THE OREGON PHOTO

Using photography to tackle a mystery

Adrian Vance

THE few hundred UFO pictures that now exist are falling into patterns that invite classification (the first step in organising information scientifically), but the picture you see here represents a breakthrough because it has recorded a mechanism that is pure magic to modern physics. *In my judgment this photograph constitutes proof that an object can be made to disappear and reappear in another location!*

The day was November 22, 1966, and the location just off Highway 58 at the 5,000ft. level near the Williamette Pass in Oregon. The man is in his fifties, relaxed college professor type, Ph.D. in biochemistry—a careful, thoughtful person making a slow climb up a snowbank at the Diamond Peak overlook in order to take a picture of that dramatic mountain.

The craggy mass of granite was breaking out of the churning mist as he neared the top of the snowbank so he made two exposures, but he waited for perhaps another shot. Suddenly, there it was! Something appeared directly in front of him and with camera at eye he instinctively snapped the shutter, but was unsure that he had even seen anything because the object was gone as quickly as it had appeared.

In that moment our man joined the ranks of the five million people in the United States who have seen UFOs, but with one essential difference—*he* had taken a picture of it and the number of people who have done that is probably less than 200.

THIS ARTICLE is taken from Petersen's *PhotoGraphic Magazine** for January 1973, of which publication Mr. Adrian Vance is a Contributing Editor. We are grateful to Mrs. Idabel Epperson, who is mentioned in the text, for first drawing our attention to this article, and for putting us in touch with Mr. Vance, with whom we have since enjoyed correspondence. It should be noted that the Editor of *PhotoGraphic Magazine* stated, carefully, that the story was used as ". . . a photographic exercise pertaining to the uses of photography as an analytical tool for the measuring of distance, speed and size." He added: "We are in no way acknowledging, or denying, the existence of UFOs."

EDITOR.

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The full negative of "The Oregon Photo" includes many Douglas Firs as well as the triple image of the object that was seen as a single vehicle.

Our story falls into limbo until the remaining nine frames of film have been exposed and processed. The 10 pictures before and the nine after tell us that our man is a sensitive photographer with a camera that functions irregularly. The old "Kodak 35" looks to be well cared for, but too much time has gone by and the shutter suffers from a disease common to between-the-lens-shuttered models. The lubricating fluid turns to something like glue and the speeds slow. The symptom is especially noticeable when the camera is cold, as it was when frame 11 was exposed, and the picture shows what the man recalls seeing, but there are three objects rather than just the one that he insists was present. The difference between what the man saw and what the camera recorded has made this one of the most controversial pictures in UFO circles in years. However, the quality of the picture and the witness have kept the issue in the centre ring of concern and as yet, without resolution.

The witness's first step (he prefers to remain anonymous) was to contact the U.S. Air Force through an acquaintance in the Reserve, and submit the negative and print "through channels for evaluation." The net result of this effort was a telephone call from an Air Force officer who insisted that the witness had seen three "Frisbees" tossed in the air and why wouldn't he "admit it?"

Undaunted our man contacted NICAP, the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, and after six month's wait was informed that, "we expect to close the case without additional study."

At this point I got into the act because one of the people who was not satisfied with the NICAP "analysis" was Mrs. Idabel Epperson, who is in charge of the Southern California chapter of NICAP. I've been doing photo analysis for the group for about five years, so after I finally got the negative, camera and a couple of prints, along with much of the correspondence regarding the case, I got to work.

The procedure for analysing a photograph is simple, but cluttered with masses of arithmetic. The size of the image recorded in the camera is equal to the size of the object times the focal length over the distance to the object:

$$\text{Image (size)} = \text{Object (size)} \times \frac{\text{focal length}}{\text{distance}}$$

In any single mathematical expression we can only have one unknown, but in UFO analysis we are generally faced with two unknowns, the object size and distance. One of the two will have to be determined by some other means and as a consequence the best UFO pictures contain images of known objects, shadows or backgrounds to which the UFO can be related.

The focal length of the camera is 2in. and the photograph contains images of trees known to be Douglas Firs with tops 25ft. in diameter. Working

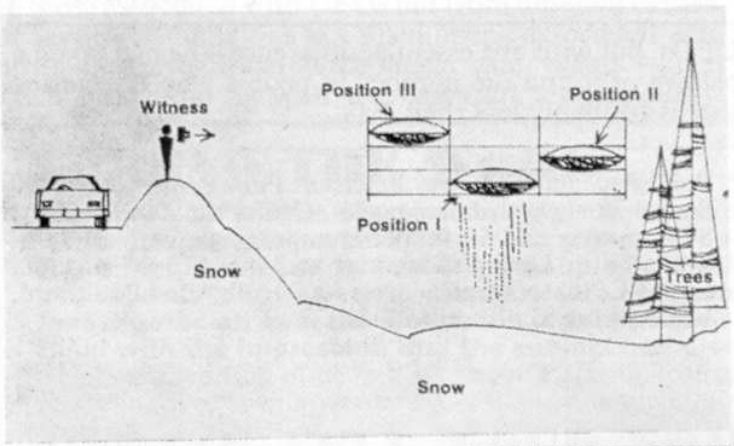
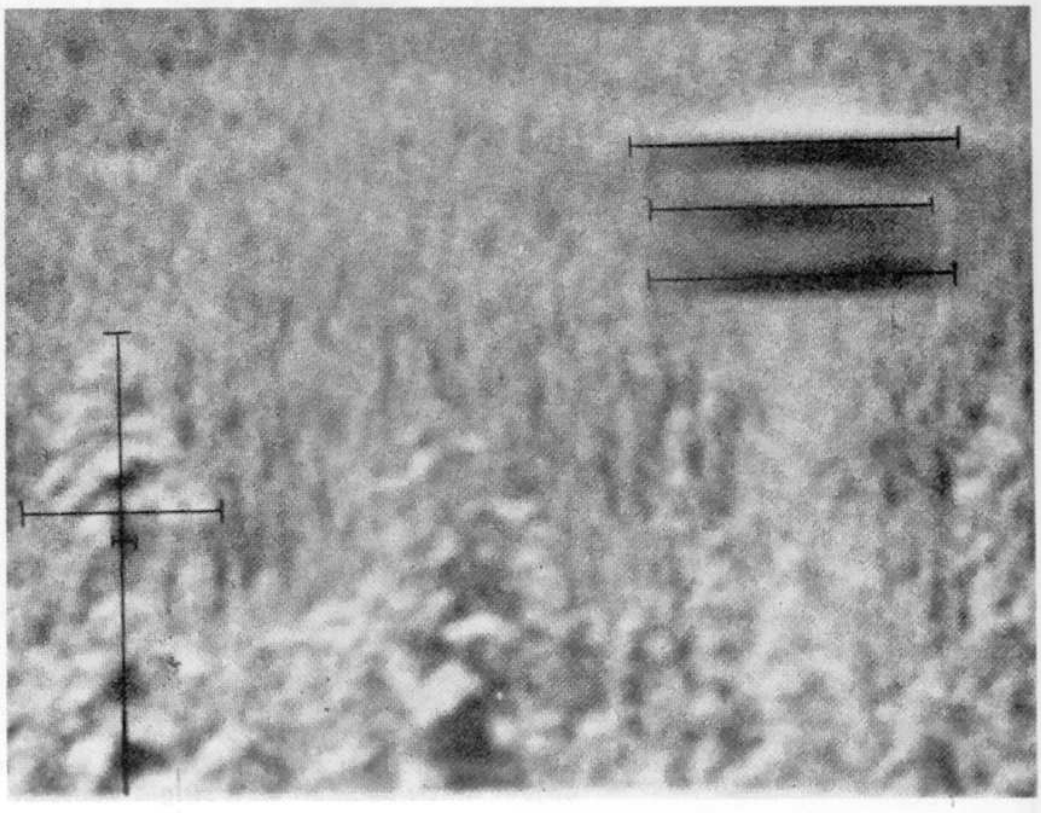


Diagram shows presumed flight path of UFO based on analysis of the Oregon Photo. Relative sizes of disc images as they appear in the print indicate that object's course deflected sharply during the instant required to take the photo. If the object was indeed some sort of vehicle, the lighter area beneath it might have been caused by a flare path or vapour trail



A known tree and the unknown object are marked on this moderate enlargement as a first step in the photo analysis system outlined in text

from one of the more prominent trees, with the assumption that its top was 25ft. in diameter, the size of the image on the negative was such that the tree would have to be 600ft. from the camera in order to satisfy the equation.

Working with small 35mm. negatives would be impossible if it were not for some kind of projection technique and the one that I prefer magnifies the negative 25·4 times. This converts every linear millimeter of the original to 1in. on the screen. Greater magnifications tend to confuse things as the only images one can make out clearly are clumps of grain. In an otherwise dark room this rather moderate projection technique will give you the finest image obtainable from the film. It is first generation, but reversed with black being white and white as black. Consequently, there is some difficulty in "reading" it and all measurements taken from it should be done several times for checking.

Examination of an ordinary 8 × 10 print of the UFO in this case gives the impression that the object is about halfway to the trees. On his return to the site at a later time the witness discovered a small, flat clearing about 300ft. from the camera position. Seeing (from the vapour trail underneath) that the object appears to be rising vertically, we have two reasons to settle on 300ft. as the distance. If we revise the earlier equation to calculate the size of the object:

$$\underset{\text{2in. focal length}}{300\text{ft.}} \times 12\text{in./ft.} \times \underset{\text{(image size)}}{0{\cdot}124\text{in.}} = 268\text{in.}$$

or 22·3ft.

The "12in./ft." has been added to convert the 300ft. to inches and the "0·124in. (image size) was from a 25·4× projection where the screen image measured 3·15in. If the object were at 600ft.—the edge of the entire clearing of the "overlook"—the object would be twice as large, or 44·6ft. in diameter. My experience with this kind of investigation indicates that the object is actually no closer than 150ft., which would bring it down to something like 11ft. in diameter.

It is an interesting consequence of living in an atmosphere like ours that light scattering off air molecules (which denigrates images) interferes with photography, but gives us another way to determine object distance. The system is a mathematical mess and an experienced "eyeball" can do about as well. Both the equations and the eyeball indicate something like 300ft.

Whatever, this UFO is definitely out of the "Frisbee" class and likely too large to be thrown by pranksters. This simple analysis dashes both the Air Force and NICAP cases. NICAP never did attempt to explain the photograph, but focused on the fact that the man saw one thing and photographed something else.

This was the "Gordian Knot," so I went to work on the camera to see if there were something novel about the way it functioned. The sad fact was that the camera would not function normally, the shutter disease had gone its course. But turning the film advance gear would operate the mechanism in such a way to show that the leaves were drawn from the aperture in the normal way, and all other frames on the strip were normal—it was not the shutter.

The answer came when I hit on the idea that a man and a camera see in two entirely different ways! A camera records anything that is placed in front of it with sufficient light to record an image for the amount of time the shutter is open. A man's eye does not have a shutter, but there is a visual cycle that produces visual flicker when there is none. For example, if we look at a turning disc that is half black and half white it will appear to flicker if turning less than 30 times per second in bright light or 20 times per second in dim light. The disc, of course, is not flickering, but our vision is flashing on and off. Anything that happens during one of those 1/30 second "ons" will be transmitted as a single event to the perceptual centres. We *see* in *still pictures!*

We don't detect flicker in motion picture theatres because the visual information is projected to the screen at the rate of 24 bits per second, faster than our visual cycle in dim light. We see a coherent image on the screen because the scenes move smoothly in a way that makes visual sense. Suppose that an especially maniacal Hollywood film maker decided to produce a motion picture wherein every frame would be totally different. To look at this film would be to see nothing more than a blur, but if you would take a camera and snap pictures now and then the processed film would show individually defined images as long as there's enough light on the screen to allow a shutter speed greater than 1/24 second.

At the moment the object appeared it was viewed by a man with a visual system operating in 1/30 second cycles and by a camera that was set at 1/100 second and f/8, loaded with Panatomic X film. But as we have noted earlier, the shutter was not operating at the indicated speed. To determine the actual speed of operation we turned to the densitometer, which indicated that the sky in negative No. 11 was about four times as dense as the normal negatives on the same strip of film. This is an error of two stops making the speed something like 1/30 second. That speed is also consistent with the general fuzziness of the photograph, as 1/30 second is just twice the normally recommended interval for hand-held work.

The sequence of recorded events would be: The shutter opens, the object is recorded in the first position, a vapour trail is seen below, the object disappears and reappears in the second position, but has a smaller apparent size. Object then disappears, no blur or motion apparent, reappears in the third position and with a larger visible size. The shutter closes.

The object either changed size or moved during the change from one position to another. Assuming that the object moved and that it was at 300ft. in the final position, the relative distances would be: 324ft. in the first position and 348 in the second. Owing to the estimated width of 22·3ft., it would seem that the object moved both up and back one "space" in moving from the first to the second positions and up one and forward two spaces in moving from the second position to the third position. The image of the object in the second position just fits between the images of the object in the first and third positions, in confirmation—the object was moving with incredible precision!

As the shutter was open for 0·03 seconds and each image appears to be of equal density, it would appear that the object was visible in each location for 0·01 second. The witness apparently perceived a single object in an approximate location as his retina gathered a fuzzy

(*Continued on page* 6)

OF GODS, GENII, HEROES AND ENTITIES

Aimé Michel

Translation: Gordon Creighton

IN 1948 or 1949, when I was still quite a young man, I found myself dining one evening in the home of the pianist Walter Rummel, along with Rosamonde Gérard (the wife of Edmond Rostand, author of *Cyrano*), her son Maurice Rostand, and an unknown gentleman who chanced to be my immediate neighbour at the table. During the random conversation this gentleman revealed a prodigious knowledge of ancient Greek literature, which he seemed to know in its entirety, by heart, *in Greek*. My favourite philosopher in those days was Sextus Empiricus, whom nobody reads and nobody knows: but he knew Sextus Empiricus better than I did, and keenly urged me to translate him, for at that date no good translation of him in French existed.

But my neighbour struck me even more by the depth and originality of the ideas he voiced on everything. As I listened to him, I had the impression of hearing a man who had come from a wiser world and who regarded the present as a period that had lost its way in illusory ideas on man, on Nature, on mind and thought, on death, on the material universe, and on the meaning of our destiny.

After dinner, I asked Rummel who was this man whose name I had not caught when being introduced to him. "What!" cried Rummel, "Didn't you recognise Mario Meunier!"

And, indeed how could I not have recognised the greatest Hellenist of our time? Ever since then, greatly impressed by that evening, I have never failed to buy it whenever I have chanced to come across one of Meunier's books—virtually impossible to get now because, like all works of learning, they are hardly ever republished.

Some time later, we began to hear talk about the flying saucers, and I never translated Sextus Empiricus.

Then, some three or four years ago, I found in a second-hand bookshop, Mario Meunier's translation of the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras, followed by Hierocles' *Commentary*.[1] Reading this *Commentary* was for me one of the greatest surprises of my life: it revealed to me in fact a cosmogony within which the UFOs, far from appearing irrational or improbable as is now the case, would have been recognised as the most natural thing in the world and the least surprising. Reading Hierocles one could even ask oneself whether that cosmogony was not perhaps the distant echo of an age in which mankind had *known* what UFOs are, and had recognised in UFOs a normal, indeed even an essential part of the world in which they lived.

I. Hierocles

This is how Meunier introduces our author to us (p. 10): "One of the most remarkable minds of that erudite school of philosophy and one who, along with Proclus, Damascius, Olympiodoros, and Simplicius, constituted the final glory of the city of Athens and of the Genius of the Pagan Era. In fact, although he lived and taught in Alexandria during the Vth century of our era, Hierocles is already permeated with the spirit which a century later, was to animate the last great philosophical school of Antiquity, the School of Athens, that final effort of a way of thought now relegated and corralled back, by the triumph of Christianity, into the venerable precincts of Athens where it had had its beginnings. It was in the year A.D. 529 that the Emperor Justinian made a decree and issued instructions that nobody should teach philosophy any more in the city of Athens. In 532, three years after the closure of the School, the same Emperor, having banished the leading philosophers, who took refuge in Persia, confiscated the very considerable possessions of the society of the Platonists."

Other details about Hierocles are given by a number of writers of Antiquity (Damascius, Suidas). I will return to this later.

II. The Pythagorean tradition

As we know, Pythagoras had lived long before, in the VIth century B.C. We know too that many mathematical

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THE OREGON PHOTOGRAPHS

(*Continued from page* 5)

impression of "something" in that area, but his recollection would be fuzzy and unclear just as the viewer of the aforementioned "different frame" movie may remember one or two especially distinct, or provocative, frames of the film.

The photograph indicates that this process of appearing and disappearing is non-instantaneous. The edges of the object are relatively faint and the dark bottom is most intensely black in the centre. Light from the background passes through the centre for a shorter period of time than through the edges. What about this business of appearing and disappearing? Isn't this something new? Not at all. Several respected authorities on the subject have written of simultaneous visual and radar sightings of UFOs that have simply vanished from space.

The UFO mystery appears to be the nearest window to a new era in science, and photography is in a pivotal position because not only is the camera a great tool for investigation, but also for creating interest. The mind of man has always seen to it that the most ambitious fantasies of the previous century have been topped by the events of the next. We've already done more than the most wild 19th Century writers could imagine and soon "2001" may seem archaic as we look through that glass.