

The Lebanon Fiery UFO

An Oregon MUFON Case Study

by

Tom Bowden

Oregon MUFON State Director

and

Keith Rowell

**Oregon MUFON Assistant State Director
Research Specialist in Librarianship**

June 28, 2009

Abstract

Keywords: Fiery—Burning—Multiple Witnesses—Low-flying UFO—Emitting Sparks

Description	First, the witnesses saw two silvery objects move beyond the horizon, then they saw a large flaming object pass directly overhead and disappear in the distance.
Witnesses	David and Rose Lowe (pseudonyms), husband and wife.
Time and Date	September 22, 2007, shortly after 9:00 PM.
Place	Lacomb, Oregon, a rural area about 10 miles north-east of the city of Lebanon, Oregon. Lat. 44° 36' 32" N; Long. 122° 43' 33" W
Weather	Clear sky, visibility 10 miles, wind NW 8 to 10 MPH, temperature 57° F
Duration	Sighting #1 — About 1 minute. Sighting #2 — About 10 to 15 seconds.

Last Updated: Monday, June 29, 2009

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SIGHTING DESCRIPTION	3
Large Fiery Object	3
Witnesses' Sketches	4
Another Possible Witness.....	6
Sighting Timeline	6
ENVIRONMENT.....	7
Neighborhood	7
Weather.....	7
EVIDENCE.....	8
Significant Points in Witness Testimony	8
Site Survey	8
ANALYSIS	9
The Silvery Objects.....	9
The Large Fiery Object.....	9
UFO Size	9
Physical Evidence	9
CONCLUSION	10
The Silvery Objects	10
The Fiery Object.....	10

INTRODUCTION

Two witnesses saw three unknown objects within a few minutes. One of these objects appeared especially close and bright, and seemed to emit flames and burning debris.

The witnesses, David and Rose Lowe (pseudonyms), were interviewed in person by a team of Oregon MUFON investigators on November 4, 2007, and subsequently the Oregon State Director has spoken with them on the telephone. The most recent telephone interview was on March 25, 2008

During our interviews, both witnesses seemed entirely credible. It is clear that they both believe that they saw something unusual that they cannot explain based on their knowledge and life experience.

Rose Lowe contacted local media, the *Albany Democrat-Herald*, which did two stories at least in 2007 on their UFO experience.

SIGHTING DESCRIPTION

On September 22, 2007, shortly before 9:00 PM, David and Rose went out on the patio behind their home to smoke. While out they were looking at the sky, they first noticed two bright lights moving from west to east. David saw these as bright, star-like lights that appeared to be satellites, but to Rose they appeared to be elongated, like airplane fuselages. Rose also saw one of these objects, she believes, appear to veer toward the northeast.

Just while the witnesses were discussing the first objects, David noticed another object right overhead and point upwards, saying to Rose, "Do you see that?"

Large Fiery Object

Rose looked up then, and they both saw what appeared to be a very large, bright, fiery orange-red object with flames shooting out of it. Burning chunks or sparks seemed to be falling away from it. Rose said she thought the bits of burning debris were falling to the ground, but David could not confirm this.

They both agree that the object appeared so large that they would have to hold out an open hand at arm's length to cover it. They said it appeared to be as large as a Volkswagen bus. The motion of the object was straight, to the north, but they described its flight as drifting or floating.

To the north of their vantage point from the patio, there are several Douglas fir trees from 75 to 90 feet tall. The object drifted over and beyond these trees and moved out of sight to the north. As it passed over the trees, they had the feeling it was close enough to set the trees on fire. However, no fire was started. (After our interview, we checked and there was no fire damage apparent at all.) David said he thought the object took about 10 to 15 seconds to disappear beyond the trees, but Rose thought it took a minute or more.

Witnesses' Sketches

Both witnesses drew color sketches of what they saw. These sketches depict a flaming object. Rose's sketch, *Figure 2, Rose Lowe's Second Sketch of the Fiery Orange-Red UFO*, emphasizes the burning "chunks" of debris that she said were falling to the ground.



Source: David Lowe

Figure 1. David Lowe's Sketch of the Fiery UFO



Source: Rose Lowe

Figure 2. Rose Lowe's Second Sketch of the Fiery Orange-Red UFO

Burning "chunks" ejected from the main object are depicted in both of Rose's sketches.

Another Possible Witness

A name and phone number was provided for another witness in Albany, Oregon. After phone contact with this witness, it was determined that she could not remember the date of her sighting. Her sighting approximates the time and trajectory of the object observed by the Lowes except that it would place the object far higher in the air; however, her memory of the incident was so vague that her testimony cannot be considered relevant at all.

Sighting Timeline

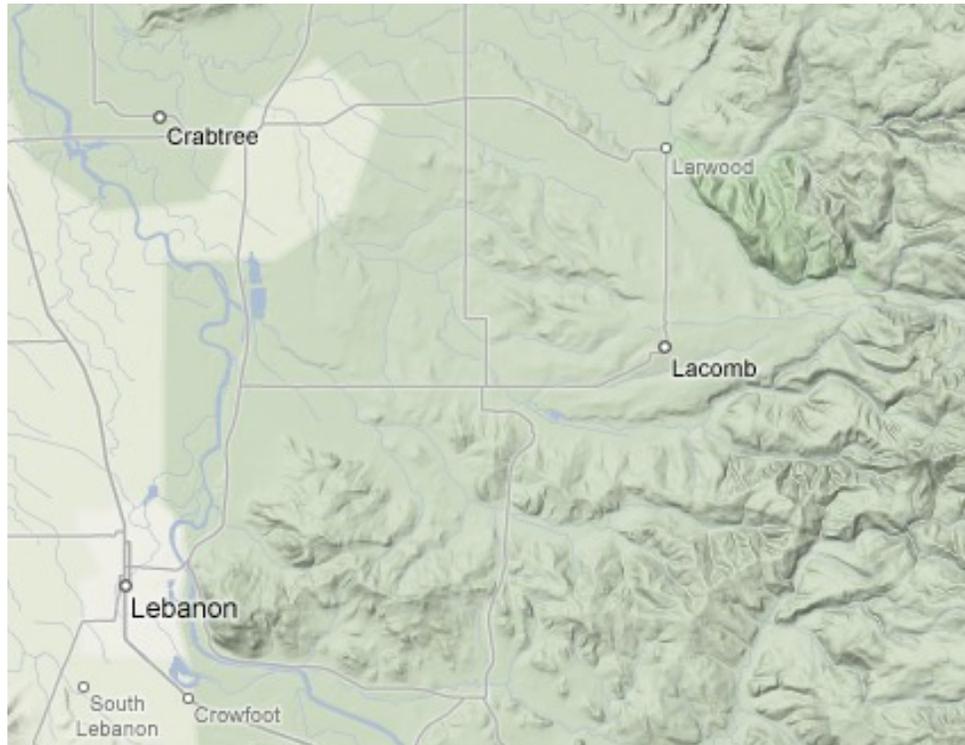
The following table shows a reconstructed timeline from witness testimony. It shows significant events as the sighting unfolds. See *Figure 3, UFO and Witness Paths*, later for the UFO and witness positions specified in *Table 1, Sighting Timeline*.

Table 1. Sighting Timeline

Time (PST)	Event
9:00 PM	David and Rose went out to their patio for a smoke.
9:00 to 9:05 PM	They both see and discuss two bright objects traveling from west to east.
9:05 to 9:10 PM	They both were startled by a large, fiery object flying overhead and watched it drift to the north. (Ten seconds to one minute duration.)
9:10 to 9:20 PM	They both continued watching the sky and discussing the sighting.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for this sighting is a rural area northeast of Lebanon, Oregon. *Figure 3, Map of Sighting Location* shows a map of the local area. The Lowe's live near Lacombe and saw the UFO from their backyard.



Source: Google Maps

Figure 3. Map of Sighting Location

Neighborhood

This is a rural area of multi-acre ranch homesites interspersed with small farms and wooded areas.

Weather

On September 22, 2007, at the time and location of the sighting, the sky was clear with 10 mile visibility. The wind was from the NW 8 to 10 MPH. The temperature was 57° F.

EVIDENCE

The evidence in this case consists of the testimony of two witness who are, we believe, entirely credible. Of the two witnesses, David appears more cautious and conservative in his observations, while Rose is more imaginative and has a slight tendency to jump to conclusions. They did not agree on several points, but since each has stuck to his or her own version, the two versions balance each other in a consistent manner.

Significant Points in Witness Testimony

The following facts from the witness testimony are highlighted here for convenience in the analysis that follows. The source of the facts is either the MUFON CMS report, denoted “(CMS),” or our interview, denoted “(Interview).”

- No sound was heard. Even though Rose thought the burning debris was falling to the ground, both witnesses state that they did not hear the sound of anything hitting the ground.
- The apparent size of the large, fiery object was comparable to an open hand held at arm’s length.
- The large object passed over the tops of some tall fir trees, establishing a minimum altitude of over 90 feet.

Site Survey

A site survey was conducted during the on-site interview on November 4, 2007. All three investigators present walked the area. A Geiger counter was used. Triangulation measurements were taken of some of the taller trees under the reported flight path of the fiery object.

Due to rainy weather and the presence of dogs and other animals roaming about on the property, the ground was very chopped up.

No radiation levels above background were detected in any areas of the property.

Based on Rose’s claim that debris had fallen to the ground, a number of samples of miscellaneous debris were collected. None of this debris shows signs of being burned or charred. A few of these specimens had some lettering on them suggesting that they are the remains of trash discarded by humans. Other specimens appear to be plastic shavings of some kind.

No soil samples or control samples were taken because there was no defined landing or impact site.

ANALYSIS

There are two separate observations in this report. These will be treated as two separate UFO sightings, since there was no claim made that the two were related.

The Silvery Objects

The two silvery objects were described by David as looking like satellites. However, Rose claimed that they had elongated shapes like rockets or fuselage shapes.

A search for possible satellite transits on the date and time of this sighting was done using “Starry Night” astronomy software. No matching satellites were found that would account for this sighting. However, it is remotely possible that they were satellites not accounted for in the Starry Night database.

There is also a remote possibility that these objects were aircraft in the distance, flying high enough to catch some sunlight and far enough away so that their sound was not noticeable.

These objects were passing at a great enough distance that not enough information is available from the witnesses to conclude whether they were aircraft or satellites.

The Large Fiery Object

The appearance of the large, fiery object was so astonishing to the witnesses that it cannot be attributed to a common phenomenon of any sort, except possibly a bolide.

The object’s altitude was probably over 100 feet above the terrain, but there is not enough information to establish any further altitude estimate. The apparent size was reported as being as large as an open hand held at arm’s length, but without a reliable distance estimate, we cannot calculate an estimate of the actual size. The subjective estimate of the actual size given by the witnesses was that of a small automobile, such as a Volkswagen “bug.”

Typically a fiery object like this would be assumed to be a meteor or bolide. However, the duration of the sighting would seem to rule that out. A bolide or satellite re-entry would transit the sky in two seconds or less. Furthermore, a south-to-north trajectory for a meteor is extremely rare. No report of any space junk or satellite re-entries were found to coincide with the sighting date and time.

UFO Size

Estimating the size of an unknown object at an unknown distance is very difficult, especially when the object is experienced only for a short time. We investigators can only estimate the size based on the best information given by the witnesses. Using the height of the trees, which we measured to about 100 feet, and the estimated angular size from the witnesses of 5 to 7 inches for a hand held at arm’s length (about 24 inches), we can estimate an absolute (real) size of the UFO at 20 to 30 feet.

Physical Evidence

The debris collected from the site does not appear to be related to the UFO sighting in any way at all. It does not seem worth the effort and expense to have it analyzed. However, this debris will be retained in case anyone deems it worthwhile to attempt to identify its nature and origin.

At this time, it is my conclusion that there is no available physical evidence.

CONCLUSION

Two sightings occurred within minutes of one another. However, there is nothing to suggest that these two sightings are connected except by proximity in time. The witnesses themselves do not think there is any material connection between them.

The Silvery Objects

In the witnesses' original statements, these objects were described as looking like satellites, but a few anomalous features were suggested. There were no records found of satellites that corresponded to these observations.

Based on the lack of information, these objects cannot be identified. However, since satellites cannot be ruled out, we are forced to conclude that there is insufficient data to make a conclusive statement that they were anomalous.

Classification: Insufficient data.

The Fiery Object

The candidates for identification for the fiery object are the following:

- **Bolide/meteor.** A bolide/meteor at close range may exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: (1) explosive type sounds; (2) smells associated with the explosions; (3) fiery, irregular, explosive lights of various colors and usually a smoky trail. The UFO as described only exhibited part of number (3). So, it seems unlikely that bolide/meteor is the explanation for this UFO. In addition, no news reports of a bolide/meteor crashing into Earth in the Pacific Northwest corresponds in time to this UFO sighting.
- **Satellite/Space Debris Reentry.** This candidate seems unlikely because something as big as the angular size described for this UFO sighting would, like the bolide/meteor mentioned above, also occasion widespread reports. There were none.
- **Ball Lightning.** If ball lightning could be proven to fit this observation, then it would be a reasonable explanation. However, there are no known accounts of ball lightning of this size and persistence.

Classification: Unknown aerial phenomenon (UFO).