

THE FALCON LAKE INCIDENT — Part 2

Chris Rutkowski

AS described in the first part of this article, Stephen Michalak claimed that, on May 20, 1967, he was burned by a strange craft, just north of the town of Falcon Lake. Much literature has been published regarding the incident, and an attempt is made to evaluate the findings to date, as well as examine the evidence as it exists.

Introduction

Something happened to Steve Michalak on the Victoria Day long weekend. His amateur prospecting was cut short by an encounter with a landed UFO. To this day, no definite conclusions have been reached regarding his experience, and his story has started to get garbled in publication over the years. Was it a hoax? Was it exactly as reported, and true? The final proof is yet to be found, but there is an astonishing amount of evidence to show that something occurred on a rock outcropping near a swampy area of the forest near the resort.

Michalak's account has appeared in several books and journals in various forms. For accuracy and the best detail, the reader is recommended to obtain Michalak's long-out-of-print book. But barring that, any one of several UFO books carries the story in sufficient quality to understand the case to a good degree, for example, Lorenzen (1969, 1976), Condon (1969), Story (1980) or Bondarchuk (1979). This article is a survey of the literature and the research, and is as accurate as possible, the result of the re-opened investigation of the case by UFOROM (Ufology Research of Manitoba), involving some new evidence and research conducted over the past few years. There is still much work to be done, and many unanswered questions exist which could effectively aid in the determination of truth. It is felt that the Michalak case is one of the most significant on record, and may hold the key for future research.

Physical effects: The site

The Condon Report found cause for concern with Michalak's inability to find the site while in the presence of officials.¹ Michalak went on two expeditions before finding the site with Mr. G. A. Hart, a personal friend. Indeed, Menzel and Taves cite this as a prime reason for labelling the case a hoax.²

However, Michalak has stated that the locating of the site presented several difficulties. First, when the incident occurred, the trees and bushes were devoid of leaves. When he returned to the area, Michalak said, he was disoriented because the leaves were opened.

This is a common complaint of individuals who hike in wooded areas, and can be regarded as a logical reason for experiencing difficulty in finding the site.

In addition, Michalak said that for that first Condon Commission expedition, he was transported to the area by helicopter, and was told to find the site from the anonymous location where they landed.

The second expedition began from a point suggested to be Michalak's exit from the bush following his encounter. Again, it was unsuccessful, due to the leaves' thickening and also Michalak's unsettled state of mind and body.

These explanations by Michalak can be accepted as reasonable, and are sufficiently sensible so as to eliminate a negative judgement on the case based solely on the inability to locate the site with official investigators. Disorientation in the wilderness can definitely be a problem in the locating of specific sites.

There is no question, however, that the site can be easily located when found by trailblazing. The usual method of finding the site is to head north from the Falcon Lake townsite, and follow a creek around large rock outcroppings until the bare rockface is seen. The numerous beaver dams and claims markers in the area can be used as reference points. Also interesting is that the actual site is within direct view of a forest ranger tower. Craig reports that the forest ranger on duty at the time of the incident did not observe either the landing or flight of the UFOs, or the smoke which resulted from the ignition of grass by the landed UFO.³

While this would seem effectively to flaw Michalak's story, one must remember that the individual in the tower would not be looking constantly in the direction of the site. However, the object was landed for at least 45 minutes, and if it gleamed in the sun or emitted an "intense purple light" as it was said to have done, it is puzzling as to why the individual in the tower did not see it.

Another problem that the Condon Report found was the reported direction that the object departed. This direction was 255°, and it is immediately obvious that such a bearing would have the object fly away from most observers. It was noted, however, that the bearing would have the object pass within a mile of the local golf course.⁴ No objects were seen by the golfers, though, again, if the speed of the UFO was great, this is not necessarily unusual. Condon also noted that the northward-opening gap in the trees was inconsistent with the 255° bearing. However, Michalak clearly stated that the object rose vertically before departing, so this argument is not valid.

Barrie Thompson, a CAPRO investigator, was one

of the first to accompany Michalak to the site. He reported that location of the site was not that difficult, and that the early expeditions to the site were led astray by basic errors.

Interestingly, both Thompson⁵ and Michalak⁶ reported a large amount of destroyed vegetation around the site. Thompson even described circular lesions on many leaves in the area (the leaves, he says, were all taken by the government before any civilian analysis could be done).

The Radiation

Much was made of the finding of radioactive debris at the site. This fact alone suggested to many people that Michalak was suffering from radiation poisoning.

The radiation detected was from soil samples brought back to Winnipeg by Michalak and an associate, after they had finally located the site. They had placed Michalak's torn shirt and tape measure in plastic bags, and put these together with the soil samples in the same knapsack. When the items were given to officials for examination, the shirt and tape measure were naturally found to be radioactive as well.⁷

Michalak mentions that Stewart Hunt of the Department of Health and Welfare informed him that the soil analysis "showed radiation."⁸ When Hunt went to the site and checked for radiation, he found "One small area. . .contaminated. . .across the crown at the rock. There was a smear of contamination about 0.5 × 8.0 inches on one side of the crack. There was also some lichen and ground vegetation contaminated just beyond the smear. The whole contaminated area was no larger than 100 square inches."⁹

The origin of this radiation is in some doubt. Whatever its cause, it was of sufficient quantity for the Radiation Protection Division to consider "restricting entry to the forest area."¹⁰ Beyond the areas located by Hunt, there was no radiation above the normal background. But the soil analysis showed a "significant" level of radium 226, for which there was no explanation.¹¹ It was suggested that the radium had come from a luminous watch dial, the dial having been scraped onto the site. However, no evidence could be found to support this contention.¹²

Analyses performed by the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment showed that the radioactivity in the samples was that of "natural uranium ore." This included counts of both alpha and gamma particles. One 190 KeV photo-peak was originally thought to be anomalous, and due to enrichment of uranium 235. While this would seem to indicate something other than natural uranium, the isotopes were found to actually be present within the expected ratios.¹³

To check further on the soil radiation, in June of 1979, a re-analysis was carried out with a lithium-drifted germanium detector at the University of Manitoba. The results showed that all the energies

detected could be adequately explained by the decay of natural uranium.¹⁴ Confusion may have resulted from the overlooking of the fact that U238 decays eventually into radon, a gas. Radon, of course, decays further into other elements, but the observed energies indicated a lower abundance than what would be expected. The reason for this, though simple, may not have been immediately obvious: radon is a gas, and will dissipate. Therefore, abundances of elements later in the decay chain will be much less than if all the previous elements were solids.

Identification of the 190 KeV peak as "abnormally high" may have been an oversight. The theory of radium 226 was related to this peak. Assigning elements to each of the peaks is a trying job, and often, two elements will give the same peak, often at the same intensity. This process is much like a jigsaw puzzle, and is somewhat open to interpretation, as it depends on variables such as the resolution, the efficiency and the capability of the analyser used.

However, while the 190 KeV photoppeak is not necessarily unusual, there are two very strong x-rays which are hard to identify. These appear at about 80 and 84 KeV. They may be caused by some radionuclide decay in the U238 chain (possibly by the emitted alpha particle affecting an electron). This, too, depends on abundance and the specific energies involved. Despite this, there is little evidence to indicate that the site was "seeded" with radium from an old watch dial. The observed radioactivity can be considered as due to natural uranium decay.

This, of course, raises the question of why the Department of Health and Welfare would consider closing off the area from such radioactivity. The early tests by individuals at the University of Manitoba are being sought. These would be helpful, since it is possible that at that time (in 1967), there may have been different peaks detected from elements with short half-lives. It will be noted, though, that the Whiteshell results, done in 1968, showed nothing other than was shown in the 1979 run, so this may suggest that the early analysis yielded the same results.

Again, however, there exists disagreement. A CAPRO investigator claims that Hunt's check of the site showed a much higher level of radiation than was reported.¹⁵ It was suggested that the bulk of the radioactive material was in a rock fissure across the site, this being either missed or ignored by official investigators. This is most relevant to a review of the metal analysis.

The metal

The metal is quite curious. A year after his encounter, Michalak returned to the landing site with an associate. With a geiger counter, they found two "W-shaped" silver bars, four and a half inches in length, and several other smaller chunks of the same

material. All this was found two inches under some lichen in a crack in the rock, over which the UFO was said to have hovered. Analysis showed that the silver was of "high purity," and contained low amounts of copper and cadmium. Craig commented that the composition was "similar to that found in commercially available sterling silver or sheet silver."¹⁶ Cannon contradicted this, saying the silver concentration was "much higher than would normally be found in native silver or commercially produced silver such as sterling or coinage."¹⁷ The reported percentage of copper, however, at 1% or 2%, is agreeable with that of commercial silver, though is indeed less than many specimens.

The metal showed signs of heating and bending, and it was speculated that it was "moulded" into its present shape. Support for the heating theory also comes from the fine quartz crystals which were found to be imbedded in the outer layer of the silver. The sand was similar to typical foundry sand, covering all of one bar and half of the other. But the very odd thing about the silver bars was their radioactivity. The bars were also covered with small crystals of a uranium silicate mineral and pitchblende, as well as feldspar and haematite. These particles are held to the silver by a sticky "moist" substance, and could be removed by washing with ethanol and brushing with a soft camel hair brush.¹⁸

Again, the two theories of Ra226 and U238 contrasted each other. But the same arguments apply. Since radium 226 is a by-product of U238 decay, it is even possible that both theories are correct, though traceable to U238.

The problem, however, is not the actual radioactive mechanism on the silver, but why it was missed earlier by other individuals. The Department of Health and Welfare went to the site on more than one occasion, and checked the site thoroughly. Why was the silver not located?

The physiological effects

The most noted elements of the incident are the many severe physiological effects Michalak experienced. When the object took off, Michalak was burned by a blast of heat or heated gas which came from a grill-like opening in front of him. His shirt and undershirt caught fire, burning his upper chest. He tore off these items and stamped them out, not wanting to cause a forest fire. Walking back to where the object had been, he felt nauseated, and had a strong headache. He broke out in a cold sweat, and began vomiting. Red marks began to appear on his chest and abdomen, burning and irritating. He set out for Falcon Lake in search of medical aid, wearing no shirt or jacket.

He eventually made it back to Winnipeg, where he was examined at the Misericordia Hospital. He did

not tell the examining physician what had happened, only that he had been burned by "exhaust coming out of an aeroplane." This was on May 20th.

On the 22nd, Michalak's family physician examined him, and said that the first-degree burns on his abdomen were not very serious. He prescribed 292s for the pain and sea-sickness tablets for the nausea. Michalak went to a radiologist on the 23rd, who found no evidence of radiation trauma. A whole-body count taken a week later at the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment also showed no radiation above normal background. The burns on Michalak's abdomen were diagnosed as thermal in origin. The curious geometric pattern of the burns led some sceptics to speculate that Michalak had fallen onto a "hot barbeque grill."¹⁹

Over the next few days, Michalak reported that he lost 22 pounds from his normal weight of 180. However, his physician could not verify this weight loss, since he had not seen him for over a year. Yet, judging from the fact that Michalak reported an inability to hold food down, in one week, his weight loss could have been considerable.

Also reported was a drop of his blood lymphocyte count from 25 to 16 per cent, returning to normal after a period of four weeks. These two counts were six days apart, but were associated with normal platelet counts on both occasions. This contributes to the

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argument against the theory of radiation exposure. A CAPRO investigator claims that the actual drop was from 25 to 6 per cent, although this is not supported by medical evidence.²⁰

There is some evidence to indicate that the red "welts" or burns went through periods of fading and recurrence, a most unusual medical situation. Because of the suggestion of radiation at the site, it was quickly suggested that the welts were radiation burns. This, however, is quite incorrect.

Radiation was also blamed for the "awful stench" which seemed to "come from within" Michalak's body. It was suggested that a quick dose of gamma rays may have deteriorated the food he had just eaten, giving him a vile odour and causing him to vomit "green bile."²¹ Individuals consulted on this, however, say that such a burst of gammas would have deteriorated Michalak, not just his digested food.

Another physiological effect was the "insect bites" rash which appeared on Michalak's upper torso. Craig reported that the rash was "the result of insect bites and was not connected with the alleged UFO experience."²² An RCAF Corporal, Davis, reported that he had been bitten by black flies when he was with Michalak searching for the site. Medical reports show that Michalak had "skin infections... having hive-like areas with impetiginous centres." Later he had "generalized urticaria" (hives) and felt weak, dizzy and nauseated on several occasions. Several times, he was examined for "numbness" and swelling of the joints.

A haematologist's report showed that Michalak's blood had "no abnormal physical findings," but had "some atypical lymphoid cells in the marrow plus a moderate increase in the number of plasma cells." This is in some contradiction to several sources (e.g. Naud, 1978) which claim that there were "imputities" in Michalak's blood. It is obvious that the reported irregularities in his blood would not in themselves be the cause for his condition.

The swelling of his body, however, strongly suggests an allergic reaction of some sort. After an apparent recurrence of his swelling at work on September 21, 1967, Michalak reported that doctors diagnosed his affliction as "the result of some allergy." The events leading up to this diagnosis had Michalak feel "a burning sensation" around his neck and chest. Then, there was a "burning" in his throat and his body "turned violet." His hands swelled "like a balloon," his vision failed and he lapsed into unconsciousness.²³

Later, he described how sometimes his wrists swelled so much that they filled his shirt cuff.²⁴ What sort of allergy did Michalak have?

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Chris Rutkowski's study will be concluded in the next issue of *Flying Saucer Review* — EDITOR

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WAS THIS A NEW TELEPORTATION IN BRAZIL?

Gordon Creighton

WE are indebted to Dr. Walter Buhler of Rio de Janeiro for the following report, which appeared in the Brazilian newspaper *O Dia* (Rio de Janeiro) of April 26, 1981.

A man named Jorge de Souza Ramos, resident on the Avenida Guaçuí, Bairro Shell, in the town of Linhares in the State of Espírito Santo, and employed by a pharmaceutical laboratory as a representative, left his home at about 6.00 p.m. on Monday, April 20, with the intention of going to the office of a friend of his in the district known as Corrego d'Água. When about twenty kilometres from the centre of Linhares, and when driving along the national highway BR-101 NORTE, he seemed to lose consciousness.

On Saturday, April 25, he found himself in the centre of the town of Goiânia, which is approximately 980 kms. to the north-west of Linhares as the crow flies. According to the press report, which was telegraphed to the head office of *O Dia* by their own correspondent in Goiânia, Souza Ramos could give no

explanation whatever for what had happened to him. He said he could remember nothing, except that he had been at the wheel of his VW *Passat* car, registration number BS-3806, when he felt himself blinded and paralysed by an intensely bright, vivid light. After that, he said, it had all been "like a dream". He could recall nothing whatever of what had happened until he "woke up" and found himself here in Goiânia, in a completely strange and unknown place.

Disappearance reported to Police

His wife, Noêmia Brando Ramos, had sat up all night anxiously awaiting his return, and when there was no sign of him she went next morning to the Police Headquarters in Linhares and reported him missing. Fearing that her husband might have been murdered, she emphasised that it was highly unusual for him to spend a night away from home, and that he had never before done so without informing her in

