

## FIRST DRAFT

# Interest in UFOs (UAPs) has long history on Western Slope

Twenty people gathered at the campground on Colorado National Monument in the autumn of 1975, a stop on their journey to contact the alien space ships that they believed would carry them “to a better life.”

While camping near Fruita, they were “indoctrinated” by The Two, a man and woman who led what was described as a UFO cult. Their ideology combined Christian references with belief in Unidentified Flying Objects.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

The events in 1975 were among the strangest UFO-related activities to occur on the Western Slope during decades of interest in unidentified celestial objects. But they were by no means the only ones.

As the U.S. intelligence community prepares to release a report this month on Unidentified Aerial Phenomena — what most people call Unidentified Flying Objects — there is renewed interest in who or what may have been flying in Earth’s airspace.

But it is not just a recent interest. As early as the 1930s — even before an alien space ship supposedly crashed near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947 — people across the United States reported sightings of what they believed to be UFOs. Citizens of western Colorado have been among those who reported seeing strange objects in the sky.

For almost as long as there have been UFO sightings, government agencies have been issuing reports attempting to offer logical explanations for the phenomena.

Based on early glimpses of the report due out this month, intelligence agencies acknowledge that they cannot explain all of the UFO sightings that have been reported, particularly those that have been videotaped and described by experienced military pilots.

Even so, this latest report isn’t the first to express official uncertainty about strange objects in the sky.

For instance, a report issued by the Air Force in 1965 said the agency had investigated nearly 9,000 reported sightings of UFOs from 1947 through 1964. The vast majority of them had logical, scientific explanations, the report said.

However, it listed 663 sightings as “unidentified.” The 1965 report also said there was no evidence that those unidentified sightings involved visitors from other planets.

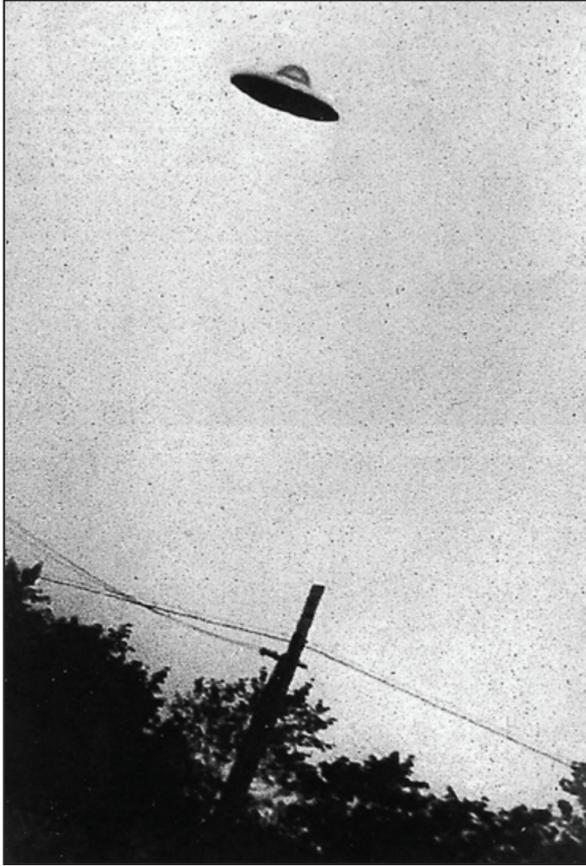
For many UFO believers, however, such conclusions were unsatisfactory. As early as the mid-1940s, reputable crews of commercial and military aircraft had begun making statements about things they had witnessed while flying that couldn’t be explained by conventional science.

Multiple books and articles were printed and lectures presented, often by people with military or scientific backgrounds, alleging visits by creatures from outer space and/or a vast cover-up by the U.S. government.

By 1962, there was a UFO club in Grand Junction, hosting lectures and films alleging that UFOs really were space ships from alien planets. Similar groups formed throughout the state, often claiming conspiracies to hide the truth about UFOs.

Meanwhile, there were plenty of sightings of unexplained aerial phenomena around the world and in western Colorado.

In the 1960s alone, UFO sightings were reported above



Alleged UFO photographed above New Jersey in 1952.



Photo taken from 2015 video shot by a U.S. Navy pilot.

the Book Cliffs north of Grand Junction, near Delta, Glenwood Springs, Eagle and Hot Sulphur Springs. There also were sightings claimed near Parachute (then called Grand Valley), Cortez, Palisade, Cedaredge and New Castle.

The Dry Creek Basin, southwest of Naturita, became a hotbed for sightings. A 1967 article in the Sentinel included drawings of some of the spacecraft that were reportedly seen by witnesses in that area.

A variety of ideas were offered by experts to explain what people really were seeing. Weather balloons, swamp gases, fires from oil and gas drilling, missiles fired from a testing ground near Green River, Utah — all had their proponents.

But few of these explanations convinced witnesses who believed they had seen alien spacecraft.

Many of the UFO true believers found a spiritual component associated with space aliens, discovering alleged references in the Bible and other religious texts.

When German author Erich Von Daniken published his 1968 book, “Chariots of the Gods,” he sparked renewed interest in UFOs worldwide. He suggested that many of humanity’s greatest wonders — from the Great Pyramids to strange rock markings in the Andes Mountains — as well as supposed appearances of gods were actually the work of ancient aliens

who populated Earth.

By 1975, when a score of people gathered at a campground at Colorado National Monument, they apparently believed that the end of the world was near and only aliens on UFOs could save them.

One woman among the group told local residents that she had given up her baby to join the UFO group.

A 43-year-old man in the group sent a postcard from Fruita to his mother in Oregon, saying he did not expect to contact her again. He had previously given away his house in Oregon.

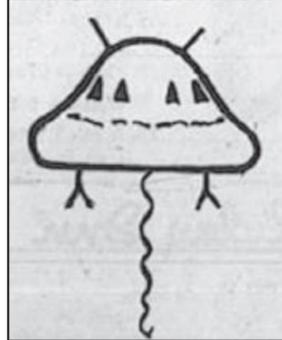
A farmer gave away all his land and farm equipment.

Meanwhile, the leaders of this cult, a couple from Houston, appeared and disappeared throughout the fall of 1975, holding seminars and recruiting new members for their group, based on belief in salvation through UFOs.

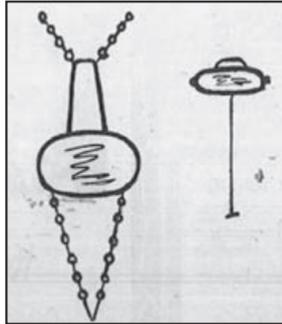
The couple told an audience in Oregon before the small migration began that there was a camp in Colorado where people could prepare for their eventual transportation to a different planet.

That apparently was the camp at Colorado National Monument, where one disillusioned ex-member later said recruits were “indoctrinated” by The Two.

“We were told we were close to Jesus and all those things,” Robert Rubin explained to an Oregon newspaper in February,



Drawing of a purported flying saucer seen in Dry Creek Basin, as described by a witness to The Daily Sentinel in April 1967.



Drawing of what is believed to be the Mother Ship and one of its smaller ships, from The Daily Sentinel article, April 1967.

1976, after he had left the group. The members of the cult were to be the “graduating class” of the millennium that was then nearing its end, he added.

By late 1975, The Two had been identified as Marshal Herff Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Trusdale Nettles, two Houston residents who were then in their 40s, who had long had an interest in paranormal and psychic activities.

Soon, however, information surfaced that Applewhite and Nettles had outstanding warrants for auto theft and for fraudulent use of credit cards.

Even so, Rubin and other former members of the group said The Two never tried to get money from recruits.

They simply told members to rid themselves of their worldly possessions because they wouldn’t need them in their new life.

The small group left Mesa County in September, 1975, and headed east, gathering recruits at meetings from Oregon to California to Nebraska to Oklahoma, apparently picking up converts along the way.

One news story said the total number of members was 300 to 400.

However, somewhere that autumn Applewhite and Nettles disappeared, possibly because of their legal issues.

By early 1976, people like Rubin were returning to their homes, many disillusioned by their experience in the cult, but still firmly convinced that UFOs were truly from other worlds.

Odds are good that no matter what the government report on UAPs/UFOs says this time, many people will remain just as convinced as people were a half-century ago that UFOs are interstellar space craft.

Sources: *Historic Colorado newspaper articles through www.newspapers.com*; “How UFO sightings went from joke to national security threat,” by Michael S. Rosenwald, *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2021; “How the Pentagon Started Taking U.F.O.s Seriously,” by Gideon Lewis-Kraus, *The New Yorker*, April 30, 2021.

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# Second mudslide forces an ‘extended closure’ of Glenwood Canyon

By SENTINEL STAFF

Interstate 70 through Glenwood Canyon was closed in both directions Sunday because of yet another mudslide.

The mudslide occurred just east of the No Name exit (119), according to a news release from the Colorado Department of Transportation.

This debris flow came down the same drainage location as the mudslide on Saturday. The mudflow reached both westbound and eastbound lanes, with more material on the westbound lanes, the news release said.

The I-70 closure is between exit 116 at Glenwood Springs and exit 133 at Dotsero on the east end.

An additional closure is in place at the West Rifle exit (87) to serve as a closure point.

Once the rain stopped and it was safe, the CDOT Geohazards team was able to enter the debris flow area to begin mudflow clean-up operations.

The news release said the

debris field is approximately 80 feet wide and up to 5 feet deep. There are no reports of injuries caused by the slide.

CDOT is calling this an “extended closure,” and motorists are encouraged to find an alternate route.

CDOT’s recommended route is using Colorado Highway 13 from Rifle to Craig, then east to U.S. Highway 40 to Steamboat Springs over Rabbit Ears Pass to Kremmling, then take Colorado Highway 99 to Silverthorne.

Motorists can access Highway 82 out of Aspen over Independence Pass, but commercial vehicles and recreational vehicles longer than 35 feet are not permitted on Independence Pass.

CDOT also advises against motorists taking alternate routes like Cottonwood Pass because it is restricted to local traffic.

Motorists should continue to check [cotrip.org](http://cotrip.org) to monitor the closure.

## GETTING IT RIGHT

“Getting it right” appears as needed to correct erroneous information that has appeared in The Daily Sentinel’s news columns, to add details that should not have been omitted from a story or to correct typographical errors that changed the meaning of the story.

In the June 25 Daily Sentinel editorial, it was incorrectly stated that the Golden State Warriors of the National Basketball Association have the Golden Gate Bridge incorporated into their logo design. The logo actually is the Bay Bridge that connects San Francisco to Oakland, California.

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