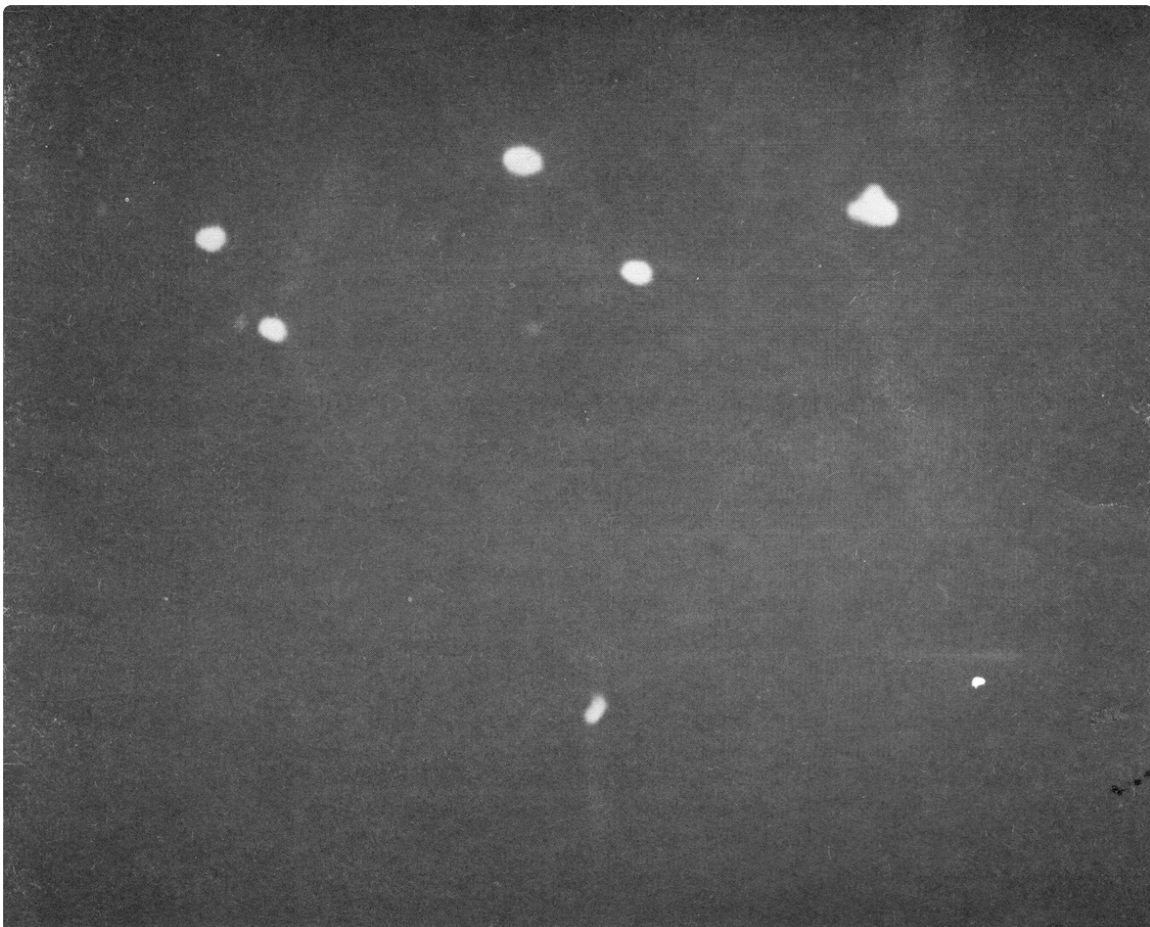


Mystery Over Naval Base

Victoria, BC - September 1968

Canadian UFO Report, Vol. 1, No. 5. Sep-Oct 1969



Odd Lights Over Naval Base

"Follow the birds to Victoria" is, for publicity purposes, one of the most expressive ways of describing the quiet charm of this lovely beflowered city on the westerly edge of Canada. It is a charm that draws thousands of visitors each

year and, correctly or not, causes the city to be likened to a little bit of old England.

But behind the gentle facade of Victoria there is an aspect of an entirely different sort, for this is the main outpost of Canada's Pacific defence organization. Part of Victoria's complex is the Canadian Forces Base at Esquimalt where the movement of warships makes strong contrast to that of brightly painted ferry boats bringing visitors from the mainland.

Hermanus Voorsluys, an amateur astronomer, lives in a section of Victoria where the southern vista faces directly over Esquimalt. Inclined by habit to look up at the night sky, he remembers a September evening in 1968 when he noticed a strange light high over the Esquimalt harbor.

"It was an orange glow about 20 degrees above the horizon." he told us. "It moved up slowly from the south and hovered for a while, then it turned a fiery red-orange and pieces of what looked like waste material fell from it and floated toward the ground. After this happened the glow became much duller and suddenly went out as if turned off like a light bulb."

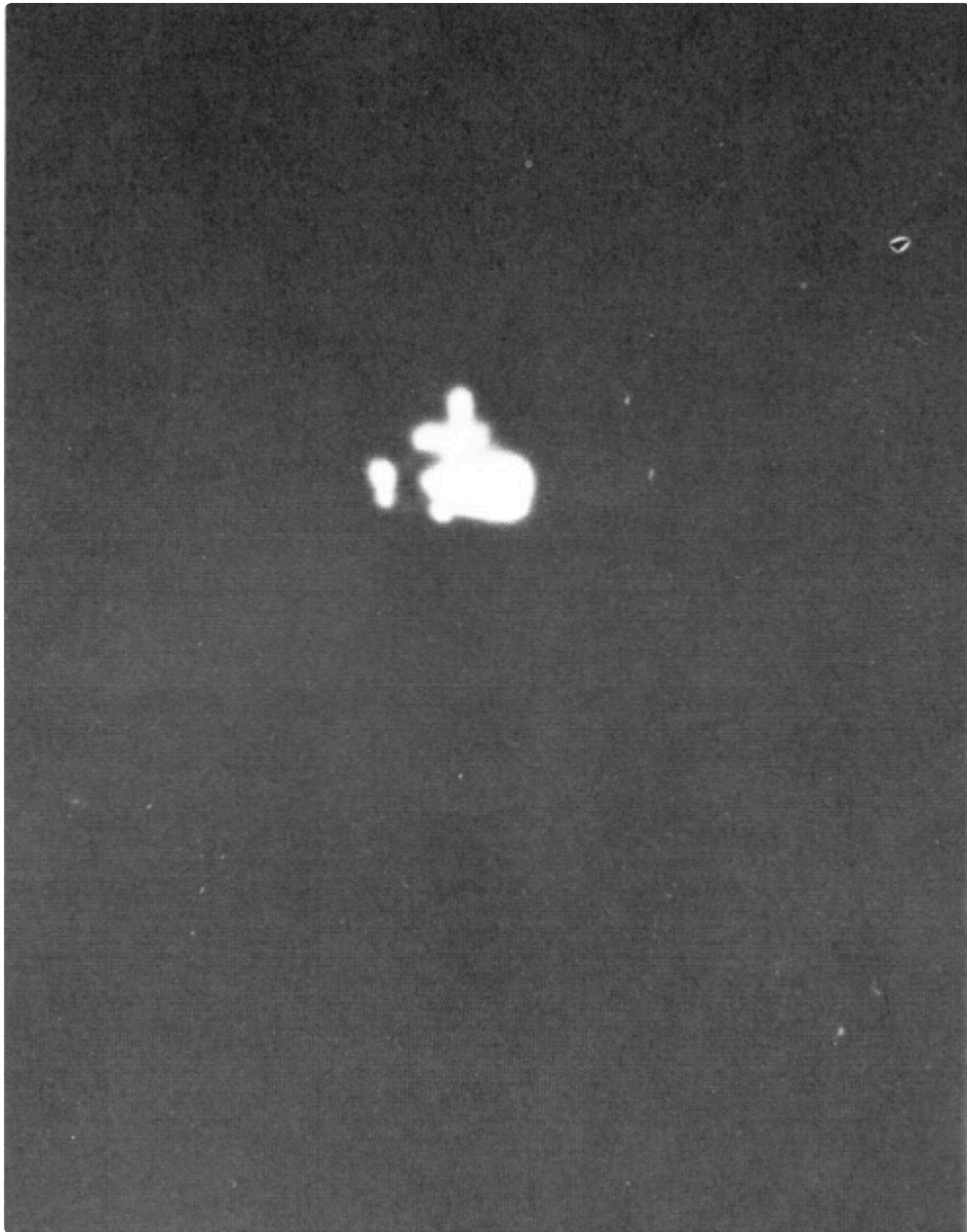
On other evenings after that he saw the same odd performance which usually lasted several minutes and, becoming deeply curious, he mentioned it to his neighbor, Reginald Neal, a retired senior officer of the police force in India, who joined him in keeping watch.

Soon Neal was also a witness to the mystery - and so later were other members of their families and neighborhood friends - with the result they decided to record it on film. On September 29 between 8 and 8:30 p.m., with cameras in readiness, they were rewarded with a clear sighting of the object and took their pictures, Neal used a telephoto lens.

On examining the results they were convinced they had recorded an occurrence beyond explanation and took steps to bring it to official attention, with the result that Voorsluys was interviewed three times by an official of the Defence Research Naval Laboratory in Victoria and Neal was interviewed twice. Of Neal's photo this official said it was "the best UFO shot" they had ever seen, the plain implication here being that the witnesses experience was by no means an isolated instance.

In filling out the Canadian Forces debriefing form, Neal said: "It certainly was not a heavenly body as it changed course, moved at various speeds, changed color from a blue white to a deep orange and once turned deep red, and generally came to rest for periods of time from a few seconds to several minutes. The distance was too great to make an estimation of shape. Also it was generally too bright for such an estimation to be made."

Voorsluys' report was along the line already quoted.



Enlargement of our cover photo revealed this striking configuration (above) of the principal object. According to Reginald Neal who took the picture, the four smaller objects appeared to drop from the leading one and, after a zig-zagging descent, returned to the level of the parent body (as shown on cover) where they then disappeared. Below the group a fifth object is seen in the process of dropping. For his telephoto picture, Mr. Neal used an Exakta SLR camera with a 135 mm lens and Dynachrome ASA 25 film. Setting was f3, exposed for 11 seconds.



Hermanus Voorsluys' shot (above) shows the UFO at a lower angle with neighborhood houses, lights and trees in foreground. Bright light at left is the moon and other lights in the sky are stars, all identified by a professional astronomer who could not explain the object in question. Mr. Voorsluys used a Minolta 35 mm camera with Kodachrome ASA 25 film. His setting was f2 with 10-second exposure.

Despite the interviews in Victoria, the final analysis lay with the National Research Council in Ottawa, to which four photos of the object were sent. Eventually this reply came from an official there:

"Unfortunately I am unable to come to a definite conclusion on the basis of what evidence appears on your photos. One thing I am fairly certain of, however, the detail shown in the object observed is probably due to slight motion of the camera, and not to true detail in the object observed. The other images, which may be stars or lights on the horizon, show evidence of the same structure. I would think that what you photographed was a point source of light which confirms your visual observations. Its intensity relative to the stars would suggest that it was either a flare, an experimental balloon with a light or possibly an experimental aircraft."

It was apparent from these remarks that the NRC did not investigate the case closely, if at all, otherwise it would have ascertained, as the witnesses did, that there was no balloon or flare in the vicinity at the time. A lighted balloon was

released that night by the Sydney (Victoria) weather office but this was at least 45 minutes after the two men had made their sighting.

Signal flares are released from time to time by the U.S. Coast Guard at Port Angeles, Wash., over 30 miles to the south, but these reach a height of only a few hundred feet and are not visible beyond about 15 miles.

A more likely possibility would have been one of the illumination flares also fired occasionally from Port Angeles. Dropped from aircraft about 3,000 feet up, these parachute suspended flares are visible up to 50 miles away on a clear night but their maximum duration is three minutes. The strange light seen by the two witnesses lasted at least 15 minutes. Moreover it did not appear to be dropping. It moved about and hovered. Since there was virtually no wind that night, these would hardly be the antics expected of a parachute.

As for an experimental aircraft, that one is always in the grab-bag of guesses but if it was such a craft, it was strangely unventuresome. As Voorsluys remarked, it repeated almost identically the same performance on several different nights. One would think an experimental aircraft would have more assorted ways to spend its time.

There was one other circumstance which, though omitted from the official report because it did not occur on the night in question, may have a significant bearing on the case. Twice the witnesses detected what they described as a "very low vibrating noise" that they thought was associated with the object. It is arguable that the noise was one of the sounds of the city. But in one of the instances they heard it, they were not in the city. Curious about the fiery looking pieces discharged by the object, they had driven well out of town to a beach where they thought the pieces might have landed. They found nothing unusual and the light had disappeared, but as they stood there in the quietness by the water, they became aware of the strange noise, unlike anything they had heard before.

"It was a low bass-like vibrating noise," Voorsluys said. "We could feel and hear this sound but it was impossible to tell where it came from no matter where we looked. It sounded like it was coming from all over the area."



HERMANUS VOORSLUYS
with homemade telescope

In Winnipeg, Brian Cannon, then director of CAPRO who has since set up his own UFO research center, followed the case with particular interest. Having compiled a full report on it, he concluded with these remarks:

"Based on available information, it is difficult to explain this sighting away as a result of misidentification of a balloon or flare. It is apparent there were no balloons in the vicinity. There would appear to be a definite difference of opinion between the two witnesses as regarding the speed of the main object. Voorsluys felt that it was moving at least as fast as "a jet interceptor." Neal, who did not compare its speed with a conventional object, stated it moved from a point five degrees above horizon to 10-15 degrees above horizon in "3-5 minutes."

"The duration of the sighting, as described by both witnesses, would seem to rule out the flare possibility. Both men are fairly conversant with various types of aircraft and felt that this hypothesis was also not applicable to the sighting."

Among questions that may come to readers minds are: Why did the object seem to favor one particular spot over Victoria, and why were the sightings apparently limited to the two witnesses and others in their immediate neighborhood?

The answer to the first must, as with so many things concerning UFOs, be sheer guess-work. But significantly the object seemed to be almost directly over a new high voltage transmitter near the Esquimalt navy base. This, plus activity at the base itself, might have made the area one of special attraction to the object.

As to the second question, there was no way of telling how many others saw the object without reporting it, but there was at least one other known witness whose qualifications added immense weight to the report of the other two. This was James R. McLean, a commercial aircraft pilot, who said that while flying over Victoria one night during the period in question he saw a glowing object he could not explain. His description of it matched that of Voorsluys and Neal, though at the time they were strangers to him. McLean came forward when a local newspaper carried a letter by Voorsluys seeking other witnesses. He made himself known to Voorsluys, not to the newspaper, thus eliminating any suggestion that his report might have some publicity value.

There the case rests at the moment, but it rests without the smallest clue to an answer. The reports and photos of the witnesses remain completely unexplained. It is far more difficult to scoff at this case than to accept the probability that something unknown to us moved across the night sky of Victoria.