APPENDIX B: THE YUKON UFO AND REENTRY OBSERVATIONS

A litany of studies and a chorus of skeptics cast so much doubt on eyewitness testimony that we have to wonder if mere mortals can distinguish rain from shine. Whether the subject is an accident, a crime, or an everyday event, witnesses score so many errors in their descriptions that the truth of experience degrades into half-truth or even less. The critics blame omissions, distortions, illusions, expectations, personal desires, social influences, memory alterations, and verbal constraints as active agents of corruption, and argue that even people who have the training and practice to observe well, like police officers and airline pilots, fare no better than the rest of us. The seemingly inevitable fate of eyewitness experience brings to mind what Robert Browning said of a poem: "Only God and I knew what it meant when I wrote it. Now only God knows."

If conventional experiences suffer so much vulnerability, how much more fragile are UFO encounters? Skeptics say the answer is a great deal, and in fact witness error accounts for most of the mystery attributed to UFOs. For this reason testimonial evidence is all but worthless and rightly rejected by science. As a case in point, highlighted in the Condon report (William K. Hartmann, pp.571-577) and in *UFOs—A Scientific Debate* (Menzel, pp.155-161), the reentry of the Soviet Zond IV moon probe on the evening of March 3, 1968 led several witnesses to describe fragments burning up a hundred miles overhead as a metallic spaceship with windows flying at treetop level. Hard as it is to believe that anyone could be so wrong, the skeptics caution that such mistakes occur all the time with UFOs.

Ufologists familiar with the same example draw just the opposite conclusion. Skeptics emphasize a few gross distortions but overlook that the great majority of Zond witnesses reported accurate descriptions. The takeaway lesson of the Zond event as ufologists see it should be that eyewitnesses are quite good on the whole, far more likely to reflect the actual events than an exotic distortion and deserving of respect as truthful observers.

For one side the glass is half empty; for the other, half full. In two cases known to be reentries the mixture of the accurate and the exotic repeats itself, and serves as a warning that some witnesses see true while others see false even when observing the same phenomenon. The following illustrations offer better evidence than any verbal description of how far witnesses can diverge in their depictions after observing a spectacular aerial phenomenon.

The first group shows a sample of witness drawings for the Zond IV reentry of March 3, 1968 over the east-central United States. Most witnesses depict a few luminous objects or several large lights trailed by a swarm of smaller sparks, quite appropriate for the reentry that provided the source of the observations. A few illustrations reveal something quite different, not separate lights but a structured craft with windows and even metal plates visible on the hull. The reentry has transformed into a UFO. These drawings and more are included in a Project Blue Book file of more than 400 pages for the Zond incident, found at the Fold3 website:
http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#1|haouYr9guzCEIcBIdTd53zRkuPfrUCmoe
[Easiest to find by going to the Project Blue Book area of the Fold3 website (http://www.fold3.com/title_461/project_blue_book_ufo_investigations/) and entering March 1968, then choosing "browse" and selecting the year and month from the dropdown menu, and finally "Northeastern US" from the menu of cases.]

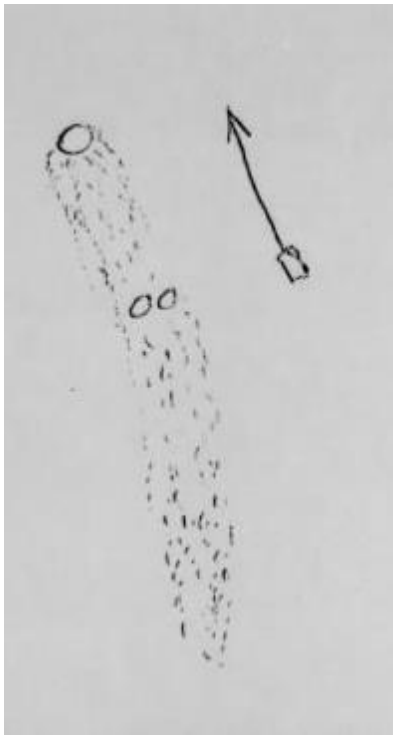
A second group comes from a Soviet report on the booster reentry event of October 30, 1963 over the Ukraine. The selected illustrations, prepared by artists who interviewed witnesses, show the same range of descriptions as the Zond drawings, from realistic impressions of debris burning like meteors in the upper atmosphere to progressively more stereotypical images that at the greatest extreme turn into the technological forms of rocket ships and UFOs. Everyone looked at the same stimulus, its nature unmistakably a reentry, yet some witnesses saw a conventional phenomenon while others saw spaceships. The full report is available at James Oberg's "Space Age Myths and Legends" website and is well worth a look. The text is in Russian but the illustrations tell the story. See under "October 30, 1963, Ukraine—Kosmos-20 booster perceived as structured UFO with windows," http://www.jamesoberg.com/10-30-1963_kiev.pdf.

Oberg posts several other examples of reentries that have emerged from the cocoon of imagination as spectacular UFOs to fly over France, the Baltic, Morocco, and other areas. See "Satellite Reentries DO Spark Major UFO Report," http://www.unexplained-mysteries.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=260501. Again, all are worth examining.

With these images in mind we come last of all to the giant Yukon UFO of December 11, 1996. Martin Jasek collected illustrations from many of the witnesses he interviewed during his investigation of the case in 1999. What these invaluable pictures show ranges from an elongated cluster of scattered lights against the night sky to an extensive array of lights to lights in regular rows and finally to lights and windows associated with the hull of a distinctive craft. The selection presented here covers that range, while the full gallery is available at the UFO*BC website under "Yukon Sightings, Giant UFO in the Yukon Territory." See "Index to Over 30 Figures," http://www.ufobc.ca/yukon/22figureindex.htm.

Anyone committed to a UFO explanation for this event can explain the differences as due to some witnesses being close enough to see the lighted craft and its numerous lights, while witnesses at a greater distance discerned only the lights. The skeptic can toss out the UFO and accept only the lights, with the appearance of a craft resulting from a mixture of contour illusion to connect the unconnected lights with expectations shaped by years of publicity about how UFOs are supposed to look. But a reentry event happened undeniably on that night, was visible where the witnesses were located, and passed west to east at the time most witnesses reported their sightings. This evidence argues in favor of the reentry as the cause for the UFO reports. So do the drawings that display the same range that characterizes the other cases where reentry is the known cause.

Group 1. Zond IV Reentry, March 3, 1968.



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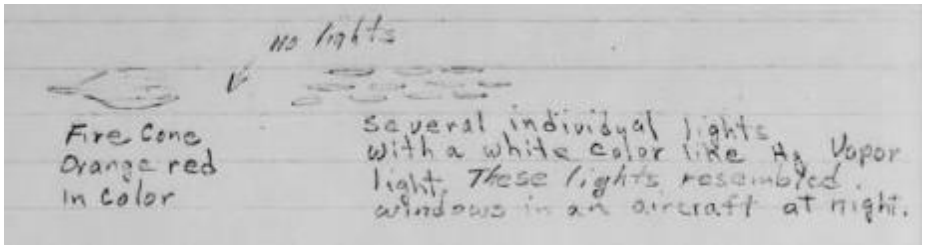

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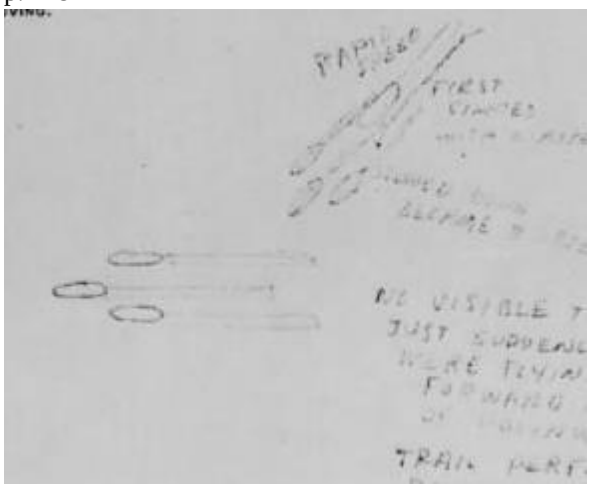

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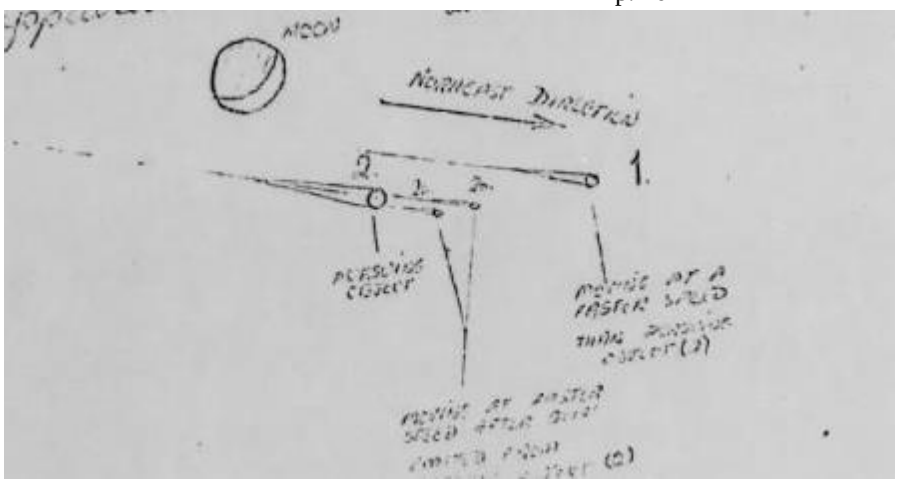

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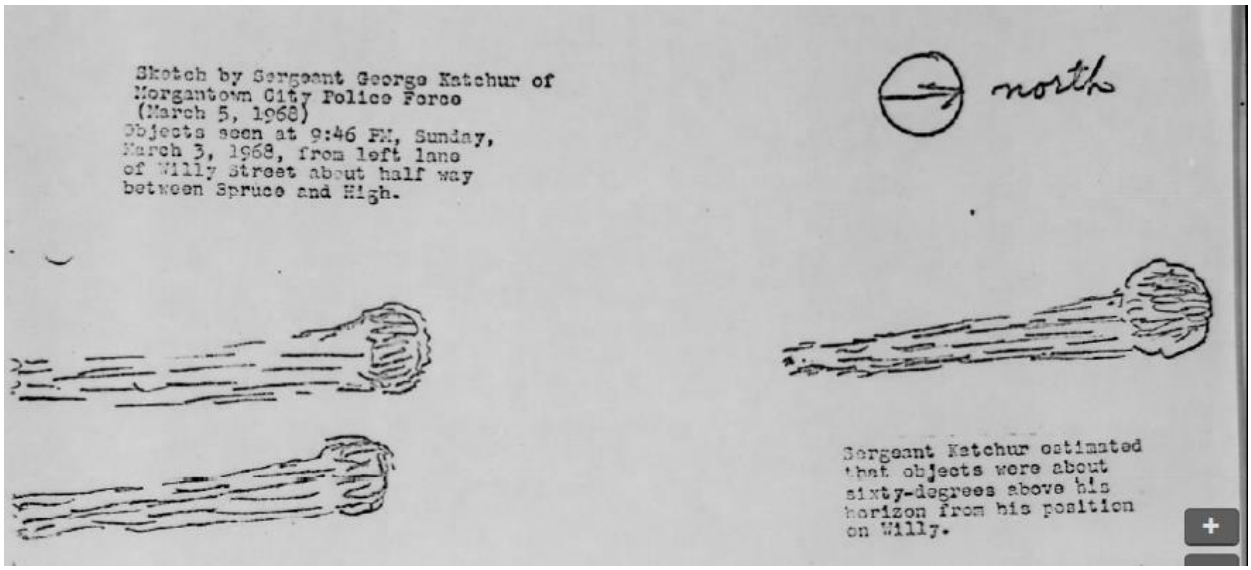

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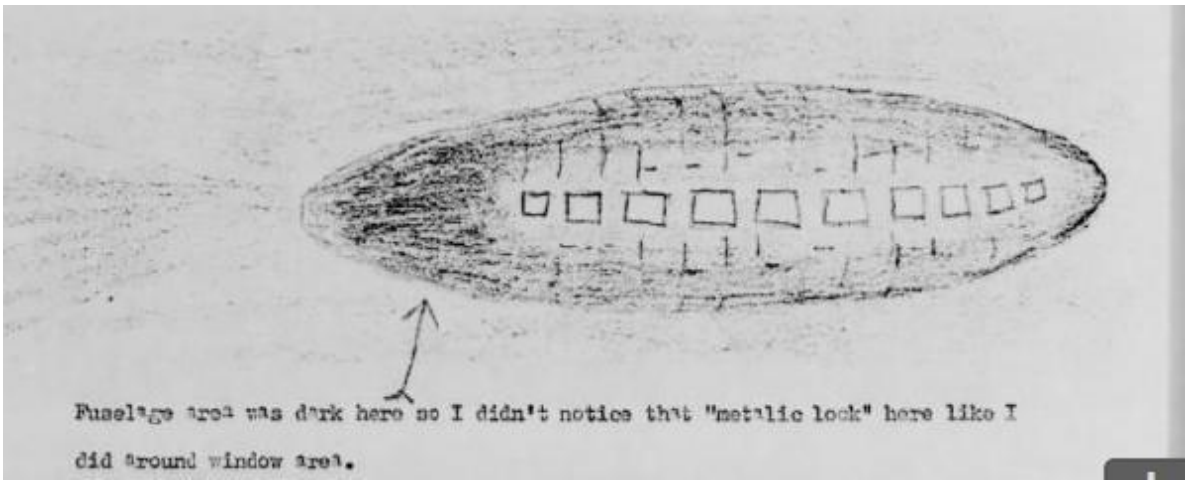

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Group 2. Ukraine Kosmos-20 Reentry, October 30, 1963.

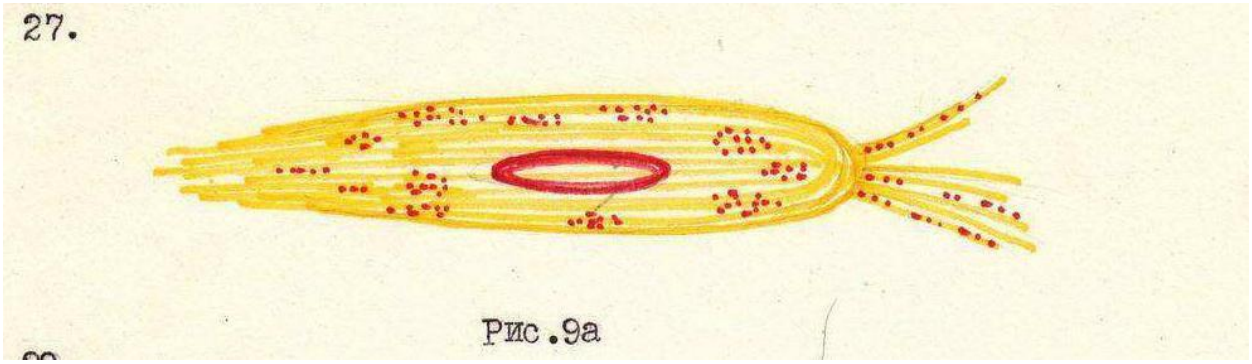

Рис.9а

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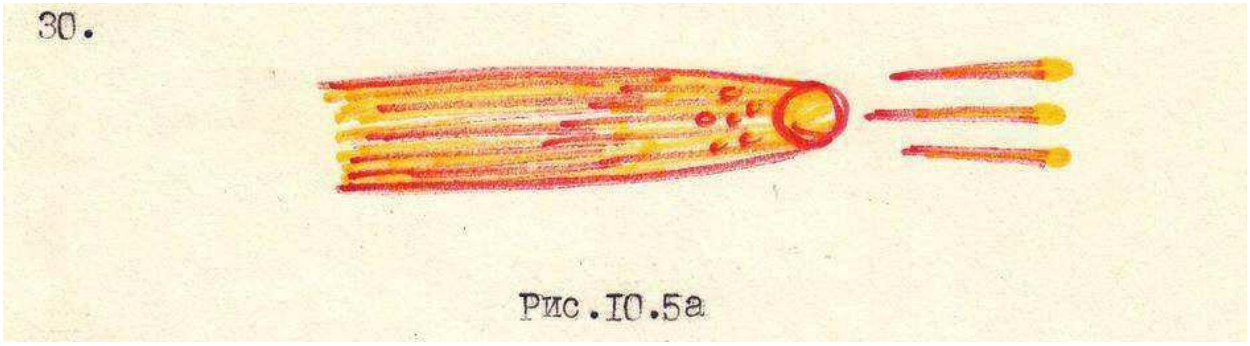

Рис.10.5а

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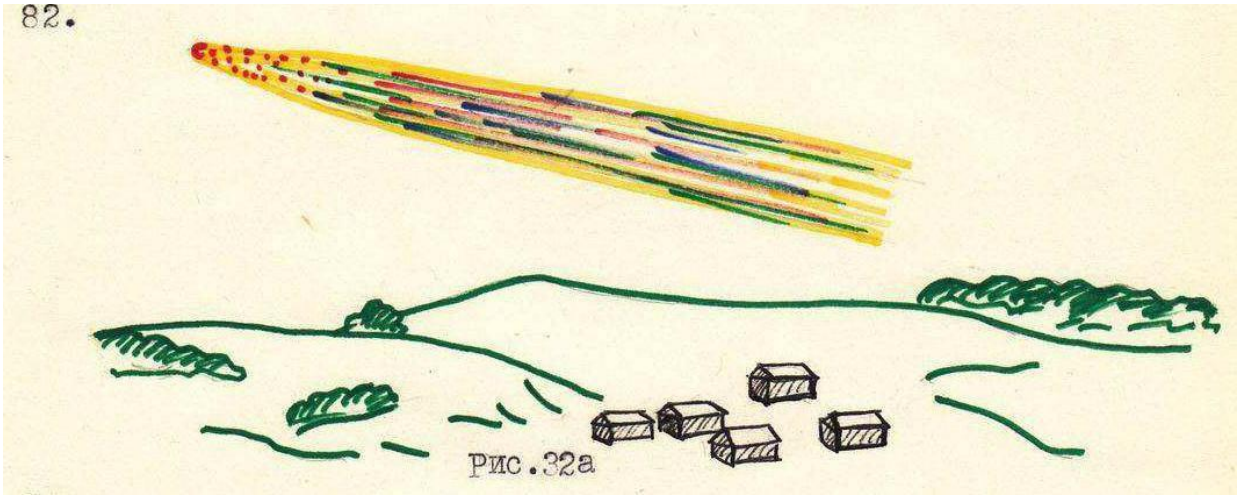
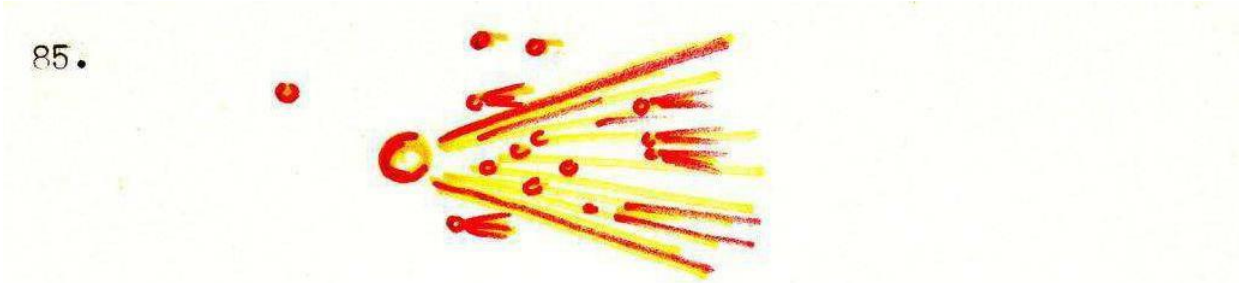


Рис.32а

p.14



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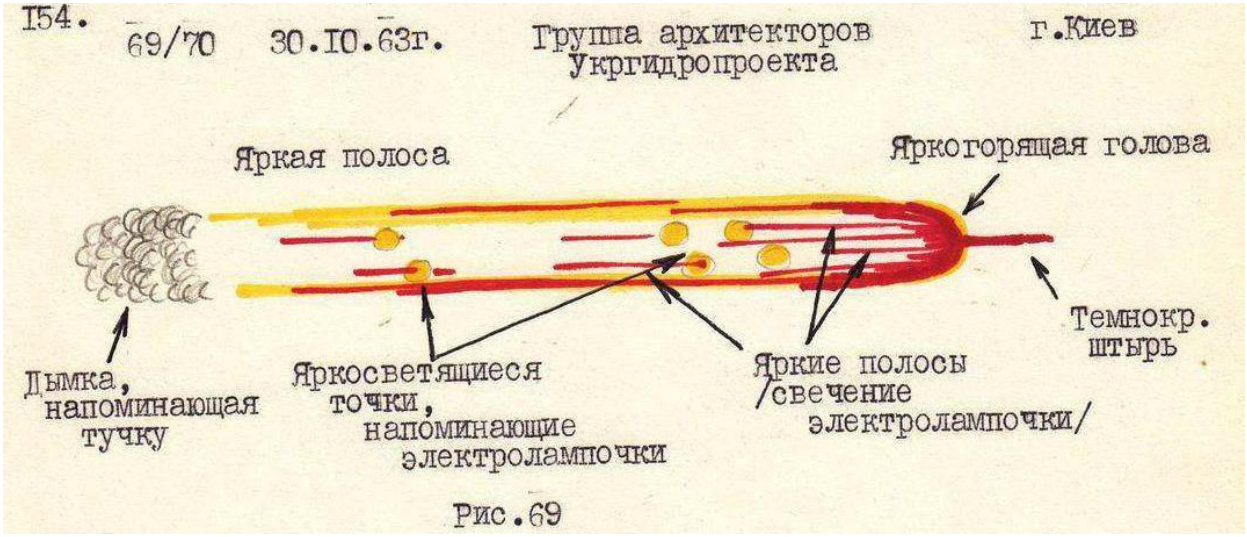
I54. 69/70 30.I0.63г. Группа архитекторов Укргидропроекта г.Киев
Яркая полоса
Яркогорящая голова
Темнокр. штырь
Дымка, напоминающая тучку
Яркосветящиеся точки, напоминающие электролампочки
Яркие полосы /свечение электролампочки/
Рис.69

p.18

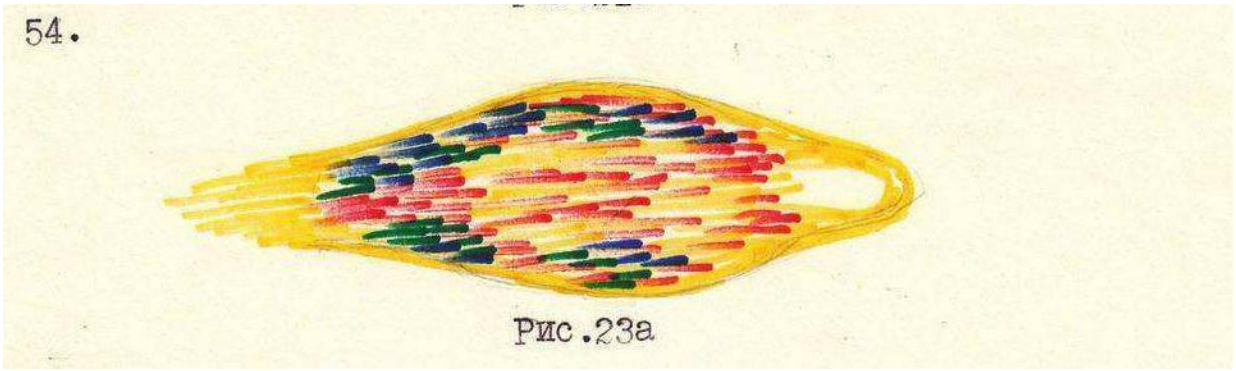
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Рис.23а

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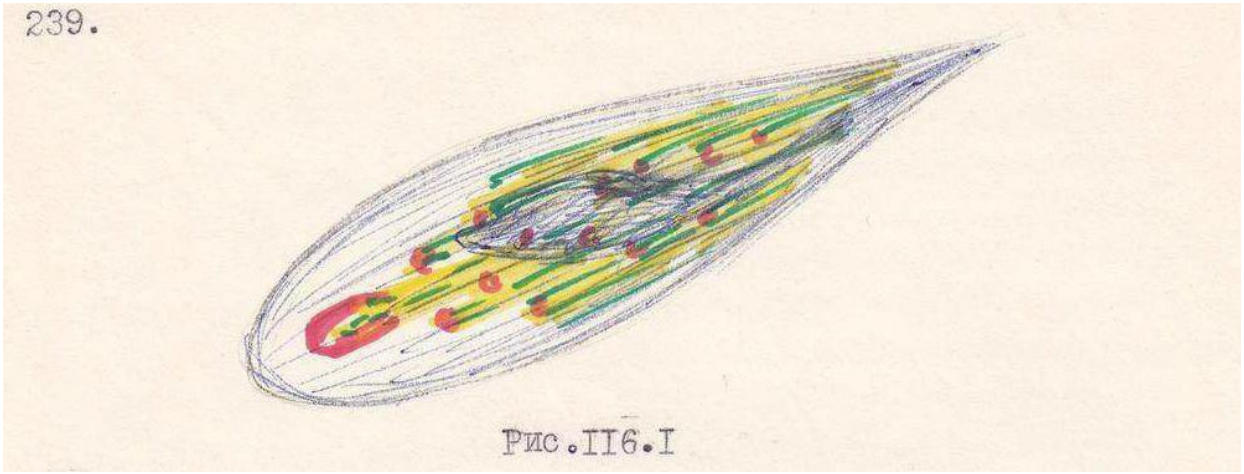
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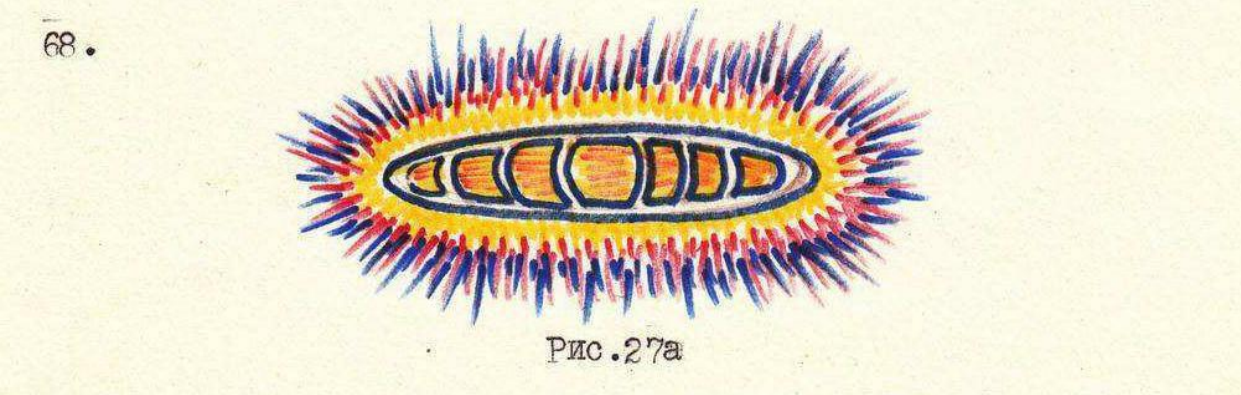
p. 23



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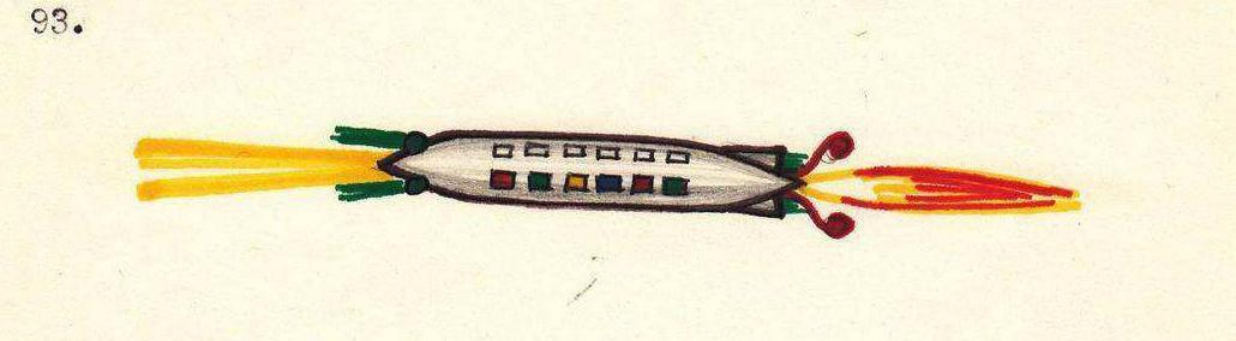

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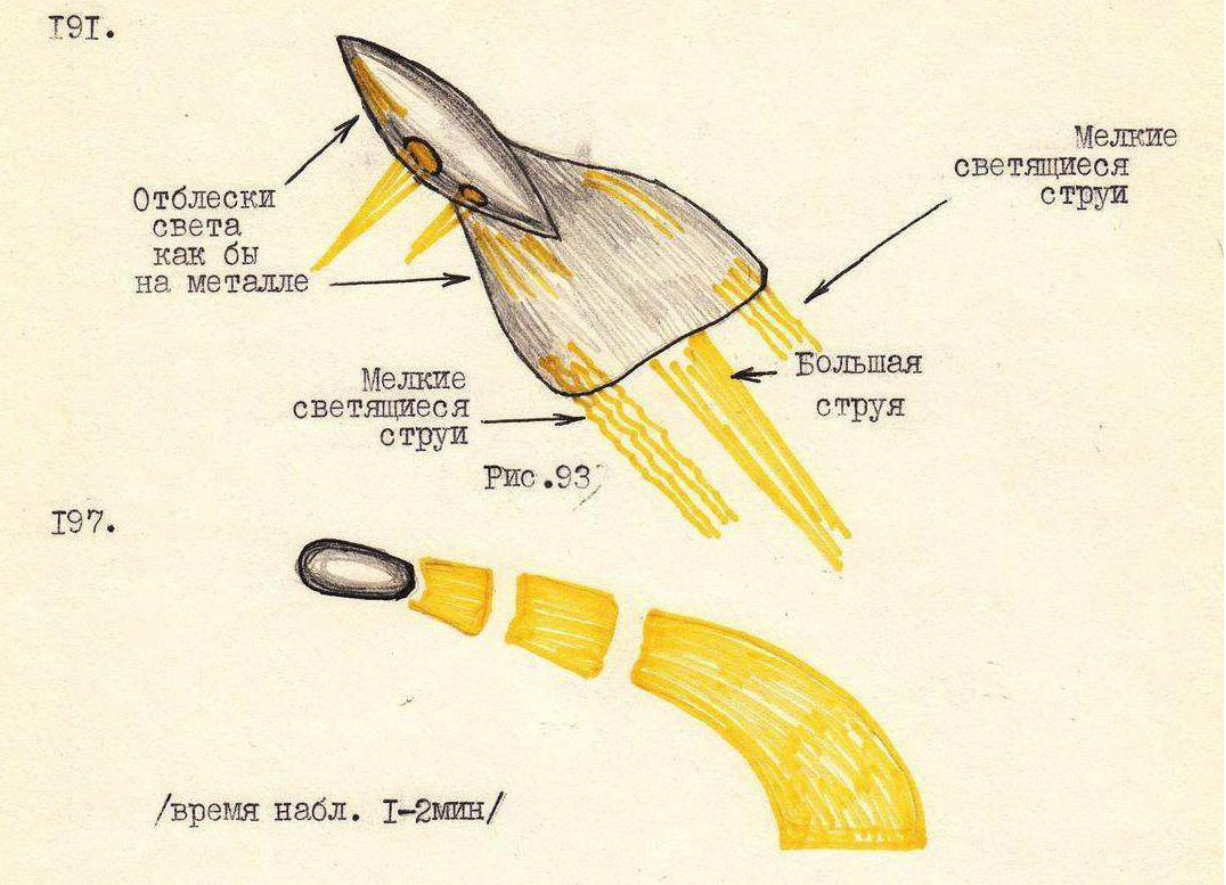
I9I.
Отблески
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как бы
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светящиеся
струи
Большая
струя
Мелкие
светящиеся
струи
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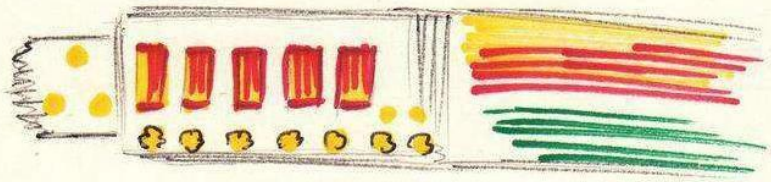
203.

красновато-желтые пятна



3 точки слабого света

4-5 точек яркого света /сходные с сваркой/

2-3 точки слабого света

Рис.99.3

215.

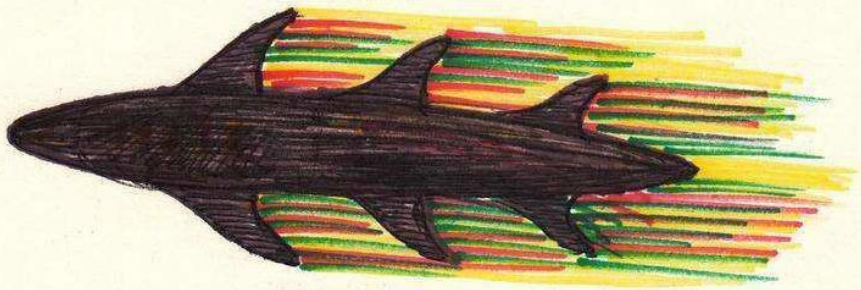


Рис.102.

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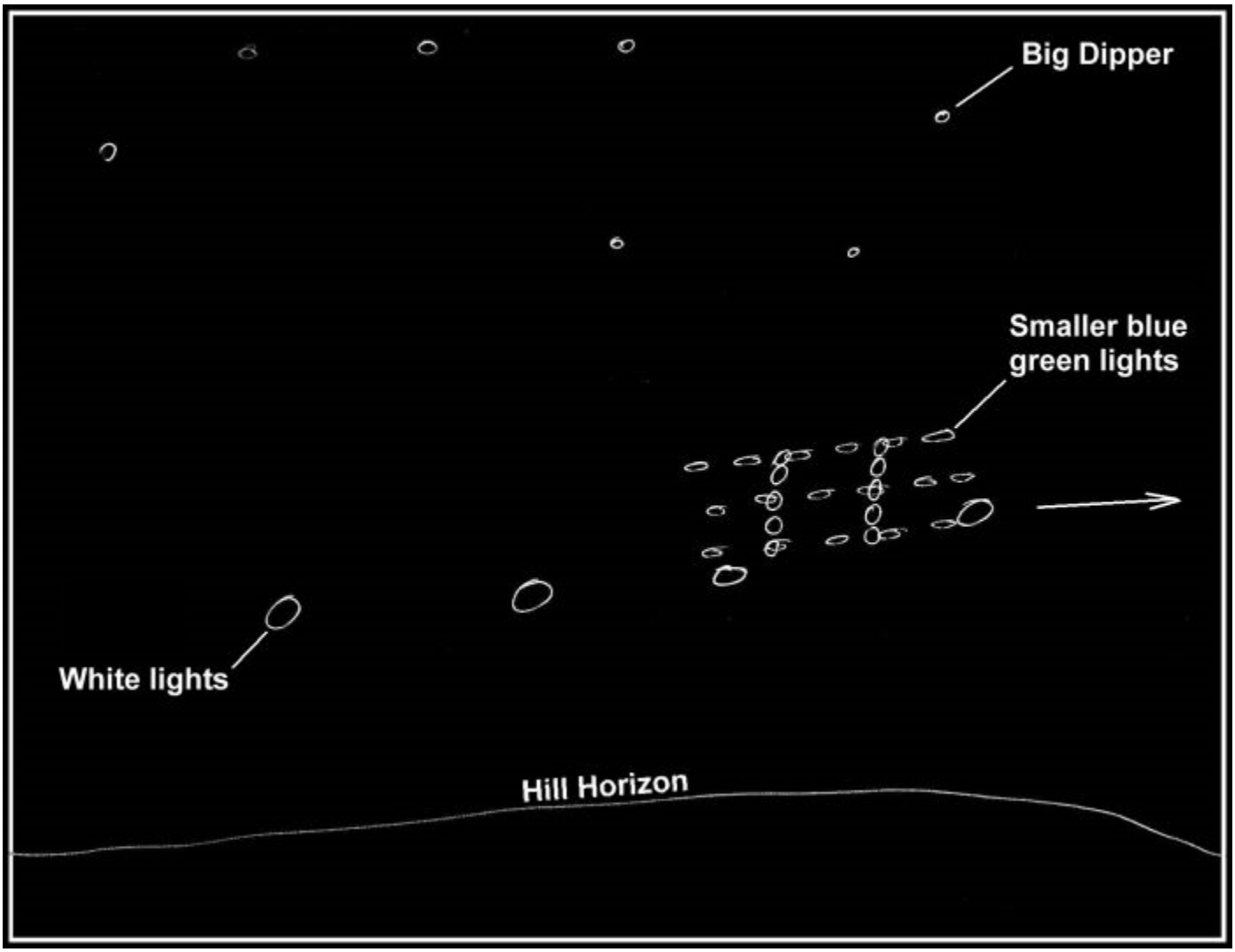
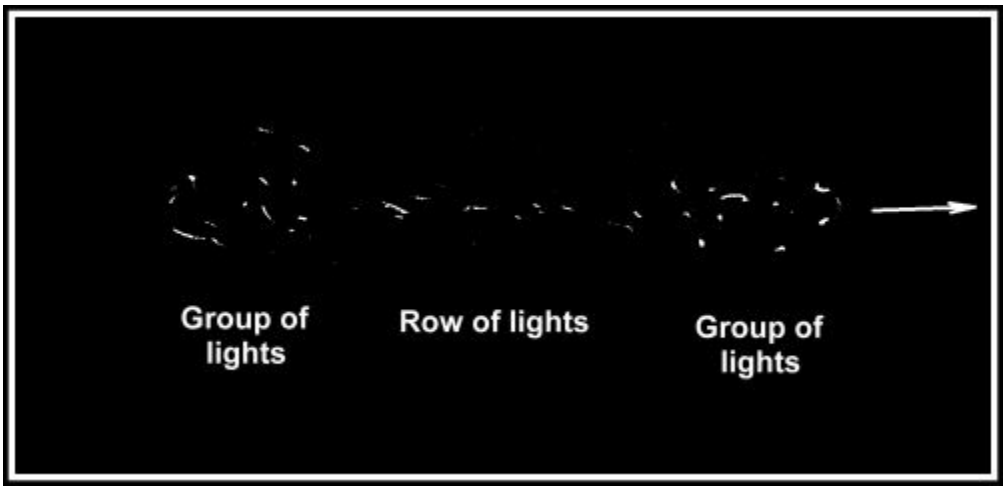
Group 3. Drawings of Yukon Giant UFO, December 11, 1996.

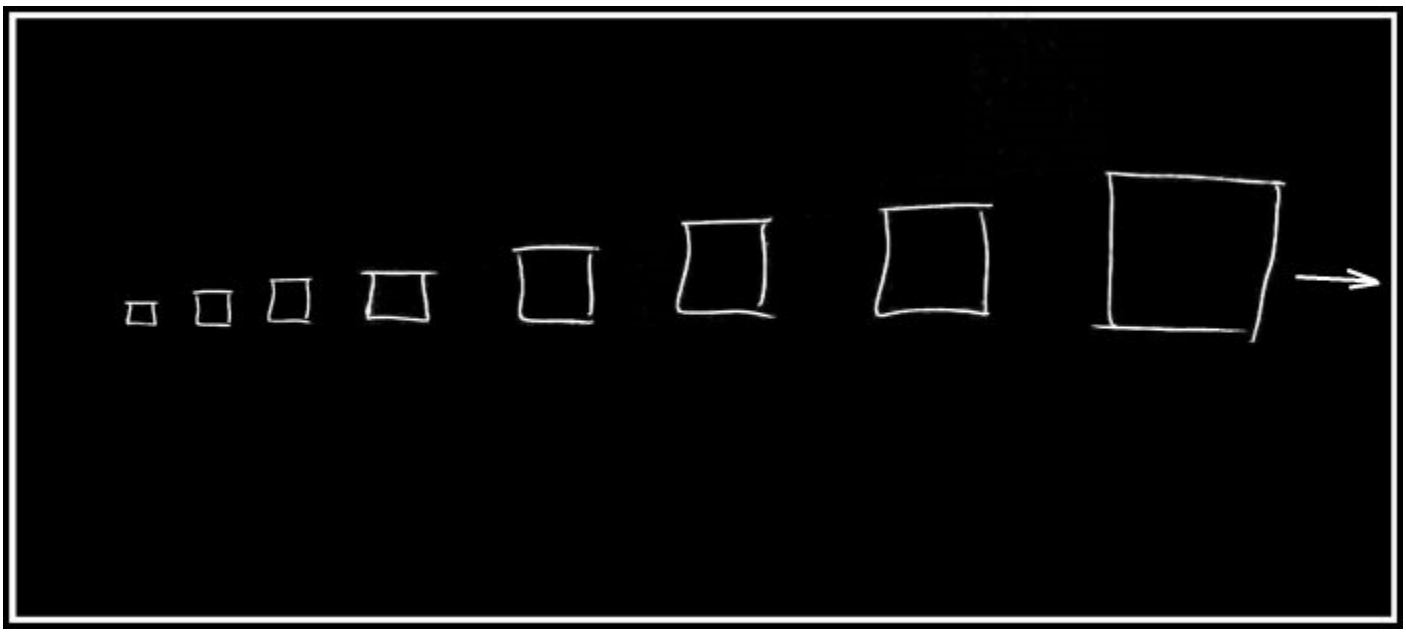
Drawing by UFO Witness PEL2



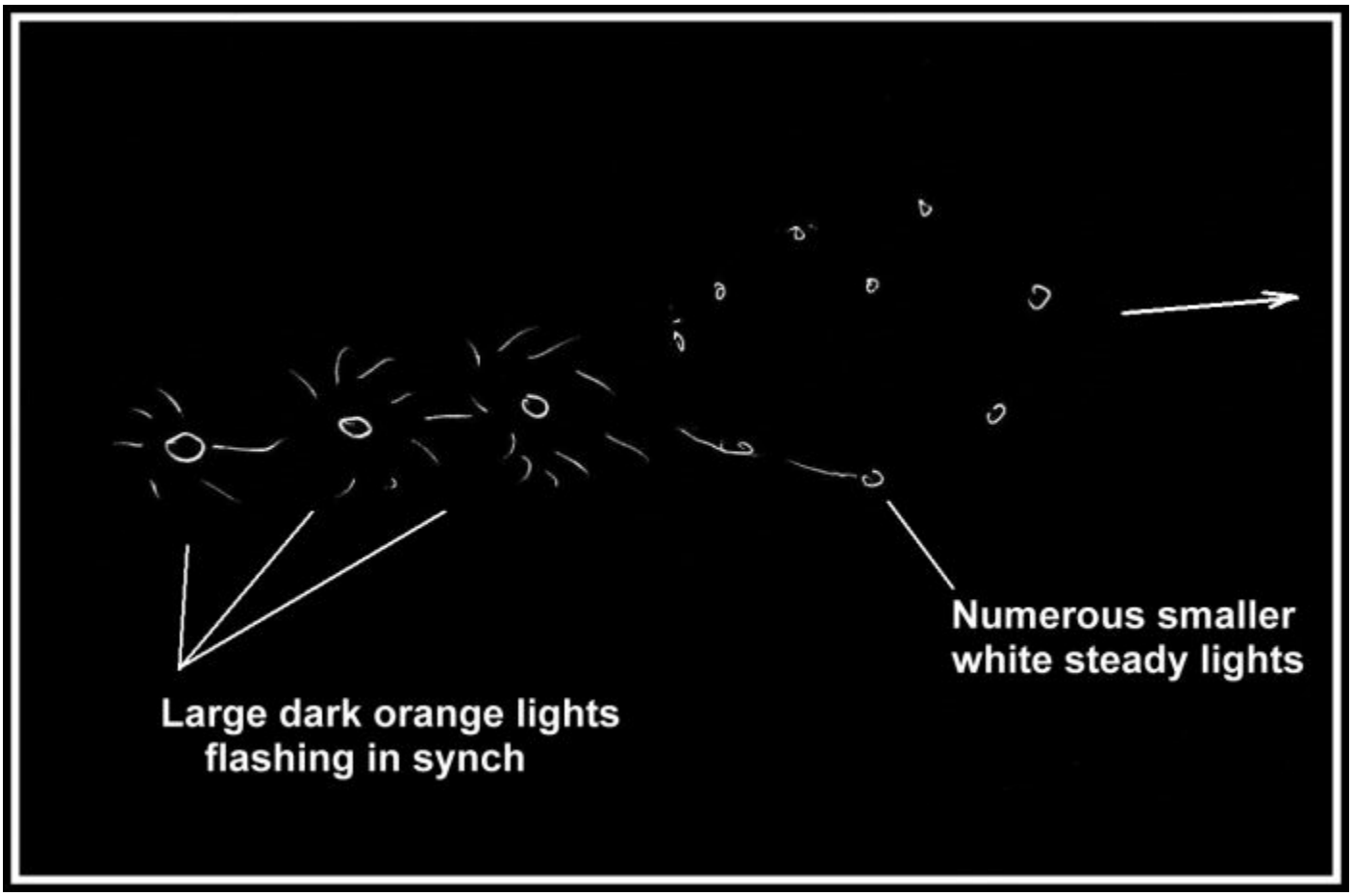
PEL3



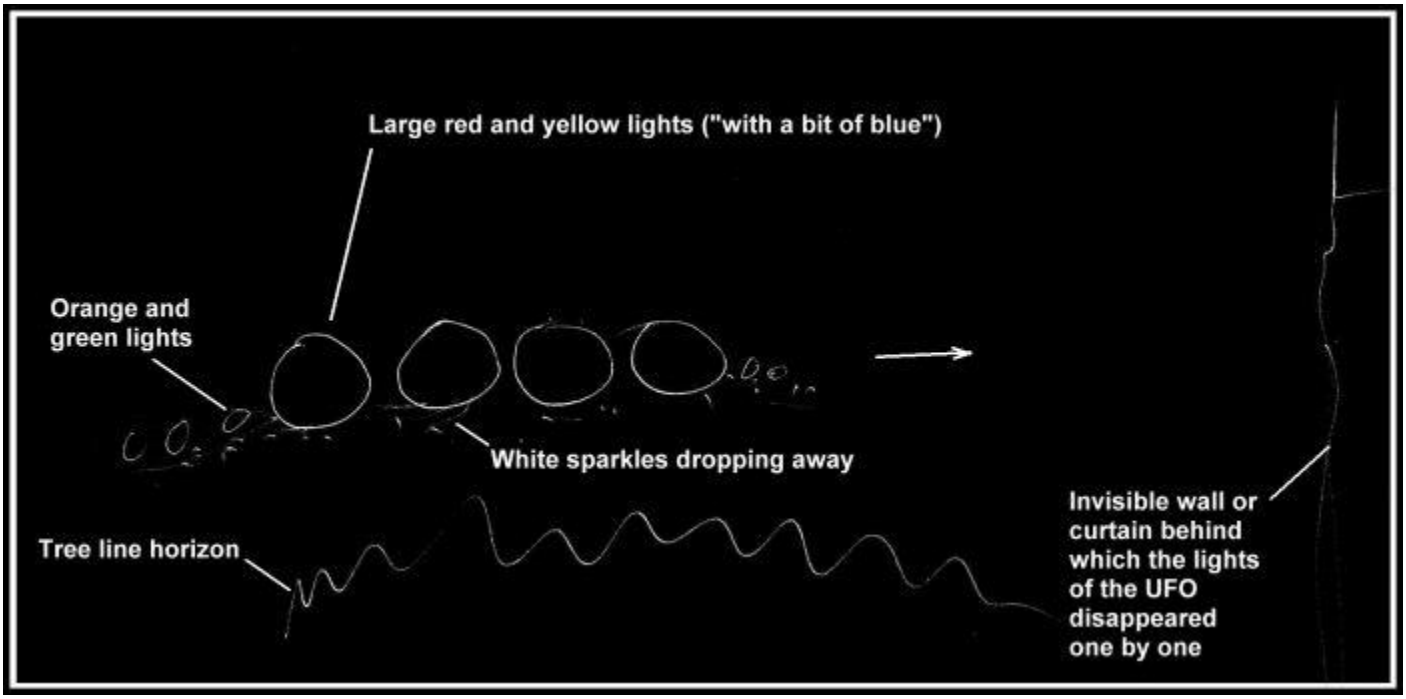
Drawing by UFO Witness PEL6



Drawing by UFO Witness CRM1

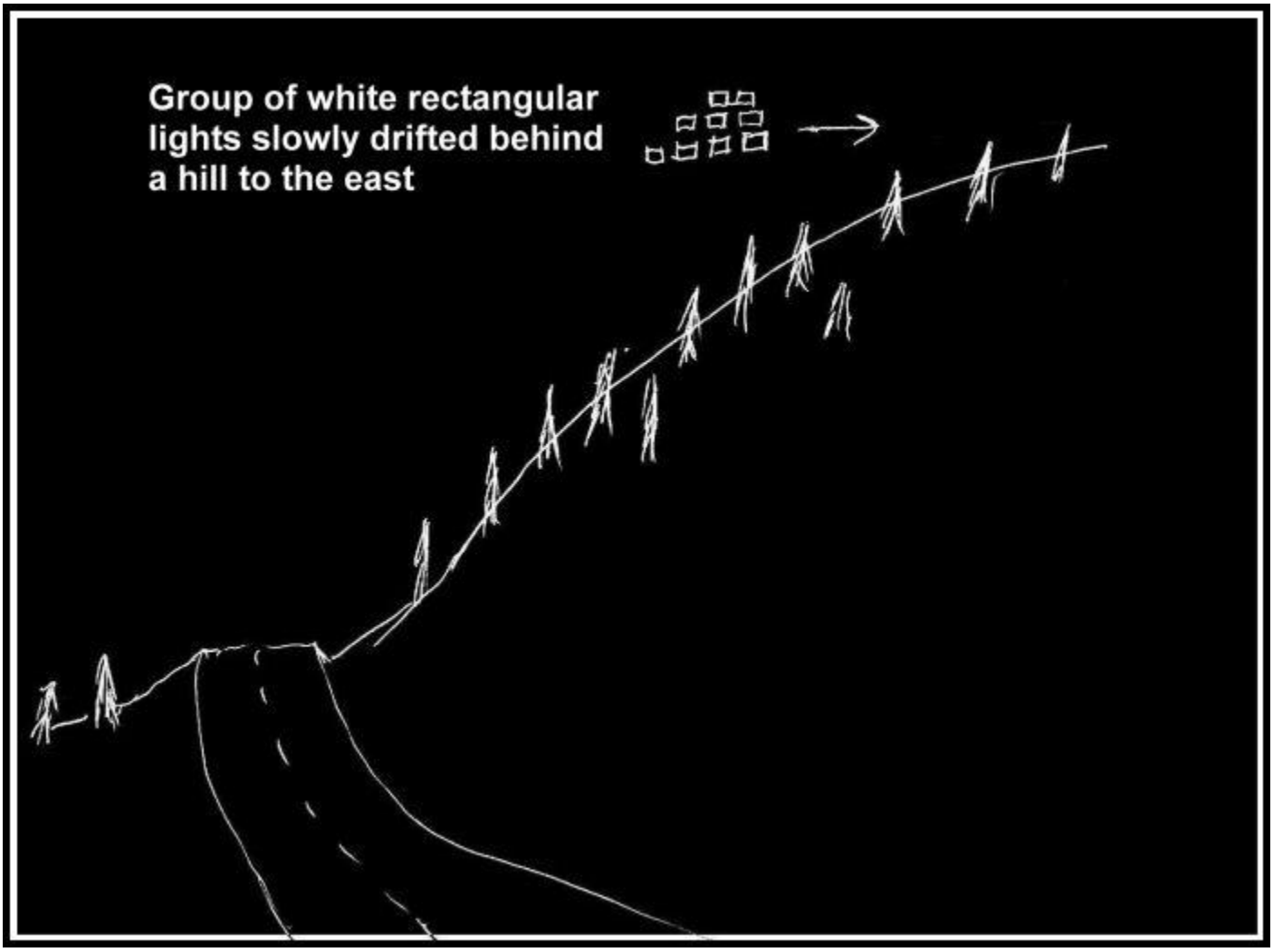


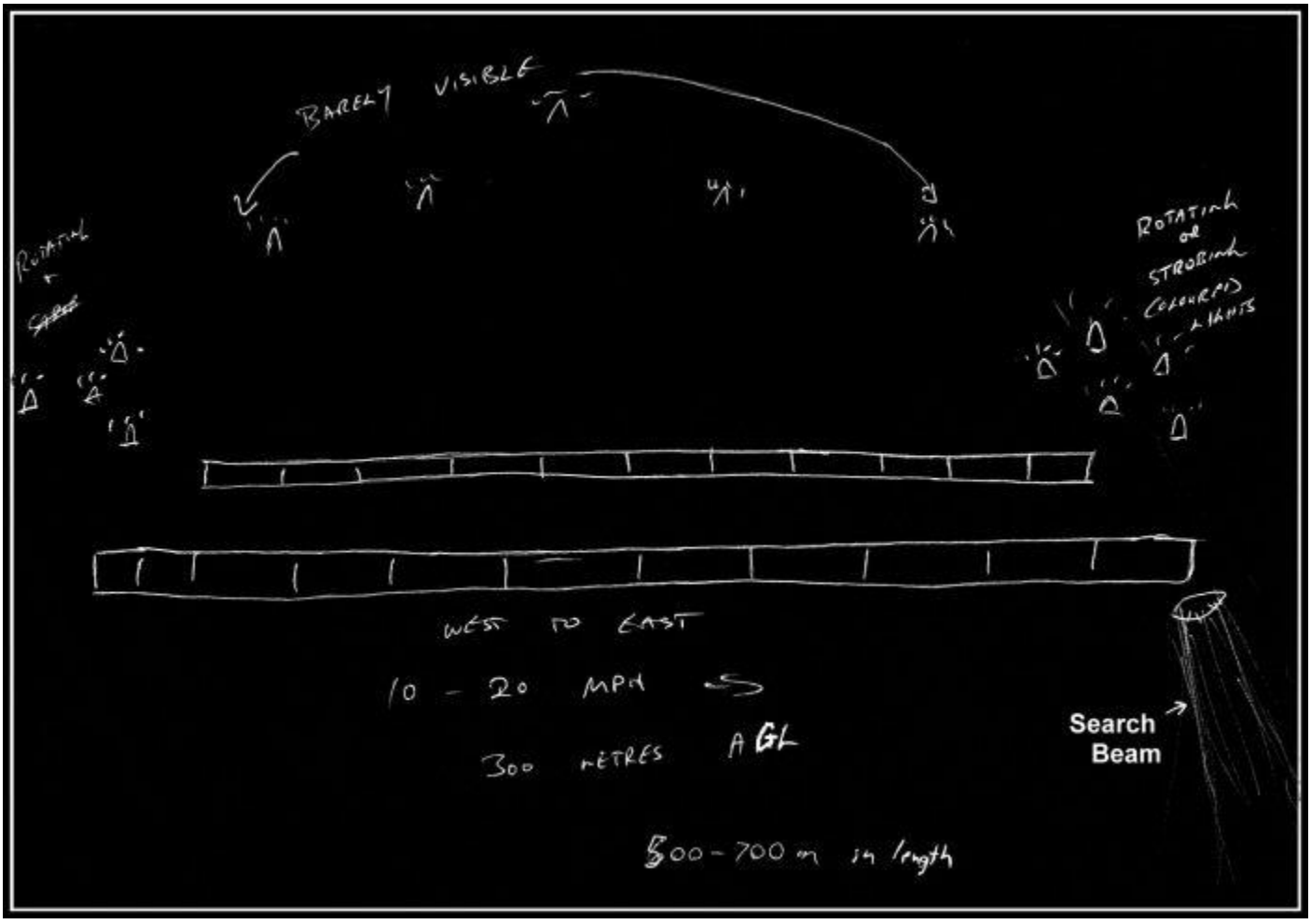
Drawing by UFO Witness CRM6



1st Drawing by UFO Witness PEL1

Investigator's Interpretation of 2nd Drawing by FOX1



1st Drawing by UFO Witness FOX3

Drawing by UFO Witness FOX4