

The Salem Maneuvering Orb-like UFOs

An Oregon MUFON Case Study

by

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Abstract

Keywords: Orbs—Balloons—Formation—Maneuvering—White

Description	Witness Charlotte King viewed a formation of 15-17 maneuvering orb-like, bright white, small UFOs on a blue sky day while on break from work.
Witness(es)	One witness: Charlotte King.
Time and Date	September 28, 2010, at 2:45 PM.
Place	In south central Salem, Oregon.
Weather	Partly cloudy sky, visibility 10 miles; wind: 3.5 mph out of the north; temperature 81° F.
Duration	About 13 minutes.

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INTRODUCTION

This sighting is a bit different because the report comes from a person of some fame in earthquake prediction: Charlotte King. She senses impending earthquakes with a combination of physiological and psychic means. She predicted the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, Washington, (May 18, 1980) quite accurately. After the Mt. St. Helens episode, Charlotte gain some notoriety because her predictions on local Portland TV and some network shows like *In Search Of*, *That's Incredible*, *The Merv Griffin Show*, and later on shows like *Sightings* and *Encounters*. (Her story is told in Ruth Montgomery's *Aliens Among Us* in the "Walk-ins from Sirius" chapter.)

Dealing with the Science Establishment and Media

Due to her notoriety over her Mt. St. Helens predictions, she eventually went on to participate in some scientific and medical studies that determined that she was unusually sensitive to sound frequencies that were in the 2 to 7 Hz range. Most people only hear frequencies of around 20 Hz and higher. Earth movements along fault lines produce subsonic sound frequencies (along with electrical and magnetic effects, too, sometimes). Charlotte is sensitive to these. Apparently, many large earthquakes produce these sounds somewhat before they occur. Thus, the ability to predict large earthquakes.

After a year of being constantly sick with migraines and other body symptoms, which were quite painful—what she termed "Seismic Flu"—Charlotte made contact with Chris Dodge of the U.S. Library of Congress. Together they kept detailed records on Charlotte's migraines and other aches, pains, and illnesses that seemed to be related to her earthquake prediction abilities. Much more information on Charlotte is found at her website: <http://www.viser.net/~charking/>.

Downplaying Her Psychic Abilities

During my face-to-face interview with her, Charlotte told me that she downplayed her psychic abilities in her dealing with scientists because scientists and most establishment people as a whole have intellectual difficulties with acknowledging the reality of paranormal world forces and the sensitivity of human beings to this world. And she is spot on with that!

At any rate, earthquake prediction, just like having a UFO experience, seems to be a complex combination of psychic/paranormal abilities/sensitivities and ordinary physical/biological abilities/sensitivities. It is no surprise to this UFO researcher that Charlotte might be a likely candidate for a UFO experience. And the following story makes that even more plausible.

Still Was a Toddler

Also, during my interview with Charlotte, she told me a family story of a very early UFO event. In 1949 when Charlotte was two, her parents had a very close, low-level sighting over the town of their residence at the time: Salem, Oregon. The entire family—Dad, Mom, Charlotte, and older brother—were driving home from a visit with the grandparents, who lived about 10 miles from their home. It was at night. The object they saw was cigar-shaped and had "port hole" type windows according to Dad and Mom. Dad, however, did not (when he was still alive) remember being out of the stopped car and looking at the UFO, but Mom remembers this today.

Charlotte says the drive home normally took 15 minutes but lasted a couple of hours at least that night. When they got home Dad called the Salem airport and reported what he saw. The person at the airport said he also saw the object and it was "so fast nothing could have caught it, but it did not make a sound."

After I got the basics of this story from Charlotte, I also talked briefly with Mary, Charlotte's mom, about this sighting of so long ago. Mary is quite elderly and frail today, but her mind is still sharp. She corroborated Charlotte's story and gave me some additional details and speculated that the family may also have been abducted. A relationship with UFOs has always been part of Charlotte's world view and perhaps a very early family abduction is why.

SIGHTING DESCRIPTION

On September 28, 2010, a Tuesday, at 2:45 PM, Charlotte King was taking her afternoon work break. It was a pretty, partly cloudy day with blue sky in between cumulus clouds, so she was outside sitting in her car in the parking lot adjacent to her building. Charlotte keeps her breaks strictly to 15 minutes so she looks at the time frequently. She works for a state of Oregon agency in Salem, Oregon.

After only a minute, she spotted an eagle catching the air currents in the sky above. Soon, the eagle moved off to the west.

Something Moving and Bright Caught Her Eye

Then she said, “something bright caught my eye off to the south.” *Figure 1, Charlotte Pointing in the Direction of the UFO Display*, shows Charlotte in the parking lot spot where she sighted the UFOs. She saw a small, bright white, star-like object. It was within seconds joined by a second, third, fourth, etc., object of the same appearance until there were—amazingly—15 to 17 objects she estimated.

The UFOs Began to Maneuver

She said, “I thought at first some child had let a bunch of balloons go,” but she soon discarded that idea because they seemed pretty high—like 1500 to 2000 feet a pilot friend would later guess after she heard Charlotte’s story. The speed at which the 15 to 17 objects appeared had her really puzzled. Then they started to do some further strange movements. “Three of them formed [an equilateral] triangle and then three more moved into an elongated triangle and the rest formed a circle!” Charlotte said.

They also maneuvered around more than this incredible “performance.” Charlotte thought, “this was deliberate movement, so I knew they could not be balloons.” She also said that she “was pretty sure they would not reflect sunlight that brightly and they would have had to be huge to be seen at that elevation.”

Elaborate Maneuvering

Charlotte said, “They would move out, come back, form a circle or a triangle. They formed [equilateral] triangles and then elongated ones. They would sit totally still and then start moving all at once and keep their distance from one another. Then they would stop.” At this point, Charlotte had looked at this formation of 15 to 17 maneuvering, bright, shining white objects for around five to ten minutes she thinks. She now got out of her car and stood by it for a better look.

A few people walked by while she was looking at this amazing display in the sky, but none of them looked up even though Charlotte was sure they saw her looking up. Charlotte was excited and didn’t understand why other people didn’t stop and look.



Source: Keith Rowell

Figure 1. Charlotte Pointing in the Direction of the UFO Display

This photo shows Charlotte pointing up in the sky to the south of where she first saw the UFOs appear and then go through their maneuvering and then eventually disappear.

A Manager Sees the Objects

Then she recognized a manager from her building and she asked him as he walked by, “Do you see those objects?” He said, “No.” So, she said to come over by her, which he did. He said, “Oh, now I see them.” Charlotte asked, “What are they?” He said, “Well, they are not planes. They are not birds. And they are not balloons.” They looked at them perhaps ten seconds more and he walked on into the building.

Charlotte Remembers Her Camera

Charlotte now thought about her camera to try to make a record of what she was seeing. It was in the car, so she quickly got it, turned it on, and pointed it up at the sky where the UFOs were. She has a Canon Powershot SX200 IS which does not have a viewfinder, just a view screen on the back. She noted immediately that the view screen was washed out in the sunlight but took two photos anyway as best she could. She was unable to see the UFOs on the view screen.

It was now 3:01 PM so her break was over and she walked back inside her building. She shared her sighting with a couple of co-workers, but they showed little interest.



Source: Charlotte King

Figure 2. Charlotte's First Photo

This photo is a full frame photo showing the tiny UFO in the upper left quadrant as a white dot. For a blow up of the UFO, see Figure 4, Photoshop Blowup and Manipulation to Bring Out Shape. This photo is unmanipulated.



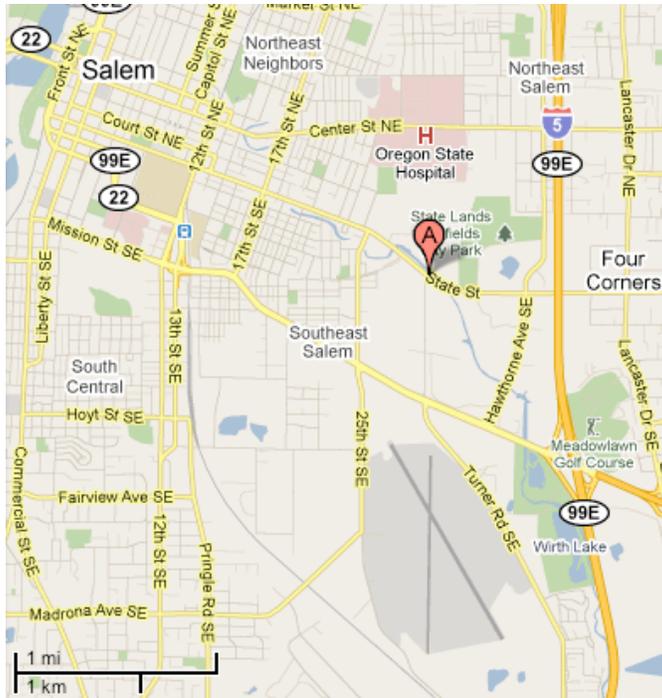
Source: Charlotte King

Figure 3. Charlotte's Second Photo

This is Charlotte's second photo taken about 30 seconds after the first one. It does not show any trace of the UFO shown in the first photo in Figure 2, Charlotte's First Photo. However, Charlotte's second photo here does show, on inspection in Photoshop somewhat, four large, anomalous, amorphous, circular patches in the sky. (Unfortunately, they do not show up well here at all.) Three of them run at a diagonal from the upper left to the central lower right. The fourth one can barely be seen in the upper central part of the photo as a somewhat darker patch about the same size as the lighter ones. The photo has been manipulated to bring more contrast to these anomalies. It is full frame. (See The Second Photo under Analysis later.)

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for this sighting is a light industrial, residential, governmental, and retail mix. The environment is not particularly relevant to this sighting except that the white orbs may have been in the direct north/south runway approach to the Salem Municipal Airport and could have interfered with air traffic. The sighting took place where the "A" marker is on *Figure 4, Central Salem, Oregon, Environs*. Charlotte was looking to the south.



Source: Google Maps

Figure 4. Central Salem, Oregon, Environs

Charlotte's sighting at State Street and Airport Road SE is about a mile north of the Salem Municipal Airport. The sighting took place where the "A" marker is on the map.

Weather

See the details in *Table 1, Weather on Sighting Day*, for the weather on the day of the UFO sighting: September 28, 2010 at 2:45 PM. The weather is not considered to be a factor in this sighting because of the extensive maneuvering of the white orbs, which otherwise might be attributed to balloons of some kind. See the *CONCLUSION* later.

Table 1. Weather on Sighting Day

Event Date	Event Time	Temp (F)	Visibility (miles)	Wind Direction	Wind Speed (mph)	Conditions
9/28/10	2:45 PM	81°	10	North	3.5 mph	Partly cloudy

EVIDENCE

The evidence in this case consists of the following:

- Charlotte's email, MUFON CMS report, and my face-to-face interview with her at her mother's home.
- Charlotte's two photos backing up her testimony.

I believe Charlotte is simply reporting truthfully what her experience was. In the 1980s, she began working with many medical, scientific, and technical people who were interested in her ability to physiologically and psychologically become aware of impending major earthquakes in the Western U.S. and elsewhere. She was tested many times so that the basis of her predictive abilities could be ascertained. As mentioned early in this report, it was determined that she was very sensitive to infrasound below normal human hearing both aurally and possibly through some sort of electromagnetic coupling effect. I feel that the scientific, medical, and technical community would not have repeatedly engaged her to test her abilities if she was not a person of honesty and integrity.

Face-To-Face Interview

I conducted a face-to-face interview with Charlotte in her mother's home in Salem on October 16, 2010. I found her to be intelligent and open to exploring her sighting with me as we considered a "balloon hypothesis." She answered all questions put to her in a forthright manner.

Her Own Investigator

Charlotte has contributed to the investigation of her own sighting by working with her own photographs to enhance them to show better what might be in them by manipulating the contrast, for example. During my face-to-face interview, I stressed the idea that I needed to have the originals just as they come out of the camera for my own analysis and she readily agreed to this, and she gave me copies of the original digital files.

More importantly, Charlotte formed her own hypothesis about what the bizarre, maneuvering, bright white, orb-like things might be and she thought of weather balloons. So, she called up Salem Municipal Airport, which she knew, of course, was only a mile south of her, and asked about when weather balloons are launched, what they look like, how big they are, and how many at a time are launched. The answers she gave in her written testimony are: twice a day at 4 AM and 4 PM, one balloon, about 40 feet ("not sure if it's height or width"), and one at a time. According to the Wikipedia article on weather balloons, Charlotte got the information right about this except for the 40 feet. Forty feet is the distance, approximately, of the height of the entire package including the radiosonde unit dangling at the end of its tether. The standard weather balloon is about five feet in diameter at launch time and expands as it rises to around 25 miles or so.

Charlotte later asked the witness manager how many white orbs he saw and he said "about ten." Charlotte realized that he hadn't quite communicated that in their brief exchange when they were actually looking at the strange display.

It is my belief that people who pursue their own investigation of their own sighting(s) are very concerned about the truth of their experience. Charlotte definitely was very proactive in this regard and added materially to this investigation by Oregon MUFON. I thank her for this.

ANALYSIS

Two photos were offered along with witness testimony in this case. Comments are offered on both photos.

The First Photo

The first photo Charlotte took appears in *Figure 2, Charlotte's First Photo*. It shows simply a white dot in a blue sky background. This doesn't offer much for analysis except for shape and color.

Shape

The shape is very much like a typical party balloon. See *Figure 4, Photoshop Blowup to Bring Out Shape*. The image was cropped to show the object image clearly. The crop on the right is manipulated simply by interpolating pixels by resampling with the bicubic algorithm (a standard practice) to four times linearly. We can see that the shape is simply smoothed out and unchanged otherwise.

Color

The color shows a low contrast, smooth gradation of white with hints of pink on the right and underneath and darker blue on the top and top left. However, this color may not be inherent to the object because of processing artifact of older, cheaper consumer grade camera such as Charlotte's. This artifact ends up producing a darker, unnatural "ridge" effect near objects that are inherently contrasty in tone, of which there is some in the blue sky to white object abrupt transition. All modern cameras since about two to three years ago generally correct pretty well for this early digital sensor and processing artifact. In general, boundary effects are generally hard to interpret in small pixel dimension objects in digital photos.

The problem here is that many people (including this author) have visually seen with the naked eye and through binoculars many objects—that they are convinced are UFOs—that have a glowing, hazy effect on their surfaces and surrounding them sometimes. It is only when we are lucky enough to obtain UFO photos/videos where the image pixel dimensions are large (at least 25 and more across) that we can begin to state with assurance that the edge effects are inherent to the object and not a camera processing artifact. Here the pixel dimensions of the basic object are only about seven by seven, so interpretation is problematic.

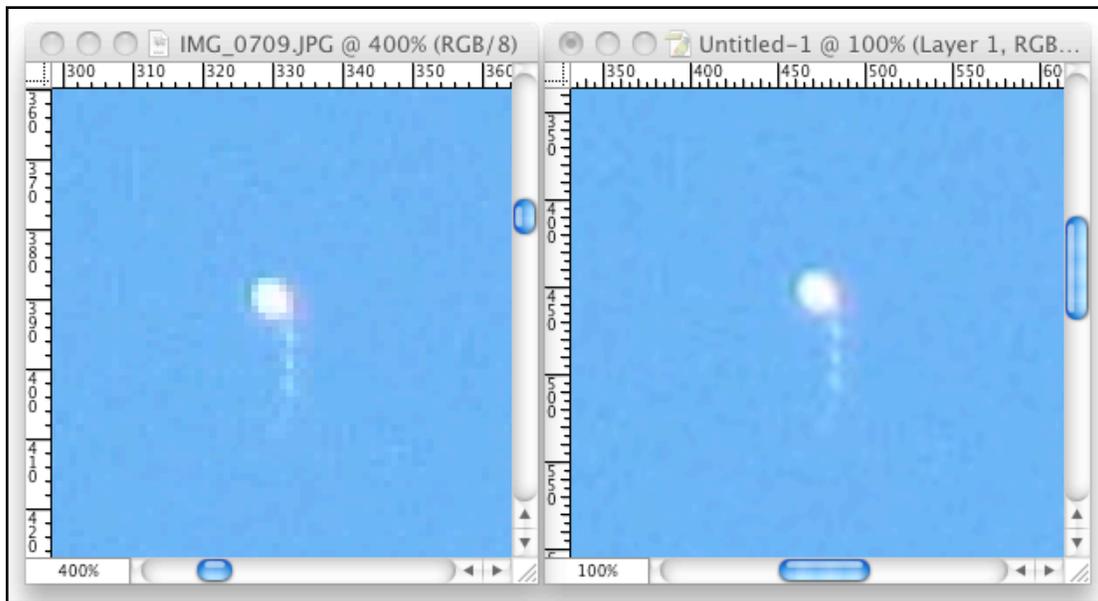
The Second Photo

Charlotte's second photo shows what is probably the same white orb-like UFO as the first photo, but the image is literally one whitish pixel in size, so virtually nothing can be said about it except that it is probably the same object. Charlotte has zoomed back out to a wider angle here and this would make the white orb-like UFO naturally shrink in pixel size.

However, the photo does show what may be some other anomalies. Close examination with a photo editing program like Photoshop reveals some odd, large "blotches" in the sky that shouldn't really be there. Charlotte's first and second photos were taken within about 12 seconds of each other. The first photo shows no anomalies except the UFO in the sky, but the second photo shows the "blotch" anomalies.

The main artifact that the irregular, large blotches match the closest is the artifact of sensor dust motes. But this camera has an always closed sensor box area. (Digital SLRs with interchangeable lenses expose the sensor to the dirty, dusty outside air when lenses are mounted and dismounted, so DSLRs are very prone to this normal dust mote artifact.)

Another condition that could account for the large blotches might be a dirty front lens element. When I interviewed her, we did, indeed, find that Charlotte's camera had a dirty front lens element. So, we will conclude here that the large blotches in Charlotte's second photo does not represent a record of anything anomalous that can't reasonably be accounted for. However, the slightly dirty lens might not have affected the first photo because it was taken at a zoomed out (telephoto) focal length.



Source: Google Maps

Figure 4. Photoshop Blowup to Bring Out Shape

The image on the left is unmanipulated in Photoshop. In order to make the basic shape a bit clearer, the image was enlarged in Photoshop by adding pixels with the bicubic resampling algorithm. The right side image was enlarged four times linear. The basic shape seems to be of an oblong spheroid “orb” similar to a party balloon. However, the normal sunlight contrast on a party balloon is not evident. Also, the “string” hanging below the “balloon” is a bit too big proportionally to be a normal Christmas ribbon tie string.

A Party Balloon Comparison

During the process of doing a previous case report on one of my own UFO sightings—see the *Appaloosa Way Case Report* on oregonmufon.com, I wanted to see how a standard red, white, and blue party balloon cluster might compare to my videotaped image of a clustered red, white, and blue orbs-type UFO. So, I obtained a party balloon cluster made to my specifications, released the cluster on a blue sky day, and photographed and videotaped the cluster as it rose in the sky. See *Figure 5, A Party Balloon Cluster*. As expected a standard party balloon cluster is similar to but not the same as many “standard” floating orb-like UFO cases I have examined and documented.

That proves to be the case here, too, in Charlotte’s sighting. In *Figure 5, A Party Balloon Cluster*, note the spot highlights on the balloons in the direction of the sun. Note also the ordinary contrast and highlight characteristics of red, white, and blue party balloons made of latex rubber. Also, note the proportion of the Christmas ribbon string size to the size of the approximately 1.5 feet in diameter balloons. The Christmas ribbon string does, however, exhibit the dark-light-dark pattern of the UFO’s “dangling string.” So, of contrast levels, highlights, string proportion, string dark-light-dark pattern, and shape only the dark-light-dark pattern and shape sort of match the UFO in Charlotte’s first photo. I conclude the UFO doesn’t seem to be a standard party balloon.



Source: Keith Rowell

Figure 5. A Party Balloon Cluster

This is a standard party balloon cluster released and photographed by the author of this report.

UFO Distance and Size

The distance to the UFO in Charlotte's first photo can only be guessed at. Charlotte's idea (and mine also) is that the UFO is between the sizes of 3 and 15 feet and that the altitude was something like 500 to 3000 feet. Let's calculate a range to see what seems reasonable, although this is all pretty much speculation since we are only going on our guesstimates.

Charlotte's Canon Powershot SX200 IS camera has a zoom range of 28 mm to 336 mm (35 mm equivalent). And the first photo was shot at 336 mm, so this means that the horizontal angle of view is 6.1° or so. By a ratio and proportion calculation, we have that the 7 pixel across UFO is about 0.03° . Using some trigonometry, we get the values in *Table 2, UFO Distances and Sizes in Feet* for possible sizes and distances.

We cannot really know how big and how far way the UFO was but it has to fit somewhere in the ranges in the table because of the image size in the photo and the focal length at which the photo was taken. My guess judging from the many other cases like this I have examined is that the UFO was in the three to seven feet in diameter range. This would make it a mile to three in altitude, so our initial speculations about altitude may be inaccurate.

Table 2. UFO Distances and Sizes in Feet

If the Altitude is . . .	Then the Size is . . .
500	0.26
1000	0.50

If the Altitude is . . .	Then the Size is . . .
1500	0.8
2000	1
3500	1.8
5000	2.6
7500	4
10,000	5.2
15,000	7.9
20,000	10.4

CONCLUSION

The UFO observation in this case was made by two people with one (Charlotte) taking a photo. It also lasted around 13 minutes or so, which is plenty of time to accurately see and remember many details. The details from the two witnesses taken together plus Charlotte’s photo rule out any conventional explanations. Because of the richness of detail, the identification candidates are ruled out definitively except for the “secret military thingie.”

Identification Candidates

The candidates for identification for this high-level, extensively maneuvering, UFO display are the following:

- **Ordinary Balloons.** A formation of balloons is the only identification candidate that makes much sense at all here. However, due to the extensive maneuvering and apparently intelligent maneuvering into and holding triangle formations, etc., any kind of balloon hypothesis seems to fail on its face. Additionally, Charlotte has managed to photograph one of the “balloons” at the end of the formation maneuvering behavior. This photo is somewhat similar to standard party balloons, but doesn’t show the right kind of contrast and shadowing that a standard party balloon would in full sun exposure in the sky. Additionally, this photo is similar to many other UFO photo cases I have examined in Oregon in the last five years. A few of these case are on oregonmufon.com. These balloon-like UFOs many times have a luminous or glowing quality that ordinary balloons just don’t have. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Scientific Balloons.** There is a very remote possibility that some sort of scientific experiment over the skies of Oregon’s capital, Salem, was being conducted on the day Charlotte happened to see and photograph the UFOs, but this investigator cannot imagine all the maneuvering behavior of this UFO display being part of scientific balloon(s) behavior. Scientific balloons may be ganged up in balloon trains but they would not maneuver as Charlotte has described. In addition, the one “balloon” Charlotte photographed doesn’t really look like any scientific balloons—many photos of which are on the Internet. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Secret U.S. military or foreign power “thingies.”** This explanation, of course, can never be completely ruled out by anyone except for the very few within the bowels of our deep black military

and corporate contractor world who would also have access to all the on-going projects. This list of people is exceedingly small (perhaps only 100?!) because of the “need to know” and compartmentation of military secrets. However, verified reports of this kind of possible secret military aerial activity over populated areas in the U.S. are non-existent as far as I know. It strains credulity that human-designed, “conventional” secret “thingies” would be tested over a large metropolitan area. We assume that secret military aircraft (and “thingie”) buffs could adequately “verify” this kind of report, but the documented record of reports of secret military “thingie” experiments appearing over populated areas is very scant, indeed. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*

Since the identification candidates fail for the reasons stated, this UFO observation is classified as a true UFO, a MUFON UAV.