

UFO: Arnold believed flying saucers were some kind of living organism

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Brown reported chasing a bright ball of fire, according to Clem's account, but could never catch the thing, which after a few moments zoomed toward Seattle and off radar.

Hastings said the story was one thing, but documents in The National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., confirmed Clem's report of "bogies" over Hanford. The things raised such a concern, Hastings said, the military considered bringing in a special night squad of fighter planes to protect Hanford.

He also said he was not surprised the story never made it to the public in 1945. Even today, he said, what government official would want to admit objects were zipping over U.S. military bases and no one could do a thing to stop them?

He saw much more
Arnold investigated subsequent UFO sightings and people who claimed that they had contact with aliens. Kim Arnold said her mother put her foot down and had her father stop because it cost too much money and took up too much time.

She said her father also believed he was supposed to talk about what he had seen and share it with other people, she said. He decided to do speeches and sell a self-published booklet he called, "The Flying Saucer As I Saw It."

"Government men," she claims, immediately stopped the speeches. She also said her father's sighting that summer day in 1947 was the first of eight during his life. While she has never seen one, she said people who have one sighting often end up seeing others.

"It just seems to kind of follow you," she said.

A sighting he had with others from the ground in Idaho Falls also made news, and one of his sightings



EO file photo
Former EO reporter Bill Bequette holds a copy of the June 25, 1947, East Oregonian in which he broke the story that began the UFO craze.

changed his perception of the objects.

He was flying over Susanville, California, when two saucers passed under his plane. The first was "as solid as a Chevrolet car," she said, but he saw pine trees through the center of the second. She said her father compared that to jellyfish that appear solid one minute and transparent the next. Her father concluded the saucers could change density.

"He never believed that the flying saucers were mechanical in any way at all," she said, "but some kind of living organism."

In his later years, she said her parents believed flying saucers were the connection between the living and the dead.

"It gave them hope of the reality of other dimensions," Kim Arnold said, "and perhaps death was not the end but a new beginning that we live on into other worlds full of all kinds of activity."

UFOs pose big riddles
Davenport posited a more concrete hypothesis about the nature of UFOs.

"My suspicion is, we are being visited routinely, probably daily, by these objects we call UFOs," he said. "We presume they are alien spacecraft."

But what, he said, could

the relationship be between those craft — and presumably the creatures inside — and human beings?

"I suspect there is some fundamental relationship between us and them," he said. "We just don't know what it is."

Kim Arnold is retired. She was 30 when her dad died at the age of 68. She said in some respects she has taken on the mantle of protecting her father's legacy.

"He was an ordinary man who had an extraordinary experience," she said. "Whatever happened on June 24, 1947, was an elaborate show for him."

That first sighting then raised the question that remains unanswered: Why was it Ken Arnold?

You can find more information on the National UFO Reporting Center at its website, www.nuforc.org and for more on Robert Hastings and his work, see www.ufohastings.com.

Editor's note: Kim Arnold agreed to participate in an interview for this story if the East Oregonian provided her 10 copies of the paper the story appeared in. The EO agreed to the unusual request.

CONVENTION: 18th annual UFOfest brought in nearly 10,000 people for parade

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the story and Trent's photos on the front page under the headline "At Long Last—Authentic Photographs of Flying Saucer[?]"

"As a historian, I was like, we have to do something for that and to recognize it," Hills said.

But he knew nothing about UFOs or even who to talk to for a UFO festival.

"I did a lot of reading in the library and historical society," he said, which led him to Bruce Maccabee of Maryland.

Maccabee is a ufologist and an optical physicist who used to work for the U.S. Navy. He analyzed photographs. He even studied the negatives of the Trent photos and determined they show a real object hovering in the sky.

Hills said he didn't let the lack of a budget stop him from inviting Maccabee to travel across country to give a presentation at the Hotel Oregon on the photos.

Maccabee has name recognition among UFO enthusiasts, Hills said, and he's "a scientist's scientist" who talked "over almost everybody's head" but was believable. That first presentation filled one of the hotel's halls beyond capacity.

"People were literally standing on the sidewalk trying to hear and see, the crowd was so big on the inside," Hills said.

The event was "meant to be a one-off thing, really," but the number of people interested in UFOs caught McMinnville's attention. The company grew the event, adding speakers and events and drawing more interest. Last month, McMinnville Hotel Oregon celebrated its 18th annual UFOfest, which brought nearly 10,000 people for a Saturday parade.

The fest had six featured speakers along with emcee Peter Davenport, director of the National UFO Reporting Center. The speakers drew

If you see something, report it

If you see a UFO, Peter Davenport says to write down what you saw as soon as you can.

Davenport is the director of the National UFO Reporting Center. Maybe 15-20 reports a day come into the center, he said, but out of roughly 20,000 "adult, competent, clear-thinking Americans who see a UFO, only one has written it down."

He encouraged anyone who sees a UFO to write down a "factual, objective description" of what they saw and submit it to his organization, or to the Mutual UFO Network, or another credible UFO organization.

The National UFO Reporting Center at www.nuforc.org and the Mutual UFO Network at www.mufon.com have online forms to make reports. You also can call MUFON headquarters at 949-476-8366. And the NUFORC has a hotline for sightings within the last week: 206-722-3000.

200-400 attendees each, and those people paid to get in the door.

Hills said finding speakers with integrity is paramount, and he is not interested in giving space to someone who would mock the topic. Yet the fest also has a serious sense of fun about itself.

McMinnville downtown businesses set up displays of air-filled flying saucers and green aliens. The fest has "alien lasertag and dodgeball," the "Abduction Dash 5K and Kids' Fun Run," and of course, the UFO Parade and "Alien Pet Costume Contest."

James Clarkson, director of the Washington State Mutual UFO Network, gave a history of UFOs in the Northwest. He said the fest is his favorite UFO event because it has such a sense of humor about it all. And the parade in particular, he told his audience, serves to show youth that talking about UFOs is OK.

Hills said the combination of whimsy and serious-mindedness evolved organically, and folks who came for the fun sometimes took in the presentations, and the true believers joined in the fun.

Kennedy said he was not able to find the right person to put a Pendleton UFO event forward, but he came close.

He had his sights on

something for 1998 and the 50th anniversary of Arnold's sighting. Arnold's daughter, Kim Arnold of Idaho, would have been the main attraction.

Arnold was working on a biography about her father. According to emails and faxes Arnold and Kennedy exchanged at the time, she was going to introduce the book in Pendleton as the hook to draw crowds and national attention. But she and her ghostwriter, Greg Long of Oregon, ended up in a legal dispute that blew past the anniversary.

Arnold said she did not want to talk about the book situation. Kennedy said the whole thing just fizzled out.

But he remains hopeful for a UFO event. Pendleton has plenty of hotel rooms and facilities for presentations and seminars, he said, as well as entertainment. And it has the roots in UFO history. "From the marketing standpoint, that's gold," he said.

New convention center manager Pat Beard agrees Pendleton is "hallowed ground in some ways" in UFO culture. But, like Kennedy, he said he does not want to go it alone developing a UFO event.

Someone else, he said, needs to step in to head the project and turn believing into doing.



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