

UFO WITNESSES AND FIELD INVESTIGATORS

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A LOGIC MATRIX is a useful device in helping sort out all possible combinations of elements of some situation and can also be instructive in guiding one into new insights. One such matrix diagram is presented in Figure 1. Although the matrix is applied to the subject of UFO field investigator and witness factors it may be applied to many other areas as well. Then a single cell of Figure 1 is amplified in Figure 2 in the form of an "event tree." Again, the diagram is meant to illustrate a useful methodology for the reader's future use as much as it is for the present purpose of analyzing UFO witness responses.

A simple 2 by 2 matrix is presented in Figure 1 where the horizontal axis represents the physical stimulus (in this case an unknown aerial object) and the vertical axis represents whether or not it was perceived. Of course there are at least two subdivisions of each axis as shown. Use of this simple matrix can be illustrated with the following analysis. Let the "Physical Phenomenon" be an unidentified flying object (UFO). It is either present [cell (A) or (C)] or it was not present at a given time and place [cell (B) or (D)]. Similarly, an observer may have experienced the UFO [cell (A) or (B)] or he may not have experienced it [cell (C) or (D)]. Let us consider each of these four cells separately.

What is usually meant by a "credible," "good," "reliable" UFO witness is a person who would always be found within cell (A). Unfortunately, people are not always good witnesses. For instance, they perceive things that are not physically present, such as dreams and hallucinations. Such individuals would fall in cell (B). Then there are those persons who mistake or misinterpret a physical phenomenon as being something else, like seeing a mirage in the desert. These individuals fall in cell (B) but for a different reason than just given.

Then there are those people who, for various reasons, would not notice a barn if they were inside it! They either do not want to perceive aspects of physical reality, or can not, for various deep-seated psychological reasons. These individuals fall in cell (C).

Now the important question may be raised, how does one select people who are likely to be good UFO field investigators and who will fall in cells (A) and (D)? A few suggestions are given next.

A good UFO field investigator should be chosen for his natural curiosity. This curiosity should be directed towards understanding the true nature, source, and human implications of the UFO phenomena. He should rely upon a flexible balance of traditional scientific methodology and creative

philosophy. He should also possess emotional stability, maturity, and a friendly disposition. Such personality traits will help insure the maximum amount of witness co-operation and concentration (in circumstances that are often filled with anxiety, fear, and emotion). These qualities in the investigator will also tend to calm and assure the witness and further gain his confidence. The witness will also be more likely to accept the sometimes probing questions that must be asked about the events of the sighting if the investigator displays a certain degree of "objective poise."

Other traits that would seem to point towards cell (A) [and also (D)] type field investigators include alertness and perceptiveness toward the subtle behavioral cues of the witness. Valuable background information bearing upon the credibility of a witness may be obtained through alertness. Also, the field investigator should be well equipped to conduct the field measurements that should accompany the field interview. The author has dealt with this subject in a previous series of articles in the APRO Bulletin.¹ The good field investigator must take more than just his measurement and recording equipment into the field. He must also take a respectable intellectual capacity with him as well so that he can answer questions put to him by the witness, the press, and others. *His credibility must be particularly high!* Of course there are many other traits and capabilities of a good UFO field investigator; however, their discussion lies outside the scope of this article. Let us return to Figure 1.

Matrix of all Possible Combinations

		"Physical Phenomenon"	
		Present	Not Present
"Phenomenon Experienced"	Yes	cell (A)	cell (B)
	No	cell (C)	cell (D)

Figure 1

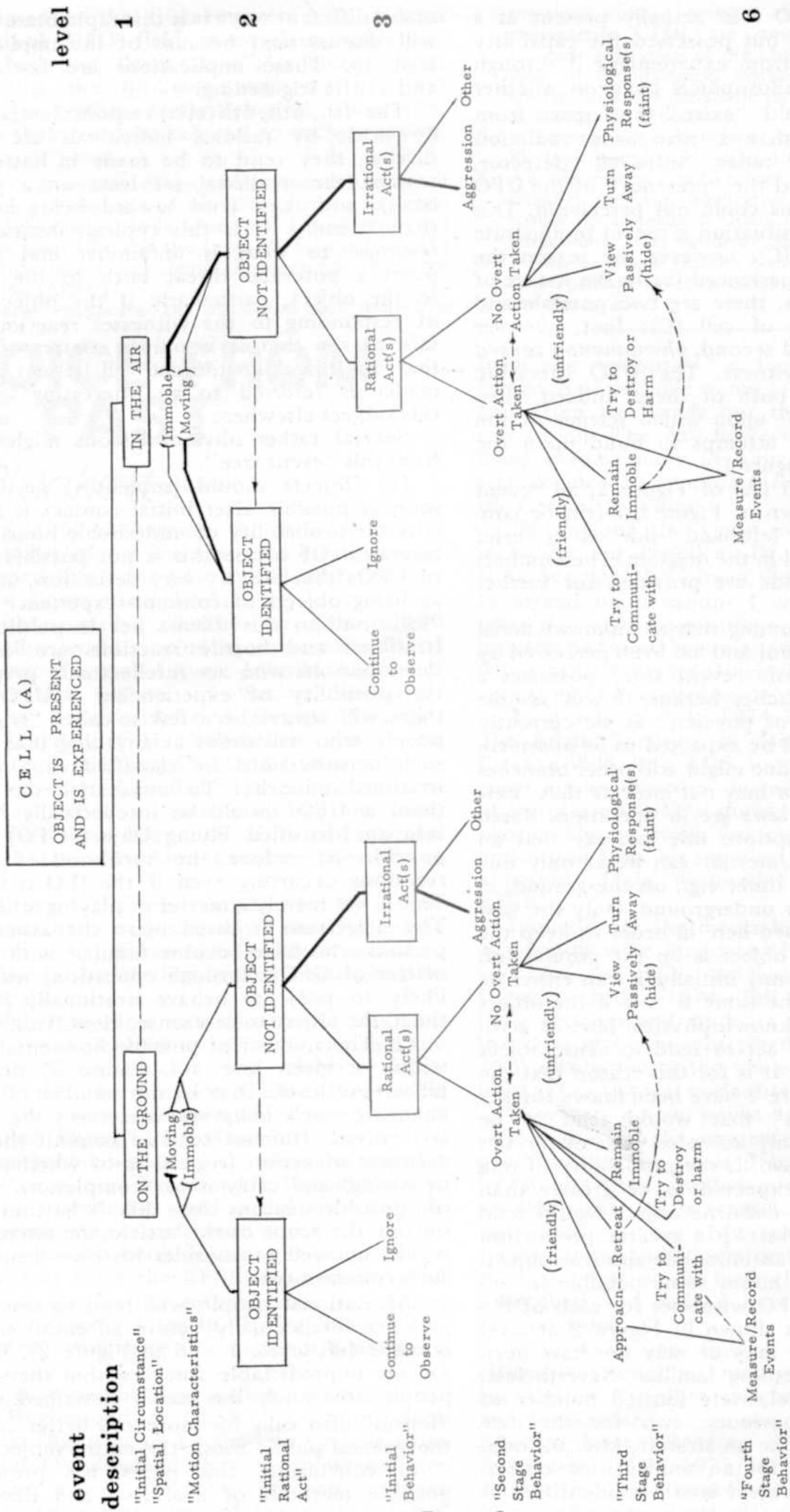


Figure 2

Assume that a UFO was actually present at a certain time and place but possessed the capability of preventing humans from experiencing it through their senses. It is a philosophical question whether or not the UFO would "exist." But apart from philosophy, suppose that a man-made radiation sensor/detector (e.g., radar, infra-red detector, magnetometer) indicated the "presence" of the UFO even though the humans could not perceive it. This purposefully contrived situation is meant to illustrate a special case of cell (C), however the reason the phenomenon wasn't experienced lay in the nature of the phenomenon. Thus, there are two possible and reasonable subdivisions of cell (C): first, *observer caused* insensitivity, and second, *phenomenon caused* insensitivity in the witness. The UFO literature contains examples of both of these. Indeed, they are some of the "stuff" upon which science fiction is based. Next, let us attempt to build upon the logic matrix shown in Figure 1.

Considering only cell (A) of Figure 1, an "event tree" such as that shown in Figure 2 might be constructed. Down the left-hand side is a brief description of each level in the diagram. The numbers down the right-hand side are provided for further reference.

We will begin by assuming that an unknown aerial object is physically present and has been perceived by one witness. The present "event tree" possesses a limited number of branches because I will assume that the "normal laws of physics," as we currently understand them, would be expected to be observed. It is acknowledged that one might add other branches to this tree which may or may not indicate that "new or abnormal" physical laws are in operation. Based upon the above assumption, one can say that an object (possessing mass/inertia) can be at only one place at any instant in time, e.g., on the ground, in the air, under water, or underground. Only the first two of these are discussed here in order to keep the analysis simple. If the object is on the ground (cf. level 1; right-hand column) initially it can either be immobile or moving. The same is true if the object is in the air; however, known physical laws of aerodynamic instability will act to tend to cause object motion of some kind.² It is for this reason that the connecting lines in Figure 2 have been drawn thicker for those "associations" that would tend to be strongest if the commonly accepted laws of physics are operating. In other words the probability of one association would be expected to be greater than another (e.g., a moving airborne object would tend to be identified [cf. level 2] a greater proportion of the time than would an immobile airborne object).

Now let us theorize about some possible initial, *rational behaviour* of UFO witnesses for each of the four possible conditions shown in Figure 2 at level 3. Note that the object may or may not have been identified as being something familiar. Nevertheless, there are still only a relatively limited number of alternative rational behaviours: two for the case of an identified object like an aircraft, kite, balloon, and perhaps two more for an unidentified object. Also note that if the object is still unidentified at this stage the "event tree" begins to branch out in

many different ways. It is this rapid branching that we will discuss next because of the implications they lead to. These implications are both fascinating and a little frightening.

The 4th, 5th, 6th (etc.) response levels that tend to be made by rational individuals are increasingly diverse, they tend to be made in haste, they tend toward the irrational (at least on a probabilistic basis), and they tend toward being hostile rather than friendly. It is this typical, instinctual human response to what is unfamiliar and strange that poses a potential threat both to the witness and to the object, particularly if the object is capable of responding to the witnesses' reactions. It seems safe to say that it is only a matter of probability that one initial hostile act will be met in kind! The reader is referred to an interesting discussion of this subject elsewhere.³

Several rather obvious lessons might be learned from this "event tree":

- (1) Objects should (somehow) be identified as soon as possible after initial contact is made otherwise the probability of undesirable human behaviour increases. Of course this is not possible in the case of UFOs that are, by very definition, unidentifiable as being objects of common experience. A possible "solution" to this dilemma lies in public education. Irrational and hostile reactions are less likely in those persons who are intellectually prepared about the possibility of experiencing a UFO. Certainly, there will always be a few so-called "trigger-happy" people who will shoot at anything that moves, but such persons must be classified as a part of the irrational minority. To summarize the first point, then, a UFO should be intellectually "converted" into an Identified Flying Object (IFO) as soon as possible to reduce the likelihood of undesirable reactions occurring even if the IFO is still a UFO. This is not merely a matter of playing with semantics. The suggestion is based upon the assumption that persons who have become familiar with the subject matter of UFOs (through education) will not be as likely to panic or behave irrationally because, for them, the object is, in a sense, identified.⁴

- (2) The number of possible horizontal transitions within a given level (cf. Figure 2) decreases the higher the level. That is, the number of options for changing one's behaviour decreases the longer one is involved. Humans tend to commit themselves to a course of action (regardless of whether it is right or wrong) and carry it to "completion." The scores of possible reasons for this behavioural fact lie outside the scope of this article; the interested reader would do well to consider his own motives behind such commitment.

- (3) Rational people will tend to resolve the experience intellectually before an emotional response is made (cf. levels 4 — 6 in Figure 2). Because of various unpredictable forces within them, irrational people are much less easily described. This third "lesson" also calls for more and better education of the general public about the entire subject of UFOs.

In conclusion, this paper has presented two possible methods of analyzing and describing the events that might surround a UFO sighting. The first

is more related to the characteristics that make a person a good UFO field investigator while the second method (viz. "event tree") is more related to determining the probable responses of UFO witnesses. As neither methodological illustration is complete they must be tailored to each situation.

Notes

1. This series of articles dealing with standardization of concepts and terms related to UFO phenomena began with the July-August, 1974 issue (part I) and continued 1975 issue (part III), and the June, 1975 issue (part IV) of the Bulletin of the Aerial Phenomenon Research Organisation (APRO).
2. For present purposes of discussion such motion as

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

E. L. Plunkett

EARLY in 1952 I became the official British Representative of the International Flying Saucer Bureau founded that same year by Albert K. Bender of Bridgeport, Connecticut, USA.

Membership rapidly climbed to some 1500 throughout the world, including some notables as Lord Downing, Waveney Girvan, John M. Lade, and among numerous authors of 'Saucer' literature.

Visitors to Bristol included George Adamski, Albert K. Bender, G.H. Williamson, and crew members of Captain Howard's BOAC Stratocruiser — namely his co-pilot Canadian Lee Boyd and his navigator N.O. Allen — and last, but not least, Desmond Leslie who filled one of Bristol's largest lecture Halls (the Museum Lecture Theatre) to capacity.

In late autumn 1953 I was informed by Albert K. Bender that he was closing down the IFSB as he had been visited by 'Three Men in Black' who had frightened him so badly that he had been violently sick for three days.

A meeting of my committee in Bristol was convened, and it was decided to officially become the British Flying Saucer Bureau, and this later amalgamated with the Flying Saucer Club of Hove under Richard Hughes, who became publisher of a joint magazine called 'Flying Saucer News.'

I still correspond with Bender, who later married the sister-in-law of our Treasurer Mr. Harold Cobley, but Albert — true to his word — did not continue with his previous 'Saucer' activities.

However, when his book — some ten years later — was published in 1962 the BFSB sent various taped requests, etc., for further information, but Albert stood by all he had related in 'Flying Saucers and the Three Men', and there the matter still stands to this day.

In earlier days we did have a 'flap' communicated to Richard Hughes and the BFSB that a 'mysterious caller' was on his way to England to visit us from Australia and I understand that our representative there did have a spot of bother. His name escapes me, but as nothing ever came of this visit, it faded

rotation, wobble, rocking, etc. which are often said to characterize UFOs, are considered to represent basic response behaviour of the object reacting to the physical laws of aerodynamic instability that are present. Of course, this is a debatable point and must be considered as a tentative hypothesis.

3. Westrum, R., *Matching wits with extraterrestrials*. Skylook, Number 91, June, 1975, pp 10–13.
4. An interesting and researchable question might be whether the same qualitative and quantitative responses would occur today if Orson Welles' radio play "Invasion from Mars" was suddenly and unexpectedly broadcast.
5. I wish to thank Jacques Vallée, James McCampbell, and Leo Sprinkle for their comments and suggestions regarding this article.

from our memories. In the early sixties I had to forego 'Saucers' due to my job taking up my evenings and often week-ends but the Committee of BFSB carried on. The day however came when earning a living became more of a problem, and eventually it was decided to terminate the BFSB and keep only the Committee going.

Throughout the years some senior members — including our President, Dr. R. Irving-Bell and our Hon. Sec. David Rudman, died, and as I was now able to attend on occasions I was made President. Our interest — as a Committee — had never waned at all in what had now become respectable under the term 'Unidentified Flying Objects' which declined to disappear as a phenomenon.

So it was in early 1974 I wrote the Principal of The Bristol Institute of Adult Education Dr. C.W. Claxton PhD, BSc, FGS, to enquire whether he could grant me an interview in respect of a possible series of lectures on 'UFOs' during the forthcoming winter season. The interview was obtained and despite some opposition from his superiors he was able to put aside a period of six Wednesday lectures on behalf of BFSB.

Immediately the media became aware of this we as a group were inundated by the local press, radio and BBC and HTV, and on the opening evening of October 16th, 1974 full coverage was given of those lectures and students present. Needless to say the class was over-subscribed and we had to stop at 44 students due to the size of the class room allotted to us. The class was undoubtedly a success.

However, a few weeks ago I was agreeably surprised, due to the immense cuts in education expenditure, to be advised by Dr. Claxton that the BFSB had been granted another six week's course on UFOs due to its reception by the general public last year. So, on November 5th we commence a new series, and it was gratifying at the enrolment evening a few weeks back that again we were over-subscribed and indeed have a waiting list in case anyone drops out.

Perhaps if you find a space for this in your estimable journal it may give other groups within the United Kingdom the necessary ambition to go and do likewise.

Editor's Note: Readers interested in seeing the Syllabuses for 1975/76, should apply, sending stamped/addressed envelope to Capt. E.L. Plunkett, 71 Chedworth Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 9RX