

After 35 years of serious investigation, exploration, and reflection, engaged with the best researchers in the field, it was time to make as succinct and clear a statement as I could, within the constraints of 1200 words for the Crossroads section in the Sunday Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

It was also a way for a mainstream newspaper, the winner of many awards, to implicitly suggest that the subject is more than tabloid fodder.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/out-of-the-closet-on-ufos-b99203753z1-245623181.html><http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/out-of-the-closet-on-ufos-b99203753z1-245623181.html>

A Confession: Out of the Closet on UFOs - February 16 2014

Let me put it to you straight. For 35 years I have been exploring and investigating UFOs and UFOlogy (both the serious endeavor and the silly speculative fare that fills popular culture) and ... well, UFOs are real: They fly, they evince technologies we don't understand, and they have been around for years.

Above all, despite voluminous and overwhelming evidence to support those assertions, to raise this subject as worthy of historical and scientific investigation is to invite ridicule, the shaking of pitying heads, derision and hostility, and embarrassed silence.

Still, I persist in believing, as Francis Bacon said in 1620, that if something deserves to exist, it deserves to be known, not rejected out of hand with prejudice. The scientific method, principles of historical analysis, and an open mind ask that much.

No subject has been more marginalized and maligned than this topic. By "unidentified flying objects" I mean not the many things commonly mistaken for them – balloons, Venus, sprites, ball lightning, secret craft, etc.– I mean anomalous vehicles which for decades have been well documented by credible observers ("Credible people have seen incredible things," said General John Samford, US Air Force Chief of Intelligence, in 1953), to which our government responded with the formulation and execution of policies in light of genuine national security concerns.

I was recently privileged to be included as contributing editor and writer on a team that produced the book, "UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry" over five years. The research/writing team was led by Dr. Michael Swords, a professor of Natural Science (ret.) at Western Michigan University and Robert Powell, a nanotechnologist formerly with AMD. The book is regarded as an "exception" to the dreary field by CHOICE, the journal that recommends works for inclusion in university collections. CHOICE suggested that all university libraries should have it (to date, 45 have it in their

collections, including 4 in the U-Wisconsin system, as well as many Wisconsin public libraries). The almost-600 page book is well grounded with nearly 1000 citations from government documents and other primary sources so it is “bullet proof.” There is virtually nothing speculative in it. We document the response of governments from the 1940s forward to events they took quite seriously—and which readers, judging on the evidence and data, will take seriously as well.

A short column can not do justice to the complex narrative, but I can state a few facts.

- (1) Any other domain of inquiry with hundreds of well-documented events would be considered worthy of scientific and historical investigation.
- (2) Well-executed policies carried out with secrecy do not constitute “a conspiracy,” and we are not “conspiracy theorists,” a term used to denigrate investigators of unpopular subjects. Members of the military and intelligence community, from the early 1950s on, decided to learn as much as they could about UFOs – which they decided did not constitute a direct threat to national security – while at the same time playing down and dismissing reports from the public. The reports themselves were considered to be the primary threat by the CIA.
- (3) The data illuminates phenomena that is global, persistent, and sufficiently similar in small details to invite taxonomic classification as to vehicle types, the physics of force fields which power the objects and ionize the air around it, producing characteristic colors in relationship to speed and power, and diverse kinds of robotic or sentient beings associated with the objects.
- (4) It is an astonishing sociological and psychological event that throughout the twentieth century, reports by credible observers, corroborated on multiple radar sets on the ground and in jets, resulted not in public investigation but in an inability to get our minds around the mere possibility. Instead the subject is literally “unthinkable.”
- (5) One reason it is “unthinkable” is the effective use of ridicule, the mocking of people who made reports or took the subject seriously, and a long silence from official authoritative voices in the face of credible testimony. When I delivered a speech and served on a panel recently at the NSA, I was reminded by a veteran analyst that “the three legs of cover and deception are illusion, misdirection, and ridicule. But the greatest of these is ridicule”—which discredits the person, not the testimony, and the testimony I have heard has come from military and civilian pilots, astronauts, even the intelligence head of a foreign military force. “This is what I saw, and I know what I saw” is what I am told, corroborating the statement in 1947 by Lt. Gen. Nathan Twining that “The phenomena is something real and not visionary or fictitious.”
- (6) My personal exploration began in 1978 when, as a recently ordained Episcopal clergyman in a parish on the edge of an Air Force base, a parishioner, a decorated fighter pilot with all the “right stuff” who retired as a Colonel, told me, “We chase them and we can’t catch them.”
- (7) “UFOs and Government” includes quotations from generals, senior intelligence personnel, and professionals like Hermann Oberth, the father of German rocketry, that affirm the exotic characteristics of the technology that no earthly power could

then achieve. As Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell told me, “Richard, if we could do what they can do, they wouldn’t have sent me to the moon in a tin lizzie.”

- (8) We increasingly accept through our own scientific explorations that many earth-like planets likely to harbor life fill our galaxy and galaxies beyond. When we hear that from authoritative voices, we accept it as a probability, but when we examine the evidence of decades of visitation by real explorers, we find it difficult to think in a concrete way that we are not alone, not the top of the food chain, and that others may have been voyaging for thousands of years—as if we are the gold standard of scientific knowledge and our current understanding of physics is the end of all physics.

So I’m out of the closet on a subject. As an older man with a solid track record of delivering insights into likely futures that have pretty much worked out over the years, a man who has spoken for security conferences all over the world (including NSA, the FBI, the Secret Service, the US Department of the Treasury, the Pentagon, etc.), discussing the impact of new technologies, I can say without embarrassment that documented data supports the contention that many historical reports show exactly what they seem to show –anomalous vehicular traffic demonstrating aerodynamic capabilities and propulsion systems beyond the range of our own technology.

So ... why do well-intentioned people who know more than I do persist in the pretense that nothing unusual has been going on? That’s a more speculative exploration, one for another time.

Richard Thieme is a Fox Point writer and professional speaker ([www.thiemeworks.com](http://www.thiemeworks.com)). In addition to “UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry,” he has written “Islands in the Clickstream (2004)” and “Mind Games (2010)” and contributed chapters to several books.

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