

# ON THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CLOSE PROXIMITY UFO SIGHTING

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Translated from the French by Gordon Creighton

ACCORDING to the Gallup Poll of November 29, 1973, 11% of the adult population of the United States, i.e. 15,000,000, people claimed to have seen UFOs.<sup>1</sup>

## I: The Statistics

While it is impressive, this Gallup finding enables us neither to know the true number of the objects seen (since several witnesses might have observed the same object, or a single witness might have observed several objects). Neither does it help us to know how many of these objects would have remained "unidentified" had they been observed by qualified individuals, nor does it tell us anything about the strangeness of the cases.

The study by Peter A. Sturrock,<sup>2</sup> professor of Astrophysics at Stanford University, gives us the answer to these areas of uncertainty. Sturrock's poll was in fact conducted among those individuals who, of all the individuals in the world, are the most fitted to be able to decide whether an object is or is not identifiable, namely the 1,175 members of the AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineers) in San Francisco. Sturrock gives the total number of such unidentified cases reported by them in his poll as twenty. The total number of witnesses was 33, of whom 17 were actual members of the AIAA. The number of cases with a very high strangeness rating was two.

Previously, such statistical studies<sup>3</sup> as had been done had shown that the probability of seeing a UFO is roughly the same for all categories of the population. If a difference exists between Sturrock's sampling and the population as a whole, it seems that we can predict that the following causes will be responsible for such variations:

(a) On the one hand the members of the AIAA ought to be expected to be more curious than most folk, and therefore more likely to look up at the sky, though this possible factor could play no role in the cases with a very high strangeness index, in which the witness cannot avoid seeing what he sees.

(b) The members of the AIAA are scientists who spend a great deal of their time beneath the roofs of laboratories or offices, and so must be presumed to be less often exposed to the opportunity of observing a UFO, and, above all, to the opportunity for encountering one of them on the ground in open country (which are the cases we are concerned with in this article).

So it would seem that prudence authorizes us to accept the findings of Sturrock as not going beyond — indeed rather to the contrary — those found for the population as a whole.

Numerical extent of the sample	1,175 individuals
Total No. of UFO sightings	20
No. of cases with very high index of strangeness	2
Percentage total of cases for the sample	1.7%
Percentage of cases with very high strangeness	0.17%

Table I: Sturrock's Findings

The total adult population of the USA taken into consideration at the time of the 1973 Gallup Poll was about 136,000,000.

If we apply Sturrock's findings to this total population, we get the following results:

Total No. of true UFOs (1.7% of $1.36 \times 10^8$ )	2,312,000
Total No. of UFOs of a very high strangeness	231,000

Table II: Real UFOs over the USA

There is nothing to suggest that the manifestations of the UFO phenomenon present any feature that is particular to the USA. On the contrary, all the studies made so far indicate the phenomenon's consistency and homogeneity throughout the world.<sup>4</sup> If therefore we apply Sturrock's findings to all the technologically advanced countries (there might of course be some disagreement as to precisely which countries would fall within this definition, but anyway their aggregate population would hardly total less than 1,300,000,000) we get the following results:

Total No. of true UFOs (1.7% of $1.3 \times 10^9$ )	$22.1 \times 10^6$
Total No. of UFOs with very high strangeness factor	$2.21 \times 10^6$

Table III

Thus, on the basis of Sturrock's figures, we can say that up till now the total number of cases with very high strangeness index observed in the technologically advanced countries is over 2,000,000.

## II: Discussion

Almost all the high strangeness index cases are of landings and very close proximity sightings.

In the advanced countries, the majority of people have a photographic camera, and many have a cine camera. They do not however by any means always have their photographic or cine camera with them at the time of a sighting. But the *opportunity* to get very close-up photos and films, that is to say photos and films of high quality, with plenty of detail, has so far occurred *over two million times* in these countries of advanced technology.

But we do not possess a single photograph or a single film of this sort [*close-up*—ED], whereas we ought to have had tens of thousands of them. We ought to have been in possession of a complete and extremely numerous stock of photos of objects standing on the ground, with their crews seen from the front, in profile, from behind, and engaged in all the activities which they have so often been described as performing. We ought to have films of all this. We have none. Panic, mistakes, forgetfulness, absence of camera at the right moment, can account for the fact that lots of opportunities have been missed. But that *all* should have been missed for these reasons is quite untenable.

The objection as concerns the very small number of eye-witnesses who reveal themselves is equally untenable. One witness who has only his own story to tell has excellent reasons for keeping his mouth shut, and if he does so, then his testimony does indeed remain unknown. But a photograph or a film are physical objects that go astray, get reproduced, get spread around, particularly when they are extraordinary. If we possess neither films nor photos it is because, out of the two million opportunities when they could have been taken, they have not been taken even one single time.

**Explanation No. 1:** *There are no UFOs, and all the stories about them are fabrications.*

This would mean that there have been over 2,000,000 fakers. Among these two millions of people, all professions (we know this from the statistics) are represented in proportion to their distribution in society. And so we have the right number of professional photographers, of professional fake photographers, and of professionals skilled in the production of special effects. And yet all these individuals, without any sort of collaboration together, have seemingly selected one sole type of fabrication, namely the *account, the narrative.*

It will perhaps be said that they have all abstained from taking photos or films because these are difficult to take. But:

1. Why should *all* of them abstain? Why aren't there thousands of badly faked photos and films, concocted by presumptuous hoaxers?

2. We have thousands of absurd and unskilful

accounts. Why then not thousands of absurd and unskilful photos? (I would remind the reader that we are discussing here solely the cases with a very high strangeness index which, in terms of photography, means clear, detailed, close-up pictures.)

3. It is quite untrue that, for a professional, such fabrications would be difficult. And yet not a single one exists.

Not only is the hoax explanation untenable, but *the absence of visual fabrications teaches us something which seems to be fundamental, namely that all details relating to the close-encounter UFO phenomenon stem from one single source: the oral source, the account.*

**Explanation No. 2:** *The Close-Proximity UFO cannot be photographed.*

This can be understood in various ways: either that the phenomenon is not of a purely physical nature (but then what about the marks on the ground? What about the photos and films taken at a distance? What about the various channels of detection, by radar, by magnetometer, etc.?) *or that the close eyewitness is prevented from using his equipment.*

If he is prevented from using his equipment (which the cases I have studied dispose me to accept as the true explanation) then it must be that the witness is under psychic control, and that he is so without his knowing it. We have a number of cases in which, after the event, the witnesses discover that they "had not thought of using their camera," and find this oversight "inexplicable." And indeed it is inexplicable. Yet this "inexplicable" forgetfulness is the rule in our subject.

## III: Further comments suggested by the statistics

From a statistical analysis based on the study of 831 landing cases with ground-traces, Ted Phillips has been able to establish that the average duration of landings is of the order of five minutes.<sup>5</sup>

If we accept that the total number of landings in the technologically advanced countries is 2,000,000, then we get a total duration of 10<sup>7</sup> minutes, or 19 years, during which a UFO has been standing on the ground somewhere in the technologically advanced countries and beneath the gaze of one or more eyewitnesses.

If we accept that the persons interrogated in the course of the polls are reporting cases which have occurred principally during the past quarter of a century, then we are obliged to conclude that *every day* a UFO is standing on the ground before the eyes of one or more witnesses for an average duration of 19 hours.

All these calculations (and others like them) show how inexplicable is the absence of photos or other close-up documentation on UFOs.

## IV: By way of parenthesis

The basis taken in arriving at the considerations is the figures given by Sturrock, because these by themselves contain all the elements needed for the calculations. One may be tempted to put forward the objection that it is hazardous to base too much

on only one single sample. But we get the same results if we base ourselves on the most severe and most negative statistics, for example on the statistics previously issued by the U.S. Air Force, according to which only 2% of all UFOs remained unidentified. It is sufficient that the order of the number of witnesses is indeed the same as is given regularly by the opinion polls.

If only 2% (the lowest figure given by the U.S. Air Force) of the cases remain unidentified, then with 11% of the technologically advanced adult population as eyewitnesses, you still get 2,800,000 eyewitnesses of true UFOs. Let us estimate that out of this total the proportion of high strangeness cases amounts to 1% (which in fact seems unreasonably low if you examine the catalogues) then you are left with 28,000 cases. Even with these eyewitnesses, the absence of photographs and films remains inexplicable. Up till now I have managed to meet and interrogate five eyewitnesses of ball-lightning, and to compare this phenomenon of ball-lightning with a close-proximity sighting of a UFO. Ball-lightning seems much the rarer of the two phenomena, and it is more unexpected, and more fugitive, and more terrifying than a UFO. Nevertheless photographs of ball-lightning exist.

#### V: Initial Conclusions

For unknown reasons related to the nature of UFOs, all we know, or think we know, about what close-proximity observations of UFOs really are derives from one single source: the description given after the event by the people who were the close eyewitnesses. But it seems impossible to explain the statistics unless all the close-encounter eyewitnesses are under the psychic control of the UFO. (The only alternative explanation would be that UFOs can efface, at a distance, any documentary evidence of them that we can get. There are in fact a number of cases which do suggest such a possibility. But then why don't they efface all the long-range photos too?)

It seems therefore that we are obliged to confess that we are totally ignorant as to the true appearance and behaviour of UFOs seen from close proximity.

In my opinion, we shall only *perhaps* begin to have some idea of what a UFO really is when we are able to have at our disposal *impersonal witnesses* that present no means whereby a psychical control can be exercised (i.e., multi-functional detecting-stations, such as the one proposed by Poher.)

In the meanwhile, the accounts given by the eye-witnesses must continue to be gathered with care and to be considered, not as statements of the truth, but as effects of a close-proximity UFO sighting upon the human psychism. Maybe one day we shall discover a method for analyzing these accounts.

We do not know whether impersonal witnesses would be more successful than the human mind in escaping from control by a UFO. But since it is possible to make infinite modifications in such artificial devices (which is an impossibility with

the human psyche) maybe it is by this means that the difficulty will one day be overcome. I confess I see no other way of doing it.

In my opinion, the facts as here set forth also oblige us to come to certain other conclusions, including some in domains far removed from Ufology. But it would seem wise that we should first of all examine the question and see whether these first conclusions of mine are solidly founded.

A.M. 29.9.75

#### Notes

1. *Gallup Results*: APRO Bulletin Vol.22, No.2, Sept.-Oct. 1973. (This publication is always antedated by several months.)
2. Sturrock, Peter A: "UFO Reports from AIAA Members". In *Astronautics and Aeronautics*, a publication of the American Institute of Astronautics and Aeronautics, Vol.12, No.5, May 1974, p.60.
3. See in particular the *Condon Report* and the Gallup Poll cited in Note 1.
4. Poher, Claude: (all in French) *Statistical Studies of One Thousand Sighting Accounts: Studies and Reflections on the UFO Phenomenon; Studies of the Correlations between Geomagnetic Readings and UFO Sighting Accounts*. See also David Saunders' *Ufocat*.
5. Phillips, Ted: "Physical Traces associated with UFO sightings" in *Bulletin of Center for UFO Studies, P.O. Box 11, Northfield, Illinois, 60093, USA (July 1975, p. 129)*.

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