

The UFOs of 1979

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One of the most fascinating aspects of UFO research is the sense of depth which the UFO phenomenon appears to exhibit. This could be no more apparent than while investigating a series of sightings which apparently took place in the fall of 1979 - occurring in the northern Minneapolis suburbs of New Brighton and Mounds View, and north along the I35W corridor. This article describes the investigation to date, and summarizes what we know about these sightings.

Silver Lake Road CE1

The mystery began to unfold last year, when a sighting was brought to my attention by Bob Schultz. The witness was an attendee at the UFO class taught by Bob through New Brighton school community education. She indicated that as she was coming out of the Lund's grocery store located at I694 and Silver Lake Rd. in New Brighton, she observed what she described as a large "squashed sphere" shaped object with a lighted rim. The object seemed to be hovering over a parking lot a few hundred feet to the north-northeast of her. She continued to watch it as she got into her car. She followed it northwards along Silver Lake Rd. for several miles through New Brighton and Mounds View. Eventually, she came to a red traffic light. While she waited for the light to change, the object suddenly shot off to the northeast. At about that time, there appear to be reports of an object with similar description seen to the north-northeast of that location (Note: at the present time we are trying to confirm these).

New Brighton Freeway Object

An object such as that seen from Silver Lake Rd. should have attracted the attention of other witnesses. Thus, we attempted to locate anyone else who might have seen this object (Note: This search is still ongoing). In a cross check with other investigators, it turned out that Bill McNeff had interviewed a witness regarding just such a sighting. The apparent date and time seem to match the date and time of the Silver Lake Rd. sighting. On a fall day in 1979, a mother and daughter were driving south on the I35W freeway in New Brighton, MN. As they approached their exit onto westbound I694, they were startled to note that traffic had pulled off to watch a large object - a flying saucer - which was hovering just southeast of the intersection. Curious, they too pulled off to watch. The object made several maneuvers in plain view of the many witnesses. Its motion was described as "showing off" to those pulled off to the motorists below, who watched it for several minutes then continued on their way. (Note: Many drivers must have seen this object and its antics. We are attempting to locate any of these other people.)

Analysis

These sightings occurred nearly twenty years ago. As might be expected, dates given by the witnesses are fuzzy, but all seem to suggest that the event took place sometime in the autumn of 1979. In addition, both witness accounts describe a roughly similar shaped object, a spheroid with a rim. Both witnesses were reasonably certain as to the time of the sighting. Thus, the two reports in conjunction would suggest that the freeway sighting occurred to the south, a few moments before the Silver Lake Rd. sighting. The object then, apparently moved to the north, and was seen by witnesses to the northeast.

Data from several sighting databases, from archives of CUFOS, from articles in the Minneapolis Tribune, and from several other sources all seem to indicate that there was either a wave of sightings, and/or a large multiple witness sighting in this time frame. Several of the sighting reports from this time frame seem to corroborate this spheroidal/discoidal shape craft.

In addition, several of the witnesses described a newspaper article which was published shortly after the sighting. In this article, (which several indicated was in the Minneapolis Tribune), the object was tracked from Burnsville through the Minneapolis area, included the sightings which I had earlier investigated, and moved north into the Forest Lake area. While many have described this article, a check of the microfilmed Minneapolis Tribune failed to find it at the indicated time. We are continuing to search other papers, and at other times, but the mystery deepens - what happened to the article? (Also note: At least one Burnsville event may have already been investigated by other members of Minnesota MUFON at that time - a possibility currently being explored).

Followup

Late 1979 appears to have been a period of high UFO sighting activity in Minnesota. This apparent wave includes the famous close-encounter case in which Marshall County deputy Sheriff Val Johnson was confronted by a UFO while on night patrol. The sheriff's squad car was damaged during the encounter, and is now on display in the Marshall county historical society museum in Warren, MN.

Sighting databases contain a large number of other sightings in approximately this time frame, the backdrop against which our sighting of interest occurred. Also, as I write this, we have recently learned of a some possible additional witnesses to what may have been this same event. By the time this newsletter goes to press, more details may have emerged. In addition, reports for the two sighting investigations described above, are posted on the Minnesota MUFON web site. Please feel free to check them out, and make any comments. Any/all information is welcome.

I would like to thank the following people who have participated or assisted in this effort to date: Bill McNeff, Bob Engberg, Casey Holt, and Bob Schultz of Minnesota MUFON; Mark Rodeghier of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies; and Hellen White, editor of the Dalles Visitor. All efforts are appreciated - and as we dig deeper into this mystery, the efforts of many will be involved.

In addition, if you observed a UFO in the late 1970s, in the Northern Minneapolis suburbs, or in the I35W corridor towards Chisago Lakes - or if you know of anyone who might have, please contact Minnesota MUFON. In the UFO mystery, the more pieces of the puzzle we find, the more interesting the puzzle becomes. Stay tuned...