psychiatrist), “Is he (Simons) schizophrenic?”

An electroencephalogram of the forester taken six months after hospitalization was normal. He had a good work record and was well thought of by his associates. Retrospectively, his bizarre illness did not conform to any readily identifiable pattern, including various psychosomatic reactions.

Although there is not sufficient supporting data, it is conceivable that Simons’ overwhelming fear, associated with the strangeness of his UFO experience, could have precipitated a response similar to what is seen, in animal hypnosis. Pavlov’s statement might be germane: “Little has been done toward the elucidation of the class of negative or inhibitory reflexes (instincts) which are evoked by any strong stimulus or even weak stimuli if unusual. Animal hypnosis, so-called, belong to this category.”¹¹

Case 3. Towanda

Earlier correspondence with Robert W. Martz, a 73-year-old retired Monroeton, Pennsylvania, electrical contractor was followed by a later psychiatric interview in his home. From this is was established that at 8:15 p.m. on April 25, 1966, while driving with a friend, Charles Dayton, he noticed a “very awesome, huge, flaming body, which lit up a large area, visible for a few seconds. It had a red flame with a green and yellow tail. Then the second view was of a dark object. The huge flames went out like turning off an electric bulb for a few seconds. There was a dim light in four portholes, and then all darkness. It looked like it was 250 feet in front of us and 250 feet up, and it could go at a terrific speed. It was about 25 feet in length and had a tail 35 feet long (see Figure 3).

The contractor did not detect any odor, but he recalled how warm he felt. He noted that the automobile engine stalled and the lights went out. He soon started the engine again. “I never saw such a sight. I was

amazed and flabbergasted.” He and his friend were concerned that the object would crash into the side of the mountain.

Messrs. Martz and Dayton are leading citizens in their community. The author has known Mr. Martz’ daughter, Mrs. Evelyn Guldner, for ten years. She is a medical secretary and electroencephalographic technician. The contractor, who was celebrating his golden wedding anniversary at the time of this writing, has never had any emotional illness. He and his friend do not use liquor or unprescribed drugs. There was nothing in the contractor’s history or behavior since the event to suggest dereistic thinking, sociopathic behavior, brain syndrome, and the like. It was interesting that the contractor had kept a daily weather log for the past twelve years in which he rarely mentioned any thing else other than such data. However, on the date of the UFO experience he wrote in the log about the event. Written confirmation was offered by the *Daily Review of Towanda*, Pennsylvania, April 26, 1966, which had an article headlined, “Thousands Awed by Fiery Object Seen in Eastern Sky.”

Case 4. Presque Isle

Shortly after dusk, Sunday, July 31, 1966, a hot clear day, four people and two infants drove to Beach Six at Presque Isle Peninsula Park, north of Erie, Pennsylvania, for a picnic. Their car stuck in the sand, and, one of them, Gerald La Belle, age twenty-six, went to Erie to seek help from friends. At 10:00 p.m., while on a routine check, Patrolmen Robert Loeb, Jr., and Ralph E. Clark noted the mired auto and told the occupants they would return in a half hour to make sure the car had been freed. When the officers swung back at 10:30 p.m., they noticed that La Belle had not yet returned and they were told by Douglas J. Tibbetts, age eighteen, “There’s something weird going on here.”

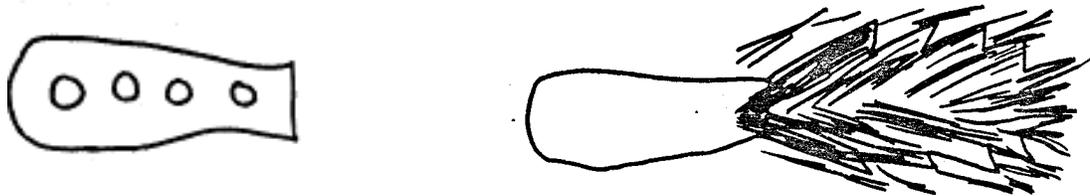


FIGURE 3 Facsimile of Robert W. Martz’s drawing of UFO. The first view (a) was “visible for a second—very awesome—a huge flaming body which lit up a large area (red flame, green and yellow tail).” The second view (b) was a “dark object—huge flames went out like turning off a light bulb, a few seconds, then all darkness (dim light in ports).”

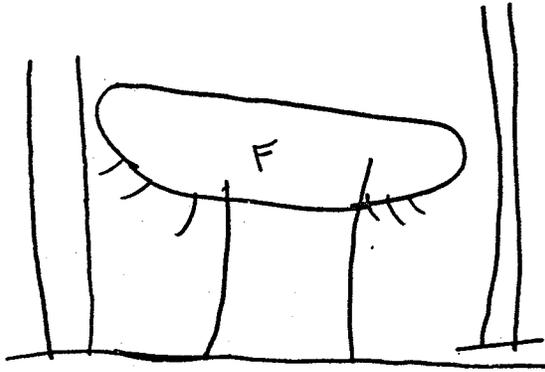


FIGURE 4 Facsimile of Betty Klem's drawing of UFO on the ground as drawn, shortly after her experience, for (Erie) *Morning News* reporters.

While the occupants were in the car, shortly after 10:00 p.m., they had suddenly seen a bright light shoot out of the skies from the north and land near Beach Seven, about 300 yards from their car. Tibbetts remembered the craft when it was "...hovering above the ground several hundred yards from the auto" (see Figure 5). Betty Jean Klem, age sixteen, remembered the craft while it was on the ground. She described it as "mushroom-shaped with a narrow base rising to an oval structure having three lights on the back" (see Figure 4).

Later Miss Klem and Tibbetts drew pictures for the *Morning News* reporters of what they had seen earlier in the evening. Tibbetts' picture resembled a photograph of a UFO over a Lawrence County farm, unknowingly made by Joseph Yost, a New Castle, Pennsylvania, photographer for the *New Castle News*. When asked whether there had been any noise, Miss Klem said, "It sounded like the noise in a telephone receiver, only louder of course. At first we couldn't believe it. We weren't scared at first. I kept saying, 'Doug, do you see it?' He said, 'Yes.' Then he would ask me if I saw it. We just couldn't believe it was really happening."

Miss Klem continued, "The ship was big. It came half way up between those trees, and when it came down and landed the car vibrated. We had the radio on....No, it didn't make any interference on the radio....Rays of light shone from the object. It lit up the whole woods along its path. It wasn't like a searchlight. There was light along the ground, along its whole path. When the police car came up to the stuck vehicle, the UFO lights went out."

The patrolmen and Tibbetts set out for the UFO, but after going only about 300 yards they heard the stranded

car's auto horn blaring frantically. Miss Klem, who was sitting in the driver's seat, and Mrs. Anita Haifley, age twenty-two, who was in the back seat with her two children, Sandra two years old and Sara six months old, were terrified. Miss Klem was "hysterical," shaking and crying. She said she had seen, "a dark, apparently featureless creature, not human, maybe animal, which moved sluggishly back into the bush." She leaned on the horn, having been frightened by the creature. Mrs. Haifley, according to what she told La Belle, the police, and a NICAP committee, also saw the creature. Terror-stricken, she threw her children from the seat to the floor of the car and huddled over them.

Miss Klem estimated the creature was in sight from one and one-half to two minutes. She sketched the "tall thing" (see Figure 6.) She recalled how it had no neck and no arms. She estimated the creature's height to be more than six feet. Before seeing the monster, they heard scratching noise on the roof of the car. Neither she nor the other occupants got out of the car, and all the windows were closed except the front side vents.

When the group were taken to the Administration Building, Patrolman Canfield noted that Miss Klem's "...forehead was covered with perspiration and her bangs were naturally stuck to her brow. I never saw anybody so scared." Mrs. Haifley and her two children were so disturbed that they were put in the first aid room.

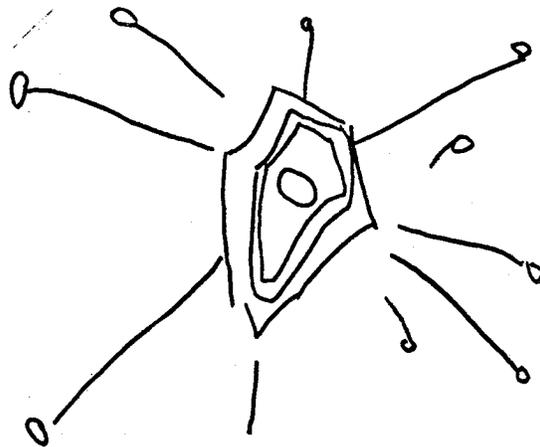


FIGURE 5 Facsimile of Douglas Tibbetts' drawing of UFO as he recalled seeing it hovering above the ground, several hundred yards from where the auto was struck in soft sand. This drawing was also made shortly after the experience, for (Erie) *Morning News* reporters.

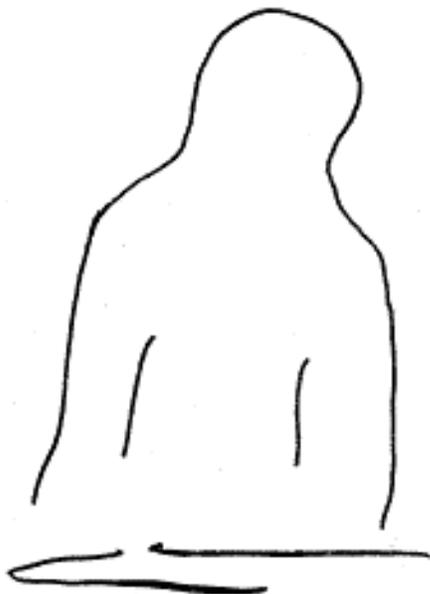


FIGURE 6 Facsimile of the “creature” as drawn by eyewitness Betty Klem for (Erie) *Morning News* reporters. “She described the creature as being upright, gorilla-shaped, about six feet tall, dark, and featureless.”

Shortly after the episode, Miss Klem was seen and questioned by Park Police Chief Dan Dascanio and Lane Pinteá, Editor of the (Erie) *Morning News*. The Chief said, “I’m convinced that the young people saw something. The girl was a credible person. Of the two individuals involved she was the most specific about what she saw—she made no attempt to fill in her story when she wasn’t sure. She was one scared girl when I first saw her. Her hands were shaking, her face was trembling, her speech was more inarticulate, and she had difficulty maintaining her composure. Her eyes were red and she kept shaking her head from side to side.”

Mr. Pinteá wrote in the Erie Morning News, “Since we saw the condition of one of the witnesses [Betty Jean Klem] within an hour after the hair lifting sighting, and talked with her for almost an hour, we have little doubt that the young lady saw things that night.” The party was later interviewed by Air Force Major William S. Hall, of Youngstown, Ohio, and members of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP).

Study of Police Chief Dascanio’s records for that day revealed that many other people, including a physician, had independently seen a strange aerial object and lights that evening. A check of the Port Erie International

Airport and of the Coast Guard revealed that no craft had been in the area at the time of the experience. There were no bears or other animals in the park (or at other times in recent years) large enough to cause the reported effects.

Miss Klem, Mrs. Haifley, and the latter’s two children remained at the Administration Building until 3:00 a.m. Monday, when they were picked up by friends and taken home. Tibbetts spent the night, and later in the morning he was brought to Hamot Hospital in Erie. Hospital records show he had “inflammation of the throat” and a slightly elevated temperature. He was treated and released within one hour of admission. The only possible sequelae for the remaining occupants, according to La Belle, consisted of recurrent nightmares for Mrs. Haifley that lasted for many weeks. She was, perhaps understandably, reluctant to discuss her experience, and it was impossible to contact her (in 1968) for psychiatric interviews.

Two and a half weeks after the UFO experience when Miss Klem returned with La Belle to the site of the episode, she had sudden diffuse abdominal cramps, which were relieved shortly after she left the park. She had nothing exactly like this previously or since.

At approximately 7:00 a.m. the day after the UFO experience, Patrolmen Paul H. Wilson and J. Robert Canfield went to the area where the craft had supposedly landed and discovered, “strange markings in the sand....[two] triangularly shaped [impressions] about eight inches deep at the apex and then sloping upward to an area that was round and smooth. The lines of the impression were ‘very distinctly made.’ Going from there, moving toward where the car was stuck in the sand, the patrolmen found three other imprints. . . .These latter imprints formed a perfect triangle. From where the first two imprints were found leading to within two feet of where the car was stuck, a pattern of conically shaped imprints was found. These imprints were also very sharply made and were about nine inches in diameter and six inches deep, leading to the bottom of the cone-shaped impressions. They were staggered as if made by a walking creature. The patrolmen said the imprints were five to six feet apart. Later in the day, the same imprints were found leading to the water of the lake. The patrolmen were particularly intrigued by the markings on the imprints which appeared to be made by claws.”

The State Police took plaster casts of the imprints,

which formed a perfect triangle and of the “claw marks.” All the information about the imprints was confirmed by review of Chief Dan Dascanio’s records, as well as by interviews on January 6, 1968, of Chief Dascanio, Patrolman Albert J. Gagnon, Gerald La Belle, and a teenager who was living at the Presque Isle Lighthouse at the time of the reputed UFO experience.

An unidentified clear liquid substance found near the indentations, which was collected in five specimen bottles, was sent for analysis. The fluid was clear, colorless, and compared by Chief Dascanio to “silicone.” Unlike water, soft drinks, and so forth, which quickly seep through the sand with little or no residue, the liquid spots lasted for several hours. Studies by Erie County Civil Defense workers revealed “no radioactivity from the area of the indentations in the sand or where the drippings were found or the samples gathered by the Park Police.”

However, Patrolman Albert J. Gagnon, who photographed the impressions and gathered the liquid samples at approximately 8:30 a.m., became suddenly and unexpectedly ill at home later (about 6:00 p.m.). His temperature rose to 102.6 at 8:30 p.m., according to his wife, a registered nurse. Gagnon took 10 gr. aspirin, and the fever and generalized malaise subsided within three hours. He had no previous or subsequent illness exactly like this. He was not exposed to anyone with a fever or recent history for influenza. He was in excellent condition before this sudden illness. He did not connect his possible illness to the “contamination” from the fluid samples until he was questioned (January 6, 1968).

A large, freshly gouged area of wood and bark (exact dimensions not recorded) was noted in the willow tree close to the picnic table. The bark was not found on the ground. The gouged area was recalled by La Belle and Patrolman Gagnon. It was also mentioned in the original NICAP records. A study of the area on January 6, 1968, revealed that the tree had been cut down and removed. This was apparently not the case with other trees in this immediate area.

The roof of Tibbetts’ car was alleged to have a dent on the right side. La Belle recalled that he helped Tibbetts wash and wax the car that afternoon before the UFO episode, and that there was no dent at that time.

On January 5 and 6, 1968, Miss Klem and La Belle were examined psychiatrically. Their accounts of the events and specific chronology were entirely similar to the many published reports and other records in Chief

Dascanio’s files. Miss Klem and La Belle, before the Presque Isle episode, had been “non-believers in UFOs,” and neither of them had read more in the popular press than perhaps the average person. La Belle recalled how he might have observed a widely reported possible UFO on September 7, 1965 [*Post Journal* (Jamestown, N. Y.): ‘Something’ in Sky Causes Furor; Believed Meteor.] Interrogation of three of Miss Klem’s friends of several years’ standing, as well as her husband [she was married in 1967], supported her reputation for truthfulness. Miss Klem seemed to be of above average intelligence.

She answered questions in a straightforward, open way. She appeared to be healthy, her only defect being myopia, which was completely corrected with glasses. [She was wearing glasses at the time of the episode.] Although her family background had emotionally disruptive experiences, she herself had never suffered from any emotional, psychosomatic, or other serious disabling illness. There was no evidence for any past or present dereistic phenomena, sociopathic behavior, or neurotic character traits. In the presence of her husband, she was quickly induced into a hypnotic trance, and the salient details of the alleged UFO experience were fully confirmed. There were never any variations in her account.

Although not directly involved in the episode, La Belle, in some popular accounts of the UFO episode, was reputedly part of a fantastic hoax. However, it seems he was no where near the site of the alleged activity when everything happened at Presque Isle. At that time he was in Erie, getting a friend to bring him back to the park and help tow the stranded car. He had no past emotional illness or penchant for pranks. He appeared to be an open, straightforward, if not rather serious, person. He supported the accounts of the others, and study of all the circumstances made the hypothesis for fraud seem most unlikely.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview Tibbetts and Mrs. Haifley. Their comments, however, as published in the *Morning News* and recorded in Chief Dan Dascanio’s official records were entirely compatible with the other data furnished by Miss Klem and La Belle.

Miss Klem and La Belle recalled the social consequences of reporting their experiences, such as often derogatory implications of their lying or imagining things. Although the interpretation of various

reported facts is admittedly scientifically unsatisfactory and incomplete, it would seem that the group's experience was so unique and amply documented that despite the shortcomings it deserved study. It should be stressed that highly trained and experienced observers, such as Chief Dascanio and his patrolmen and Lane Pinteau and his staff of the *Morning News*, carefully recorded all the data almost immediately after the UFO episode. All these circumstances make a hoax or fabrication very unlikely indeed.

The presence or absence of coexistent psychopathology is secondary to the purpose of this study in answering the question: Is it likely that the group had an objective, reality-bound, close experience with a UFO? Psychiatric evaluation suggests an affirmative answer.*

Comment and Summary

Although the objective reality of the alleged UFO accounts can neither be proved nor disproved, the data are entirely similar to many published experiences and seem to be authentic. The behavior of the participants during psychiatric studies was consonant with truthfulness for the reported experiences. While psychopathology in one sphere does not a priori invalidate one's ability to report data accurately in other areas, it should be stressed that, unlike Simon's patients, in none of these examples was there any clinical evidence for current or past emotional illness or excessive fantasizing. Furthermore, the participants in each example were fully conscious of what was happening and they recalled their experiences in a wakeful, alert state. There was no history for lying, dissociative reactions or possible drug effects. In the absence of permissiveness for lying in the history of the subject, or other members of his family, lying or unconscious fabrication becomes quite unlikely.¹² There was nothing intrinsic about these possible UFO experiences, or in the histories of the participants, that suggested parapsychological aspects, such as purported telepathic communications, and so forth. Similarly, nothing in the

study of the participants or their families suggested any unusual symbolical, mystical, or religious explanation.

The veracity of the UFO accounts is further supported because the participants did not seek notoriety from their experiences. Quite to the contrary, most were reticent about relating their experiences because of the fear of publicity and ridicule.

The objective reality of the UFO participants' reports of their unusual, traumatic experiences is also supported indirectly from clinical studies on various emotional illnesses. In his earliest researches on hysteria, Freud¹³ discovered accounts of previous traumas. Although he originally believed his patients' accounts of the traumas, he later abandoned this position in favor of the theory that the supposed past traumas were not objective facts but in the realm of fantasy and wish-fulfillment. However, Freud's earlier viewpoint of *actual* trauma was subscribed to by Ferenczi¹⁴ in an address given in 1932 (not published until 1949). Ferenczi's opinion that actual traumas took place as described was based on transference and counter-transference reactions with patients in therapy, rather than actual study of parent and child.

The Mayo Clinic¹⁵⁻¹⁷ collaborative investigations of whole families by a team of highly skilled physicians has provided a major breakthrough to the question of trauma, fact versus fantasy. These up-to-date studies seem applicable to the problem of validity for the UFO experiences. For example, one such study of ninety-one patients and the relatives revealed that the majority of schizophrenic patients had actual traumatic assaults by parents or parental surrogates. It was clearly demonstrated how the first schizophrenic delusion represented in "a striking, specific manner the essence of a parental assault." By analogy and comparison to the first schizophrenic delusions, the UFO experiences of the healthy subjects—those who did not suffer from gross psychopathological distortions—take on even greater significance for objective reality. Fantasy and delusion versus objective reality is a complicated process, but for the skilled therapist experienced in collaborative psychotherapy dealing with both parent and child it is entirely possible to separate fact from fantasy. In a healthy person the task is that much easier. Therefore in the absence of psychodynamic motivation for conscious or unconscious fabrication it seems reasonable that the four UFO examples are factual and objectively accurate. The problem is the interpretation.

* Unfortunately, limitations of space preclude a more comprehensive presentation of the material at this time. The official Air Force release of the "evaluation on the sighting of 31 July, 1966" consisted of five paragraphs that were, in the writer's opinion, insufficient for a scientific dialogue.

Although more UFO encounter data would be desirable, there is sufficient material for some speculation. For example, attention might be directed to various physical, physiological, and psychic effects, such as (1) the temporary blindness and hoarseness in Case Wanaque, (2), the development of severe muscular weakness and wasting in Case Split Rock, (3), the sensation of heat in Case Towanda, and (4) panic reactions following an encounter with an alleged "monster" in Case Presque Isle.

It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the extraterrestrial hypothesis for UFOs, possibilities of electromagnetic effects, and the significance of a possible contactee encounter as in Case Presque Isle. Intriguing questions might be raised about the strange triangular impressions or "claw marks," and the fluid. All these points raise questions better left to the experts in other areas. For example, the biologist Ivan T. Sanderson, who has studied UFOs since 1929, has compiled some provocative data and has made some brilliant speculations that could be of particular interest to physicians.¹⁸

Although many other eminent UFO authorities, both pro and con, could be quoted, we cite only Professor Hermann Oberth,¹⁹ "Father of Astronautics," who was originally trained as a physician and began his career "in a military hospital for three years, where [he] also had the care of mentally ill patients." On many occasions Professor Oberth stated his conviction that UFOs are piloted by superintelligent beings from another planet.

The data of firsthand UFO experiences should have practical value and interest to the physician who by training is in a unique position to make contributions to this problem. He is often the first to hear of such reports and is in a position to obtain all the facts and assess the human biological effects. While it is evident that the physician will undoubtedly come across some crackpot and irresponsible accounts, as a practitioner of an ancient art and science he should scrupulously avoid ridicule and keep an open mind lest he unwittingly discourage significant reports from those who might have had valid experiences, and thus inflict damage on them. A condemnatory attitude is as scientifically reprehensible as a gullible one. "We can see now, that in years past, patients were lost or driven into psychosis by our failure to believe them because of our conviction that much of their account must be fantasy."¹⁵

Four examples of allegedly close contact with UFOs are presented. Possible physical, physiological, and psychic reactions are explored. The question of the validity of the data, and the evaluation of psychodynamic factors operating in fact versus fantasy, is discussed.

It is felt that the objective details of the reported UFO experiences are essentially real, and neither fantasized nor derisive. By his training the physician is well suited for the task of interviewing and obtaining data from persons who might have had UFO experiences. Some of the medical implications of this challenging data are discussed.

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