CUFOS BULLETIN

J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659

SPECIAL BULLETIN APRIL 1988

The return of the CUFOS Bulletin

Shortly after CUFOS was founded in late 1973, the first issue of the ***CUFOS Bulletin*** was published. Issued on an irregular schedule, it was designed to bring timely information to our Associates about recent developments in ufology and at CUFOS.

After a hiatus of almost seven years, we are reinstituting the ***Bulletin*** to once again provide important information and news to you. The specific spur for our decision lies in the series of ongoing events in Gulf Breeze, Florida, of which some of you may already be aware. The story has gained some local publicity and has been discussed in other UFO publications (see the March and April 1988 issues of the ***MUFON UFO Journal***).

CUFOS investigator coordinator Robert Boyd has been assisting the MUFON investigative team that has been working on the Gulf Breeze case. His report on his discoveries begins opposite this editorial. CUFOS is issuing this special report as both a statement of our position and as a caution against excess enthusiasm. The Gulf Breeze case involves photographs—lots of photographs—as well as multiple sightings. Those facts raise a red flag to those familiar with the history of ufology, recalling such personalities and events as those associated with the names Billy Meier or George Adamski.

We promise no regular schedule for the ***Bulletin***, but we will publish when events deserve your attention and cannot be expeditiously covered in ***IUR***. We hope you enjoy the new ***Bulletin*** and the information on Gulf Breeze. We'd be pleased to receive your comments.—***Mark Rodeghier.***

Don Schmitt featured at University of Wisconsin-River Falls

CUFOS co-director and IUR art director Don Schmitt was the featured speaker at an all-day UFO symposium hosted by the University of Wisconsin at River Falls on Saturday, April 16. Don gave an excellent overview of UFO physical evidence and investigative techniques for the crowd of approximately 200 attendees. Also speaking at the symposium were UW-River Falls professors Jack Bostrack (biology) and Earl Blodgett (physics), who discussed evolution, the physics of communication, and SETI research. The organizers of the UFO Site Center Corporation at Elmwood, Wisconsin, explained their elaborate plans to lure UFOs to land near their small community.

CUFOS Bulletin, April 1988 special issue. **Editor:** George M. Eberhart. **Scientific Director:** Mark Rodeghier. Published irregularly by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659. Provided free to all CUFOS associates.

Gulf Breeze, Florida: The Other Side of the Coin

by
Mark Rodeghier
and
Robert D. Boyd

Background. *On November 16, 1987, a businessman, later nicknamed by UFO investigators and the press as "Mr. X" or "Ed," delivered five Polaroid UFO photos and a "To whom it may concern" letter to the editor of the Gulf Breeze, Florida,* ***Sentinel.*** *The letter and three photos were printed in the November 19 edition of this weekly newspaper.*

The letter, from the anonymous photographer who was later revealed to have been "Mr. X" himself, explained that the pictures were taken about 5:00 p.m. on November 11. The camera was a Polaroid Model 108 with a fixed distance setting. The object appeared to have been the size of a house. Other anonymous witnesses claimed to have observed the same or similar objects, and their comments appeared in subsequent issues of the paper.

Mutual UFO Network investigator Donald M. Ware went to the site of the alleged encounter, the home of the witness, who said the object changed direction, cast light, hovered, descended, ascended, wobbled slightly, and glowed. After taking the fifth photo, Mr. X was paralyzed in a "blue beam" coming from the UFO. He felt he was being levitated and told telepathically to be calm. Then he got the impression that someone was "flipping through a book showing him pages of dog pictures." He tried to scream but couldn't, then fell to the ground, whereupon the object and the beam disappeared.

On later occasions Mr. X claimed to hear a humming sound in his head, which indicated to him that the UFO had returned. He would then go outside, hear more voices and see more pictures in his head, and see the UFO. Several times he was able to obtain more photos.

The case is much more complex than can be related here, with Mr. X producing a videotape of the UFO, aliens with shields and a glowing rod who beamed down from the object, a strange black dog that followed the witness, a baldheaded human who appeared in his bedroom, and two civilians with pistols who attempted to take the photos and claimed to have a "material seizure warrant."

The incidents and photos have been reported by

WEAR-TV in nearby Pensacola, WKRG-TV in Mobile, Alabama, the Pensacola ***News Journal,*** *the wire services, the* ***Miami Herald,*** *and current issues of the* ***MUFON UFO Journal.***

Robert D. Boyd, CUFOS' investigator coordinator and MUFON state section director for Alabama, has provided us with the results of his investigation, published here for the first time.—GME.

Photographic Analysis

The bare details of the Gulf Breeze sightings as described above cannot do justice to the convoluted nature of this case. CUFOS has been asked several times by ufologists and the press to comment on Gulf Breeze. Given the complexity of the case and the fact that only Robert Boyd of CUFOS has talked to the primary witness, we have previously declined to state our position. We do so now because we are quite concerned about

"The Gulf Breeze photographs taken by Mr. X are most probably a hoax."

the possible ramifications for ufology if Gulf Breeze is eventually discovered to be a hoax.

The CUFOS position can be stated simply: the photographs taken at Gulf Breeze by Mr. X are most probably a hoax. Moreover, the investigation of the case has been less than competent, a circumstance contributing to continuing interest in the photos.

Let's begin with the photographs themselves. Almost every experienced ufologist, upon first viewing the color images, has said something like, "These photos are too hokey to be real." This includes not only both authors and other staff at CUFOS, but also Willy Smith of the UNICAT project and Robert Nathan of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. Nathan's opinion can be summarized by this quote: "I have the feeling that somebody is perpetrating a hoax."

Of course, "real" photos of UFOs might just look hokey, but there are more problems. It is curious that several investigators have remarked, upon viewing the prints, that there is a waviness in the images that makes them appear to be taken near water or in water. Yet the pictures are said to have been taken near Mr. X's home, not on the Gulf of Mexico. Another interesting feature is the obvious non-symmetrical shape of the UFO and the flaw in its bottom rim (evident only on good quality prints, not in newspaper reproductions).

If the photographs are a hoax, we can suggest at least two possible methods.

One is to take the prints as reflections in water. This method has the advantage of requiring the photographer to work at a body of water, away from his home, so that his neighbors would be unable to view his creative efforts. Another classic technique of trick photography is to take the photos as a reflection off a pane of glass. Either of these methods would require the use of a model or common household object, explaining the flaws in the objects's appearance.

And it is still possible that, despite the use of a Polaroid camera, the witness has developed an ingenious means of creating double exposures.

Never underestimate the cleverness of the motivated common man.

Here is another problem with the photographs, in a lesson taken from UFO history. How many photos of UFOs has Mr. X taken? Dozens. How many reliable photos of UFOs exist with the exception of Gulf Breeze? Probably around 2 dozen, give or take a few. Does that make Mr. X's photos appear less plausible? Absolutely.

Yet another odd fact. Dave Barry, reporting for the ***Miami Herald***, visited Mr. X a few months ago in the company of a photographer from the newspaper. The photographer was quick to point out that some of the film used by Mr. X has an ASA rating of 80, which means it is relatively slow to react to light. Why is this a problem? Because Mr. X claims that the UFO moves almost continually, and a moving object would appear blurred with this film unless the shutter was left open for some time. But Mr. X's images of the UFO are relatively sharp, and he has not opened his camera shutter for excessive amounts of time. As the Herald photographer stated, "It just doesn't look right."

If the photographs are such poor evidence, why the continued interest in this case? Putting aside the actions of the local newspaper, the ***Gulf Breeze Sentinel***, and its editor, who has covered the story extensively, one contributing factor has been the willingness of the local MUFON investigators to endorse the authenticity of the photos before detailed analysis. In the December 10 issue of the ***Sentinel***, Charles Flannigan and Donald Ware are quoted as follows:

"Preliminary evaluation, prior to the completion of the photogrammetric analysis, is an unknown of great significance because of the quality of the five photographs..." How, we ask, can it be determined that one has "quality" photographs prior to the analysis? The answer is simple. You cannot, if you are conducting a serious, unbiased investigation.

The Witness

There are other indications that the quality of the investigative work has fallen short. One of us (Boyd) was astonished to learn, in late March, that the MUFON team had not yet canvassed Mr. X's neighborhood for potential witnesses, even though the original sightings had been publicized as early as November 19.

Talking to as many neighbors as possible is crucial in this case because Mr. X claims that a large UFO has often been hovering low over his neighborhood. If true, we would expect several sightings from his immediate neighbors. If there are few such sightings (and so far, that is true), one is led to wonder about the veracity of Mr. X's testimony.

After some prodding, Mr. X took a lie detector test, which he passed, on February 18 and 23 of this year. The investigators have pointed to this test as evidence for Mr. X's sincerity. However, it is well known that sociopathic personalities can pass lie detector tests even when telling falsehoods. CUFOS

does not put much stock in the results of any lie detector test, whether pro or con (since nervous, truthful people can also fail a test).

The investigators also seem to have overlooked several curious parallels between incidents described by Mr. X and the events described in Whitley Strieber's book, ***Communion***. The most striking is Mr. X's mention of the smell of cinnamon during one close encounter. Strieber also mentioned that distinctive smell in his book (page 19). This coincidence is intriguing because nowhere else in the UFO literature can we find a mention of cinnamon, except for Mr. X's account and a book published a few months before his own experiences. Does this prove the case is a hoax? Of course not. But should we be looking for such parallels in Mr. X's testimony? Absolutely, and the fact that the MUFON team has not is discouraging.

We believe the points raised above are sufficient in themselves to cast doubt on the validity of the Gulf Breeze events. There is more, though, and it concerns the personality and actions of Mr. X himself. One of us (Boyd) has verified by interview that Mr. X, a prominent businessman in the community, is known as a practical joker and prankster. In fact, we have been told that Mr. X told a number of his young friends (he does many things for children and teenagers) that he was going to pull off "the Ultimate Prank." This statement was allegedly made in the summer of 1987. Given the sensational nature of the Gulf Breeze events, these revelations are hardly of the type to increase our confidence in the case.

Mr. X has also made the rather unbelievable claim that on January 13 of this year, two men with large pistols came to his home and said they had a "material seizure warrant" and demanded his photographs. Shades of the men-in-black stories of the fifties and sixties. First, there is no such thing as a "material seizure warrant." And second, the government does not come around seizing photographs that have already been published in a newspaper (you see, the old MIB stories concerned an attempt by the dark forces to suppress evidence not yet made public, not gather evidence already released). Thus we don't believe Mr. X's story about the two men, and once again, more doubt is cast on the rest of his story.

Mr. X is clearly articulate and bright. But those who have visited with him at length have come away somewhat disturbed by his personality. Rather than use our own observations, we quote Dave Barry, the reporter, again. He concluded after his talk with Mr. X that, "He acts agitated, manic. Not to put too fine a point on it, he acts a little crazy." Has this bothered the investigators on the scene? Not too much. But it certainly bothers and concerns us.

The "Investigation"

Let's step back for a moment and take stock of what we have learned. A fellow in Florida has taken dozens of pictures of UFOs that hover over his community, even his own home. This is an unprecedented situation in the annals of ufology.

Recall the boomerang sightings in the New York city area. Thousands of people saw the huge boomerang-shaped UFO over a period of several years, and many photos were taken of the object (see the November/December 1987 ***IUR*** for a review of the book, ***Night Siege***, about the sightings). That is precisely the point. This UFO came back ***many*** times, and ***many*** people saw it each time. But in Gulf Breeze, although the UFO has returned many times, almost no one except Mr. X has seen it around his home.

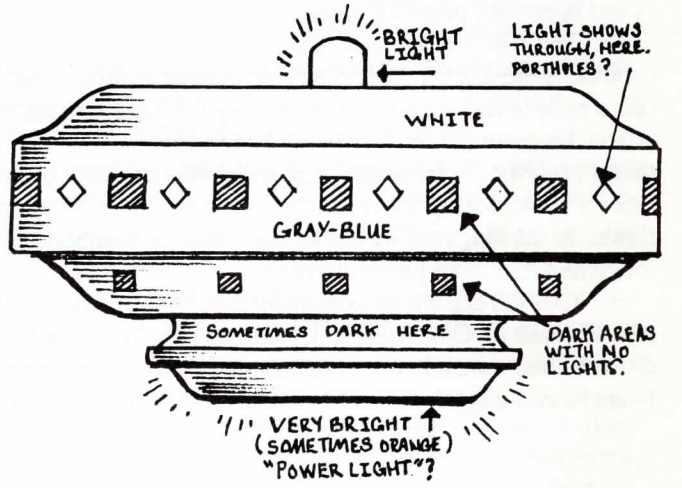
Some more points. Most competent investigators who examine the photographs believe they look fake, even if the exact mechanism cannot be specified.

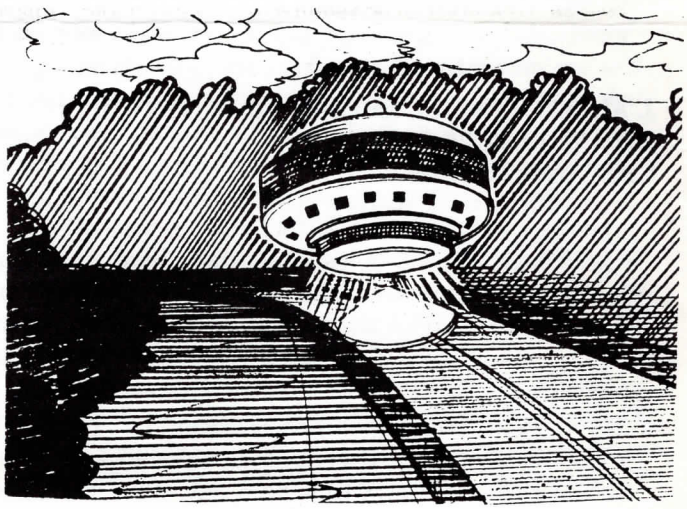
Mr. X is alleged to have been planning to pull off the "Ultimate Prank" since last summer. And Mr. X is known as a practical joker.

Given all this (and there is other information that is not yet ready for publication), we would expect any investigators to treat the case with caution and take great care to have the photos analyzed as soon as possible. We have seen that the investigators have acted instead with what some might term reckless abandon.

As for the photo analysis, nothing conclusive has yet been done after all this time. And consider this amazing fact: the ***National Enquirer*** declined to publish the photographs in their publication! This action from a journal that has told us how to detect if our co-workers are star people. On this one, we're with the ***Enquirer***.

It has not taken any penetrating powers of analysis or relentless onsite investigation to gather the evidence or reach the conclusions presented above (although Boyd has made about





Top: The Gulf Breeze object, adapted from Mr. X's drawing. Bottom: An artist's rendering of one of the Polaroid photos, showing the object hovering over a road. Artwork courtesy of Susan Smith.

half a dozen trips to the Gulf Breeze area). The evidence has been there for the taking. We believe that certain leads were furnished to Boyd by concerned citizens primarily because he had expressed an open-minded, unbiased approach to the investigation and wanted only the truth about what was taking place. It is the responsibility of an investigator to follow any serious lead, pro or con, on any case.

One more issue should be mentioned. Some investigators have expressed the opinion that Mr. X should be considered innocent until proven guilty, as if we were dealing with a court of law. But the methodology of science is not to be confused with that of our legal system. The witness is an integral part of any UFO report, i.e., the witness is one of the measuring instruments, just has he or she often is in any of the social sciences. This means that witness reliability and validity must be ascertained if one is to have confidence in the data being analyzed. Any facts which weaken our confidence in the believability of witness testimony are thus crucial to an examination of any UFO report, or, in this case, photographs.

Unlike many UFO reports which rely only on witness testimony, the Gulf Breeze reports will stand or fall on the authenticity of the photographs. We welcome and support detailed studies of the photographs. Either the photos will be found to be authentic or they won't. That is a reassuring point in this otherwise perplexing case.

The UFO community cannot conduct itself as does the debunking movement, with its tacit agreement never to criticize one's colleagues or allies. That is why we have written this article, however painful it may have been to say some of these things in public. Science advances by healthy criticism of each other's work, not by silent acceptance of potential errors and flaws. In the long run, we are all the better for weathering the rough and tumble of public debate.

CUFOS expects this statement to be both the first and last one we make on Gulf Breeze. Ufologists have better things to do with their valuable time and resources than spend endless hours listening to tales of UFO visitations from Mr. X. Hoaxes do not occur often, despite what skeptics may claim, but when they do, it is important that ufology quickly expose them for what they are. The UFO community did this with the Billy Meier case in Switzerland, as well as several others.

We hope this statement from CUFOS contributes to a rational discussion of the Gulf Breeze events and a full expose of the facts and circumstances surrounding the reported sightings.

The Spectrum of UFO Research now available

The proceedings of the 1981 CUFOS Conference have just been published by the Center for UFO Studies under the title, ***The Spectrum of UFO Research***. This 232-page monograph contains many papers that have not been published elsewhere. Edited by Mimi Hynek, the book includes papers by J. Allen Hynek and Howard Schechter (on an acoustic analysis of a recorded UFO sound), Bruce Maccabee (a definitive analysis of the McMinnville photos), Budd Hopkins (on investigating abductions), Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos and Miguel Guasp (on standards in UFO report evaluation), Keith Basterfield (on hypnagogic imagery), John Schuessler (medical injuries in the Cash/Landrum case), J. Gordon Melton (a survey of contactees), Alan Holt (UFO maneuverability and radiation characteristics), Joan Jeffers (the psychic connection), Donald A. Johnson (on the ignition interference effect), Mark Rodeghier (on vehicle interference reports), Alvin H. Lawson (birth trauma imagery), and Roberto Pinotti (on early Italian cases).

The Spectrum of UFO Research may be ordered for $11.00 (plus $1.80 postage and handling) from CUFOS Publication Sales, 2457 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659.

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