

# UFOs: What are we talking about?

By Tom Bowden, Oregon State Director, MUFON  
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# Basic Question: What is a UFO?

- The term UFO, for “unidentified flying object,” comes from the military.
- Originally “UFOB”, around 1950, it was simplified to “UFO” and was used by the military as an alternative to “flying saucer”, or other popular terms.
- The new military term, UAP for “unidentified aerial phenomenon,” is probably a better term than UFO, but UFO is much more familiar to the general public.



# MUFON's definition of UFO

An object or phenomenon which, after thorough investigation by a competent investigator, cannot be explained as a known natural or man-made object or phenomenon.



# How Does MUFON Investigate?

- Establish communication with the reporting party. Interview eyewitness(es). Establish witness background and assess credibility.
- Gather data: Location of sighting (GPS), weather conditions, astronomical data, air traffic data.
- Examine and analyze any photo/video evidence. Original images needed for authentication.
- If needed, visit sighting location to gather data and/or physical evidence.
- Possibly explore witness background on social media and other sources.
- Cross-check with any other reported sightings.



# When is a reported UFO not really a UFO?

- When it can be identified with a high degree of certainty as a known natural phenomenon or man-made object. (identified flying object.)
- When it is a made-up story, faked photo or staged event. (Hoax)
- When it is a third-party story, a screen shot from a remote webcam, or a YouTube video of unknown origin, etc. (Information only; nothing to investigate.)
- When the report comes from an untrusted or non-cooperating source, or needed information is not available. (Insufficient data.)
- Still unexplained? Then it may be called a UFO, **but not necessarily** an alien spaceship, because that is too hard to prove.



# Why does MUFON Investigate?

- Raw UFO reports are a mixture of potentially explainable sightings, hoaxes, useless reports (not enough information), and **some** actual UFOs (unidentified).
- If a researcher wants to study UFOs rationally, they want to focus on the true unknowns rather than waste time weeding out the explainable.
- MUFON does not “throw away” reports that are considered to be identified objects, hoaxes, or insufficient data. They are categorized accordingly, but retained for reference purposes or for research.



# Early Military UFO Investigations

- Project Sign, 1948: U. S. A. F. program to collect and investigate UFO reports.
- Project Grudge, 1949: Air Force charged personnel with a mission of explaining away every report.
- Project Blue Book, 1952 - 1969: Relabeled Air Force project, same mission.
- Dr. J. Allen Hynek, astronomer, was a civilian consultant to these projects. Dr. Hynek would go on to be one of the most significant writers on the subject of UFOs. He advocated for rational scientific study of UFOs.



# Air Force Ends UFO Investigations

- In 1966, USAF announced that a scientific study of UFOs would be contracted out to the University of Colorado.
- This project, headed by Dr. E. U. Condon, included a staff of well-qualified scientists. Some of the best cases from Project Blue Book were included in the study.
- Thorough scientific analyses performed by consultants in the study resulted in nearly 30% “unexplained” cases (UFOs). This is significant!
- Despite these findings, the summary conclusions written by E. U. Condon declared that nothing of scientific value was produced by the study, and nothing was likely to be gained from further study.



# MUFON's Origin

- In 1969, a network of UFO investigators formed the Midwest UFO Network in Illinois and Wisconsin.
- They were partly motivated by the Air Force announcement that Project Blue Book was ending, and also by the perception that the Condon-led study was a pre-arranged white-wash.
- Over the next decade, MUFON expanded to many more states and decided to rebrand their organization as the Mutual UFO Network.
- MUFON attracted many highly qualified people: scientists, engineers, historians, psychologists.
- Today, MUFON has over 5,000 members world-wide and publishes a monthly journal plus additional on-line newsletters.



# Some Important UFO Incidents from Oregon History



# June 24, 1947

- While flying between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams, Boise-based pilot Kenneth Arnold saw nine metallic objects near Mt. Rainier.
- When Arnold landed in Pendleton, Oregon, he was met by reporters who were eager to get his story.
- He described the movements of these objects as being like saucers skipping over water. This gave rise to the popular term “flying saucers”.



# July 4, 1947

- Many UFOs sighted in the Portland area.
- Witnesses included police officers, firefighters, airline pilots, and people of all walks of life.
- These reports were published in the newspapers of the time.
- There were also many sightings across the nation during that summer.



# McMinnville, OR, May 11th, 1950

- A farmer, Paul Trent, his wife Evelyn, and Evelyn's uncle, saw a disk-shaped object moving over their fields.
- Evelyn called to Paul to get the camera. Paul was able to get off two shots before the object flew away rapidly.
- These photos are among the most well-studied images in the history of ufology.
- Optical physicist Dr. Bruce Maccabee, an expert in photo analysis, performed exhaustive analysis proving that the object in the photos was at a distance, and not simply a pie plate suspended from the telephone wires seen in the foreground of the photos, as had been claimed by some skeptics.



# Historic McMinnville Case

May 11, 1950,  
Paul Trent Photo





# Trent Photos Case (3)



Source: Bruce Maccabee

Paul Trent Photo Blowup #1





Source: Bruce

Paul Trent Photo Blowup



Source: Bruce Maccabee

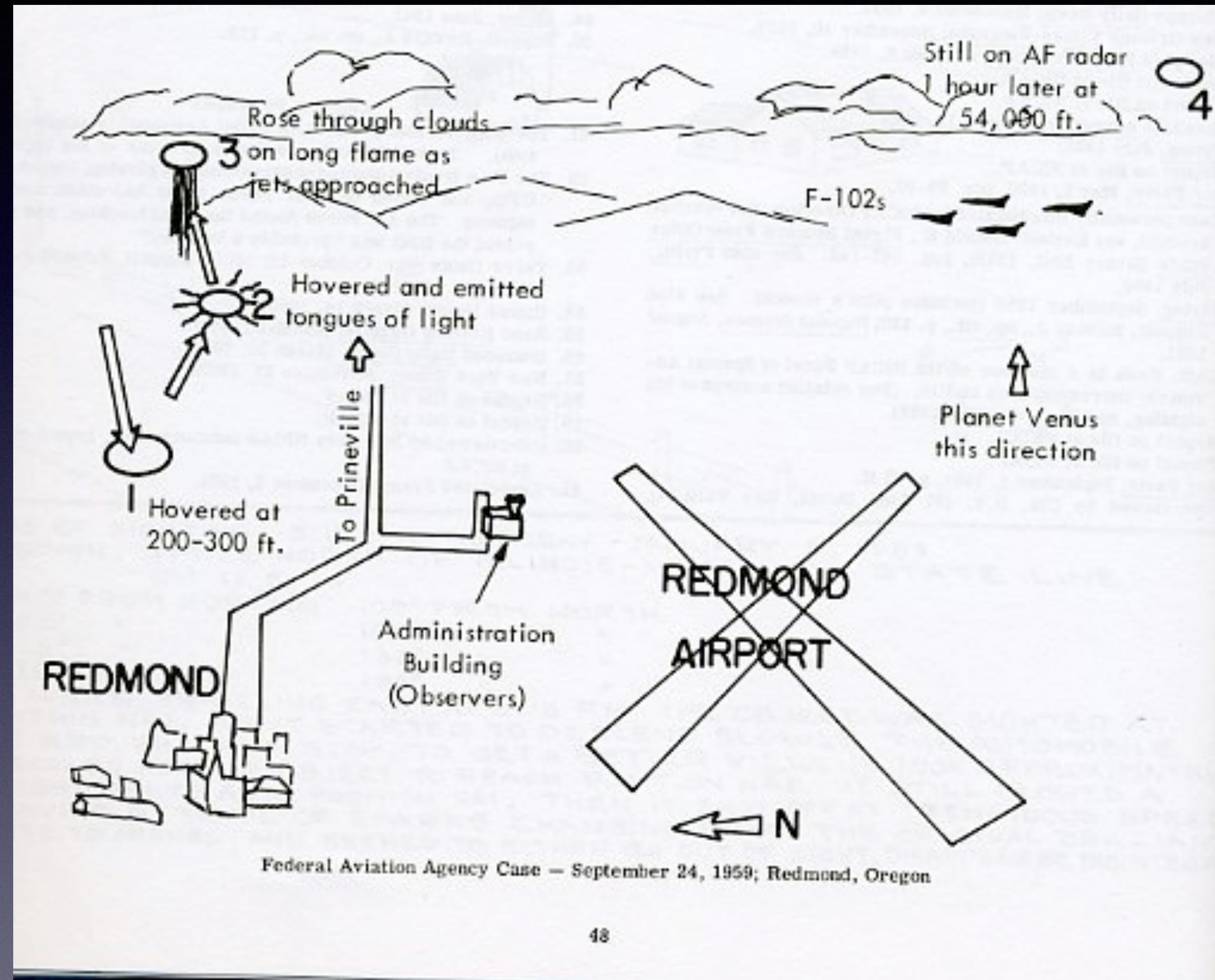


# Redmond Airport Case

- ***When and where:*** September 24, 1959, at Redmond, Oregon airport.
- ***Evidence:*** Multiple eyewitnesses with binoculars; radar.
- ***Description:*** At dawn, Policeman Dickerson saw a falling, bright object stop 200 feet above the ground and hover. It grew bigger and lighted up junipers. He drove toward it; it changed to dull red and moved to just NE of the airport. Airport FAA employee Wertz, Officer Dickerson, and others viewed the object through binoculars.
- Official FAA logs showed the UFO was reported to the Seattle Air Route Control Center.



# Redmond FAA Case (2)



Source: *The UFO Evidence*

Sketch of Layout of Redmond Sighting



# Redmond FAA Case (cont'd.)

- Seattle relayed the sighting to Hamilton AFB.
- Seattle log said, “UFO also seen on the radar at Klamath Falls GCI [Ground Control Intercept] site. F-102’s scrambled from Portland.”
- Log continued [from Redmond ground observers] “ As aircraft approached, UFO took shape of mushroom, observed long yellow and red flame from lower side as UFO rose rapidly and disappeared above clouds.”
- UFO was seen again 25 miles south of airport. Radar showed the UFO south of the airport for two hours.



# Recent UFO Cases in Oregon



# Black Triangle over Gresham

- Where: Gresham, Oregon  
When: August 29, 2003, about 10:00 pm.
- Two separate witnesses, about 2 blocks apart, saw a large black triangular object hovering and maneuvering over a residential neighborhood.
- Based on witness estimates, triangulation was calculated. Object was estimated to be about 90 feet long, and hovering 500 to 700 feet above ground level.



# Eastbank Esplanade Sighting

- Where: Eastbank Esplanade, Portland, Oregon  
When: May 15, 2004, 8:00 am.
- Two women were walking on the Eastbank Esplanade. One of them was using a digital camera to photograph bridges over the Willamette River.
- They noticed a dark, cylindrical object moving slowly in the overcast sky, below the clouds. The woman with the camera took a video and three still photos.
- Weather data for that date shows broken clouds at 1900 feet, and overcast at 2700 feet. Based on the photo evidence and the cloud cover, it appears that the object was likely closer than 1900 feet to the witnesses.



# Astoria Classic Saucer Case

- **Where:** *Just outside Astoria, OR, on Highway 30.*  
**When:** December 30, 2005, about 6:10 AM,
- **Evidence:** Three witnesses: Elizabeth (pseudonym), her son, and his wife.
- **Description:** Elizabeth, her son, and his wife and infant son got up to drive to PDX early in the morning. They drove east along Highway 30 about 15 minutes. It is hilly and curvy in this section of Highway 30.
- They all saw bright strobing lights to the left of the road.
- They lost sight briefly, then saw for about 15 seconds a classic flying saucer hovering about 200 or so feet away.



# Astoria Classic Saucer Case (cont'd.)

- It was at tree top level. Brilliant white light poured from apparent windows from a domed object about the size of a large SUV.
- The saucer lit up the surrounding ground and area.
- Elizabeth slowed the car. The object hovered motionless and apparently soundless.
- Five or six strobing lights were seen on the bottom. They strobed in unison. Flash, flash, pause. Flash, flash, pause. About a second or two long per cycle.
- All agreed it wasn't a helicopter or aircraft. It was a flying saucer!



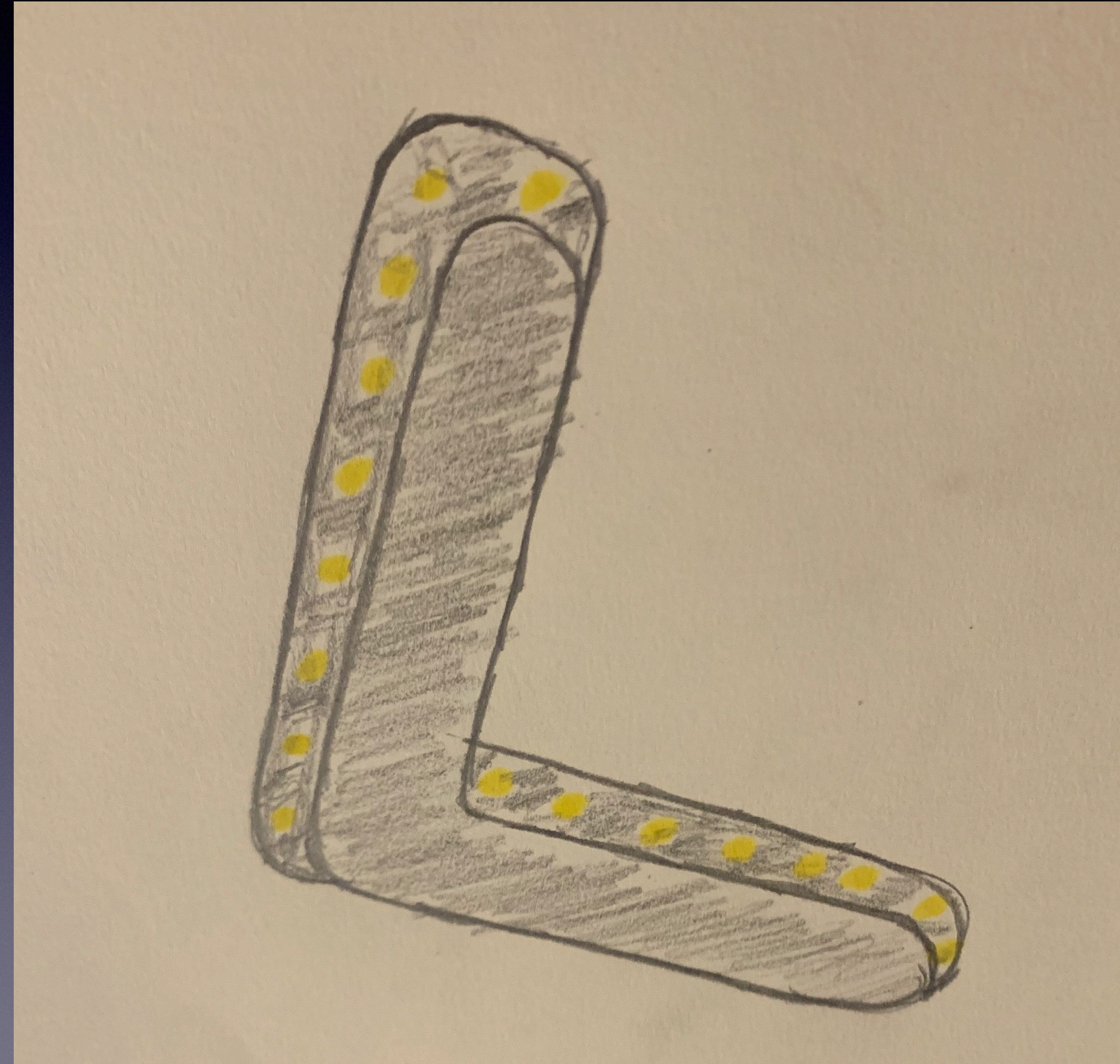
# Chevron Object Over Springfield

- Where: Springfield, Oregon  
When: October 25, 2020, 9:02 pm
- Witness: 52 year old man with an AA degree; works as a building contractor; served 3 years in the U. S. Army as a tank mechanic; states that vision is very good without correction.
- While relaxing in his hot tub, saw a chevron-shaped object that moved swiftly and silently overhead.
- Object described as not being like an aerodynamic shape, but rather thick with vertical walls about 15 feet high and lights around the side surfaces that looked like internally lit portholes.



# Chevron Over Springfield, cont'd.

- Witness sketch.
- Shows vertical walls all around the outer perimeter of the object.
- Walls lined with lights that looked like portholes with light coming from inside the object.





# Very Bright Lighted Object Near Fort Klamath

- Where: South of Fort Klamath, Oregon.  
When: June 15, 2020, 4:40 am.
- Witnesses: (1) Male, age 68, some college, works as an artist and a river boating/rafting guide. (2) Male, age 70, some college, retired auto mechanic. Both need eyeglasses and they were wearing them at the time of the sighting.
- Heading out for a fishing trip. Saw a large, very bright light over a pasture, hovering just above the ground.
- At first, they thought it was a crop-dusting helicopter, but soon realized it was not flying like a helicopter, and no sound was heard.
- Turned car around, went back to take another look, but the object was gone.



# Fort Klamath Case, Illustration

- Illustration by primary witness (commercial artist).
- Described as so bright that it lit up the area like daylight.





# Close Encounters

- MUFON defines a close encounter as a case where the witness(es) state that the object was within 500 feet. Such cases often involve some form of interaction with an intelligence behind the phenomenon.
- Some people report being “taken” by humanoid beings associated with a UFO. We use the term “experiencer” for these individuals.
- Such incidents may also be called “encounters with non-human entities”.
- Such cases seem to push the bounds of credibility; however MUFON has a special group known as the Experiencer Resource Team that takes charge of such cases and provides sensitive support for people who report such experiences.



# Beyond “Normal” Physical Experiences

- To really understand UAP, one must be prepared to recognize the paranormal aspects of these phenomena.
- Unknown objects may seem to appear out of nowhere, or disappear inexplicably. Or one object may split into two or more. Or two or more objects may merge into one.
- Witness may report receiving telepathic messages from the intelligence behind the UFO. They sometimes feel that they are receiving a “download”.
- The vast majority of UFO witnesses are what we would consider “normal” people. Very few would be considered mentally ill.



# Abductions?

- This term is commonly used for cases where a person claims that a non-human entity or entities took control of the experiencer (physically and/or mentally).
- These experiences sometimes involve being taken on board some sort of craft, and may also involve what seems like a type of medical procedure.
- Experiences vary greatly. Sometimes the reporting party remembers everything, but in many cases there are memory gaps.
- “Missing time” refers to an unexplained time lapse that is suspicious and not consistent with the person’s expectation of the normal progression of events. For example, driving a known route, but arriving two hours late with no reasonable explanation for the lost time.



# Close Encounters and “High Strangeness” Cases



# Columbia River Audio Case

- Where: Over the Columbia River, near St. Helens, Oregon  
When: March 17, 1981, between 4:00 and 4:29 am
- Law enforcement officer on both sides of the Columbia river observed a large orange glowing object moving slowly over the Columbia.
- Working with a CB radio hobbyist, one of the officers used his squad car radio to pick up the sound that the object made while the CB radio hobbyist made a tape recording.
- An acoustical expert analyzed the sound and determined that the frequencies were unnaturally pure sounds at 1000 Hz and 3000 Hz, with minimal harmonics. Such sounds are difficult to produce in a natural environment such as the outdoors.



# The Sound of the Columbia River UFO

- (Playing external sound file.)



# Portland Home Intrusion Case

- Where: NE Portland, Oregon, at a home located about 20 miles SSE of St. Helens.  
When: March 17, 1981, 4:30 pm (Note: Nearly the same time as the Columbia River Sound Case.)
- A woman was awakened by her dog barking wildly, and there was a very loud high-pitched noise that was very disturbing. She began feeling like an unseen force was taking control of her body.
- When she regained control of her body, she hurriedly went to get her three children from their beds and got them in the car. She called her sister to tell her what was happening, and then just drove away into the hills at a high speed.
- During the drive, the children saw lights in the sky and described a triangular object. They were asking, "What are those lights?"
- After a few hours of driving around, her husband returned home from work, so she felt safe to bring everyone home.



# More of the Story

- On the television news that evening, March 17, 1981, there was a story about the UFO incident from that morning saying that there were other witnesses.
- The TV station asked that any witnesses to the UFO event please call the station and agree to attend a meeting arranged by the station.
- My witness agreed to this and attended the meeting with several other witnesses. Also present were people in Air Force uniforms claiming to represent Project Blue Book; however Project Blue Book was officially closed down in 1969 (12 years earlier).
- Witnesses were shown pictures in binders marked with Air Force Project Blue Book emblems. These were pictures of various shapes of UFOs and pictures of non-human entities (“aliens”).
- I am still trying to find out what television station arranged this meeting, and whether I can track down a surviving member of the newsroom people from that time that might remember this episode. Anyone out there have any ideas about this?



# Close encounter with a black triangle

- Where: Lower Lake, near Breitenbush Hot Springs, eastern Marion County  
When: August 1, 2018, about 9:00 pm.
- A man on a backpacking trip with his grandson was sitting and meditating by the campfire. His grandson was sleeping in a tent nearby.
- The man sensed a presence nearby and looked up to see a massive, low-hovering, silent black triangular object, with what looked like static electrical discharges flashing on the surface. There were white lights on the underside at the three corners.
- He observed the object for several minutes. He shined a powerful LED flashlight toward the object, but saw that the light seemed to be absorbed into the surface of the object.



- He then got up and walked about 30 feet nearer to the object, and observed the object emitting blue-white flashes of light.
- As he walked directly under the object he began experiencing a very strong vibration inside his body, which he likened to standing in front of a large loudspeaker at a rock concert. This feeling was strong enough to deeply affect the man.
- At one moment, the man considered getting out his handgun and firing a shot at the object, but he feels that something entered his consciousness to convince him to not do this.
- The witness is not clear on how or when the object departed. He thinks he just went to bed when the campfire had died out. (After approximately 3 hours.)



# Missing Time case

- Where: I-5 between Grants Pass and Medford  
When: March 15, 2020, about 12:40 am.
- This party is a Catholic priest and a licensed professional counselor. He was driving home on I-5 from visiting friends when he said he sort of “zoned out”.
- When he returned to consciousness, he saw a massive craft taking off in front of his vehicle. He realized then that an hour and a half had elapsed that he could not account for.
- At home, shortly after going to bed, he saw lightning-like discharges arcing between the walls and the ceiling inside his bedroom.
- He said he had some unexplained physical injuries on his arms. He submitted photos of these marks.
- This individual has had many “highly strange” experiences going all the way back to childhood.



# Alien handprint on the wall?

- Where: Salem, Oregon  
When: February 1, 2021, after midnight.
- Reporting party stated that a mysterious image of a handprint was found on his bedroom wall. The size of the handprint was too large and not properly proportioned to be a normal human handprint.
- An attempt was made to gather physical evidence, including DNA; however the test results were inconclusive.
- During the investigative interview, the reporting person stated that he has a long history of contacts by non-human entities in his life going back to his childhood.
- My assessment of this witness is that he is a stable, well-adjusted person, gainfully employed, with no apparent reason to fabricate such a story.



Any Questions?  
(There should be some.)

Note: for further study, please visit [oregonmufon.com](http://oregonmufon.com)  
On the website, scroll down the right side to find the “Books” link. This will  
take you to an excellent annotated bibliography on the UFO subject.