
UFO PHOTOGRAPHS: PORTRAITS OF A MYTH?

Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos



INTRODUCTION

- The reason of my being here today is to present you an international research project, **FOTOCAT**. This is the acronym for “catalogue of UFO photographs”, and by this I mean pictures, films and videos of unidentified flying objects.



Why a catalogue of UFO evidence?

- The development of entity catalogues is part of the initial scientific method. Naturalists and other scientists have been doing so for centuries, after collecting samples of new creatures, specimen, processes, objects or phenomena.
- This phenomenon is universally recognized as an enigma. Any first step before a final analysis is planned is to list and tally and give a measure of organization to present-day disorganized data. This is what I plan to accomplish with **FOTOCAT**.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

- Let me first tell you that I started the study of UFO reports back in 1965, long time ago indeed.
- I must admit that when I was young I felt a sort of fatal attraction to UFO pictures.



- I now realize it was not because I believed flying saucers were spacecraft from another worlds. This was a belief I really never had. I perceived it more like a form of art. It is their iconography, their aesthetics that seduced me.
- In plain words, I just liked the images of this unrecognized aeronautics.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

- However, my research objectives and interests during all these 40+ years took me to areas different to UFO photography.
- I have produced work on the analysis of UFO landing reports, made papers on methodology, scientific bibliography resources, and lots of articles on field investigation and case studies.
- Finally, from 1990 to 2000, I was deeply involved in the official process by which the Spanish air force declassified its UFO archives. It was very much prompted by my personal actions, and since I became an informal consultant to the intelligence command dealing with this process.



OBJECTIVES OF FOTOCAT



- In the course of all these years, as a result of my learning, study and documentation process, my own investigations and my relationship with colleagues, an important file of UFO photographs was being created.
- Then, in year 2000 I decided to launch the **FOTOCAT Project**
- The basic objectives of this research program are the following:
 - ❑ Integrate into a single databank all photographic UFO reports published in the mainstream UFO journals and books
 - ❑ Collect actual photographic materials from donating sources, to ensure its preservation and organization for future public consultation
 - ❑ Compile a catalogue of events
 - ❑ Achieve a realistic view of the dynamics of the UFO phenomenon through the reported images achieved

OBJECTIVES OF FOTOCAT

- **Finally, make this freely available to all researchers through the internet**
- By doing so this program is aimed to:
 - Assist in the statistical study of the UFO phenomenon
 - Become a tool to facilitate case re-inquiry
 - Promote the scientific analysis of UFO images
 - Stimulate the recovery and preservation of archives in danger of abandon, dispersion or loss



WHAT IS FOTOCAT?

- **FOTOCAT** is a database of reports. Actually, it is an Excel spreadsheet with 23 columns filled with data. This is an example of the standard catalogue structure:

FOTOCAT: WORLDWIDE CATALOG OF UFO PHOTOGRAPHY © Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos (Fundación Anomalía)														
Type	Format Available					Date		Aprox		Time	Description	OK	Location (Country)	
A	M	D	F	V	d	C	Day/Mo/Yr	Y	M					D
							01/01/1960	Y	M	D	Night	Lens flare	OK	Moscow (Russia)
							01/01/1960	Y	M	D	Day	OVNI		Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires (Argentina)
							21/01/1960					Missile	OK	22.06N, 179.49E, Pacific Ocean
							01/02/1960		M	D		Non-event	OK	Irkutsk, Baikal Lake (Russia)
							02/02/1960					Fake, humanoid	OK	San Andrés de Giles, Buenos Aires (Argentina)
							13/02/1960					Developing flaw	OK	Grand Blanc, Michigan
							22/02/1960					Astronomical, <i>Spica</i>	OK	Alexandria, Louisiana
			F				02/03/1960					Fake	OK	Leibnitz (Austria)
							04/03/1960					OVNI		Dubuque, Iowa
							06/03/1960					OVNI		Norrtälje (Sweden)
							09/04/1960					Film flaw	OK	Arcata, California
							10/04/1960					OVNI		Le Boulou (France)
							11/04/1960					Film specks/Aircraft	OK	Hazel Green, Wisconsin
							21/04/1960					Reflection in window	OK	Bahía de Guantánamo (Cuba)
							25/04/1960					OVNI		Shelby, Montana
							01/05/1960			D		Fake	OK	Decatur, Illinois
							06/05/1960					Fake	OK	Seattle, Washington
							08/05/1960				11,30	OVNI		Izu-Oshima Island (Japan)
							04/06/1960					Lens aberration	OK	Leadville, Colorado
							07/06/1960					OVNI		Union City, Indiana
							07/06/1960					Meteor	OK	Champaign, Illinois
							07/06/1960					Lens aberration	OK	Sault Ste Marie, Ontario (Canada)
							26/06/1960					Aircraft	OK	20 Miles South of Battle Creek, Michigan
			D				01/07/1960			D		OVNI		Brawley, California
							02/07/1960				22,20	OVNI		Osaka (Japan)
			D	F		d	03/07/1960				16,30	OVNI		Yacanto, Córdoba (Argentina)
							17/07/1960					OVNI		Edwards Air Force Base, California
							01/08/1960			D		OVNI		Alps (Switzerland)
							01/08/1960			D		Cloud	OK	Wales (UK)
							03/08/1960					Fake	OK	Linz (Austria)

- Every line in the catalogue develops along 3 pages. The first 7 cols are used for housekeeping codes, or they contain information only relevant to the Spanish section of the compilation.
- The following columns in page #1 cover the date, the time, the description of the sighting (either “UFO” or the explanation, when there is one), as well as the location, this is, the town and country.

WHAT IS FOTOCAT?

Nation Code	Province State, Region Department	Photo Film Video	Photographer/Cameraperson	Media (for professionals)	(***) Duration (secs)	Special Photo Features	Blue Book Files
CAN	BC	PHOTO				Weather automat. camera	
KOR		PHOTO	Yonhap News				
USA	NM	PHOTO	Dennis Bossack				
USA	NH	VIDEO	Paul Spera				
USA	NH	VIDEO	Paul Spera				
BRA	SP	PHOTO	Luiz Fernando Cabral e Cunha				
USA	OH	PHOTO	Michael Franklin			automatic camera	
ARG	SAL	VIDEO					
NOR	16	VIDEO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio		> 3		
NOR	16	VIDEO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio				
USA	MN	PHOTO					
USA	NM	PHOTO	Joe Martz				
NOR	16	VIDEO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio		> 30		
NOR	16	VIDEO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio		> 6		
NOR	16	PHOTO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio		300		
NOR	16	VIDEO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio		> 9		
NOR	16	VIDEO	Massimiliano Di Giuseppe/Romano Serra/Ferruccio		> 2		
USA	OK	PHOTO					
ARG	JUJ	VIDEO	Alfredo Ghilanda	Canal América 2			
USA	UT	VIDEO	Greg Smith				
DEU		VIDEO	Werner Walter				
MEX	GTO	VIDEO	Francisco Espitia Piña				
USA	LA	PHOTO					
GBR		VIDEO	Steve Musson				
ESP	21	VIDEO	Antonio L. Perejón Rodríguez				
BHR		VIDEO	Mohammed Jaffer Al Hajer				
COL		VIDEO					
CAN	QB	PHOTO	Serge Lapointe			unseen by photographer	
CHN		PHOTO		Xinhua News Agency			
SYC		PHOTO	Dario				
USA	MT	VIDEO	Nick LaFave	KTVM-NBC			
CAN		PHOTO					
USA	WI	VIDEO					
ITA	PG	PHOTO	Mario XXXX				
USA	CA	VIDEO	R. David Anderson				
USA	CA	VIDEO	R. David Anderson				
CHL	V	VIDEO	Victor Vial Terán (AION)				
USA	NY	PHOTO					
NLD		PHOTO				unseen by photographer	
USA	OH	VIDEO	Bob Ridener				
USA	AK	PHOTO	Mike C.				
ARG	CF	VIDEO	Ricardo D'Angelo				

- In page #2 there are columns to record the nation's code, the province, region or state codes, the format of the existing document (either picture, cine movie or video), as well as the full name of the photographer or cameraperson.
- Other data columns include the duration of the event, the media associated to photographers, any singular information like automatic camera, unseen phenomenon, spectra, stereo pics, radar echo, infrared film, etc.
- Another column indicates if the case was filed by the US Air Force's Blue Book Project.

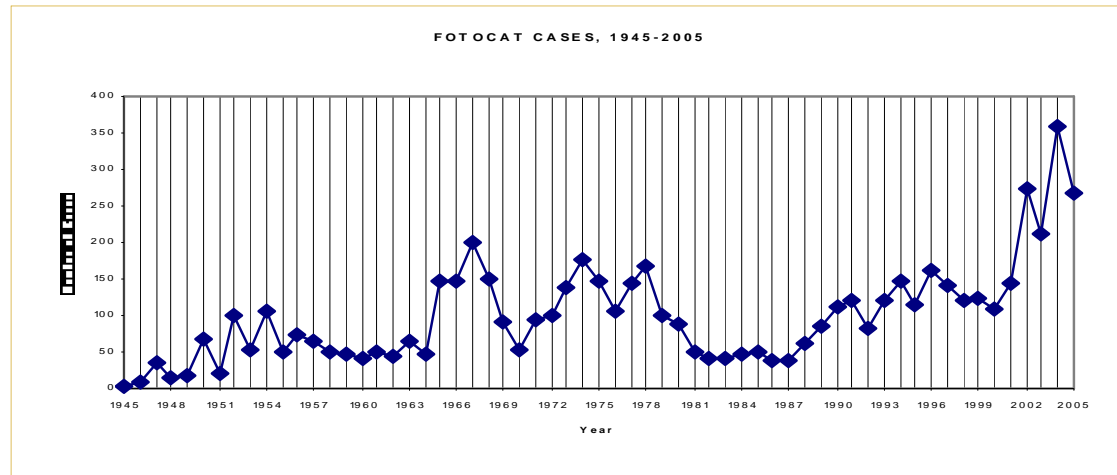
WHAT IS FOTOCAT?

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- Finally, last column of page #3 collects all references, sources and existing bibliography to document the events.
- Basically, **FOTOCAT** is a catalogue of references; it is not a gallery of photographs.
- Pictures are in our files but **FOTOCAT** is a database where basic information is available to any students of this subject.

WHAT IS FOTOCAT? PERSPECTIVES

- To date, **FOTOCAT** logs over 8,500 cases worldwide. By far, it is the largest international catalogue in its class. And it is expanding at a very fast rate, with input from many well-established researchers from all parts of the world.
- Generally, the catalogue collects cases where a picture, film or video has been obtained up to the closing date of December 31, 2005.
- Target is to arrive to the magical figure of 10,000 entries, and then stop to concentrate in completing missing data in the spreadsheet columns, in order to perform a general analysis in some detail.
- In the meantime, yearly or national studies have been done (for example, the analysis of events of year 1954, or the 1965 cases in Argentina). Others are under way (for example, the analysis of events in year 1947, or the cases in Norway). And many others are planned (Finland, Chile, Italy, etc).
- Such a huge database can and will be expanded. This will allow us to generate many regional research papers with a level unprecedented detail.



HOW EVERYTHING STARTED

- Everybody knows that the name ***flying saucer*** was coined by an American journalist after the description Kenneth Arnold did of his June 24, 1947 sighting in the state of Washington.
- Arnold described the motion of the objects as follows:
 - **They flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water**
 - As far as their shape is concerned, however, the objects were described crescent-shaped...and they had wings.
 - This is the best rendition I have seen of this group of objects, made by the famous British illustrator David Sankey.



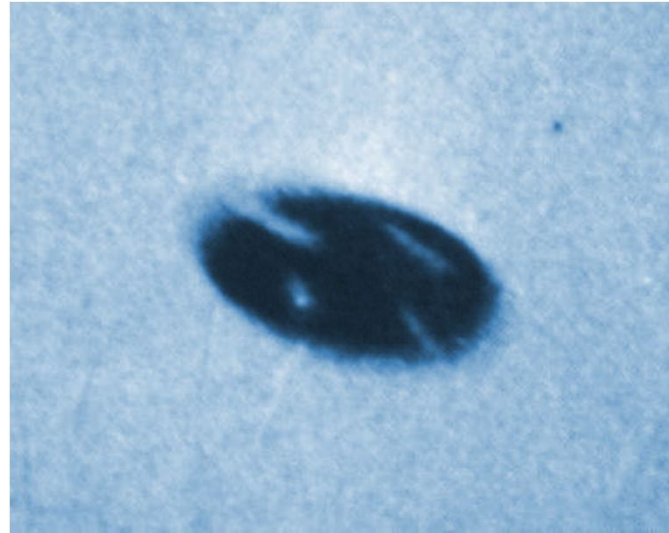
HOW EVERYTHING STARTED

- The funny thing here is that people started to see UFO's with the shape of a flying saucer, following the most visually-appealing term the journalist had used, not the actual shape of the objects Arnold had claimed to have witnessed.
- In spite of the fact that the first official UFO was bird-like, people reported that they were seeing flying discs. I am afraid this is something a sociologist should explain!
- Us researcher Barry Greenwood and I are doing a special job with the cases from year 1947 and we are finding a lot of previously unknown photographs for this period.
- But flying discs were not only watched. They are also frozen in photography, like this pair of flying objects that were seen in Pontiac, state of Michigan, on July 7, 1947, just a few days after Kenneth Arnold sighting.



HOW EVERYTHING STARTED

- The two objects was saucer-shaped indeed. As we can see in this recent computer enhancement of one of the images, it really looks like a vinyl record



- The man who made the pictures said he was in the company of other eyewitnesses. But they did never show up. The photograph is just supported by the testimony of the photographer, a tool and die maker by profession.
- We are in the process of reviewing this case and it is hoped additional research results will be obtained soon.
- To date, this is one of the examples of what the UFO phenomenon appears to be.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF COCOYOC, MEXICO

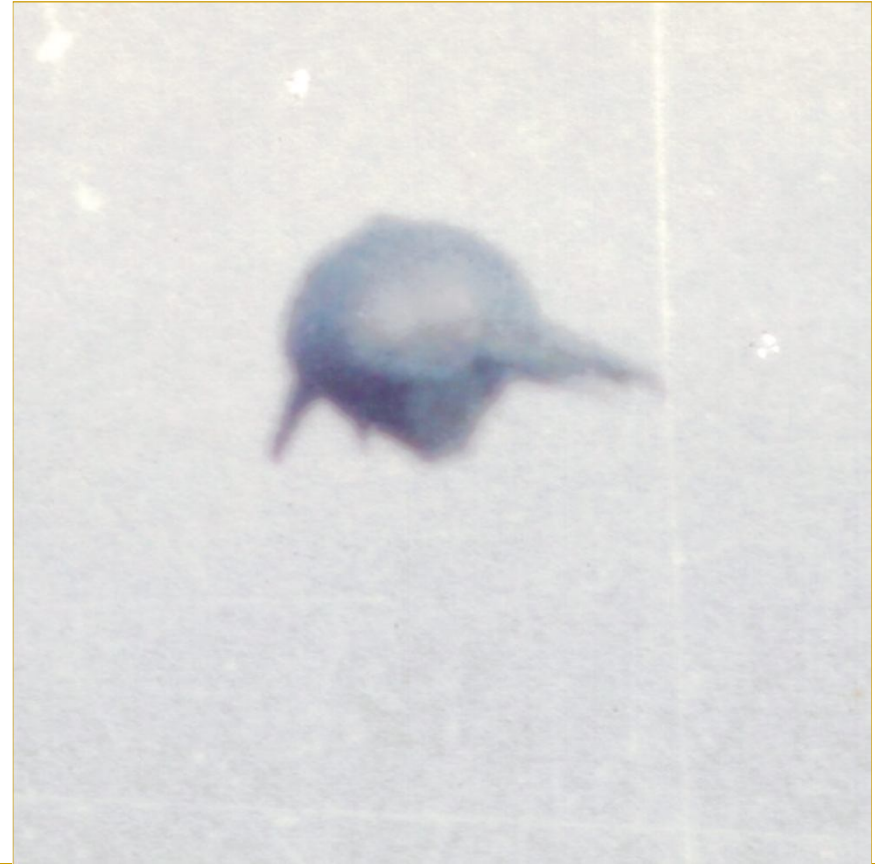
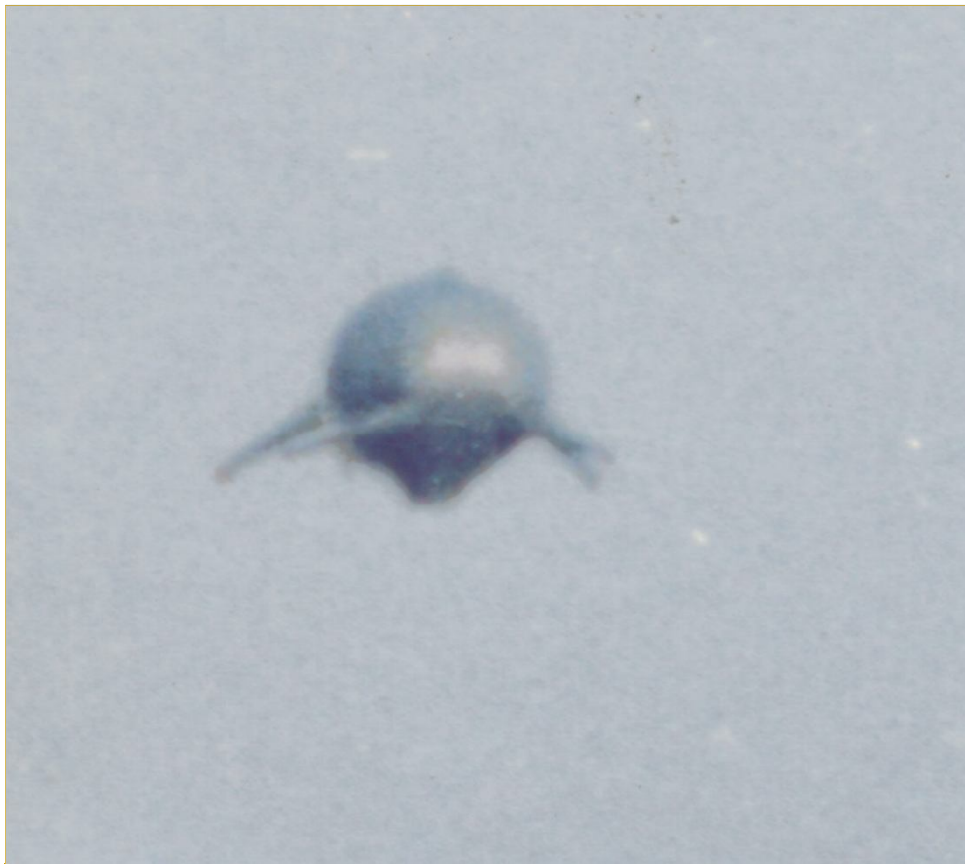
- A Mexican family of 4 was spending the day in Cocoyoc in January 3, 1973, when they saw a flying object in the distance, descending to the ground. They stopped the car and came out to see better. It was an object like an inverted pear, with a number of tentacles. While they took some pictures, the UFO went down to land some 300 meters away. At the same time, another similar object was seen in the air. The family was then in panic and they left the scene.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF COCOYOC, MEXICO

■ Here you see 2 extreme enlargements from the original prints.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF COCOYOC, MEXICO

- Here we have one example of a typical UFO case with photographic evidence.
- Is this a spacecraft? A balloon, perhaps? Judgement is pending.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE McMINVILLE DAYLIGHT DISC

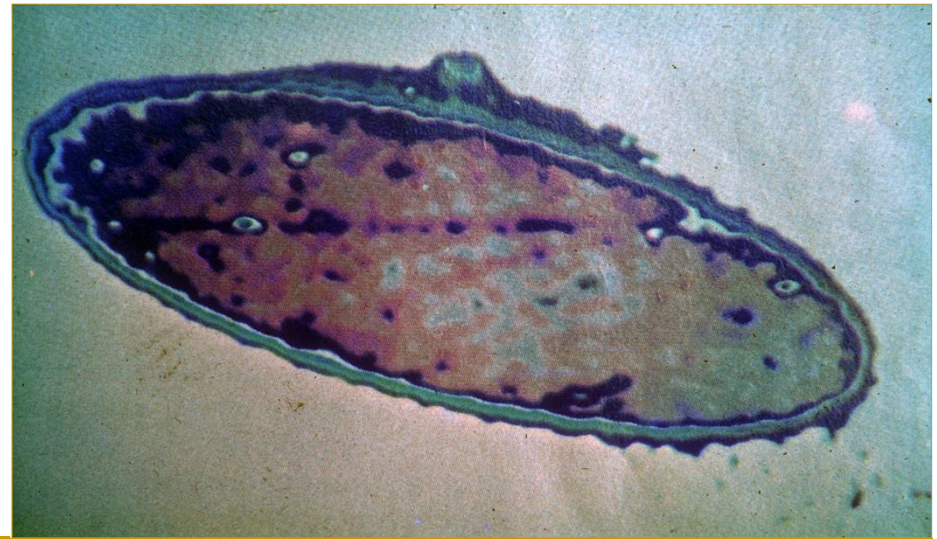
- This classic photo-case is important because of the clarity of the images that were obtained in plain daylight by farmer Paul Trent, in McMinville, Oregon, on May 11, 1950.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE McMINVILLE DAYLIGHT DISC

- Mr. Trent and his wife, who also saw the object in flight, treated the photos quite casually, in fact several weeks past before they were developed.
- Dr. William Hartmann from the Colorado committee determined the object to be 1.3 km away and have a size of tens of meters. But his conclusions did not completely ruled out a fabrication.
- Other analyses have provided contradictory results. Robert Sheaffer found a time lag of several minutes between the photos, while Dr. Bruce Maccabee confirmed distance and diameter found by Hartmann.
- Time of the day has been also subject for discussion, as well as other aspects of the story that seem to be confusing.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE McMINVILLE DAYLIGHT DISC

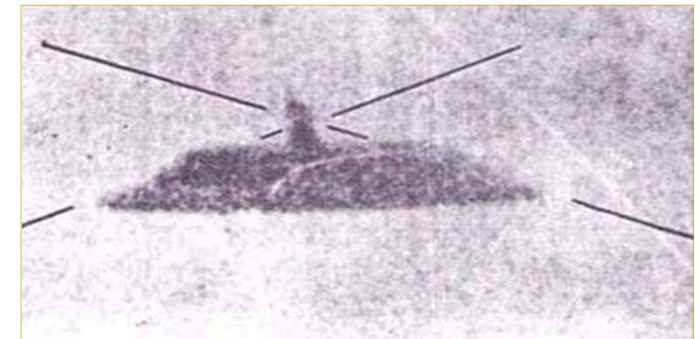
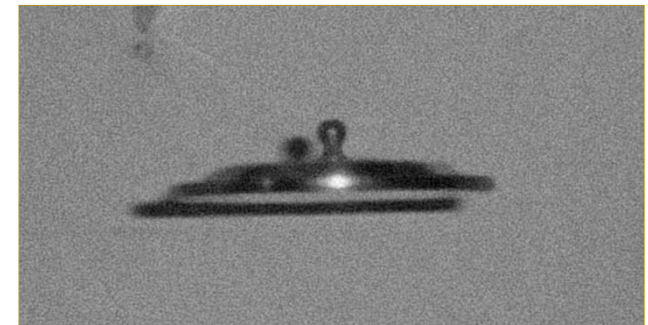
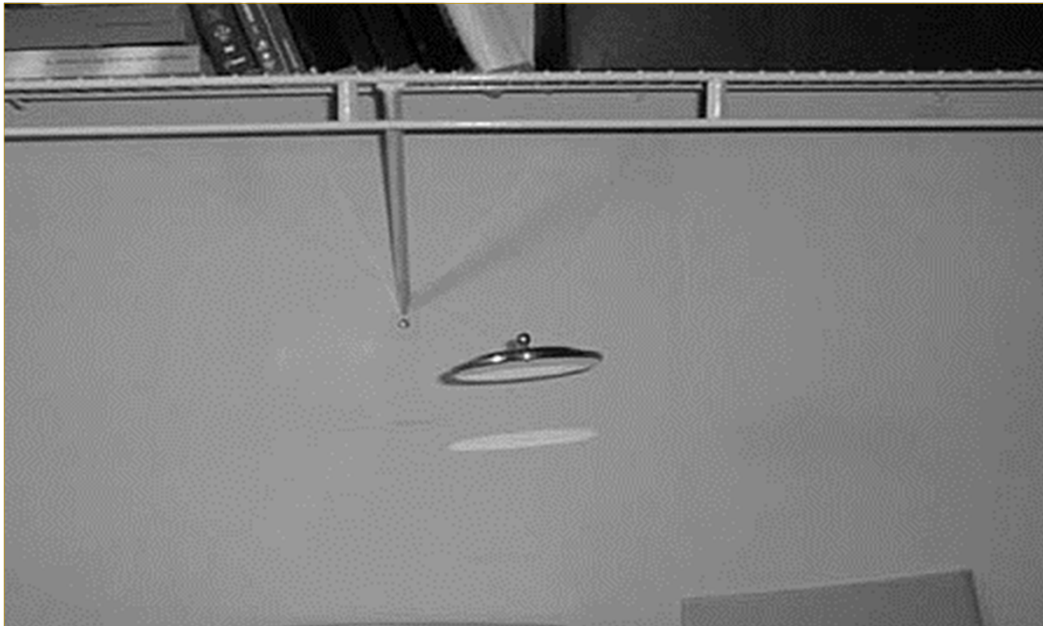
- The second photograph looks impressive, too.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE McMINVILLE DAYLIGHT DISC

- As it is true in most good UFO photographic cases, there is an on-going heated discussion on this case, with both pro and con arguments exposed.
- Lately, American ufologist Joel carpenter found elements to support the hoax theory. Also, he noticed that the UFO had a resemblance to a side mirror of an old truck. The debate goes on.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

“THE BATTLE OF LOS ANGELES”

- On February 25, 1942, dramatic radio news in the United States reported that an unknown aircraft was seen at 2,45 a.m. over the Los Angeles area, in California. Anti-aircraft guns were activated and many searchlights were lighted in order to try to throw down the object, one that was called an “unidentified blimp”. Fortunately, a staff photographer of Los Angeles Times could obtain some pictures of it. There were sirens all over the place and they said 1,400 shells of artillery were fired to the unknown aircraft.
- Was it a true, early UFO sighting over America? Or just one of the many mistakes made in times of war?



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

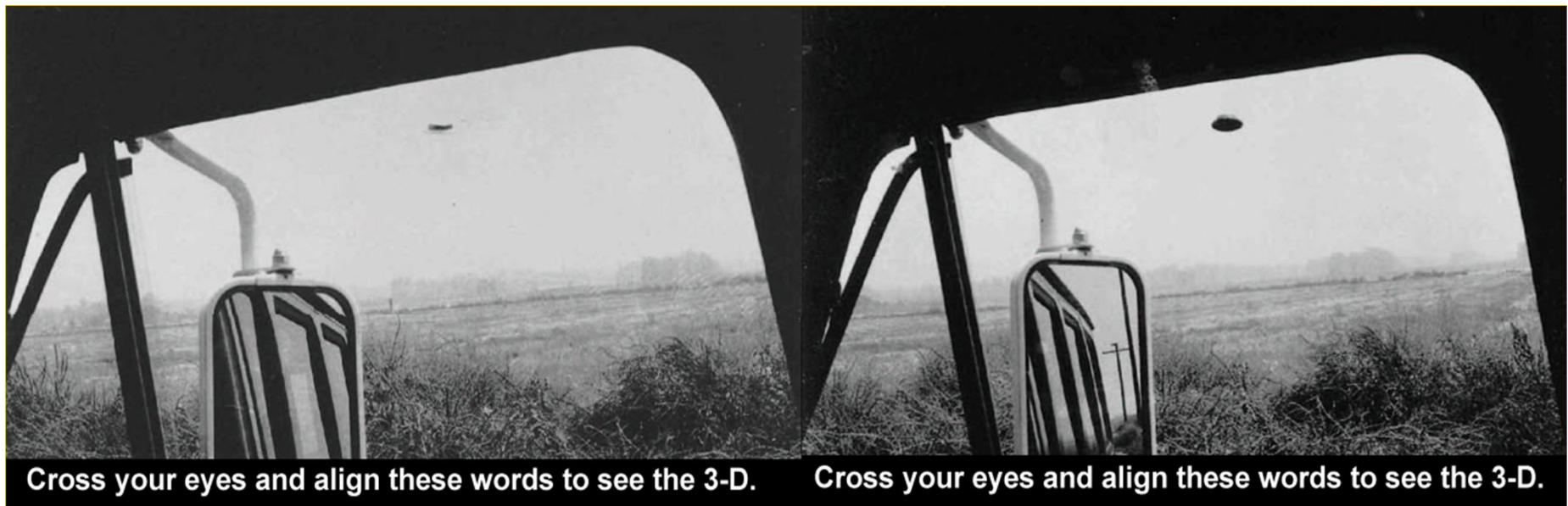


- Shortly after noon, August 3, 1965, Rex Heflin, a highway traffic inspector, took 3 photographs of a metallic-looking disc, near Santa Ana, California. Then he also took a picture of a smoke ring which he claimed it was associated to the UFO.
- As soon as he saw the unidentified flying object, he reached for his Polaroid camera and snapped the photographs through the windshield of his truck.
- As usual in this type of evidence, there are conflicting conclusions and opposite analyses. Work by the US Air Force Blue Book Project qualified it as a hoax. The Colorado UFO project called it un-conclusive.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

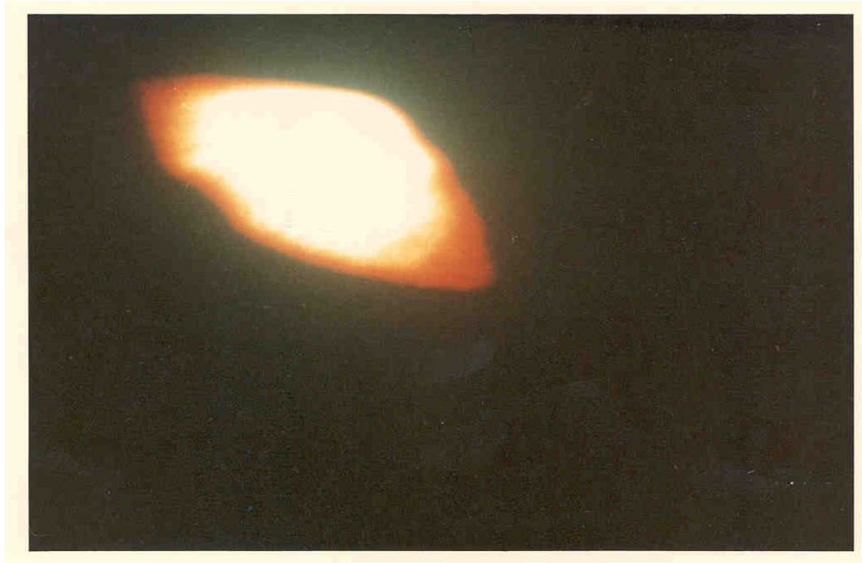
- Some computer enhancements seem to reveal a vertical linear structure over the flying hat, i.e. a supporting string. Sceptic researchers like Robert Sheaffer conclude the object was actually quite small and close to the camera.
- Finally, I leave you to decide by yourself.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

POLICEMAN PHOTOGRAPH

- In this short trip on classic UFO photographs, we arrive now to the picture that was taken by deputy sheriff Arthur Strauch. It was 6 p.m. on October 12, 1965, on Saint George, Minnesota.



- He was returning from a bow-hunting trip in the company of 4 others, when they spotted a light some 700 meters above the ground, some 500 meters away. After 10 minutes sighting, they drove down the road about 1000 more meters and stopped again. Then, the sheriff took a photograph, just as the object began to move. It passed over their heads at a high rate of speed and disappeared.
- This seems to be a good case to retain as evidence of the UFO phenomenon.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

THE COAST GUARD PHOTOGRAPH



- Another classic. On July 16, 1952, this photograph of 4 objects was taken by a United States coast guard station photographer at Salem, Massachusetts.
- The picture was taken through a window, after the witness observed how some lights seemed to be wavering. After a few seconds, he grabbed the camera and took a photo when he noticed that the lights had dimmed. He assumed at the time the objects he saw was a reflection.
- Analysts conclusion was that the photograph represents just reflection from any interior sources, like ceiling lights.

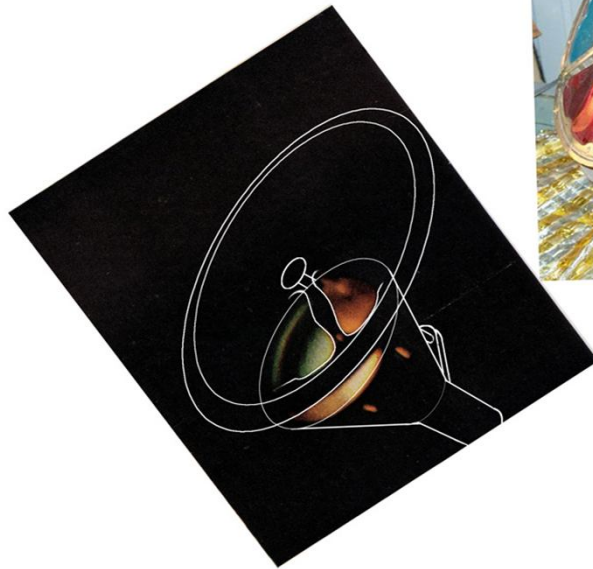
UFO's OF ALL KINDS

- This one was taken by Alan Smith of Tulsa, Oklahoma, on August 2, 1965. 14-year-old smith claimed to have seen this colored UFO crossing the night sky.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

- Still considered a true UFO in some books, back in 1966 the photo analysis division of the United States Air Force noted that the image was similar to the effect of photographing a multi-colored revolving filter flood light.
- Recently, ufologist Joel carpenter provided a 1960s Christmas tree color wheel, that shows how the photo was done.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

PORTUGAL



- At 8,30 a.m. on September 10, 1990 in Vilar, Alfena, near Porto, in Portugal, several children saw a strange object hovering in the sky. Described as a "turtle with legs", some 5 meters in size, it was reflecting the sun rays. It was some 50 minutes in the area until photographer Manuel Gomes spotted it and was lucky enough to make a sequence of 4 shots of the object.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

PORTUGAL

- Several international researchers have studied the object and their conclusion seem to exclude the possibility of a balloon.
- On the other hand, the standing of the object in the air for almost one hour, and its apparent deformable surface, in my view, could point to any kind of balloon.
- The mystery continues.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

UNEXPECTED PICTURE

- This is 3 p.m., December 25, 2000. The place is Mount Mammoth, California. Do you see anything special in the picture?



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

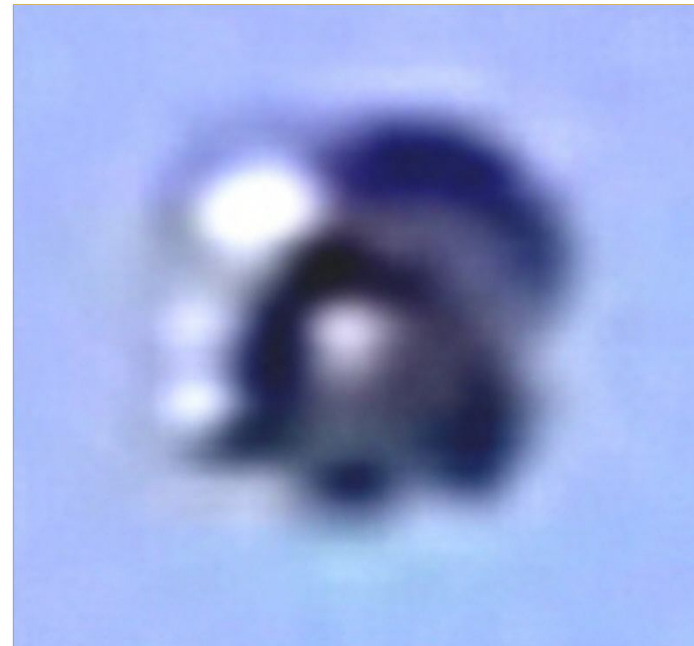
UNEXPECTED PICTURE

- The professional photographer who took this photo just found the object when he downloaded the picture.
- Here we have some enlargements and a contrast enhancement. Full analysis is still pending, so by the time being it is a real UFO.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

- Stan Romanek got this footage of a UFO of complex shape on December 27, 2000 at Lakewood in Colorado.
- This strange shape is not uncommon in UFO reporting. But it reminds a group of balloons tied together, or a single balloon of complex design. The enigma is in the air.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

- Another floating UFO was shot on eastern USA on September 11, 2002. Let me show you first two original shots.



- Now a close-up, and finally a possible reconstruction of object. Was it another complex-design balloon?



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

UFO METEOR

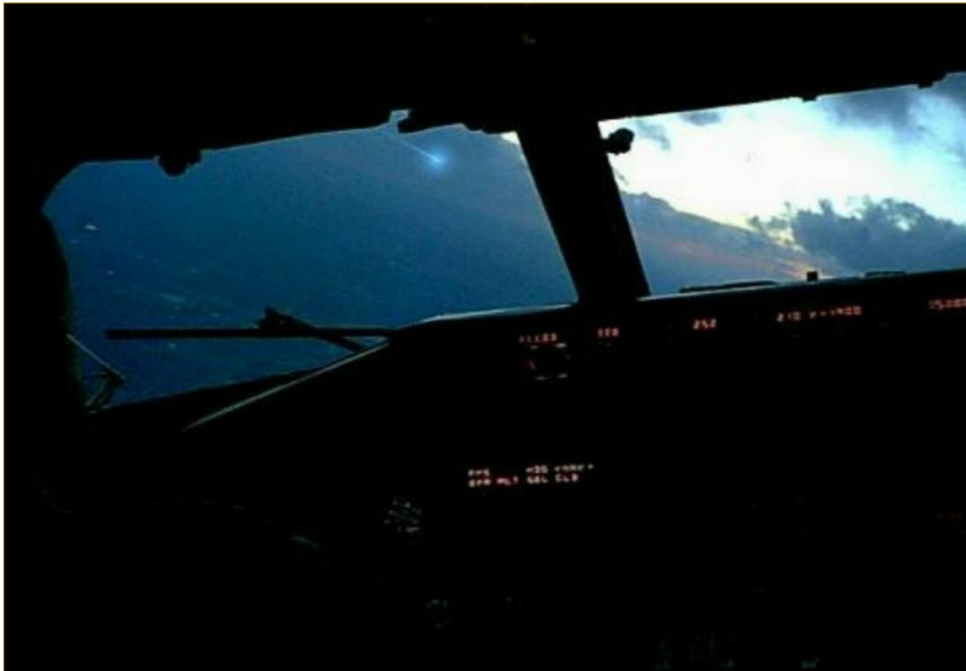
- Recently this event was reported by an aviation captain. The airplane crew spotted this luminous object on a flight on September 2002, going from Washington, DC to Atlanta, Georgia. Little information exists, and the strange thing is that the informant said “the objects appeared six times throughout the flight”. Captain said: “at first they appeared to be meteorites. The objects were moving incredibly fast, however too slow for a shooting star!” This is the first one of the 3 pictures made.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

UFO METEOR

These are the two other pictures.



UFO's OF ALL KINDS

LIGHT IN THE NIGHT SKY



- At 3,15 a.m. of December 14, 2001, a private jet of the Chilean aeronautics had an encounter with a UFO. During 15 minutes while flying in the night over the sea, near Arequipa, Peru, colonel Luis Illi Salgado took this couple of pictures of a seemingly descending flaming body.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

LIGHT IN THE NIGHT SKY



- In this case, a fireball or a re-entry can be discarded because of the long duration of the phenomenon. This is a U.F.O.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

CANADA

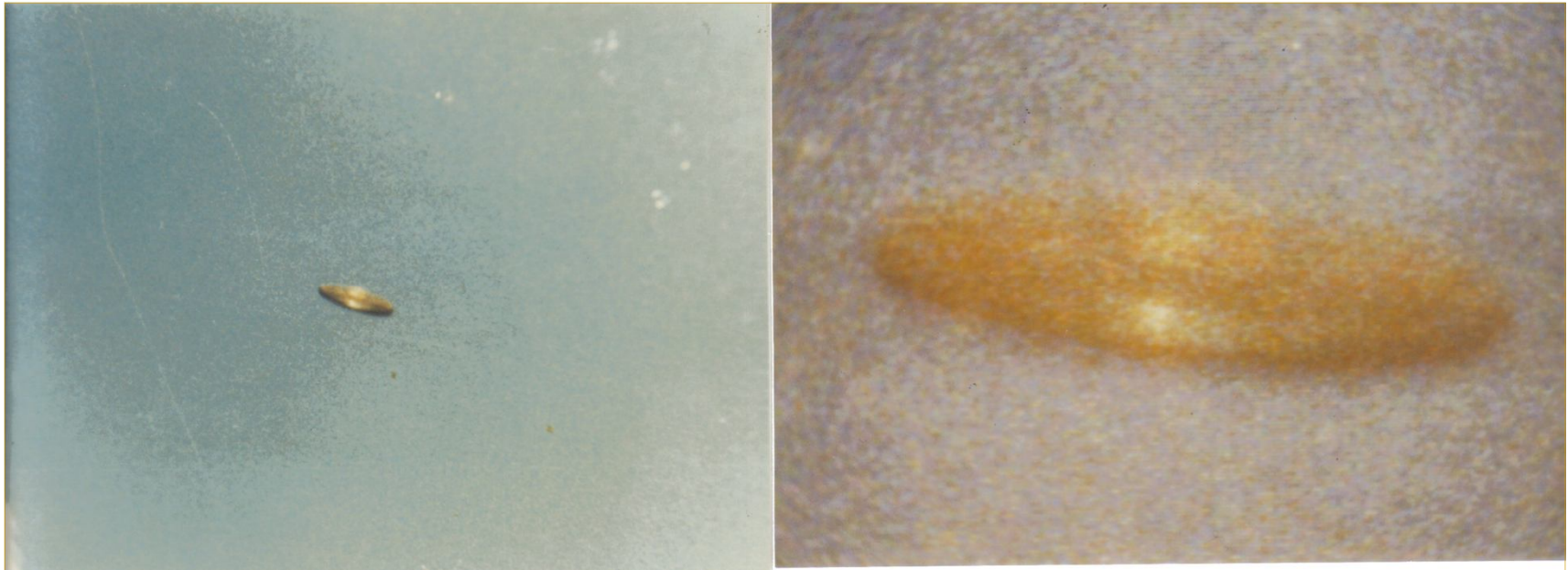


- This flying disc was accidentally photographed in the Vancouver Island, Canada, on October 8, 1981. A family of 3 were on a holiday trip when the mother took a shot of this mountain. Nothing was seen at the time. Days later, when prints came from the processor, they found the disc over the mountain.

UFO's OF ALL KINDS

CANADA

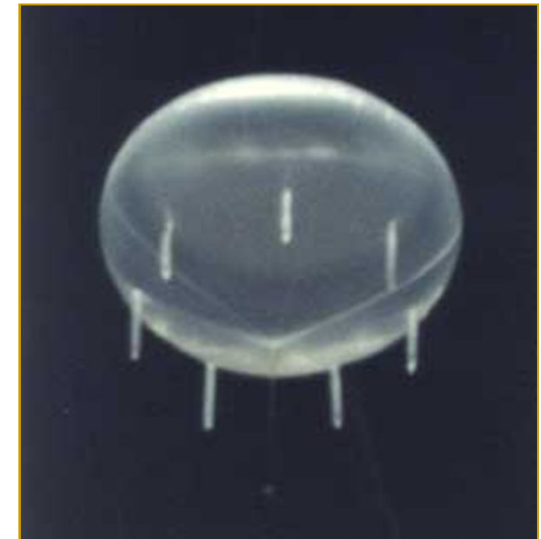
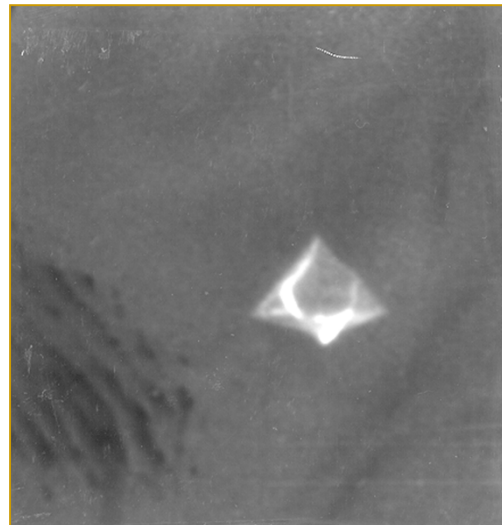
- Researchers like Dr. Richard Haines and Dr. Jacques Vallee have studied the print and they feel this is conclusive proof of a real, flying object some 60 meters long. However, if an object was tossed up into the air and then photographed, nobody knows for sure.



BALLOONS

GENERAL

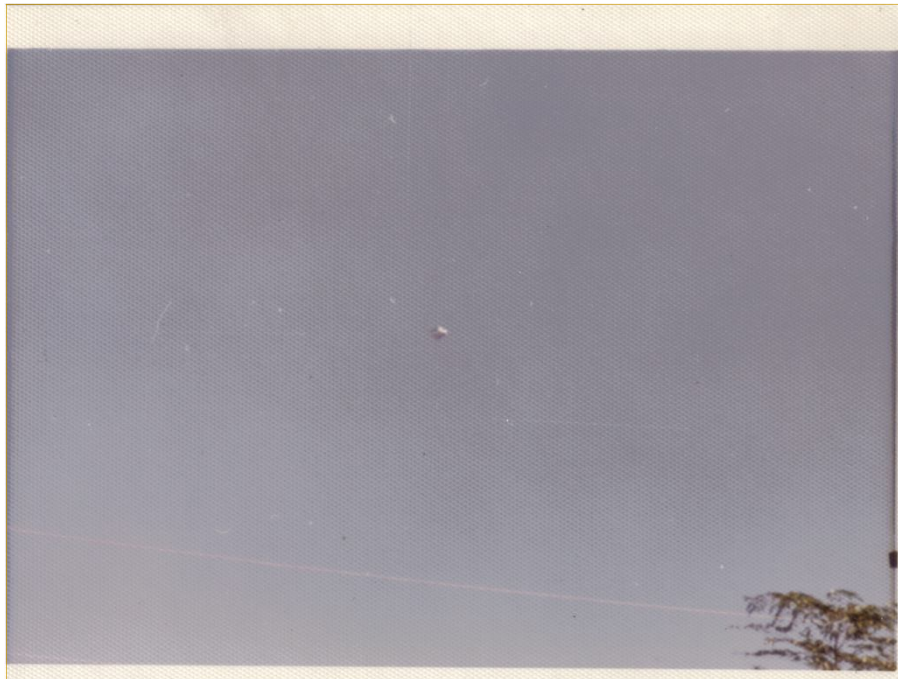
- Now we enter in the pure I.F.O. section, this is identified flying objects. We will review the most frequent natural phenomena and man-made objects that use to be misinterpreted as UFO's.
- In one of the top positions in the ranking of misidentified objects, we have balloons. There are many kinds of balloons, toy and fire balloons, captive and free balloons, research and stratospheric balloons, weather and sounding balloons, etc. Balloons are small and large, and come in many shapes and sizes, as in the following visual examples:



BALLOONS

MESA, ARIZONA

- On November 11, 1972, a group of children in mesa, Arizona, were playing in the garden when they saw a strange object hovering in the sky. One neighbour, Mr. Lee Elders came out and took several photographs during the long period the object stayed there, so much that witnesses preferred to went home to watch a football match on TV! Here, a couple of the photos.
- This object was later on identified as a tethered, helium balloon sold by Edmund Scientific Co.



BALLOONS

ITALY

- An Italian military pilot faced an amazing situation when at 11,30 am of June 18, 1979, ground control tower alerted him to check about a black cylindrical object that had been detected by radar 1,500 meters over Treviso. Pilot managed to take a 80 pictures of the object before it sped away.



- This peculiar object gives the impression to be floating, not flying.
- I wonder if it could be a type of balloon you can purchase in a shop, like the one shown in the photo at the right.



BALLOONS

Phoenix, Arizona & Mérida, Mexico



- It was 7 a.m. on September 17, 2004 in Phoenix, Arizona, when this translucent, high-altitude object was sighted and video taped.
- It was found out it was a upper atmosphere research balloon launched by NASA's J.P.L.
- To me, this is quite similar to certain UFO pictures we have just seen in this presentation.

- But if there is a country where there is a popular culture on balloons is Mexico. I could spend hours showing you nice examples of flying balloons in Mexico, with incredible shapes and colours. I just want to mention here one last example and close the section devoted to balloons.

VIDEO CLIP (no activado en esta versión)

BALLOONS

Mérida, Mexico

- On October 28, 2004, at 10 p.m., one pilot of the Mexican Air Force was at home, in Mérida, Yucatán, when he and his family observed the flight of a UFO. It had a ring of lights around. He described it as an “incredible sighting”.
- Local ufologists discovered later it was just a hot air balloon launched in the town because of the festivities of Saint Judas Tadeo. Impressive, yes, but quite mundane!



CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

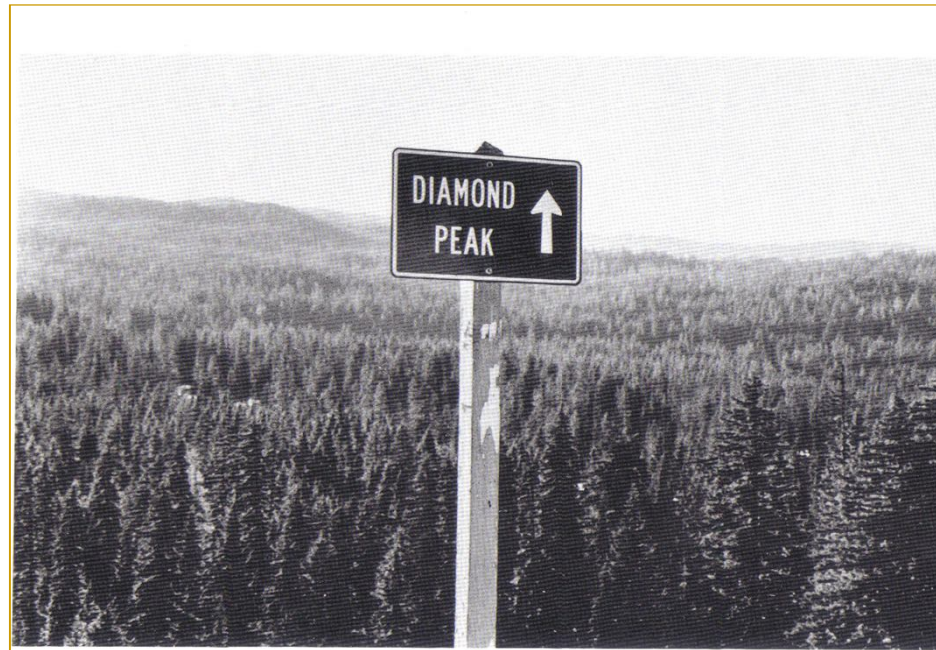
- One of the most glamorous examples of how cameras have the potential to deceive us is the case of November 22, 1966 in Oregon, USA.
- A doctor in Biochemistry took some photos from a lookout point located at Willamette Pass, Oregon. When the pictures came back from processing, a three-tiered object appeared in one of the photographs. This is the enigmatic image.



- For years this picture has generated lots of pseudoscientific speculation on the possibility that the UFO here presented almost supernatural motion capabilities, including instant invisibility.
- I have a personal story to tell in this context. In 1973 I met in France with some top ufologists and scientists. We were over lunch and a well-known astronomer tried to explain to me the outstanding scientific implications of this photography. To my hesitations, he called me naive, but....

CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

- In 1993, Dr. Irwin Wieder, a research physicist made a deep study of the photograph and found out how it was really made. And he proved it.
- He writes: ***The search for the true nature of the object finally led to the possibility that the photo was a sign with snow on top taken from a car in motion.***
- To make a long story short, this is the reconstructed sign that was in the epoch in the site. To this, some white layer on top was added to simulate snow.



CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

- And this is one of the resulting images after taken a shot of this sign post as indicated. The resemblance to the original photo is complete. Q.E.D., as they said in Latin.



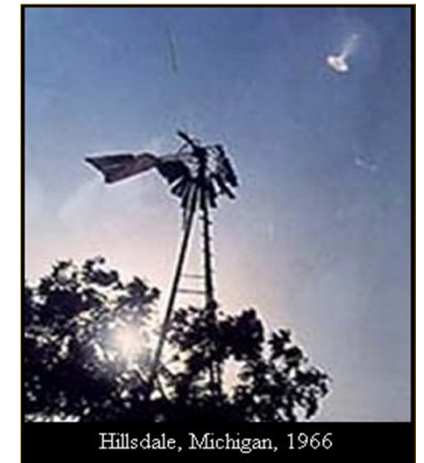
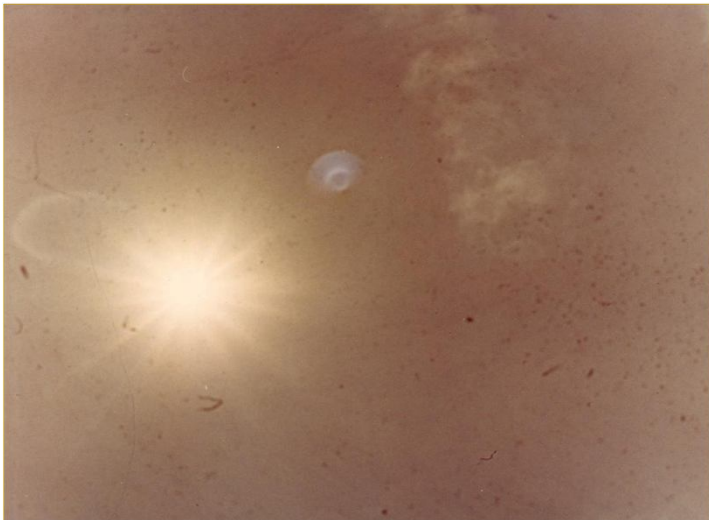
CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

- They say that cameras do not lie. Yes, it is true, but I assure you that they can deceive and confuse. Cameras are mischievous by nature, and photographs, even more.
- Because cameras produce images that the eye does not see. Invisible or chance UFO's that are just internal reflections, lens flares, virtual images with no physical reality.
- For example, on October 10, 2004, a journalist was taking photos of the Valparaíso Port, Chile. He did not see anything strange but this image appeared when the pictures were developed. This is a kind of lens flares called filter flares.



CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

- Lens flares can be produced by any strong light source, the Moon, a street lamp, etc. Most typical, lens flares are produced by the Sun. Here we have some examples, taken in Denmark (1954), Florida (1970s) and Michigan (1966).



CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

- Analog photography involves a chemical process that is not perfect. It produces some curious-looking flaws and defects that resemble objects in the sky. In these cases, camerapersons did not see anything strange at the time of doing the photo, obviously.
- Let me show you a few instances of pictures from Argentina, left, and Russia.



CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?

- Not to speak about tricks produced by the modern digital cameras. Like this false images due to internal reflections of the Sun. It was taken in Cachi, Argentina, November 2004.



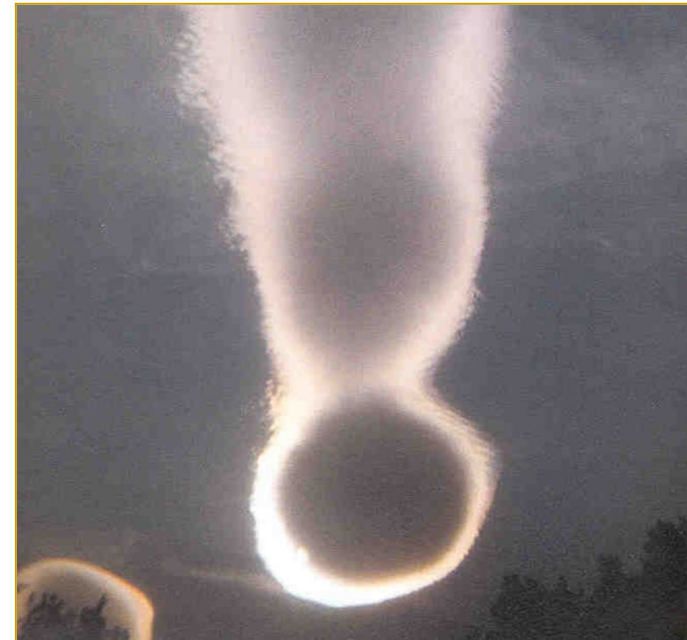
CAMERAS DO NOT LIE, DO THEY?



Or the following, which is identical, made December 27, 2003 in Tombstone, Arizona

SEND IN THE CLOUDS

- Meteorology also helps to create many false UFOs. In particular, in the form of clouds.



- Funny shaped clouds seem to show solid objects inside. Two examples here. The one in the right was claimed to be a UFO, July 1981 Burgos, Spain.

SEND IN THE CLOUDS

- Lenticular clouds have the shape of a flying saucer, like the following snapshots taken in Canary Islands, 1966, Spain 1975 and France, 1957.



SEND IN THE CLOUDS

- I cannot resist the temptation to show you a few more photographs of peculiar clouds taken as UFO's, from many parts of the world, Russia, Sweden, USA, etc.



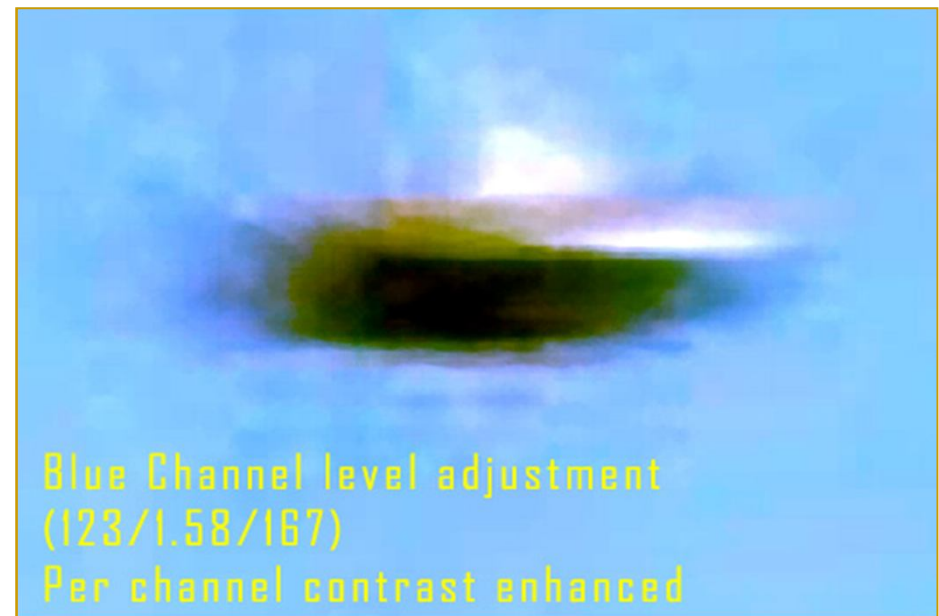
BIRDS & BUGS

- Contemporary digital cameras can freeze the pass of a nearby flying bug or bird. The photographer does not see anything strange when taking the pictures, but when these are downloaded weird shapes and objects appear in the photos. UFO's? No. Forensic analysis can determine accurate data on distance and size of the objects, thanks to the EXIF meta-data stored by the cameras.
- Below photograph was made in Vancouver Island, Canada, November 25, 2005, and it shows a bird caught in flight.



BIRDS & BUGS

- The following picture was shot on January 15, 2004, at 2 p.m., near Melbourne, Australia. The photographer did not see anything special until he watched it in his computer. Research conducted support the theory that the image was produced by a flying insect near the camera when the photo was done.



UFO's in SPACE?

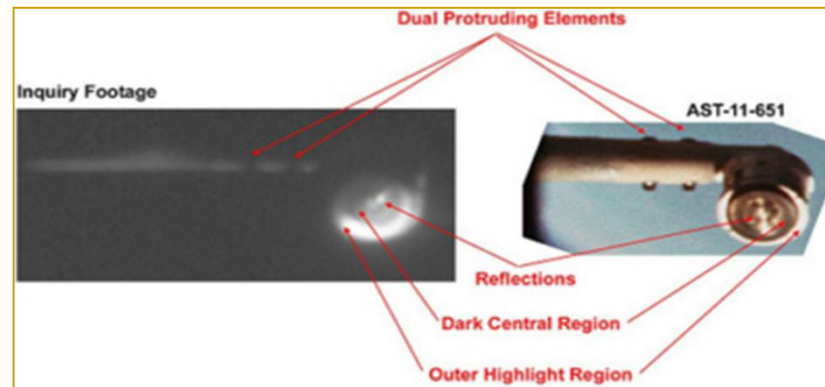
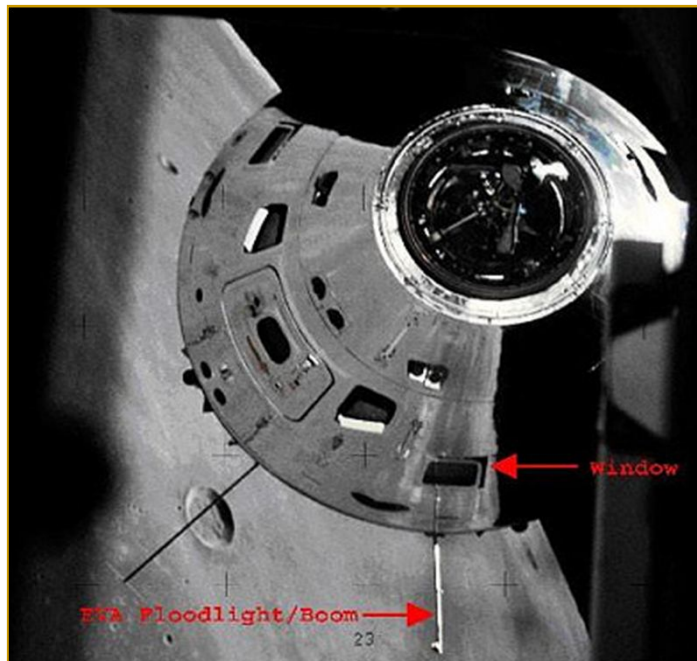
- This photo belongs to a NASA video that was taken by the Apollo 16 crew when approaching to the Moon, April 24, 1972. Well, no doubt about it, it is a flying saucer. But is it?



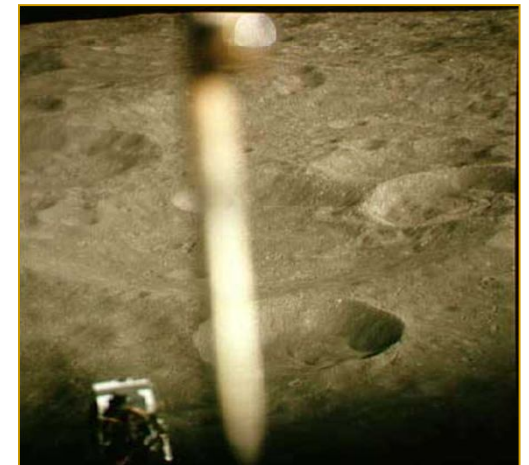
- The reality is quite another...

UFO's in SPACE?

- This is a spacecraft boom and floodlight, activated for EVA missions, or external vehicular activities. It is this equipment what appears in the picture.
- We can see here some details of the mechanical instrument which was responsible of the image.



- The same device appears in some other 1972 astronaut photography, generating wild speculation, as the one in the far right of this slide.



FIRE IN THE SKY- NATURAL

- One of the most spectacular events in the atmosphere is the sight of big fireballs called bolides. These are fragments of material that entry the Earth's atmosphere from deep space. The luminous trace so created is known as a meteoroid, as the one that was videotaped over the Czech Republic, on may 6, 2000.

VIDEO CLIP(no activado en esta versión)

- From ancient times, the apparition of fireballs has raised concern and fear. For decades many such fireballs have been taken as UFO's. Typical fireballs lasts up to 3-4 minutes and can be extremely bright, as this fireball sighted over Spain on January 4, 2004.



- Let me close this slide devoted to meteors by showing you the spectacular footage achieved in Peekskill, New York, October 9, 1992.

VIDEO CLIP (no activado en esta versión)

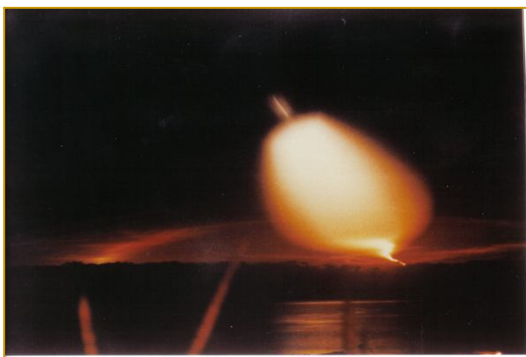
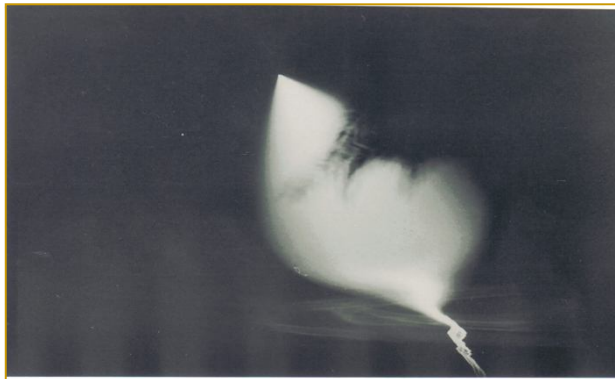
FIRE IN THE SKY- NATURAL

- There are another type of fireballs, the man-made meteors. These are produced by the decay or re-entry of rockets, satellites and spacecraft launched into orbit. Rocket boosters after launching and satellites after their orbit degrade, finally fall into the Earth, giving rise to very bright meteors.
- The MIR was a Russian orbital station that was launched in February 1986. 15 years later its space adventure ended, the re-entry took place February 2001 in the form the photograph shows.



IF IT LOOKS LIKE A MISSILE, IT IS A MISSILE

- Research rocket and missile launches can be taken as UFO's. Because of the military, secret nature of some of those tests, finding the true explanation may take many years. In the seventies there were the events below, seeing from the Canary Islands, Spain, in the Atlantic Ocean. When certain US Navy records were declassified we found out these had been originated by the launching of Poseidon ballistic missiles.



IF IT LOOKS LIKE A MISSILE, IT IS A MISSILE

- Missile launches start as a brilliant point of light that explodes and produces an umbrella of light behind, due to the ignition of the several stages of the rocket. This is the picture of the firing of a Minuteman rocket from Vandenberg AFB, on July 7, 2000, as seen from San José, California.



IF IT LOOKS LIKE A MISSILE, IT IS A MISSILE

- Missile launches create great photography and I would like to show some other outstanding and beautiful examples.
- First, some of the pictures taken by a Japanese citizen from Los Angeles, California, on October 28, 1987. It was another Minuteman rocket from Vandenberg AFB.



IF IT LOOKS LIKE A MISSILE, IT IS A MISSILE

- Or this amazing shot from Sierra Nevada, California, October 14, 2002, due to the launch of a Minuteman missile.



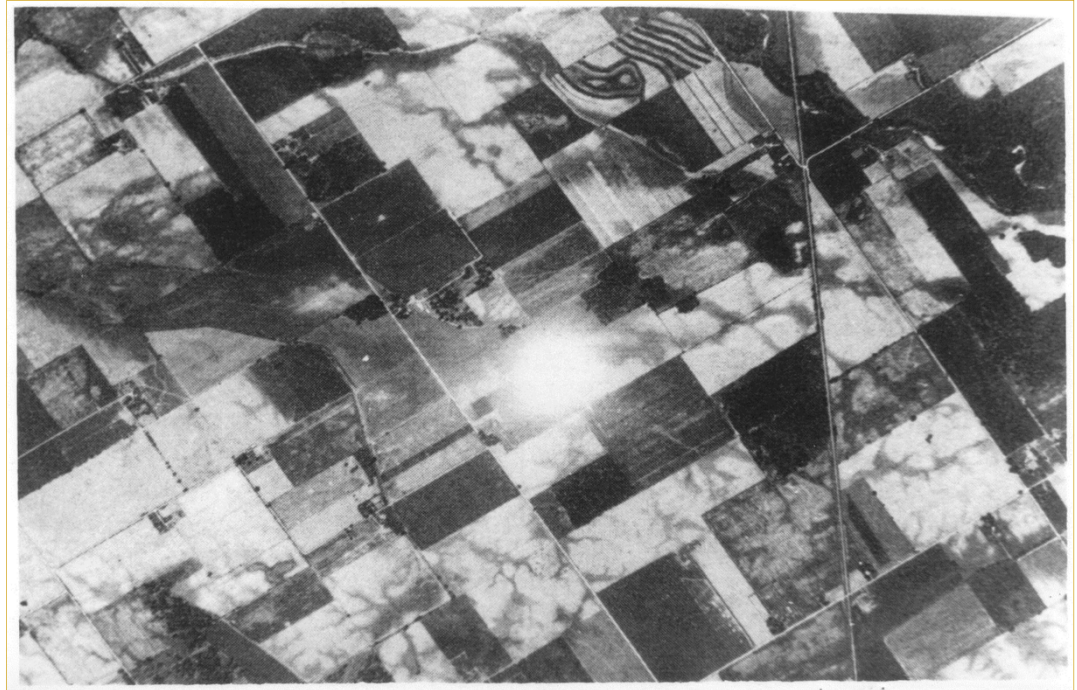
ASTRONOMICAL & ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA

- Any analyst of UFO reports will agree that the night vision of stars and planets stimulate the largest fraction of false UFO cases in the world. One of the best UFO researchers, Allan Hendry, once noted how remarkable is that adult witnesses see stellar bodies and still call them UFO's. But this happens every other day.
- Venus is culprit #1. In some nights, this planet is so bright that is taken by a UFO. See two images of Venus videotaped in Valencia, Spain, October 1999 and January 2001 in Victoria, Chile. Chromatic aberrations are due to the use of the zoom device.



ASTRONOMICAL & ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA

- The atmosphere produces many optical phenomena, like the Subsun, a reflection of Sun rays on ice in the clouds that creates confusing images. A pilot called Brubaker took a photograph of this phenomenon in May 1954 while flying over Richmond, Indiana.



INTERNET, THE LIAR

- In the last years, the number of photographic cases has increased considerably. Most pictures come through the internet and many have in common a serious lack of background information. A couple of examples of such extraordinary, nice UFO-looking photos.



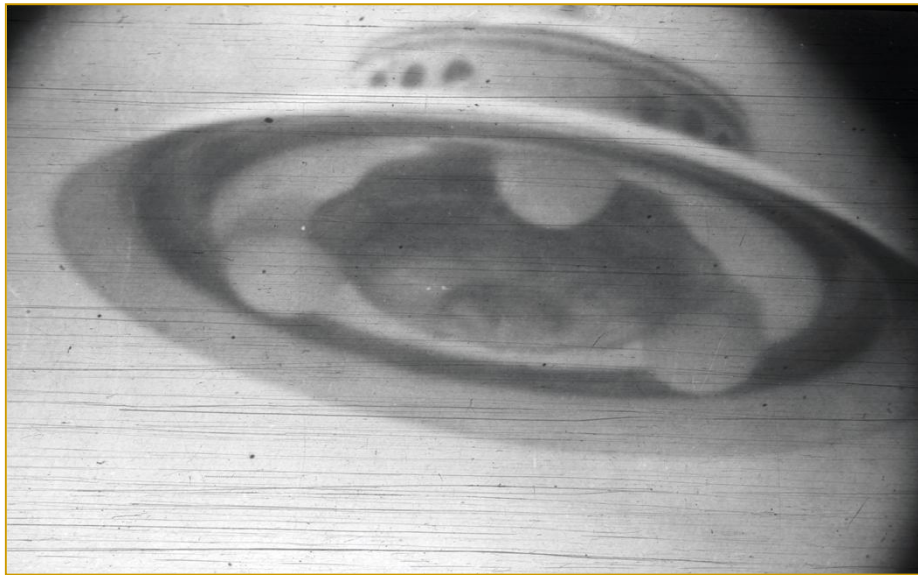
INTERNET, THE LIAR

- I call it the 21st century paradox. Recently, the veteran UFO organization called SOBEPS, based in Belgium, planned an European survey about the best UFO cases. This is, well-investigated cases with high strangeness reported in the last years. Basically the reply received was poor. Common feedback was to claim that lately there were no good reports of flying saucers any more. However, **FOTOCAT** shows that since year 2000 the rate of incoming reports is one per day! What happens? For me it is just an internet effect – internet is a liar!

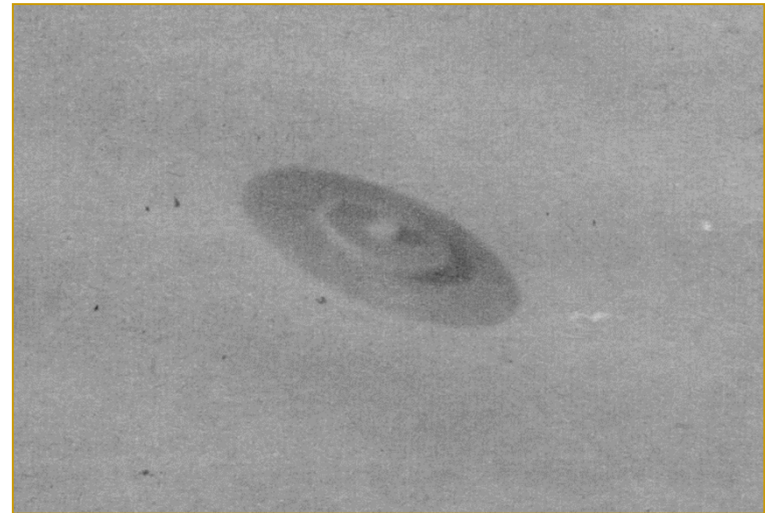


FAMOUS FAKES

- But, let us admit it. Fakes and hoaxes have been always quite common in the history of the UFO phenomenon.



From the 1952 classic flying saucer from Venus by George Adamski



Or the Barra Da Tijuca, Brazil, photo by Ed Keffel, also 1952

FAMOUS FAKES



To this beautiful picture made in Switzerland,
July 1975

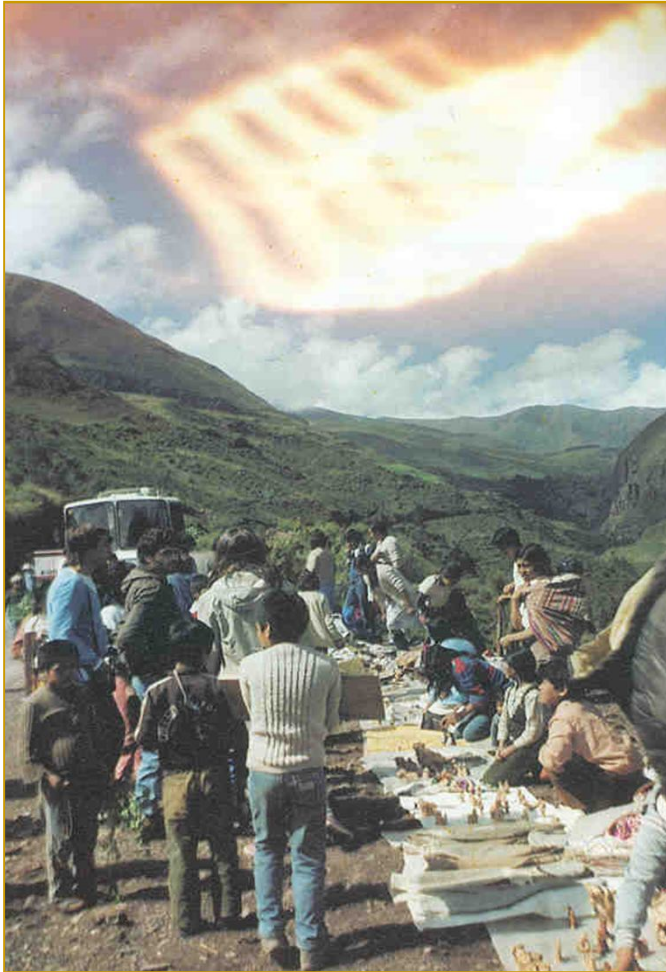
The solution, on the left. It was just a flying toy.



To one of the most recent alleged UFO
videos. It has been taken April 4, 2007 in
Lomas de Zamora, Argentina.
Up, one frame.



CONCLUDING REMARKS



- Since 1947, there have been reported UFO sightings by hundreds of thousands. Researchers have also collected stories about similar phenomena from decades before, centuries before, even back to Bible times.
- What can we make out of this all? I think we are facing one of these two options:
- On one hand we might believe that
- **There is a phenomenological continuum that has existed forever, something that has evolved in parallel to the development of humankind**

CONCLUDING REMARKS



- But I guess there is a much more simple alternative.
- Based on personal study and research over a 40-year period, I favour a most reasonable, common sense option:



- We are just witnessing a continuing trend of misinterpretations of natural phenomena (specially relevant in the past) and conventional artificial objects, phenomena and processes (specially relevant today), which are interpreted according to current knowledge, fears, and science myths of the epoch.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



- ***Are there UFO's?*** You will ask.
- My reply is, yes, provided we agree to define UFO as those phenomena for which we have not found an explanation yet. Because there are still UFO's, this is why we continue in this study.
- ***But, are there any flying saucers?***
- Sorry to disappoint some of you, but I think there are not. At least, not here on Earth.
- ***Then, what about all the myriads of reports? What about the photographs and the movies?***
- As the title of the speech announced, I am afraid that we are just contemplating the portraits of a myth, of a contemporary myth in the making.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ***A contemporary myth?*** Most probably.
- But finding out what is going on, and the mechanisms by which normal people reports seeing extraordinary phenomena in the skies is an exciting subject to study.
- Let me close with a smile. Here we have an extraterrestrial “grey”, as the flying saucer occupants are called in the UFO mythology. He is attempting to have a sunbathing, but he continues to be grey!

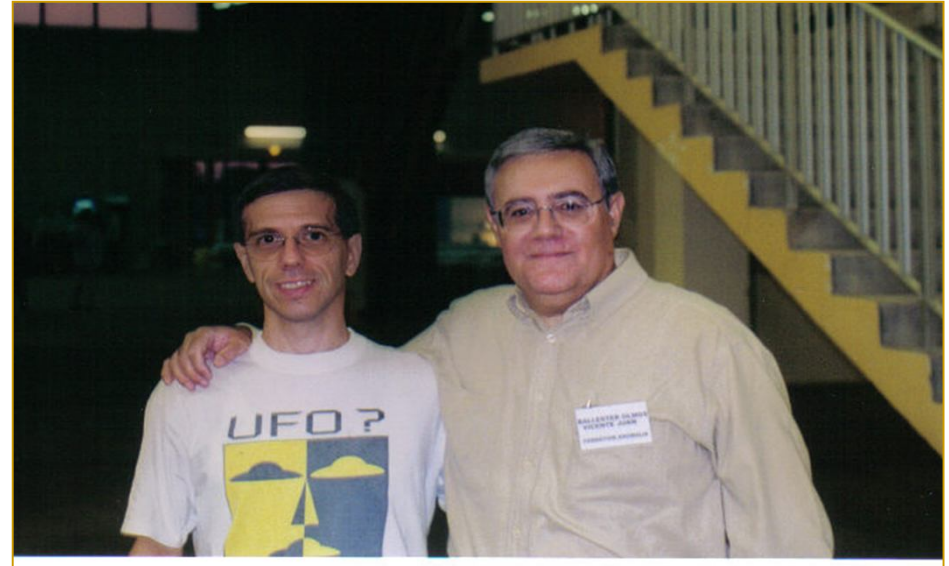


THANKS!

- Let me close this speech by showing my gratitude to **CISU**, the Italian Center for UFO studies, to all his valuable staff, and specially to **Edoardo Russo**, for giving me this opportunity to present a very hasty outline of my current work to you.



**SIG. MAURIZIO VERGA & SIG. PAOLO
TOSELLI, CISU STAFF**



SIG. EDOARDO RUSSO, DIRECTOR CISU