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→ MARTE



Is it a boy or a girl? The new crowned face near Syrtis Major, Mars

Mars Face-Lift and Conference Potpourri

Mike Luckman pulled a cloth, unveiling a large sculpture of the Cydonia face made by New York artist Salvador Rosillo. "And now a new photograph has been released," added Luckman, showing a large print. "It's an entirely new face on Mars, and this time it appears to be the face of a woman bearing a crown." The old-time New York ufologist and publicist then introduced the two scientists that could back up his assertion: Dr. Tom Van Flandern, a former Chief Astronomer for the U.S. Naval

Observatory, and Dr. Brian O'Leary, a former astronaut-trainee and well-known speaker on alternative energy and paranormal issues.

The May 8 press conference on Martian anomalies at the Hotel New Yorker in midtown Manhattan proceeded. O'Leary read from a prepared statement criticizing the way NASA and JPL had handled the Cydonia affair, and then Dr. Van Flandern showed some of the intriguing new images taken in recent months and weeks by the Mars Global Surveyor, or MGS. These images, he explained, "are in the general cat-

egory of, if we saw them on Earth we would conclude that they were the result of the activity of either human or large scale biology on Earth."

They included both old and new shots of the Cydonia face; the so-called "glassy tubes" shown in FATE's June cover story; dotted features Van Flandern called "infrastructure"; the Martian "trees" that have excited Sir Arthur C. Clarke; some supposed writing sample or "Martian graffiti"; and of course the new face.

The "Crowned Head" is located far away from Cydonia—"near the famous dark markings in Syrtis Major, it's a sample of the kind of artistic imagery we're seeing on Mars," said Van Flandern. The astronomer emphasized that these faces and other Martian anomalies "are statistically significant; these are not repeated instances of freakish chances of nature."

Nonetheless, that is probably what NASA and mainstream science will likely say in the months to come. The Martian anomaly issue seemed crippled a few years ago after JPL finally re-imaged the Cydonia face with poor results. It has now rekindled with a plethora of new candidates, including the new and somewhat feminine Syrtis face. I asked Van Flandern whether these supposed structures are archaeological ruins, or if Mars is being used currently by an alien civilization as some remote viewers and ufologists maintain.

"We have no evidence of current activity of intelligences on Mars," responded Van Flandern, "although that image I showed you that looked like a tree does certainly suggest that there is currently large biology on the planet."

Despite the exciting comments and intriguing images showed at the press conference, I remain agnostic. I am all for investigating the images, for MGS and future Mars probes to re-photograph them at different angles, and so on. But I am also painfully aware of the long human history of misinterpreting things on Mars. Anyone

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interested in Martian anomalies should study, as a cautionary tale, the long debate about the "canals" that consumed astronomers, the press, and the public in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I highly recommend the essay "The Canals of Mars" in the classic Fortean book, *Enigmas*, by Rupert T. Gould. However, I fully agree with Arthur Clarke's final comment on looking for artifacts on Mars: "Nevertheless, such an investigation is fully justified, even if the chances of success are remote."

Mike Luckman and Bill Cote have released a complete video of the press conference titled *Life on Mars? New Scientific Evidence*. (For more information contact Luckman at www.cosmicmajority.com, Cote at www.bcvideo.com, or Dr. Van Flandern at www.metaresearch.org.)

Back to Europe and South America

In early March I flew to Budapest to lecture at a symposium sponsored by Hungary's *Ufomagazin*, which has published many of my columns in Hungarian. This was a particularly pleasant occasion, as I was awarded the "In Memoriam Colman von Keviczky" medal in the international category. The national category went to Sos

Tibor, a local TV documentarian who compiled several videos with witness testimony throughout Hungary. He gave me a 1999 tape titled *UFO Control*, with a number of detailed sightings and abductions in Hungary.

Most of the witnesses in the video are policemen. Benyuns Miklos was taking a cigarette break in the parking lot of his police station on a thus-far-quiet night. To his amazement, Miklos observed a disk emitting a thick beam over a parked patrol car and illuminating the whole area. All the cops and one top-gun pilot appear in uniform. The details are (unfortunately for us) in Hungarian, but the case animations are very straightforward, and I had the opportunity of talking with Tibor about his research. We also visited the old Ludovica Military University (now a science faculty), where my old mentor Colonel von Keviczky graduated back in 1932.

San Marino was my next European destination in late March, after a quick stopover in New York City between trips. This was my fourth trip to the little republic inside Italy where UFOs are in the official agenda of the Ministry of Tourism. Regular readers have followed my adventures there since 1998. Roberto Pinotti's surprise this year (he is the famous Italian ufologist, author, director of CUN, and symposium coordinator) was to throw a SETI Symposium on the Friday before the weekend UFO Conference. Dr. Frank Drake, the father of SETI and director of the SETI Institute in California, was the keynote speaker. Drake stayed for the UFO Symposium, attending every single lecture and



Photo: Sherwin Winick

The speakers at the New York May 8 Mars Anomalies press conference (l to r): Dr. Tom Van Flandern, Mike Luckman (holding a model of D Pyramid in Cydonia), and Dr. Brian O'Leary.

interacting openly with all of us. This would be hard to imagine at an American UFO Conference.

There were also interesting updates to my September 2000 column on the Mussolini UFO dossier. Antonio Garavaglia, the forensic expert who analyzed the documents, attended the conference, and I was able to interview him informally. "Listen," he told me, "I am not a UFO expert and I can only comment about those specific documents which I myself analyzed, and I have to tell you, they're authentic." Pinotti and Alfredo Lisoni, the two main investigators, revealed they were able to trace, through references in the original documents and other leads, an aeronautical engineer who had been involved with the so-called "Cabinet RS/33." They located the scientist's residence, but he had died a few years earlier. His daughter, however, gave them access to her father's papers, where they discovered detailed blueprints of a flying disk. The San Marino Symposium continues to be the most important annual European UFO event.

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