

The True Value of UFO Experiences: Close Encounters are the Best Kind

By

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Disclaimer:

This article is a work of nonfiction—not science fiction. The piece recreates true events, locations, and conversations from my memories of them. In some instances, the names of individuals and places were changed to maintain anonymity. The article explores an expressed link between experiencing anomalies and the brain's capacity to change. This material is provided for educational and informational intentions. The document contains no copyrighted material which has not been cited or specifically authorized by the copyright owner. This information is made available in an effort to advance the understanding of environmental, political, human rights, economic, democratic, scientific, and social justice issues, etc. Allowance has been made for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, education, and research.

The Psychological Value of UFOs

UFO is a term commonly used to label an object observed in Earth's atmosphere (or the space beyond) that is impossible to identify. The act of observing a UFO is not an ordinary occurrence. An extraordinary observable object or event is called a phenomenon.

An anomaly is a rare, very unique object or event that has perceptual qualities. Humans perceive things with their senses. Sighting a UFO is clearly a phenomenon. To be more precise, sighting a UFO is an anomalous phenomenon.

Carl Jung, an influential psychologist, stated that the UFO phenomenon had an extremely important psychological component (Jung, 1978). Jung questioned why UFOs were a topic of great human interest. To Jung, UFOs were desirable phenomena that kept arising in the minds of human beings.

A healthy human nervous system needs exposure to exceptional random events and sensations to build up the brain. Complex nerve assemblies crave novelty and unpredictability (Feldenkrais, 2019). Brains love to order confusion. As a result, humans seek out experiences that seriously arouse their brains (Neurotracker Team, 2018a).

Some parts of the human brain are hardwired. In essence, the brain's wrinkled gray matter is connected to sensory inputs and motor outputs with chains of nerve cells. Yet, significant portions of the brain are not linked together. For greater connectivity, nerve cells will rewire to generate new networks (Neurotracker Team, 2018b). During a UFO experience, the brain gets rewired.

The UFO phenomenon embodies highly strange objects and events. To figure out a UFO experience, an observer must employ elastic thinking. Elastic thinking is a nonlinear way of handling complex issues. Elastic thinking involves using multiple threads of thought simultaneously. During elastic thinking, tiny interactions of billions of networked nerve cells in the brain rapidly search for solutions to bizarre problems (Mlodinow, 2018).

While a person is experiencing a UFO, nerve cells in the brain are stimulated. These nerve cells receive and send electrical signals. Such cells are called neurons.

The neurons involved with processing a UFO fire together. Once they fire, they form a specialized circuit. This newly connected circuit reforms the brain. Thus, a UFO sighting changes the human brain.

Once a UFO experience is repeated, the connections between neurons in the circuit mentioned above become stronger. Each time that we gain new knowledge through practice or habit, the connections linking neuron to neuron are strengthened. A better connection between neurons means that electric signals travel more efficiently when using the path (Cognifit, n.d.). When circuits fire fast: the brain works well.

Usually, a UFO encounter enlists the observer's sensory, perceptual, affective, and cognitive mechanisms. UFO sightings engage several brain areas allowing incoming information to be placed into various parts of the brain. This new data will be available for addressing challenges later on in life. In general, life becomes more gratifying once the brain has learned to establish order in a universe of chaos.

Witnessing an unidentified aerial anomaly often brings about a rare state of mind. My research indicates that experiencing a UFO is a composite of several processes that rely on a number of brain structures working in harmony. Seeing a UFO may involve torrents of mental processes that occur instantaneously. More importantly, some UFO experiences might contribute to human health and well-being.

Close Encounters

In 1984, I earned a Doctor of Education Degree (with a major in Music Education) from Penn State University. By 1985, I was drafting a children's musical play. My musical play

incorporated several popular contemporary topics: extraterrestrial intelligence, spaceships, UFOs, and outer space. To learn as much as possible about the UFO phenomenon, I joined the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained (PASU). PASU was a scientific research unit that conducted investigations of credible unexplained occurrences and served as a clearing house for UFO sightings. Before long, I was a dedicated UFO researcher.

I regularly attended meetings as one of PASU's field investigators. Only bona fide PASU members could attend the group's closed monthly get-togethers. At those private gatherings, sensitive matters were often discussed. The PASU organization distributed a bi-monthly publication known as the *PASU Data Exchange Newsletter*.

Whether analyzing confidential data at monthly meetings or collecting evidence out in the field, PASU members agreed to follow specific written rules. Those rules insured private matters received professional attention. Field investigators could keep copies of their UFO reports. However, we were not allowed to give out PASU-held information to the media or the public without clearing its release with one of the group's directors. If an associate did not follow these regulations, he or she could be dismissed from the association by a majority vote of the members.

While many UFO investigators follow ethical codes, they should also attempt to use an acceptable protocol for organizing and presenting valid information. Such a protocol is known as the scientific method. Good science relies on curiosity to inspire hunts for knowledge. Only appropriately structured scientific expeditions will harvest high quality information.

Science is most useful when recognized as a body of knowledge acquired through curiosity and studied using a well thought-out approach. Authentic scientists use the scientific method to structure effective means for acquiring knowledge and gaining understanding. Likewise, even the most basic approaches to scientific methodology insist that investigators observe, research, hypothesize, predict, experiment, and conclude.

To help render field research efficient, Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) field investigators fill out various checklists during their inquiries. One such checklist incorporates a scale developed by Dr. J. Allen Hynek who was a scientist and astronomer from Northwestern University. His scale classified observed events that involved unidentified flying objects (UFOs). The original Hynek Classification System outlined three kinds of close encounters with UFOs: *Close encounters of the first kind, close encounters of the second kind, and close encounters of the third kind.*

A close encounter of the first kind is a visual sighting of a UFO within 500 feet of a witness. According to the Hynek classification system, a close encounter of the first kind encompasses a near sighting of a UFO that is 500 feet or less away from the observer. The UFO may be odd

lights or aerial objects that are maneuvering or displaying characteristics not possible with current terrestrial technology.

A close encounter of the second kind is a visual sighting of a UFO plus accompanying physical evidence. An encounter of this kind involves the nearby sighting of a UFO that leaves a physical trace. These traces can be measurable heat or radiation experienced by the observer. Such traces also include damage to the immediate terrain. Incidences of human paralysis, mysteriously agitated animals, as well as radio and television interference fall into this second category. The phenomenon of lost time is also evidence of a second kind encounter.

A close encounter of the third kind involves sighting occupants in and around the UFO. Close encounters of this nature include a witness observing animate beings associated with a UFO sighted less than 500 feet away.

In 1987, I volunteered for a year-round unpaid job. I served as the performing arts chairperson for a three-day arts festival. The festival took place annually in Blair County, Pennsylvania. My chairperson responsibilities included auditioning prospective acts to perform at the event.

One night in 1989, after the Earth had recently tilted into its summer solstice, I was finishing some paperwork and getting prepared to hit the road. I was scheduled to audition two musicians in a band who regularly played at a local roadhouse. This pub was near the town of Ebensburg, Pennsylvania in Cambria County. Little did I know I'd be a significantly changed person after the trip—once a mind has expanded to accept new information, it can't shrink back.

It was about 11:00 P.M. Eastern Time on Friday, June 23rd. In less than two hours, a close encounter of the first kind would transform my life. Unfortunately (as with all of my UFO experiences to date) there was no link between the imminent encounter and any ongoing field investigation. Thus, I was not wholly prepared for what would occur in about an hour and a half.

That night, I left my house via the back door and walked to the driveway where my car was parked. I opened the car door and slid into the bucket seat of my gently used 1985 Volkswagen Scirocco. This particular VW was pewter-colored and sported a Blaupunkt stereo system as well as a moon roof. I injected a newly mixed cassette into the car's tape deck. The tape was a compilation of songs by the musical group Supertramp.

A nanosecond before turning the key in the ignition, I was startled by a fingernail tapping on the car's tinted glass moon roof. For some reason, my response to that fingernail tap was a definite quiver—like when a full set of fingernails scrapes a chalkboard. An involuntary head-snap toward my right shoulder revealed Roxanne.

Roxanne was a neighbor who lived in my housing development. Roxanne had recently separated from her husband. She occasionally sought out neighbors to help quell her annoying ruminations about relationships. Earlier that week over coffee, I had invited her to join me for the upcoming audition. Her presence at my car indicated she had accepted the offer.

Stepping out of the car, I walked over to the car's passenger side. I opened the door for her. Closing it carefully, I got back into the car and buckled up. Without hesitation, we drove in a northeasterly direction. We were traveling on Route 22.

We arrived at the Cambria County nightspot in time to hear one of the band's better dance music sets. Cambria County, which borders Blair County to the north, is mountainous and recognized for harvesting coal. After parking in a nearby lot, we walked into the crowded bar at exactly 11:30 P.M.

We found comfortable seats relatively close to the stage and attentively listened to the band. The name of the band was: Downtown Harry. We listened to a full set of songs. During the break, I negotiated and signed a contract with the band's leader—Harry. Since most of the paperwork had been done ahead of time, the process was painless and quick.

It was 12:30 A.M., early Saturday morning, June 24, 1989. Roxanne and I were on the return trip down through the mountains. In order to compensate for my ears' exposure to the din in the bar, I set the car's stereo at almost full volume when we first rolled out of the parking lot.

It was part of my job, as the performing arts chairperson, to negotiate reasonable contracts. Therefore, I did not drink alcohol before or during auditions. Besides, drinking and driving don't mix. However, my guest, Roxanne, had sipped on a short alcoholic drink as we listened to the music back at the bar. All potentially mind-numbing drinking ended with her one alcoholic beverage. As a result, our minds seemed unusually vibrant. We were both sober. That was a good thing. Soon, after about five miles of motoring down the mountain, a strange experience began to unfold.

The early morning darkness was warm, humid, mostly clear, but with some tufts of scattered fog. The moon was bright and more than half-illuminated. So far, the morning had been perfect for traveling. Route 22 was a representative four-lane highway with a guardrail bordering its sides.

Supertramp's "Take the Long Way Home" raged through the stereo system almost loud enough to shatter the speakers. The moon roof was gaping. Regardless, I was attempting to hold a pseudo professional conversation with Roxanne. In reality, I was trying to impress her by presenting a detailed technical review of the live music we had experienced at the pub.

Throughout the conversation, I would occasionally glance at Roxanne as she adorned her bucket seat. During one look, my peripheral vision caught something moving outside my passenger's windshield. The object was about 35 yards ahead and off of the highway to the right. My eyes focused on the object as my ears let the music go.

Something was moving on the ground. The thing was not on the highway—it was behind the guardrail. That specific section of guardrail was situated on a flat piece of land. A large tree stood on the land. The tree was growing several feet beyond the far side of the guardrail. The land stretched for quite a few feet past the tree before the terrain dropped down to a trench.

The object was stirring near the base of the tree's trunk. At that moment, the object was animated. It was close to the bottom of the tree, but it was a couple of feet off to the right—stage left.

The thing was solid black in color. It looked as if it was on or near the ground. I slowed the car and focused on studying this moving object. Within a fraction of a second, the thing froze in place. It waited for my car to get closer before it made its move.

As I slowly drove nearer to the spot where the object was located, the thing gently rose from its hiding place behind the guardrail. The entity floated up until it reached a position slightly beneath the lowest hanging branches of the tree.

While the object effortlessly lifted, it changed color: from a deep solid black, to a camouflage-like gray with black blotches, to a solid grayish white. Once it had achieved a solid light color, the object sailed out from under its leafy cover and flew toward Route 22.

I had anticipated a close-up view of some sort of large bird. I was wrong. In fact, a lot of things seemed wrong with this close encounter.

The thing's wingspan measured about 12 feet. Its body was approximately five feet in length from tip to tail. It was longer than my car was wide. Overall, the object appeared to be about five feet long with a wingspan of around twelve feet.

As soon as I realized we had come upon some sort of unusual flying object, a torrent of thoughts gushed through my mind. My brain began to search through its neuron networks looking for answers to the following questions: What kind of huge bird is that? Why would a bird be flying at this wee hour of the morning? Is it an owl? Could it be a huge Snowy Owl? What is a Snowy Owl doing this far south? How is this owl able to fly without flapping its wings? Why does this owl not have feathers?

It was obvious that the object's odd actions and appearance were working on my brain. In turn, my mind was rapidly working on it. I was using a lot of mental energy.

This aerial anomaly quickly ascended to an altitude slightly above the treetop. When my car's headlights illuminate the scene, the thing banked and established a new flight path with my car as its destination.

When I clicked on the high beams, I got a good look at the object's underbelly. On its underside, a smooth translucent skin covered the entire body. It no longer looked like a bird. Its shape was actually closer to that of a large manta ray. But, this devil-fish was navigating in air—not water.

Unlike an animal, this thing had no specific head to speak of—it had no eyes, mouth, or beak. It lacked feet and a definitive tail too. Furthermore, it had no visible openings, holes, rivets, flaps, or seams. Too, this odd winged object had no noticeable separations of any kind. And, there was no visible means of propulsion.

As it flew toward my car, the thing changed color again. This time, it turned a soft white color and seemed like it was lit from within. But when it adjusted course to dive-bomb my vehicle, the entire winged figure began to glow a fluorescent green. Its color mimicked a luminous watch dial.

The now radiant UFO swooped directly over my car—clearing the open moon roof by only a few inches. As it passed above, the inside of my car became flooded with fluorescent green light—the same color as the UFO.

This “manta ray” flew above my slow-moving car and then abruptly dipped. It nearly hit the paved surface of Route 22's oncoming lanes. Unexpectedly, it shot up at a steep angle and flew north at a phenomenal speed. The object climbed sharply at hundreds of miles per hour. While it soared, it was leaving a greenish trail. Its trajectory sort of looked like a missile in flight. In seconds, the darkness absorbed it. It was gone. Out of sight—but not out of mind.

Overall, the session with this UFO lasted for maybe two minutes. Regardless, I couldn't wrap my mind around what had just happened. As soon as it was out of sight, I expressed my inability to fully comprehend the encounter by involuntarily hyperventilating. I felt as if I was in the midst of a beginner's yoga class poorly practicing some new rapid deep breathing technique.

Embarrassed and self-conscious, I looked over at Roxanne. She was hyperventilating too! We were both hyperventilating! In unison! It was an extraordinary happening.

At that point, I realized I was undergoing a strong aesthetic experience. My panting fit was not initiated by fear. Instead, hyperventilation was a physical reaction to being exposed to a high quality unexplained phenomenon. Gasping for air was part of my physiological response to stumbling upon a rare, highly stimulating event. Encountering a UFO was much more powerful

than having a strong aesthetic experience while listening to a piece of really good music or viewing a work of extremely fine art.

Aesthetics involves the study of beauty. An aesthetic experience is a kind of scrutinizing behavior integrating several levels of processing. Aesthetic experiences have five characteristics: focus, perception, affect, cognition, and cultural matrix. Focus is when an observer's attention is devoted to a particular object or event. Perception is the process of becoming aware of an object or event through the senses. Affect may be experienced in two ways. The first form of affect is through a type of physical response such as an increased heart rate or amplified breathing. The second form of affect involves a "feelingful" reaction such as shivers running up and down the spine. Affective reactions may range from strong to weak and from simple to complex. Cognition is a characteristic of an aesthetic experience that allows an individual to recognize many different levels of attributes related to the object or event being observed. Cultural matrix takes the cultural context of the experience into account. An eyewitness is not able to fully experience an anomalous phenomenon, like a UFO, without the underlying context supplied by a culture (Radocy & Boyle, 1997).

The emerging scientific research picture shows that aesthetic experiences are associated with neural connectivity patterns. Experiencing an aesthetic response after encountering a non-arts object or event, such as a UFO, brings together understandings about neural connectivity and neuroaesthetics. Neuroaesthetics is a field of science that combines psychological research with aesthetics by investigating the perception, production, and response to art, as well as interactions with objects and scenes that evoke intense feelings (Chatterjee, 2011).

Studies related to aesthetic experiences and brain structures show robust patterns of distinct neuroactivity during affective processing. The findings about neural processes leading to aesthetic experiences are complex and as of yet undefined. Related studies are sparse.

Aesthetic experiences are a composite of several processes that rely on a number of brain structures working together. Efficient connections and organization between brain regions (which are measurable) have proven to be important for cognitive functioning and intellectual performance. Functional connectivity patterns may be used as a predictor for mental performance.

Accumulating evidence indicates that aesthetic experiences also contribute to human well-being and health. Currently, a need exists for more studies about neuroaesthetics (Reybrouck, Vuust, & Brattico, 2018). Contrary to the approach of studying neuroplastic changes, the effects of aesthetic experiences on brain connectivity are still rather elusive.

My research indicates UFO encounters elicit aesthetic experiences. The value of a UFO experience could be enhanced if the observer focuses on the way he or she is experiencing the

UFO. If an observer takes an aesthetic attitude toward a UFO, the overall experience may be heightened.

Meanwhile, back on Route 22, I was still hyperventilating. So, I applied the brakes and cautiously drove my car off of the pavement and onto the road's berm. When the clamor of loose stones hitting the car's underside stopped, I pulled up the handbrake and opened the door. Crawling out of the automobile, I continued to draw in the early morning atmosphere through measured gasps.

A quick look around indicated we were safe from other moving vehicles. I motioned to Roxanne. She removed herself from the passenger seat and joined me on the road's shoulder. There, we both immediately assumed hands-above-the-knees poses and rhythmically sucked in air.

Once I regained control of my breathing, I vowed to Roxanne: *I'm reporting this!* Silence dominated the trip home. Later that morning, I phoned a report into a UFO hotline. After I verbally relayed my close encounter to the hotline's recording machine, I began to think about my health and Roxanne's well-being too. We may have been exposed to excessive radiation when the glowing UFO zeroed in on the car's open moon roof. I recalled reading about UFO cases where individuals eventually developed symptoms of radiation sickness after experiencing a close encounter.

A few minutes later I received a return phone call from a UFO hotline volunteer. Among other things, the volunteer suggested that I make an appointment with a local hospital for an examination to check for excessive ionizing radiation exposure. I phoned Roxanne at her home and suggested that she schedule the same type of assessment. She said she would make a doctor's appointment pending my hospital exam's results.

The following day, I called a local hospital and set up an appointment for specialized tests to determine if I had surplus radioactive material in my body. The tests were scarier than the UFO encounter. The first test involved drawing samples of blood from my arm to look for changes in my blood cell count. However, it was the second test that really frightened me.

To start the second test, a nurse led me to a cold bench in one of the hospital's empty white-tiled halls. Soon, another nurse approached me with a hefty hypodermic needle filled with a reddish-brown fluid. The hypodermic needle was enormous. The barrel of its syringe looked as if it could hold a half pint of liquid—or more!

After a brief orientation, the nurse plunged the needle into my right leg just above the knee. She slowly injected the full contents of the syringe. I had a difficult time watching her execute the

technique. The process, although skillfully carried out, made me woozy. After the injection, I was required to stay seated quietly for ten minutes. Luckily, no side effects set in.

Next, another nurse helped me limp down a chilly hallway to a nearby room. The room was stark and contained a solitary gurney bed. Permanently installed on the room's ceiling was an amazing piece of equipment. It was a camera-like device mounted on an intricate system of mechanical arms and track rails. For the most part, the exotic machinery above me allowed the device to move fast and effortlessly in complex patterns while it filmed above the gurney.

The nurse directed me to stretch out horizontally and place myself face-up on the bed's hard surface. Then, she strapped me down, and instructed me to remain perfectly still. Furthermore, she said that I must breathe in a shallow manner during the entire procedure. When she finished the instructions she began to leave the room. Oh her way out the door she shouted: *And for God's sake don't try to sit up.* I was scared.

Within seconds after the nurse left the room, the device on the ceiling lowered until it was about an inch above the tip of my nose. Then, it immediately began whirling and zipping around my perfectly still body. It was capturing images of my organs, soft tissues, bones, and other internal body parts. The minute it stopped and made a retreat to its resting place on the ceiling, the nurse returned. She unbuckled the straps, and walked me out into the hall. She said I could leave the hospital.

I shook the whole way home. Less than a week later, I received a letter from the hospital stating the tests had not detected any significant increases in radiation. I notified Roxanne.

Shortly after receiving the favorable test results, I had an epiphany: There was a definite link between anomalous experiences, such as UFO encounters, and aesthetic experiences with music and the other arts. The most noticeable part of that link was the affective reaction.

The August 1989 issue of the bi-monthly *PASU Data Exchange Newsletter* reported that something that was glowing brightly had been sighted near a rural roadway on or about May 20, 1989 at 1:30 A.M. This May sighting involved several witnesses and took place in the town of Bolivar—located about 27 miles west of Ebensburg.

According to that newsletter, a man walking his dog noticed a strange object on the road. It was several feet long and glowing a bluish-white color. The object was as bright as a fluorescent bulb. The man quickly summoned two other witnesses. The three men had been observing the object for about 30 minutes when something strange happened. About 50 feet away from where they were standing, a section of fence suddenly began to glow the color of a luminous watch dial. After several seconds had passed, the fence stopped glowing. The odd object was still on the road when the witnesses retired for the night.

If one draws a line on a map from Ebensburg to Bolivar, and then from Bolivar to the Chestnut Ridge region of Pennsylvania, a 90-mile straight southwesterly flight path is revealed. Chestnut Ridge in Westmoreland County is considered a hotspot for paranormal phenomena in Pennsylvania.

A report published in 2010 listed the sighting of a ray-shaped object in nearby West Virginia. That sighting happened in 2004. Apparently, on December 3, 2004, a couple in West Virginia had a close encounter of the first kind with a UFO. The UFO mimicked the object I chanced upon in Pennsylvania during 1989.

Following is a summary of that 2004 encounter: Two individuals were traveling on Rt. 2 towards Huntington, West Virginia. They were on a long straight stretch of road outside of Ashton, West Virginia. Suddenly, one of the individuals noticed an unexpected movement in the sky over the Ohio River to her right in front of the car. It was a grayish, smooth, wing shaped object. The strange object swooped in a figure 8 pattern in front of the car's windshield. Then, it speedily flew to the left.

The flying object was bigger than a car. The wingspread was wider than the road. The wings stretched even wider as it did a figure 8 swoop. It was never more than 25 feet away from the car as it flew towards the windshield. At one point during the swoop, it was only about five feet off the pavement.

The UFO was gray and translucent like a jellyfish. The two eyewitnesses described it as a manta ray. The body was flat like a manta ray or a bat. The wings were long, smooth, and somewhat pointed at the tip. No texture. No roughness—only a smooth surface. It had only a body and wings: no head, eyes, tail, or feet. It did not look humanoid, but it was not a bird. It moved like something in the ocean moves. It did not flap or flutter its wings. Underneath it looked gray and smooth. The anomaly may have been a hybrid organic machine of sorts (Phantoms and Monsters, 2010).

After additional years of research, I hypothesized that close encounters of the first kind are events rarely experienced by humans. Moreover, I concluded that the object I had experienced on June 24, 1989 was indeed an aerial anomaly. The object could also be categorized as an Unidentified Flying Object (UFO).

Recent scientific studies show that human brains have systems specifically designed for appreciating anomalous phenomena. According to current research, aesthetic systems in the brain help determine how appealing an object or event is. The research also indicates that it doesn't matter if the phenomenon of focus is a UFO, a work of visual art, or a piece of music. Aesthetic processing involves the appraisal of real objects. Such objects include all types of

perceived things. Both art and non-art objects can undergo aesthetic processing (Brown & Gao, 2011).

On September 26, 2014, I encountered a UFO in the sky above St. Joseph County, Indiana. Shortly after I initially detected it, I suspended my ordinary beliefs about unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Instead, I decided to perceive this UFO as an aesthetic object because it seemed strange, extraordinary, and special. Consequently, from the get-go, I focused on the way I was experiencing this particular anomaly.

During that 2014 UFO experience my mind was in a state of openness. My perception process seemed prolonged (Consoli, 2012). Also, my understanding of the whole UFO phenomenon had improved since 1989.

My 2014 state of mind was probably related to the statistics that show the human brain relies on past experiences to predict future ones. Organizational changes in components of the nervous system at one point in time continue to be useful in the future. Each additional experience changes the connections linking neuron to neuron. Nerve impulses move more quickly when the insulating sheath around the nerves is enhanced (Markham & Greenough, 2006).

Myelin is the insulated coating around neuron connections. Myelin sheathing has dramatic functional consequences for how neurons transmit their signals. There is evidence that myelin is regulated by experience (Snaidero & Simon, 2014). Neurons in a neural pathway communicate through connections called synapses. Each time humans gain new knowledge, the synaptic communication between neurons is strengthened. A solid connection between neurons means electric signals travel more efficiently when creating or using a new pathway (Cognifit, n.d.).

September 26, 2014 was a great night for sky-watching. At about 8:38 P.M. Eastern Time, I was sitting in my backyard in Mishawaka, Indiana. It was a clear, calm evening. I was resting in a folding chair while looking up at the sky with unaided eyes.

Suddenly, I noticed a bright orange orb in the sky. The orb seemed to be at least a mile away. At that distance, it was about as large as my thumbnail when my arm was fully extended. The orb appeared to be several hundred feet up in the air. I guessed that it was at an altitude of almost 1,500 feet. Although this was technically not a close encounter of the first kind: it was close enough.

The entity looked like a glowing, bright, solid orange orb. It was self-luminous. It was not transparent or translucent. The object was moving in a straight path from east to west. This orb had no additional strange characteristics. It seemed to be flying at around 100 mph. It made no sound. It gave off no odors. I could taste nothing odd in the air. I could feel no heat coming

from this airborne anomaly. As I observed the anomalous phenomenon in the sky, a chill ran up and down my spine.

As it flew directly above me, I continued to focus on it with all of my senses for about 30 seconds. The flying object gradually passed over and disappeared out of sight in the western sky. The whole experience—from start to finish—lasted approximately 2 minutes.

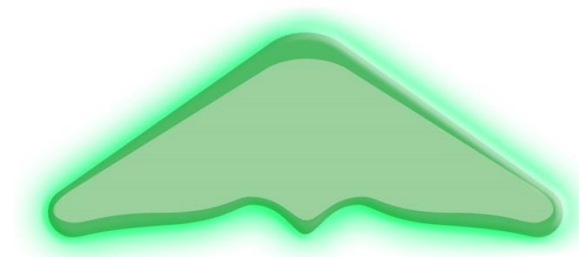
When I first sighted the object in the distance, I thought it might have been a Chinese lantern. However, it was not flickering—lanterns with candles flicker. There were no other blinking or colored lights involved. Also, it was not rising from low to high as most lanterns do. Instead, it was intently moving from east to west at a constant level. It moved at a steady, rather high rate of speed. My brain readily accepted that the object in the sky was not an orange weather balloon, a flare, an airplane, a helicopter, a drone, the planet Mars, or swamp gas.

A little later that same night, while looking almost straight up from my backyard, I saw with unaided eyes a rather bright flash. It almost looked as if someone way up in the sky had taken a photograph using a huge flash bulb. I couldn't see or determine the source of the flash. It was not lightning. There were no clouds in the sky at that time. There was no wind.

A few minutes later, I saw something far in the distance moving rather quickly from north to south. The shiny spec was most likely in the outer space beyond Earth's atmosphere. It reminded me of what an orbiting satellite looks like from Earth. I recalled observing a Project Echo passive communications satelloon during the 1960s. It was an interesting night for sky-watching.

Eventually, I sent Facebook messages about my orange orb sighting to two members of MUFON of Indiana. I followed-up this 2014 sighting by conducting some research related to Indiana UFOs. I discovered that a similar round globe or orb was observed by several witnesses in the skies near Mishawaka, Indiana in or about 2010.

Attached is an artist's rendition of the UFO I encountered in Pennsylvania on June 24, 1989 (Illustration by Donald Kopis © 2018. Used with permission.).



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