

Though no evidence suggests that Blackburn hoaxed his report, the report did encourage a Brands Flats resident, Donald Cash, to pose as a spaceman, intending to scare a neighbor. Instead he ran into a group of schoolboys who chased him until he managed to escape. Afterwards the boys brought Staunton police to the site, and later gun-toting locals descended on the scene, apparently hoping to bag an extraterrestrial. Augusta County Sheriff John E. Kent declared that anyone bearing arms without good reason would face arrest ("Little Green Man," 1965).

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BROOKSVILLE INCIDENT

A man so obscure as to be barely known to most other residents of the rural area where he lived, John F. Reeves, 66, became the focus of international attention in 1965, when he reported an encounter with a UFO and its occupant. Reeves further claimed to have pieces of paper containing messages in what appeared to be an alien language. From any point of view, the episode is among the more bizarre in the

history of high-strangeness UFO claims. Like other, comparable cases, it is riddled with ambiguities and features that confound confident conclusions about what did or did not take place.

Reeves lived in a partially finished house on the slope of a hill in a remote, barely accessible location known as the "scrublands." His residence was six miles west of Brooksville, Florida (pop. 6000), some 45 miles north of Tampa and a few miles east of the Gulf of Mexico. A longshoreman on a disability pension, Reeves moved to Brooksville from New York with his wife and son in 1961. He opened a trailer park but lost it in 1963. According to local businessmen, the soft-hearted Reeves was disinclined to demand rent from tenants who tended, like many other people in the region, to be poor. Moreover, one resident later told UFO investigators, he "often bought groceries for his trailerite tenants if he thought they were in need." His wife moved back to New York, and his son entered the Navy. Since then Reeves had been living alone.

Around mid-afternoon on Tuesday, March 2, 1965, Reeves walked into a service station-grocery store next to his house. He told John (Red) Wells, the owner, that he had just seen a flying saucer land. He said that probably no one would believe him. Still, maybe they ought to call Channel 13 (WTVT, the Tampa television station), he thought. But no such call was made, and Reeves went to his house. Wells, who knew Reeves well, had no trouble believing his story. He later claimed that "after the story got out, three different people came to see me and said they'd seen it too, same time, same locality."

That evening, feeling the need to talk with a friend, Reeves visited another neighbor, Estes Morgan, a young man who worked as foreman at a nearby lime rock quarry. Morgan recalled that Reeves "was all shook up. I'd never seen him in such a state before." As he related, with difficulty, his UFO encounter that afternoon, he showed Morgan two pieces of a tissuelike paper with writings on them. "I didn't believe him, not really," Morgan said, "until he showed me the two tissues. I held them up to the brightest light in the house and gave them a good going-over. I wasn't so much impressed by the writings. After all, there are lots of strange languages. But I was very much inter-

ested in the tissue material itself. Never in my life had I touched anything like it, so filmy, yet so tough, and containing very long, very fine, dark purple veins or threads. The tissues gave off a strong, acrid smell that I couldn't identify, either. Nothing around here smells like *that*."

Morgan took it upon himself to call Channel 13, which was neither interested nor polite about its lack of interest. He then suggested that Reeves speak to the *Brooksville Sun-Journal*. So the next morning Reeves went to the office of the local weekly newspaper and talked with reporter Miriam Gant, who recalled, "Reeves related his story with great sincerity and concern. His account did not sound like it had been rehearsed." The Brooksville city clerk also looked at the tissue paper and its alleged alien writings. Someone encouraged Reeves to see William Johnson, owner of Brooksville's radio station WWJB.

"I never met John Reeves until the morning of March 3, when they brought him over here from the newspaper office and sort of turned him over to me," Johnson told investigators Robert Snyder and Robert S. Carr a few days later. "I knew vaguely who he was and couldn't help noticing his place out on Highway 50. I heard about his going broke buying groceries for tenants who couldn't pay their trailer rent. I never heard anything bad."

After hearing Reeves's strange story, Johnson called MacDill Air Force Base, which promised to send out investigators as soon as possible. Then, accompanied by his son Wally, Reeves, and photographer Frank Fish, he went out to the site. Meanwhile someone from the *Sun-Journal* phoned a St. Petersburg radio station, WLCY, which quickly aired a report about a landed UFO, its "robot" occupant, and the alien writings. Evelyn Anderson of St. Petersburg heard the report and notified another St. Petersburg UFO enthusiast, E. R. Sabo. Sabo phoned Robert Snyder, a Clearwater man who headed Florida Unit #2 of the Washington-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). The world was about to descend on Brooksville.

Reeves's story. Early in the afternoon Reeves had been wandering through the woods above Highway 50 in

search of snakes. He frequently hunted snakes, captured them alive, and shipped them to his son, who was interested in the reptiles. Leaving a one-track road used by the U.S. Forest Service, he went deeper into the scrublands until, about two miles from the highway, he spotted a "big flying saucer" sitting in an open clearing on top of a sand hill. Reddish-purple and bluish-green in color, it rested on four legs and was six feet high and 20 to 30 feet in diameter.

Fascinated but not frightened, Reeves sneaked to within 100 feet of the craft, then crawled into dense bushes to watch it further. He glanced at his watch. It was 1:55. Suddenly he saw something moving on the far side of the object and heading in his direction. As it walked past the UFO, he was able to observe what it was: a "robot" with a glass dome or space helmet over its head. It spotted Reeves even as he tried to hunker down deeper into the bushes, and it came within 15 feet of him.

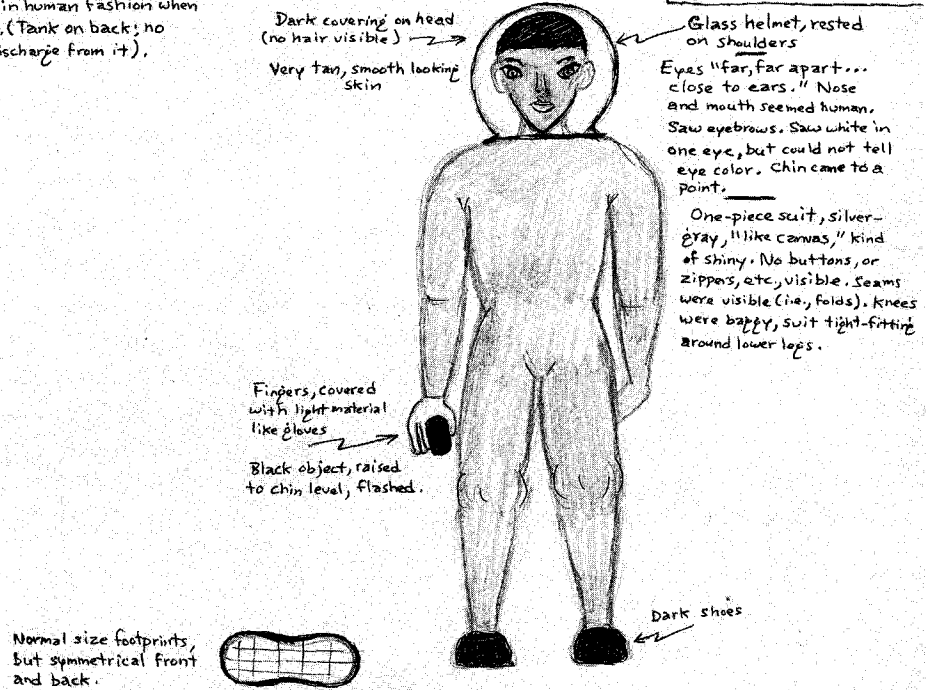
Though Reeves would persist in calling the figure a "robot"—reasoning that "anything that isn't human has got to be a robot"—he described an essentially humanlike being with a darkly tanned face, five feet tall, clad in a silver-gray canvas material. It had thin white gloves on its hands and metallic-looking boots on its feet. Its eyes were a little farther apart, closer to the ears, and its chin a bit more pointed than a normal person's, but he thought it at least conceivable that these were distortions from the glass. It had a "cylinder" on its back and was wearing a skull cap.

It stood watching him for about a minute and a half. Then it reached to its left side and produced a round, black object, six or seven inches in diameter. It lifted the device to its chin, and it flashed twice. Panicking, Reeves got to his feet and tried to run, but he tripped and fell back down into a sitting position facing the figure, which flashed the round object at him one more time. Reeves thought it was taking his picture.

The figure now walked toward the object. Beneath the craft Reeves could see a small spiral staircase made up of round steps. The being walked up these and into the ship. Once it was inside, Reeves told NICAP investigators, "a lot of little blades around the rim of the saucer started to move in unison like the

About 5ft. tall, "looked like a diver."
 Kind of stocky, like the suit was thick and heavy.
 No expression on face, "just stared."
 Turned and walked in human fashion when returned to craft. (Tank on back; no visible or audible discharge from it).

March 2, 1965
 Brooksville, Fla.
 Witness: John Reeves
 1:55 P.M.



Though John Reeves called this figure a "robot," his description was of a generally human-like being.

slats of a venetian blind. They opened and closed. Then the rim started going around counterclockwise. It made a whooshing and rumbling sound as it speeded up its spinning. The staircase pulled up inside. . . . Then the four stilts or legs retracted, and the saucer went straight up with that whooshing sound. I watched, and it was out of sight in less than 10 seconds in the cloudless sky."

At the clearing where the UFO had rested, Reeves found a large number of footprints. They were round at the heel and toe areas but narrow in the arch. The being had apparently walked in the immediate vicinity of the craft but at no point gone any distance from it. Four holes left by the landing gear stood in a square area, each 10 feet or so from the other. Each hole was cup-shaped, four inches wide and four inches deep. In the middle of the square, at the spot where the staircase had been, Reeves noticed a wad of loosely folded paper. When he picked it up, he discovered that it consisted of "two sheets of very

strong but very thin tissue, unlike anything I'd ever touched before. Both were covered with strange writings or marks that looked like Chinese."

Not knowing what else to do but feeling that he should tell somebody, he went to his friend Red Wells's store and spoke briefly with him. Then he went home to study the writing on the tissue.

Investigations. Early on the afternoon of the third, 1st Lt. Edward R. Goettl and three enlisted men arrived in Brooksville from MacDill AFB. They met Reeves and Johnson at the latter's radio station. After an hour's worth of interviewing, they drove the witness to the encounter site, spoke with him further, and took photographs of the markings, prints, and paper. In his official report, written later that day, Lt. Goettl remarked, "The paper Mr. Reeves claims he found at the landing site is similar to silk span paper used to build model airplanes." The officer judged Reeves to be of "doubtful" reliability. In any case, Reeves had willingly handed over the paper for analysis, which

presumably would settle the question of whether or not he had had some kind of unearthly encounter.

The Air Force men took Reeves back to the radio station around 4 P.M. By this time reporters from Tampa, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere were waiting. With Johnson acting as a sort of combination agent/protector, Reeves answered questions until well into the evening. The next morning, Thursday, there were even more reporters and curiosity-seekers. By evening the throngs of gawkers had obliterated most of the alleged "robot" footprints at the site. What little remained was washed away in a rain shower that night.

The circus continued through the weekend. Even so, amid all the hoopla, a few of those who were flocking to Brooksville came with serious purpose. On Saturday, March 6, investigators arrived separately from the Air Force and from NICAP. The two teams arrived on the scene with opposing predispositions. The Air Force strongly suspected a **hoax**, and NICAP's representatives clearly were prepared to collect evidence for a real-life extraterrestrial encounter.

The Air Force team consisted of Lt. Goettl, a sergeant, and a civilian scientist named C. W. Bemiss. As a member of the technical staff of Pan American Airways, a major Air Force contractor, Dr. Bemiss worked at the Air Force Eastern Test Range, headquartered at Patrick AFB in Florida. After reading accounts of the Brooksville incident in the press, Bemiss offered his services. Specifically he offered to test the site for traces of radiation. His request was speedily approved, and early on the afternoon of the sixth, he and the MacDill investigators examined the location. Bemiss detected no evidence either of radiation or of disturbance in soil, grass or leaves. "This type of litter," he wrote in his official report six days later, "is very loose and could be easily moved by a moderately strong air flow." The fact that it hadn't been struck him as suspicious, unless "if a 'sighting' did actually take place, the unknown vehicle must have included a form of propulsion unknown to our science." Bemiss also thought the irregular spacing of the four holes allegedly left by the landing gear raised questions. One would expect, he remarked, that "the support legs of a circular vehicle would be

equally spaced or at least the diagonal distance spacing would be similar" (Bemiss, 1965).

The Air Force men did not speak with Reeves that day, but Robert M. Snyder and Robert S. Carr of NICAP spent a great deal of time with him. On the third Carr had called MacDill about the case and been stonewalled by six departments. Finally Capt. Richard Henry, the base's public information officer, reluctantly acknowledged that MacDill already had investigators on site. Carr prevailed on Henry to give him the name of the individual who had alerted the base to the incident, and Carr called William Johnson immediately. Work commitments kept Carr from going to Brooksville that day, but he sent his wife, who purchased a set of photographs, including ones depicting the alien writings, from Frank Fish. The next morning Carr placed the negatives in his safety deposit box, apparently out of concern that the Air Force might try to suppress this evidence.

The next day, in a series of phone conversations, Carr and Snyder advised Johnson, with whom they had managed to establish a rapport, to be cautious in his dealings with would-be exploiters. For example, Tampa's WTVT, now intensely if belatedly interested in Reeves's claims, wanted to have him hypnotically regressed on live television. The NICAP men urged Johnson to shelter Reeves from the press until they could get there themselves. Johnson hid Reeves on Fish's farm.

Meanwhile, on the fifth, Miguel Acoca, chief of *Life's* Miami bureau, contacted Carr. Carr, whose wife Katherine was a former executive with the magazine, suggested Acoca accompany him and Snyder to Brooksville the next day. He made the suggestion, Carr later told NICAP, "thinking this might prove a good way to shape to NICAP's benefit whatever might appear in *Life* magazine." Carr soon would learn how wrong he was.

At 10 A.M. Saturday, March 6, Snyder, the Carrs, Acoca, and *Life* photographer Burton McNeely showed up at Johnson's radio station. Johnson told them, "It was the tissue material, as much as anything Reeves said, that made me feel this case was a real one. I examined the tissues closely. I have never seen or touched anything like them: very light, yet very strong, veined with long threadlike fine dark lines, and al-

most impossible to tear. I took scissors and clipped off a corner to see if it would burn. It did."

The group then repaired to Fish's farm east of town and spoke with Reeves for two hours. According to Snyder and Carr, "All later agreed that Reeves created the impression of an honest, simple, uneducated, guileless man who had had a very great surprise, a profound experience, which he felt he ought to tell all who asked questions, because it was too big to keep to himself." He appeared to be in a "mild state of shock, as though a deeper state of shock were wearing off."

Afterwards the group went to the landing site, only to find that little remained there. Reeves invited the investigators to his house, where he talked about his life and showed them copies of musical scores he had composed a quarter of a century earlier. In his youth, he said, he had written songs which were sung at roller-skating rinks in New York. Much interested for



Robert S. Carr (left) led NICAP's investigation of John Reeves's alleged encounter with a "robot" near Brooksville, Florida.

reasons Reeves gave no sign of suspecting, the investigators examined the sheet music carefully, and Carr stepped outside with Fish so that the latter could photograph one sheet. Everybody but Reeves grasped at once that they now had samples of Reeves's writing which they could compare to those on the tissue materials. Subsequently they concluded that there was no obvious resemblance. They may not have stopped to consider that someone's handwriting may change over a 25- to 30-year period.

In the course of this trip and others made in the next few days, Snyder and Carr interviewed Wells, Morgan, and other Brooksville-area residents. All spoke well of Reeves. The investigators learned that *Life* planned to subject Reeves to a polygraph test. Johnson asked Snyder if he thought that was a good idea, and Snyder replied in the affirmative. He suggested, however, that Johnson record the polygraph interview without telling Reeves that he was doing so. It is not clear what Snyder had in mind, but the tape would prove useful to the ufologists in the dispute about to erupt. In any case, on March 9 Johnson set up recording equipment in the office of Tampa polygraph operator David Allison.

Allison's analysis of the test convinced him that Reeves was not telling the truth. When Snyder heard this two days later from *Life* reporter Acoca, he was so upset that he drove almost at once to Brooksville and picked up Johnson's tapes. That night he played them for NICAP associates, who agreed that Allison had done a poor job. In the pre-test interview he had asked Reeves about his background and forced him to recall a traumatic incident of years before, when he had witnessed a murder committed by waterfront gangsters. Thus, once he had been hooked up to the polygraph machine, Snyder and Carr reported to NICAP headquarters, "John Reeves was in such a pitiable condition that the instrument showed confusion, fear, and guilt registering on *every* question asked—not merely the 'catch' questions" (Snyder and Carr, 1965).

So the ufologists arranged for a polygraph examiner more to their liking, fellow NICAP member E. J. Edwards. Edwards, a resident of Orlando, spoke with Reeves and Johnson in Brooksville. Once having familiarized himself with the story, he brought Reeves

to Orlando on the thirteenth and gave him a polygraph test. Edwards concluded:

... John F. Reeves has answered all pertinent questions truthfully, regarding the experience he had when as he stated he saw a UFO and occupant on March 2, 1965[,] at Brooksville, Florida. A further and most significant point of interest is at the conclusion of the tests, Mr. Reeves first remarked, "[N]ow would you like to see the place where I saw the saucer?" The usual reaction of a guilty subject with respect to not answering truthful [sic] would have more likely been, "[W]ell[,] how did I make out?" There was in Mr. Reeves a complete unconcern about the Polygraph test outcome. It is my opinion[,] therefore, that he was truth-telling in all respects [Edwards, 1965].

Tissue of lies? Meanwhile the Air Force's **Project Blue Book**, which had the tissue papers in its possession, sought to have them analyzed. On March 16 Maj. Hector Quintanilla, Jr., head of Blue Book, wrote the Institute of Paper Chemistry, Appleton, Wisconsin, and asked if it would give immediate priority to an examination of the material. On the twenty-fourth, in a four-page reply, T. A. Howells, chairman of the institute's Technology Section, wrote, "The sample is composed of bast or leaf fibers from any one of a number of plants. Although these fibers are a minor part of the raw material of the paper industry, their use in some segments of the industry is not uncommon." Later in the letter he noted:

We have made no attempt to analyze the ink or other marking material on the specimen because we have had no special experience in this area and feel there are other laboratories that are more competent. After brief microscopic examination, however, we feel that the markings probably were placed on the specimen by printing or stamping under light pressure rather than by marking with a pencil or ballpoint pen which probably would cause more disruption of the fibrous surface.

In summary, we see no reason to believe that this material came from outer space; it is composed of fibers which are not uncommon in this country and in foreign countries. The fiber

composition, as well as the general nature of the specimen, correspond [sic] to lens and stencil papers made both in this country and abroad on continuous machines and also in small-scale hand operations. It is possible that the exact nature of the fiber could be determined more closely by additional study of fiber morphology and dimensions but without further advice from you we are not convinced that such efforts would be worthwhile [Howells, 1965a].

At the end of March, Blue Book issued a press release announcing its conclusion that Reeves had hoaxed the story. Among other suspicious features it noted, "The holes which were purportedly caused by the landing gear were straight and appeared to have been scooped or dug as opposed to indentations caused by an object of any sizeable weight." When deciphered, according to Blue Book, the "hieroglyphics" on one page read, "Planet Mars, are you coming home soon? We miss you very much. Why did you stay away too long?"

The Florida NICAP representatives disputed the accuracy of what Blue Book had called a "simple substitution code." Carr claimed to have shown copies of the writings to a "wide range of specialists" who found them unfamiliar and puzzling. Snyder and Edwards complained that the Air Force had one word represented by two different symbols.

On March 31 Reeves wrote Maj. Quintanilla and asked politely for the return of the tissues. Two captains from MacDill delivered them personally to Reeves on the morning of April 13. If this method of transmission was intended to assuage any fears that the Air Force was trying to cover up evidence of extraterrestrial visitation, it failed. The officers had barely driven away before Johnson was on the phone to the NICAP people in Clearwater. The papers the Air Force had returned, he said, were not the ones it had been given.

When Carr met with him on May 1, Johnson produced a sheet of lens tissue which he had just purchased in a local camera store. It was exactly the same as the paper the Air Force had turned over. "Had the originals been on lens tissue," he said, "I would not have believed Reeves, as I still do. The writings look the same, but now the materials are completely differ-

ent.” Reeves’s friend Estes Morgan also claimed that the tissue material he had seen prior to the Air Force’s first visit was “completely different . . . absolutely not the same ones Reeves showed me” (Snyder and Carr, *op. cit.*).

Snyder and Carr would, however, part company in their analysis of what this meant. Snyder thought the Air Force had substituted ordinary tissues and kept the real ones. Carr was sure, on the other hand, that the ordinary tissues were the “real” ones. In his interpretation Reeves had had an authentic UFO encounter, but after speaking with Wells about it and expressing the opinion that no one would believe him, he went home, brooded on the matter, and finally decided that he would produce his own “proof.” Carr speculated as follows:

Too smart to write a Martian message on ordinary tablet-paper, Reeves chose the lens tissue over one of his many sheets of printed music paper[;] using the lines beneath as guides, he

began to invent an alphabet, drawing upon the only “other language” he knew, the symbols of musical notation, from which the Brooksville writings seem to me to be derived, with variations.

On the first sheet, he invented symbols for our alphabet, from A to I, in order, then at random, to have plenty to choose from. On this first sheet, he used musical bar-lines to separate every four to eight characters.

Then he took his second sheet of lens tissue and in a larger hand, omitting the bar-lines, he hastily and thoughtlessly composed a message curiously similar to his roller-skating song lyrics: the most banal sentiments, in the simplest of English words, grouped into short but complete sentences, like the lines in his song lyrics. The 19-word message contains only 19 letters, used 68 times.

Four hours have now elapsed. Night is falling. Armed with his weird-looking “proof,” Reeves



Reeves’s visitor supposedly dropped this thin tissue paper containing extraterrestrial writing.

walks up the slope to visit Estes Morgan, the nearest thing to a "best friend" Reeves has. Morgan sees Reeves is "all shook up," because he is truly in a state of shock from his *real* experience. The strong emotions evoked by the true story he now tells in full for the first time, to Morgan, carries [sic] over by "transubstantiation" to the fabricated tissues, which grow steadily more "authentic" to him, as time passes. He fails his first lie-detector test, having a sense of guilt about the tissues, but passes his second test, by which time he has completely absolved himself of guilt.

Another reason I think Reeves faked the tissues is the way he de-emphasized them. . . . He never says the spaceman handed them to him . . . or even that he saw the spaceman *drop* them. He merely says he *found* the tissues on the ground *after* the UFO flew off. Reeves' tissues have all the earmarks of an AFTER-THOUGHT, and one that he does not want to be prosecuted for, in case it is exposed. . . .

If John Reeves had the tissues with him when he emerged from the scrublands about 3 P.M., March 2nd, why did he not show them to his friend and neighbor, Red Wells? Because he decided to make the tissues AFTER talking to Red Wells. . . .

The Air Force returned the same lens tissues they [sic] took from Reeves. However, the appearance, texture, strength and all physical characteristics of the tissues had been radically altered by much handling and intensive testing, which may have included the application of heat and certain chemical vapors. This soft rice paper absorbs skin-oils, sweat, and any other moisture. It deteriorates more quickly than used Kleenex [*ibid.*].

On June 15 Elizabeth McCarthy, a Boston-based document expert who had examined the writings on the tissues, reported to NICAP investigator Owen Lake:

It is my opinion that these symbols were made with a common type of pencil of the hard variety. The color and condition match the condition of the writing line and match rather

closely that of a No. 4 pencil, such as Mongol 482, Saphir 200 of A. W. Faber or Dixon Oriole 287 [McCarthy, 1965].

From Brooksville to Moniheya. "I don't care what anybody says about me," Reeves told a correspondent on April 2. "All I know, I saw the flying saucer and it's [sic] robot pilot. That's my story, and they are stuck with it" (Reeves, 1965a).

That story, however, had begun to expand, or so it seemed to some. Several months later he wrote the same individual:

There is a lot more to that story than what I told the news reporters. Something happened back in the woods that no one knew about. . . . [T]he robot, after he took the second flash . . . didn't go over to the saucer. He came over by me, and put his hands on my shoulders three times, tapping me on the shoulders. Something happened there that wasn't to get out, something I knew about. That space craft came back in [sic] twenty nine days later. I knew it was going to come back. There was [sic] three of us that saw it. We got a picture of it, but the picture didn't come out too clear. We had to do some running from under the trees to get out in the opening. The ship came down to about a thousand feet, and about a half mile away. From what I understand, there was a jet chasing it. So I was told by this other party. . . .

When the robot came over to me, he pointed to the sun. Then he pointed to the East, then to the West[;] then he pointed to himself, then to the saucer[;] then he pointed to the sky. As he did this, he made his hand go around in a circle like[;] as he pointed to the ground, he was trying to tell me that the sun would rise and set so many times. That was the number of days that would past [sic] that he would be back again. I understood what he was trying to tell me. I have the paper he made the dots on. After what he done [sic] he put his finger on my lip like and then held his hand out afterwards and closed his hand up like a fist, meaning I shouldn't let any one know that he was coming back here again [Reeves, 1965b].

There is reason to believe this was not subsequent confabulation but a part of Reeves's story from the beginning. During their initial interview with him, Air Force investigators noticed that at one point he stumbled, as if he were about to say something which he then decided to keep to himself. Perhaps significantly, the stumble happened precisely at that point in the narrative at which, as he would later assert, the being touched him. The Air Force men thought the hesitation indicated that he was lying.

On October 26 the *Tampa Tribune* reported:

Two people confirmed the March 2 saucer sighting saying that they had seen one on that day in the area. On March 31 a Brooksville man and his wife went with Reeves to the woody landing place to await the saucer return and reported that they did see it approaching in the sky from the north and then an Air Force jet approached and the disc-shaped object flipped over on its rim and disappeared. A Pinellas Park resident also reported seeing an unidentified flying object the same afternoon [Perrow, 1965].

Reeves claimed that on October 21 he found footprints and holes at a site about 400 feet from the original landing spot. The footprints, apparently made by two or three individuals, were two inches longer—12 inches as opposed to 10—than those at the first site had been (Hartmann, 1965; Perrow, *op. cit.*). Reeves allegedly witnessed a landing in the early morning hours of December 4, 1966. A group of UFO enthusiasts led by *Saucer Scoop* editor Joan Whritenour who arrived a few hours later found traces and footprints ("Recent UFO Sightings," 1967; Steiger and Whritenour, 1967).

To commemorate his UFO experiences, he constructed a 23-foot obelisk, at the top of which he placed a crescent moon and a replica of earth, and displayed it in his front yard. Elsewhere on his property he put a large wooden saucer. He began wearing a jumpsuit and mounting displays of UFO-related materials such as clippings and photographs at local shopping malls.

In 1968 Reeves came forward with a story so bizarre that it shocked his supporters into silence. As he told the tale, at 2 A.M. on August 5 he awoke with a strong

urge to go into the woods. He managed to resist it by drinking a glass of milk and falling asleep again. The feeling continued during the day, and finally at 3 P.M. he headed for the trees. There he met two men, one shorter than the other; both wore spacesuits and carried helmets under their arms. "Where are you fellows from?" he asked. Pointing skyward, they replied, "From up there." At this juncture Reeves tried to run away, but the men overtook him and gently guided him to a flying saucer waiting on the other side of a nearby lake.

Inside the spaceship he saw six other humanlike occupants, all working in a glass room full of instruments, including three-dimensional television screens. He was introduced to the leader, whose name sounded something like Josh. He also met a beautiful young woman, Detzee, who was clad in a brown jumpsuit and who had, he said, "light brown hair and blue eyes."

He was placed in a chair opposite a chair where Josh sat. As Josh manipulated levers, Reeves passed out. "Apparently the acceleration was too much for me," he said. The next thing he knew, he was waking up, and Detzee was telling him he would be all right. The saucer people otherwise were not forthcoming. Asked where they were from, they said another galaxy and nothing more. They did inform him that he was being taken to the moon.

After six hours in space, the ship landed on the moon's surface. Reeves stepped outside with several others and walked around for a time. He did not have to wear a spacesuit because the moon had air that was breathable though thin. He returned to the ship, which flew around the moon's dark side at a low enough altitude that Reeves could see human inhabitants. "As we flew over the ground at about 300 feet," he told a reporter, "I counted 18 people along a stream flowing down the side of a low mountain."

At one point he was fed a delicious dinner of some unknown delicacy. It was followed by a glass of a liquid resembling crystalline ink but tasting like water.

Before they dropped him off, the space people told him they would come back and take him to their home planet. He would be gone a couple of weeks, so if he disappeared for a time, no one should worry

about his whereabouts. "They were friendly," he said, "and we got along great" (Twitty, 1968).

True to their word, the space people returned two months later and took him to their world, which they called Moniheya and which earthlings call Venus. (Apparently they were fibbing earlier about being from "another galaxy.") He returned home with a Venusian flag. Where the ship had landed he erected a plaque with this inscription: "The spaceship that took John F. Reeves to planet Moniheya, millions and millions of miles from planet Earth, landed here October 5, 1968."

In 1980 Reeves was forced to sell his property to the state to pay off back taxes, and he moved to a trailer in Brooksville. The state destroyed both house and monuments, ignoring protests from some Floridians. Interviewed by Canadian writer Douglas Curran in the early 1980s, Reeves expressed regret that his ambition to be buried at the foot of the obelisk would never be realized. The stone was to bear these words: "In this tomb lies the body of John F. Reeves, one of the greatest men of our time, the greatest of them all. Outer space traveller to other planets of our galaxy" (Curran, 1985).

Dreams, lies, and another encounter. In some ways the Reeves episode reminds one of the **Eagle River CE3** of April 18, 1961. In both instances older men, separated from their wives, living alone in the country, and regarded as honest by friends and acquaintances, supposedly encountered humanlike, dark-featured UFO occupants with whom they communicated via gesture. The claimants also produced what purported to be alien artifacts ("pancakes" in the Eagle River incident), and in both cases scientific analyses proved the artifacts to be disappointingly terrestrial in nature. Witnesses also reported apparently confirmatory sightings at or around the time of the alleged encounters. In neither instance were these sightings properly investigated. All we know of them is what we read in brief press references, and therefore their value as evidence is slight.

There are also some important differences between the two cases. Even Blue Book, which often showed no such scruples, could not bring itself to accuse Eagle River claimant Joe Simonton of conscious hoaxing—the pancakes notwithstanding. Moreover,

Simonton related only one story. However many times he told it, that story remained the same. His UFO never returned, in other words, and he never went to Venus, or even to Milwaukee, aboard it.

Reeves's March 2, 1965, story is riddled with credibility problems. Yet those who knew him were sure he was sincere, and they were uniformly of the opinion that he had had some kind of experience. In the end this is virtually the *only* positive evidence, though that does not make it trivial. Reeves *acted* as if he believed his story to be true. Nonetheless even the initial encounter is dubious on its face. The image of a camera-toting extraterrestrial tourist rings false, and nothing like it appears in other, more ostensibly plausible accounts of **close encounters of the third kind**.

Perhaps the point to be considered is that Reeves also acted as if he believed he had been to the moon and Venus. From the latter he brought back a Venusian flag which we may safely assume he, and not Venusians, manufactured. Given that, it requires no leap of imagination to deduce that he could also have manufactured alien writings, footprints, and traces.

Though we will never know with certainty what did or did not happen that afternoon in 1965, one reasonable hypothesis might run as follows:

Suffering from undiagnosed psychiatric problems, Reeves hallucinated a UFO encounter. After relating the experience to Red Wells, he left determined to silence scoffers with "evidence." Instead of going to his house as announced, he returned to the site to concoct prints and traces. He then went to the house and created the alien writings. The attention he received only hastened his departure from consensus reality, and Reeves came to occupy a fantasy world in which he was a space traveler and the "greatest man of our time." In a case such as this, dreams and lies may have become indistinguishable even to the one who was dreaming and lying.

And yet. . . .

On Friday, March 5, the *Orlando Sentinel* picked up UPI's article on the Brooksville incident. That afternoon a tourist, retired Chicago milkman Harvey Keck, stopped at the newspaper office and related an interesting story. A month earlier, he said, he had

seen the same kind of being Reeves was reporting. At the time he had been walking along an isolated stretch of Lake Michigan beach at sunrise. He had not reported it then because he was sure no one would believe him. Even his wife told him he must have dreamed it.

"I'd say the one I saw was about the same size, five feet tall and stocky, just like the one in Brooksville," he stated. "He also had dark tan flesh, the same glass dome helmet, and his eyes were farther apart than normal. He even had the same pointed chin as this one in Florida. And that description of the saucer was right on the button. About six feet high and the same four-legged landing gear."

There were some differences, however. His UFO occupant had not carried a camera. Nor, he said, had it handed him paper with writing on it (West, 1965).

If any portion of Reeves's testimony is in any way authentic, we can only regret that he seems to have done everything in his power to hide that fact.

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