

THE FALCON LAKE CASE: TOO CLOSE AN ENCOUNTER

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ABSTRACT Stefan Michalak was extremely ill after an encounter with a UFO in Canada in 1967. The case was investigated intensely and he was subjected to numerous medical tests. The results of the tests were inconclusive, physicians could find no explanation for Michalak's symptoms. If it was a hoax, it is one of the most contrived on record, involving radiation, ground traces, medical examinations and interrogation by government officials at many levels. The case is still a puzzle to researchers.

Throughout the UFO literature, there are many stories of alleged physiological effects associated with UFO encounters. There are several published reviews of these cases, including Aggen (1969), Crain (1971), Tokarz (1978) and the definitive summary by McCampbell (1987). In addition, reviews of close-encounter cases often include details of medical reactions and effects associated with UFO experiences. The most well-publicized and investigated physiological-effect case in recent ufological history was the Cash-Landrum encounter, in which two women said they were confronted by a diamond-shaped object and suffered various injuries as a result (Schuessler 1984).

One of the most intriguing cases of serious injury attributed to a UFO experience is that of Stefan Michalak*. He returned home from a prospecting expedition with serious ill effects that he claimed were a result of an extraordinary UFO encounter (Rutkowski 1981a).

The incident occurred on May 20, 1967, in an area near Falcon Lake, Manitoba, Canada, approximately 75 kilometers north of the American border in the rocky edge of the great Canadian Shield. Falcon Lake is a resort town at the southern boundary of Whiteshell Provincial Park. The park is largely uninhabited wilderness, about the same size as the state of Rhode Island. The Whiteshell is known for various mineral deposits, and several small mines were established in the surrounding region.

Stefan Michalak was an amateur geologist and had worked the area many times

* Although called Stephen, Steven or Steve in other published accounts, Michalak advises that his proper Christian name is Stefan.



Fig 1 Stefan Michalak standing next to a claim marker in the Falcon Lake area. The claim stake inscription reads 1 VIC, S Michalak, W10053, July 21, 1967, 11 00 A M

Some prospectors had found several quartz veins nearby that were associated with silver deposits, and Michalak had even staked a few claims himself. On May 19, 1967, he traveled from his home in Winnipeg to Falcon Lake, where he spent the night in a motel on the Trans-Canada Highway. He had expected to enjoy a quiet weekend of prospecting.

THE ENCOUNTER

Stefan Michalak left his motel at 5:30 that morning and headed north into the bush. By 9:00 a.m., traveling under a bright, cloudless sky, he had found a quartz

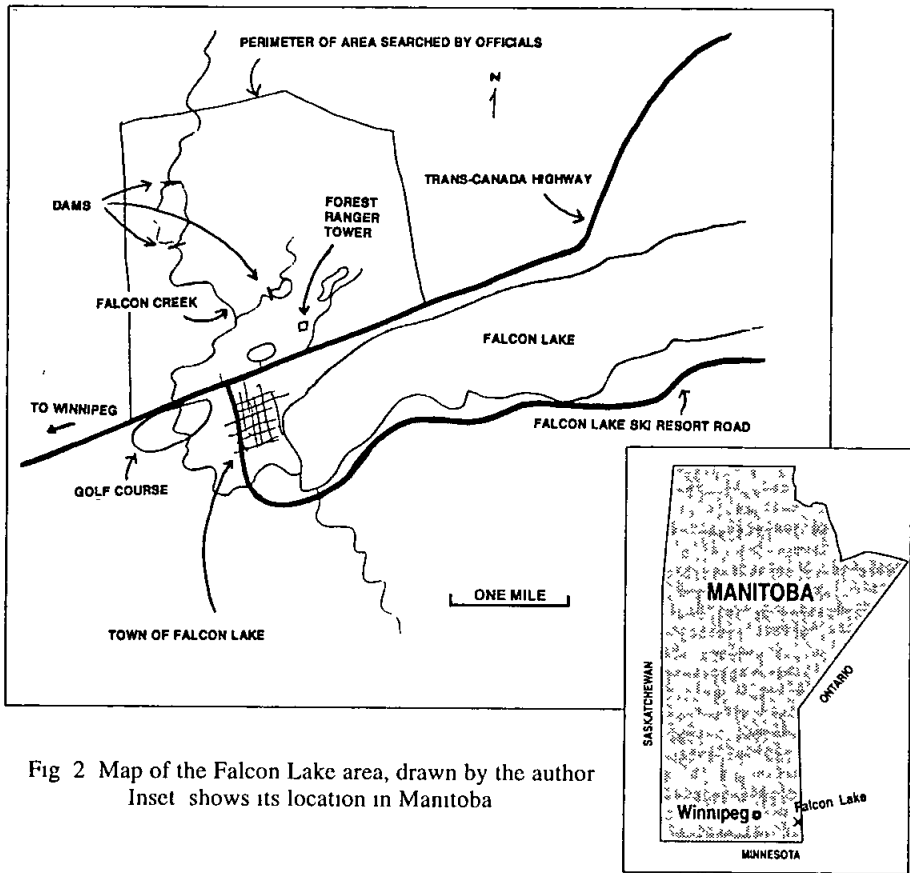


Fig 2 Map of the Falcon Lake area, drawn by the author
Inset shows its location in Manitoba

vein near a marshy area, close to a small stream. At 11 00 a m he had lunch, then went back to his examination of the quartz formation. At 12 15 p m, with the sun high and clouds gathering in the west, Michalak was startled by the cackling of some geese, who were obviously disturbed by something.

He looked up and was surprised to see two cigar-shaped objects with "bumps" on them, an estimated forty-five degrees in altitude, descending and glowing red. As they approached, they appeared more oval and then disc-shaped. Suddenly, the further of the pair stopped in midflight, while the other drew nearer and appeared to land on a large, flat rock which was later determined to be about 160 feet away. The one in the air hovered for a short while, then later departed, changing from red to orange to grey as it flew into the west, where it disappeared behind the clouds.

Focusing his attention to the object on the ground, Michalak saw that it, too, was turning from red to grey, until it finally was the color of "hot stainless steel," surrounded by a golden-hued glow. As he observed the object, he knelt beside a rock where he had been chipping at the quartz. He had been wearing welding goggles to

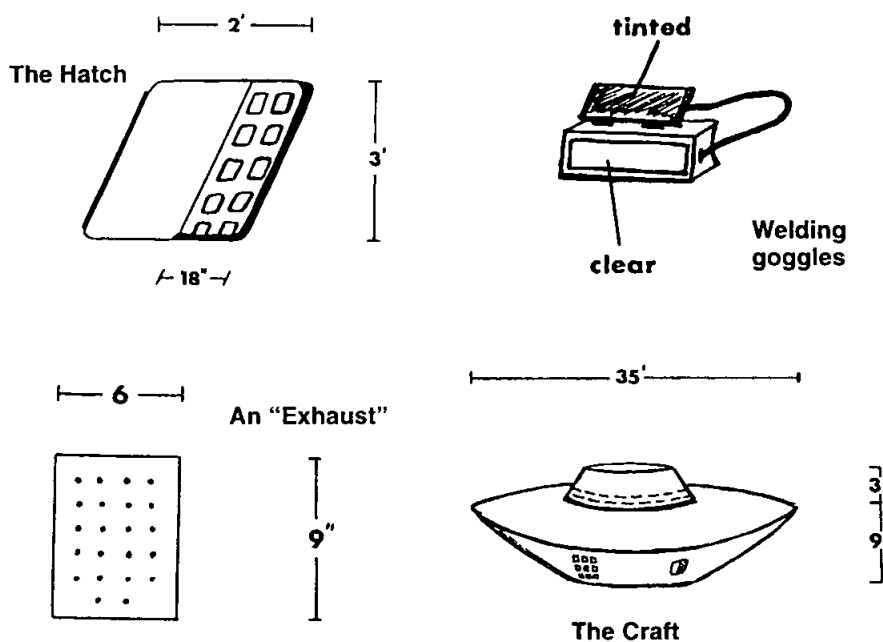


Fig 3 Drawings of various aspects of the Michalak encounter, based on his testimony and sketches

protect his eyes from flying rock fragments. The goggles proved to be very useful, as brilliant light shone from openings in the object, blinding him and creating red afterimages in his eyes. For the next half-hour he stayed near the rock, making a sketch of the object and noting various features. The craft was saucer-shaped, about 40 feet in diameter and approximately 10 feet thick. Its upper cupola or dome was an additional three feet high.

Michalak became aware of waves of warm air radiating from the craft, accompanied by the "smell of sulphur." He also heard the whirring of what sounded like a fast electric motor, and a hissing, as if air were being taken in or expelled.

A door had opened in the side of the craft, revealing some lights inside. This door was about two by three feet in size. Michalak approached to within 60 feet of the craft, and heard two humanlike voices, one with a higher pitch than the other. He was sure that the craft was an American experimental test vehicle, and walked closer to it, sarcastically asking, "Okay, Yankee boys, having trouble? Come on out and we'll see what we can do about it." Getting no response (the voices had subsided), and becoming flustered, he asked cautiously in Russian, "Do you speak Russian?" There was still no answer, so he gave greetings in German, Italian, French and Ukrainian, then once again in English.

At this point, his curiosity got the best of him, and he walked closer to the craft,

ending up directly in front of it. Poking his head into the opening, he saw a maze of lights on what appeared to be a panel, and beams of light in horizontal and diagonal patterns. There was also a cluster of lights flashing in a random sequence "like on a computer."

As Michalak stepped away from the craft, he saw that the wall of the craft was about 18 inches thick. Suddenly, three panels slid over the opening, sealing it "like a camera shutter." He examined the outside of the craft and touched the side of it with his gloved hand. There were no signs of welding or joints, the surface was highly polished, and appeared like colored glass with light reflecting off it, and made "silvery spectra" out of the sunlight. Drawing his glove back, he saw that it had burned and melted when it brushed the side of the object.

Unexpectedly, the craft shifted position, and he was facing a gridlike exhaust vent which he had seen earlier to his left. This vent was about nine inches high by six inches wide, and contained a uniform pattern of round holes, each about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter. A blast of hot gas shot from these holes onto his chest, setting his shirt and undershirt on fire and causing him severe pain. He tore off his burning garments and threw them to the ground. He looked up in time to see the craft depart like the first, and felt a rush of air as it ascended.

AFTERMATH

When the craft had left, Michalak noticed a strong smell of burning electrical circuits mixed with the original smell of sulphur. Looking down, he saw that some moss had been set on fire by his smouldering shirts, and so he stamped it out. He walked over to where he had left his belongings, and saw that the needle on his compass was spinning erratically, after a few minutes, it became still. He went back over to the landing site and immediately felt nauseous and a surge of pain from a headache.

The landing spot looked as if it had been swept clean (no twigs or stones). However, piled up in a circle 15 feet in diameter was a collection of pine needles, dirt and leaves. As he looked around, his headache became worse, he felt more nauseous and he broke out in a cold sweat. Feeling very weak and dizzy, he vomited. He decided to head back to the motel. On the way back, he vomited several more times and had to stop to regain his strength.

When he finally reached the highway, he was about a mile from where he had entered the woods, so he started off down the road in that direction. He saw an RCMP car coming towards him and tried to flag it down. It passed by, apparently to turn around, because a few minutes later, Michalak heard a voice calling beside him. Michalak told the RCMP officer what had happened. Michalak says the officer listened but recalls the uncooperative constable told him "Sorry, but I have other duties to perform." Then the officer got in his patrol car and left.

After walking for what seemed to be an eternity, Michalak reached the motel.

Thinking he was somehow contaminated, he did not go in but instead remained outside in a clump of trees. He tried to get help at the nearby park headquarters but it was closed. At 4 00 p m , he finally ventured towards the motel and entered the coffee shop to inquire whether or not a doctor was available, as his pain had become considerably worse. He was told that the nearest doctor was in Kenora, Ontario, 45 miles east of Falcon Lake. Not wanting to travel even farther from home, Michalak decided to return to Winnipeg. Thinking that there might be danger for other park visitors and that his encounter was certainly newsworthy, he called the news desk of the *Winnipeg Tribune*. He had expected them to send someone to pick him up and take him a doctor, hearing his story on the way. But as it was a Saturday, the news department was short-staffed and unwilling to comply with his request, especially since he wanted assistance "but no publicity."

He went to his room, where he waited until the next bus to Winnipeg arrived at around 8 45 p m. He called his wife, telling her that he had had an accident and not to worry, but to send their son to meet him at the bus terminal. When he arrived back in Winnipeg around 10 15 p m , his son immediately took him to the Misericordia Hospital.

Throughout the next two years, Michalak was examined by more than one dozen physicians in the United States and Canada. Site investigations were made by members of the RCMP, RCAF, government officials and numerous civilians.

The number of government departments and officials who were involved in this case is staggering. In the ground party which traveled with Michalak to the site there were representatives of the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) Training Command Headquarters, CFB (Canadian Forces Base) Winnipeg, RCMP CID (Criminal Investigations Division), the federal Department of Health and Welfare, and the Manitoba provincial Department of Health and Welfare. In addition, the University of Colorado Condon Committee investigated, *Life* magazine reporters came to Manitoba and two connected but separate civilian groups, APRO (Aerial Phenomena Research Organization) and CAPRO (Canadian APRO), became involved. Furthermore, the federal Department of Mines and Natural Resources took an interest, as did the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment (WNRE), the Manitoba Cancer Institute, the Mayo Clinic, and a host of other medical establishments. The scope of this intense investigation cannot be understated. The Falcon Lake case may well be one of the most intensely investigated well-documented on record.

The case presents a number of elements of particular interest to researchers

- 1 Michalak's burns and other physiological effects,
- 2 the ground traces found at the site,
- 3 radioactivity allegedly associated with the site, and
- 4 mysterious metal fragments found at the site

All of the available data associated with each of these elements will be examined in turn.

CHARACTER OF THE WITNESS

At the time of the incident, Stefan Michalak was an employee of an industrial facility in Winnipeg. He was an industrial mechanic, with knowledge of automotive machinery, welding, and metalwork.

With regard to Michalak's mental state, an examining psychiatrist at the Mayo Clinic noted

I found no evidence of dreams [or] hallucinations. The MMPI was not extraordinary. I can find no overt evidence of significant mental or emotional illness. [Mayo Clinic 1968: 2]

Michalak had never before reported observing anything like the UFO he encountered in 1967. During World War II, he had been an intelligence officer and was very familiar with the appearance and behavior of military vehicles.

In the RCAF report on the incident, much was made of Michalak's association with a man named Gerald Hart (RCAF 1967a). Hart was known to the RCMP as a "subversive" individual, so when Michalak told them that Hart had assisted him in his quest for the site of his encounter, officials became suspicious. (Among other eccentricities, Hart refused to pay income tax and in fact wrote a popular book on how to avoid paying the government anything.)

Furthermore, the actions of civilian UFO investigators were cause for concern in the minds of officials. In particular, Barry Thompson, described by a former CAPRO member as a "liaison between CAPRO and APRO," was

a constant companion of Mr. Michalak and he appeared to be the spokesman for Mr. Michalak during some of the interviews. Both the investigating officer and Professor Craig [of the Condon Committee] agreed there appeared to be monetary gain intentions associated with this relationship. [RCAF 1967a: 4]

However, there was never any "monetary gain" from the incident. Michalak's own narrative account was privately published in late 1967. His manuscript, written in Polish, was translated and printed as a 40-page booklet which quickly sold out. But Michalak saw little of the money recovered after publication costs, and to this day is bitter that "others have made money from my experience, but not me" (Michalak 1980). Actually, because of the small run and limited circulation, it is thought that the publisher lost money. (In the early 1970s a civilian investigator of the case wanted to have the manuscript retranslated and the booklet reprinted, but this never occurred.)

Squadron Leader Paul Bissky of the Royal Canadian Air Force was the investigating officer on the case. His reports to Canadian Forces Headquarters are remarkable in their detail and candid comments about his investigations. But complicating his

reports is the fact that Bissky was a devout skeptic, and told researchers he "didn't believe in that stuff [UFOs]" (Bissky 1980) How much his personal opinions may have influenced his reports is not known

That Bissky thought Michalak was a liar is an understatement At one point during his investigation, he bluntly asked Michalak if he had been drinking on the day of the experience He believed that Michalak was hallucinating because of some alcoholic stupor Bissky appeared sure that alcohol was somehow involved with the case, and he cleverly manipulated Michalak into proving he was not a teetotaler In his first report, Bissky noted

Although the authenticity of Mr Michalak's report had not been questioned up to the second search, he had appeared genuinely sincere and his story was convincing to those who heard it for the first time, some doubts arose during the last search Mr Michalak had staunchly denied having consumed alcoholic beverages at any time while at Falcon Lake Yet a reliable witness at Falcon Lake advised that he personally had served Mr Michalak 4 or 5 bottles of beer the night prior to the trip into the bush [RCAF 1967a 2]

This is an odd note, since the "reliable witness" was obviously a bartender, and Bissky did not state how his source's own reliability had been established Bissky seemed to want to prove there was at least one inconsistency or lie in Michalak's testimony, and the issue of alcohol consumption seemed to be a choice target (In retrospect, even if Michalak admitted drinking several beers, there would still remain the problem of the other physical and physiological evidence, Michalak's drinking probably had no bearing on the case itself)

In his later report, Bissky noted several "discrepancies" in Michalak's story, including this following detailed passage which gives us some insight into Bissky's RCAF investigation

it was proven that Mr Michalak does consume alcoholic beverages, in fact to some considerable extent After coming out from the alleged site, Mr Michalak was purposely taken to the same bar where he had consumed the five beers the night prior to his initial encounter on the 20 May 67

Although he declined the offer of beer (it could not be determined whether this was done because he did not like beer or not), he did accept the offer of several rye "Presbyterians" (rye and half water/ginger ale mix), in fact he even went so far as to purchase a round of drinks for the group He appeared to hold his alcohol reasonably well, although it was noticed that he did loosen up after the third drink and become quite gay, telling numerous stories When questioned about

the vast discrepancy in direction the object departed, he just shrugged his shoulders and laughed it off. When last seen, he was in a jovial mood, remaining at the bar, presumably to await the arrival of his two assistants from Winnipeg. Hence it is very possible that Mr. Michalak may have had a private party on his own the night of 19 May, which in turn could have caused hallucinations the following day [RCAF 1967b 4]

Bissky was convinced that Michalak had drunk heavily the night before his alleged experience, causing him to have imagined the entire UFO encounter ten to twelve hours later. However, Bissky described an alternative theory to the author: Michalak had been drinking and burned himself on a hot barbecue grill. Support for this new theory came from another of Bissky's unnamed but "reliable sources," in this case a woman who was awakened by Michalak pounding on her cabin door at 2:00 a.m. Unfortunately, Bissky said that the woman was at Falcon Lake for a "tryst" and could not come forward publicly. It is interesting that this explanation was never mentioned in any official report, and has no other evidence to support it (Bissky 1980).

Despite all of his attempts to find flaws in Michalak's story, Bissky was forced to concede that

there are certain facts, such as Mr. Michalak's illness and burns and the very evident circle remaining at the site, which are unexplainable [RCAF 1967b. 5]

Even under the intense scrutiny of biased military investigators, the case appeared sound.

As of the time of this writing (January 1994), Michalak still stands by his original story and insists that his experience occurred as he described.

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS

When asked by the examining doctor how he had been injured, Michalak said he had been "hit by exhaust coming out of an aeroplane." In the narrative of his account, Michalak explained that he had not told the doctor about the UFO because neither he nor the (Chinese) physician were fluent enough in English to make the fantastic story understood, and because Michalak was very tired and wanted to go home. He was given a sedative and went home, where he took a bath to cleanse his wounds then went to bed (Michalak 1967: 23).

The next morning, Michalak was still in some pain and his family noted he had extremely bad body odor and halitosis. He could not hold any food down, but he was not hungry anyway. He said that according to the bathroom scale he had lost six

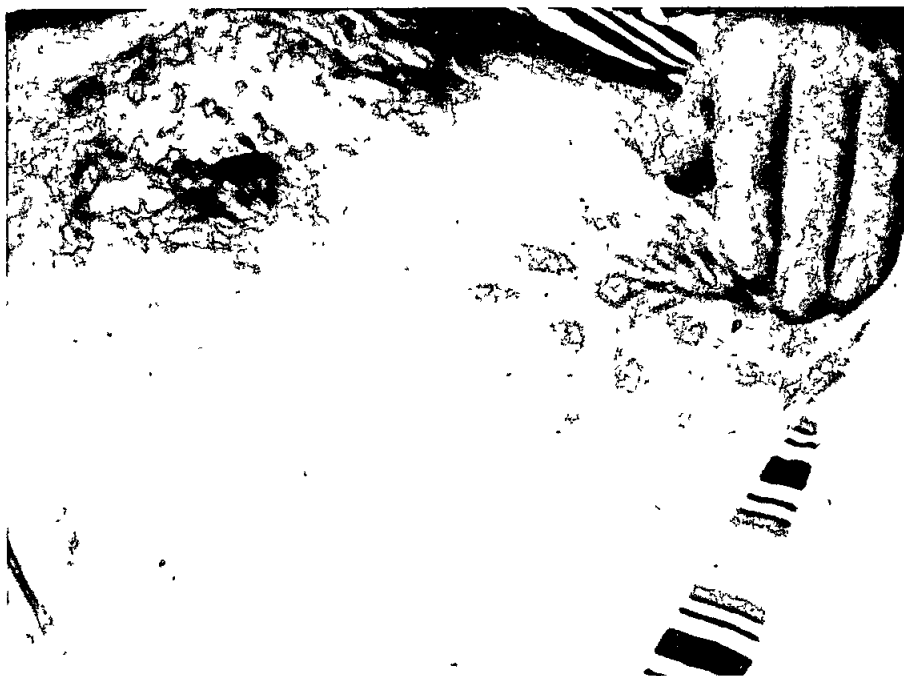


Fig 4 Michalak's chest and abdomen, showing his charred upper body and the "checkers" pattern of red chemical burns on his stomach
The photo was taken a few days after his encounter

pounds during the previous two days, and he became concerned

It was not until that evening that his own physician, Dr R D Oatway, examined Michalak and was told the saucer story Michalak noted "He looked at me with what one may call a professional discretion" (Michalak 1967 24)

Oatway's detailed report, prepared for APRO consultant Dr Horace Dudley, describes Michalak's physical condition at that time

He complained of band-like headache, hot forehead, anorexia and nausea, feeling of blacking out On examination, he appeared rather depressed, dazed, apathetic, but rational and coherent There was singeing of the hair on the forehead at the hairline and over the lower sternal and upper abdominal region Over the upper abdomen, in the mid-portion and especially to the left of the midline, there were numerous reddish, slightly irregular, oval-shaped, slightly raised lesions, arranged with their long axes mainly in a transverse direction These lesions seemed to be consistent with a first degree burn As I recall they were painful and tender but not severely I also observed the burnt under-

shirt which had holes with charred (or blackened) edges corresponding to the site of the burn [Oatway 1968]

Oatway examined the burns and prescribed antinausea tablets and codeine painkillers. Later, he referred Michalak to a dermatologist who gave him some antibacterial skin cleanser for the burns.

During the next two weeks, Michalak's condition improved gradually. He kept a diary of his health during this time. He noted that his weight decreased from 180 lbs before his UFO encounter to a low of 158 lbs on May 27, one week later. Unfortunately, since Michalak had not seen his personal physician for more than one year before his UFO encounter, there was no official record of his preencounter weight. During this time, he also experienced several fainting spells, which he had never had before in his life. He continued to vomit occasionally, but his appetite slowly returned to normal.

As a result of prompting by civilian UFO investigators, Michalak went to a radiologist on May 23. No evidence of radiation trauma was found. On May 30, Michalak was taken by a UFO investigator to the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment, where he was given a whole-body count. Again, nothing above normal background readings was found.

During the period immediately following his encounter, Michalak had a slight drop in blood lymphocyte count, from 25% to 16%. As noted by one investigator, the specific values and corresponding times were

May 24, 1967	16%	
May 30, 1967	21%	
January 15, 1968	31%	[Cannon 1970].

After four weeks, the white-cell count was reportedly back to a normal level. During this time the platelet counts were consistently normal. If Michalak had been affected by radiation, as some have suggested, the counts would have varied more significantly. Brian Cannon, a founder of CAPRO, reported to that group's membership that the healing of Michalak's burns was "a characteristic trait of radiation burns" (Cannon 1968). One hematologist's report, however, indicated "no abnormal physical findings," although Michalak had "some atypical lymphoid cells in the marrow plus a moderate increase in the number of plasma cells" (Oatway 1968). These minor variations do not support some published accounts that claim Michalak had impurities in his blood (Naud 1978).

But Dr. Horace Dudley, a radiologist and APRO advisor at the University of Southern Mississippi, observed that Michalak's

nausea and vomiting followed by diarrhea and loss of weight is a classical picture of severe whole body [exposure to] radiation with x- or gamma rays. I would guess that Mr. Michalak received on the order

of 100–200 roentgens It is very fortunate that this dose of radiation only lasted a very short time or he would certainly have received a lethal dose [Lorenzen and Lorenzen 1968 40–41]

Others did not believe that symptoms of radiation poisoning were present, and the issue has never been fully resolved (Michalak 1967 27–28, Rutkowski 1981b)

Michalak's skin problems also had different interpretations His upper chest, having been diagnosed as thermally burned, healed fairly rapidly His abdomen, where the grid pattern appeared, went through periods of fading and recurrence It had been suggested that these welts were radiation burns

Michalak also had a rash which broke out on his upper torso One investigator said this was due to insect bites, and this is supported by the fact that investigators were indeed bitten by large numbers of black flies at the site However, it does appear that Michalak had more than just a simple patch of bites Medical records noted he had skin infections that were "hive-like areas with impetiginous centers" (Oatway 1968) In another report, he had "generalized urticaria" (Oatway 1967) Along with the recurrence of the rash and urticaria, Michalak reported feeling weak, dizzy and nauseous, and he experienced numbness and swelling in his joints (Michalak 1967 35–36)

It is possible that Michalak had an allergic reaction to something in the environment On September 21, 1967, four months after his UFO experience, Michalak was at work when he became very ill He felt a burning sensation on his chest and neck, his throat constricted and he became very flushed ("turned violet") His hands swelled "like a balloon," he became dizzy, then fainted (Michalak 1967 35) Upon examination, doctors concluded that Michalak had had an allergic reaction of some sort However, considering that he had never had such reactions before his encounter, one might wonder what had triggered the episodes

Michalak gradually recovered from his injuries and stopped having his recurring allergic reactions To this day, however, the strange array of burn scars can still be felt underneath the skin of his lower abdomen

THE MAYO CLINIC

In August 1968, Michalak went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota The purpose of his visit was to undergo tests in order to determine exactly what was ailing him, since the doctors in Winnipeg appeared to be unhelpful It is worthy to note that Michalak paid for the Mayo tests entirely on his own, as Canadian medical insurance would not cover such a trip

He traveled south and stayed for two weeks at a motel near the hospital, walking across each day and entering as an outpatient He reported that he was given a thorough physical and psychological examination by various doctors, then sent home

Michalak waited for several weeks, but received no word on his results He com-

plained to his own doctor and told CAPRO representatives of the lack of results CAPRO investigators appealed to APRO for help Eventually, ufologist John Keel intervened and as a result, Dr Berthold Schwarz, a psychiatrist and ufologist, assisted by sending a letter of inquiry to the Mayo Clinic, asking about the medical reports In reply, he was sent what has been referred to as the "letter of denial " Dated (perhaps significantly) April 1, 1969, the letter bluntly stated

I have checked through our registration desk and I find that we have never had a patient by that name registered at the Mayo Clinic If he had been a patient I suspect that I would not have been able to send you information without a release from him, state laws being what they are, but I can tell you we don't know anything about him [Barry 1969]

This immediately spurred shouts of "cover-up!" from some individuals who learned of the letter, and rightly so, as this appeared to be a deliberate attempt to mislead the investigation However, Schwarz tried again, with a different tactic, he asked Michalak to sign a simple medical records release form and forwarded that to the Mayo Clinic in January 1970 The reports came immediately

Michalak had been found to be in good health but with neurodermatitis and simple syncope (fainting spells due to sudden cerebral blood pressure losses) The syncope was suggested as having to do with hyperventilation or impaired cardiac output (Rovelstad 1970) This is interesting, as Michalak has indeed had heart problems during the past decade

Furthermore, the Mayo Clinic report described Michalak's physiological problems in more detail

Since May, 1967, he has had repeated clearing-up and recrudescence of the erythematous and pruritic lesions on his chest and legs Sometimes these occurred at intervals of approximately 112 days, but this has not been consistent Since January, 1968, reoccurrences have been more frequent but the symptoms were briefer in duration Generally, the chest lesions appear as minute points or "grains," enlarge progressively to the size of a quarter or a half dollar, and are very pruritic The time between initial appearance and disappearance has ranged from a few days to several weeks Various medications have not been helpful [Mayo Clinic 1968 1]

His condition was viewed as being quite serious, especially given the following information

Mr Mechallack's [sic] main reason for coming to the Mayo Clinic now is because of headaches and "blackout spells" which have attended

the other symptoms since he was severely ill in January, 1968. Headaches are mainly bitemporal, steady, and excruciating. Skin problems occur at the same time. Blackout spells are not sudden but cannot be predicted accurately enough to permit him to drive during symptomatic periods (he is fearful of hurting himself and/or others). Gradually, his eyesight begins to dim until everything goes black. He has time to sit down but is unconscious for a few minutes or more. Allegedly, his wife has viewed him during these spells and he recounts no symptoms suggestive of seizures. He declares that he is unable to hear during the spells. [Mayo Clinic 1968: 1]

RADIATION

On June 30, 1967, Michalak traveled to Falcon Lake with Gerald Hart. Hart had offered to help in the search, and told Michalak he visited the area frequently on his own. Michalak took him up on his offer.

He not only took me there but helped me in the search. I looked throughout the woods checking rocks I had seen before, examining chips I had made in the stone and finally, after six hours, we came upon the spot. [Michalak 1967: 31]

They found a ring of debris, thought to have been made when the object lifted off. In addition, they found bits of Michalak's shirt and his tape measure which he had left behind.

When they returned to Winnipeg, they informed the RCAF of their findings. On July 2, RCMP, RCAF and CAPRO investigators accompanied Michalak to the site, gathering samples and taking photographs. The RCMP analyses of the samples showed significantly high radiation readings. On their recommendation, consideration was given to cordoning off the area due to a possible health hazard. This was noted in an *Incident Report* from an inspector with the RCMP Crime Laboratory in Ottawa, the result of tests on some samples sent by the RCMP to the Department of National Health and Welfare. They found

a radiation value of 3 microcuries in the soil sample. The radiation is from a radium source and is a possible serious health hazard. [RCMP 1967]

Samples taken from the site by Michalak and Hart were eventually tested by the Radiation Protection Division of the Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare. They examined samples of "soil, burned shirt and steel tape for possible radioactive contamination." The initial gamma analysis showed significant levels

of "Ra 226 or its equivalent "

In a report prepared by Stewart Hunt for A K DasGupta, the head of the Safety Assessment and Control Section of the Division, details of the radioactivity assessment were described. Hunt outlined very clearly and cautiously the reasons his Division was involved

The task of assessing the radiation hazard to the general public and the landing site did not initially indicate that it would be necessary for the Division to involve itself in the RCMP and DND investigation. However, it became obvious that collection and coordination of all background information was essential due to the following

- a The apparent lack of cooperation by the principals toward the military and police
- b The exact location of the sighting had not been established at the time of the Division's initial involvement [Hunt 1967: 1]

Hunt flew to Winnipeg and met with various other officials on July 26, 1967. They had a brainstorming session, during which they arrived at a complicated plan of action that included a thorough investigation of the site, analyses of the physical effects and a detailed background check not only of the principal witness but also of the civilian investigators.

As part of their investigation, the team traveled to East Braintree, Manitoba, near the Whiteshell, where hazardous waste from the Manitoba Cancer Institute was buried. The reason for this was the suggestion that someone had "seeded" the landing site with commercially produced radium. If it had not come from a radium watch dial, they reasoned that it must have come from a nuclear waste disposal site. Again, the seriousness with which the case was regarded is evident. Tampering with a nuclear waste disposal site is a very grave matter. No indication of tampering was found, however. The team also visited Michalak's place of employment to see if it used radium in any of its products.

They then visited Michalak¹ at his home to check for radiation in the samples he had in his basement. Hunt noted

A survey of the basement showed no evidence of any loose contamination. Radiation fields were detectable coming from the plastic bags containing soil and the remnants of Michalak's burned shirt.

Mr Michalak has no respect for contaminated materials. He handled the contaminated soil with his bare hands, and was made to wash his hands with great difficulty [Hunt 1967: 2].

Hunt was both horrified and suspicious. How could an amateur geologist and trained engineer not be concerned by radioactive debris?

Hunt's visit was what helped convince Michalak to visit the site with Bissky and

the others. Hunt went along to verify that radioactivity was present. He found that

One small area was found to be contaminated. This was located across the crown of the rock. There was a smear of contamination about 0.5×8.0 inches on one side of the crack. There was also some lichen and ground vegetation contaminated just beyond the smear. The whole contaminated area was no larger than 100 square inches. All water run off areas were checked for possible contamination, but nothing was found [Hunt 1967: 2].

After examining the site, he felt there was "no serious health hazard involved."

The fact that only a small area was radioactive conflicted with the fact that Michalak's steel tape measure was radioactive, yet it was found "40 paces" from the site. The explanation offered for this was that everything taken from the site had been left together in a pile in Michalak's basement, so that unaffected items could have become contaminated after the fact.

In an undated Department of National Defence *Minute Sheet*, an official in the office of the Chief of Defence Staff in Ottawa noted

There is some doubt that the soil samples did in fact contain "226" or pure radium. This question of doubt is a scientific evaluation beyond this investigation.

The quantity of "226," namely 0.5, is equal to approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of that associated with an average wrist watch.

However, the quantity, although pertinent, does not explain how this "smear" got on the rock at the alleged landing site. This is what is bothering the scientific people [Canadian Department of National Defence 1967?].

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the "radium seeding" scenario was Hunt's visit to the provincial Environmental Sanitation Laboratory in Winnipeg.

Samples from [the] UFO site and those taken from Michalak's residence were checked under a UV light. The samples taken from the UFO site gave an indication that they were contaminated with Radium luminous paint. The samples from Michalak's house did not respond to the UV light [Hunt 1967: 3].

This was puzzling. If Michalak or Hart had seeded the radium, then they would surely have had some luminous paint in their own radioactive samples. Yet this was present only in the later samples.

Further confusing details were found when Hunt visited the home of Barry Thompson, the APRO investigator. Hunt checked some soil and vegetation samples

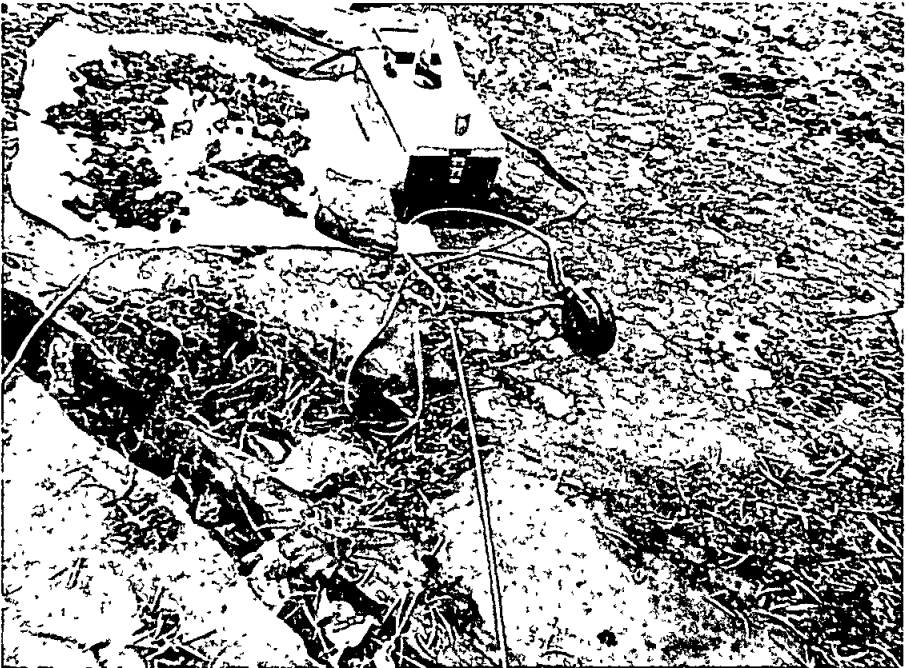


Fig 5 The appearance of the rock slab over which the UFO was said to descend The crack in the foreground is where chunks of metal were dug out by Michalak in May 1968 The geiger counter was used to check for radioactivity at the site

Thompson had in his possession Thompson had been given the samples by Michalak when he accompanied him during a separate visit to the site on July 17, 1967 Hunt noted that one sample

proved to be radioactive Levels up to 1mR/hr were detected The sample was sealed in a plastic bag A contamination check was made of the area where the samples were, using the UV light The area was extremely cluttered with photographic equipment and a great deal of junk Several areas responded to the UV light, but these did not prove to be areas of contamination, probably photographic emulsion splashes Thompson appears to be a very sloppy worker [Hunt 1967 5]

This raises the possibility that "emulsion splashes" were also the cause of the luminosity found in the RCAF samples from the landing site

Hunt learned that Thompson had given some samples to George Dyck, a technician at the Nuclear Medicine Department of the Winnipeg General Hospital On his

own time, Dyck had tested the samples using his department's standard laboratory equipment. One sample was said to have shown a "1.4 MeV peak" and two other weaker peaks. Hunt visited Dyck and was introduced to nuclear medicine specialist Dr. F. Helmuth, who had examined Michalak's burns when he had been brought in following his other medical tests. Hunt also interviewed other nuclear medicine specialists at the hospital. Dr. R. Walton, executive director of the Manitoba Cancer Clinic, was apparently embarrassed to have his organization involved in such tests because "they weren't particularly interested in becoming involved in work of this nature." The stigma of UFO investigation was too much for the medical establishment.

THE METAL

Between July 1967 and May 1968, the landing site was visited by a variety of individuals. One of these was Mr. E. J. Epp, who searched the area for radioactivity as part of a check by the provincial Department of Mines and Natural Resources. They were concerned that Michalak had misdirected the earlier searchers to protect his claims. However, not only did Epp not find any radioactivity, but Michalak didn't file any claims until the fall of 1967.

The lack of radioactivity at the time is important, because on May 19, 1968, Michalak again visited the site with a friend. In his report to the Condon Committee, Roy Craig said Michalak found

. . . massive pieces of radioactive material in a fissure of the rock within the "landing circle." This . . . consisted of two W-shaped bars of metal, each about 4.5 in. long, and several smaller pieces of irregular shape. These items were said to have been found about 2 in. below a layer of lichen in the rock fissure. . . the two fragments each consisted of a central massive metal portion which was not radioactive. One of these was 93% and the other 96% silver. Both contained copper and cadmium, and had a composition similar to that found in commercially available sterling silver or sheet silver. The metal was coated with a tightly-adhering layer of quartz sand, similar to that used as a foundry sand. This also was not radioactive. The radioactivity was contained in a loosely-adhering layer of fine-grained minerals containing uranium. This layer could be removed readily by washing and brushing. The minerals were uranophane and thorium-free pitchblende, characteristically found in vein deposits. [Condon 1969: 323]

In his own teletype to headquarters, Bissky said that when he examined the metal pieces at Michalak's home

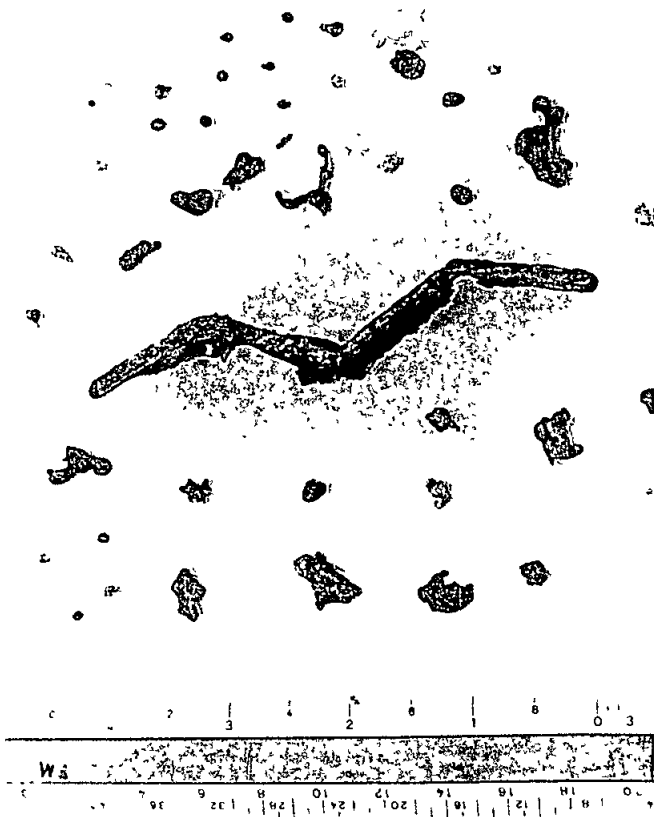


Fig 6 Metal samples retrieved from the crack in the rock

All shown objects were subjected to civilian Geiger counter and majority of readings at same level as that of the dial face of a service wrist watch in same counter [Bissky 1968]

Again, there was speculation that radium was implicated in the radioactivity of the metal. It is ironic that it came from Bissky's own watch.

Bissky also observed that

Larger objects appeared to have been cast for a specific design and Mr M indicated he had considerably more in his possession but would not allow viewing or indicate the exact numbers although he did allow that some were in a reverse "S" design.

He then

attempted knicking one of the larger pieces with a knife and found metal very resistant to knife although there was no normal metallic ring when struck by another metallic object or against a stone. [Bissky 1968]

This last observation is curious, since a four-inch chunk of dense metal would not necessarily ring when struck

Bissky's concern that the matter still was very suspicious was obvious as he concluded

should it be found metal is of unusual raw material, feel that NRC should be brought into picture for expert investigation. It may be that metals are normal large deposits of silver or other composite materials found in this area

And, most importantly

it is interesting that items have been located at exact point of alleged landing of UFO. Should this be a hoax, someone is going to considerable effort to perpetrate same [Bissky 1968]

An understatement, indeed!

A number of institutions performed analyses on the metal pieces. Biospace Associates apparently had some samples tested through Colorado State University. They noted that

This particular UFOlogy is made of silver, with no metallic impurities detectable by the x-ray fluorescence analysis [Kachur 1968]

In a note from the UFO Research Institute, located in Pittsburgh, Dr. J. Roesner reported that

The gamma spectra were complex, 15 distinct energies ranging from 0.11 MeV to 2.57 MeV could be resolved. The three major contributors to the total gamma radioactivity had energies of 0.61 MeV, 1.10 MeV and 1.53 MeV and decayed with half-lives of ~14 days, 8 days and 21 days, respectively. A semiquantitative chemical analysis showed that 95 percent of the specimen is silver. The amount of copper in the specimen was determined to be 0.5 percent. The energies and half-lives of the gamma rays emitted by the specimen do not agree with the expected decay of silver activation products formed in an (n, γ) reaction on natural silver [Weitzel 1968]

In his report to the Condon Committee, Craig quoted the conclusion of R J Traill, head of the mineralogy branch of the National Research Council of Canada, who reviewed the WNRE findings

I would interpret the specimen as pieces of thin sheet silver that have been twisted, crumpled, partly melted and dropped into or otherwise placed in contact with nearly pure quartz sand while still hot They have subsequently been covered with loosely adhering radioactive material which consists of crushed pitchblende ore, much altered to uranophane and containing associated hematite [Traill 1968 2]

Craig further noted

In view of the thoroughness of earlier searches of the site for radioactive material, it is improbable that the particles discovered a year later would have been missed had they been present when the earlier searches were made [Condon 1969 323]

However, CAPRO insisted otherwise

The fact is that there is overwhelming evidence that the metal was there, at least since July 1967 When the metal was located, and since it was taken from the middle of the rock, we examined the soil samples removed from the sight [sic] in July 1967 These samples also contained tiny fragments of the same metal and no doubt the samples taken by the authorities contain pieces as well [CAPRO 1969 6]

Brian Cannon, a civilian investigator for CAPRO, was rightly concerned that the metal samples seemed to undermine the credibility of the case It looked as if the metal bars were unrelated to Michalak's experience To check this, CAPRO had the metal bars tested for the presence of radium According to their report

Analyses confirmed the presence of Radium 226, the same source as was found in the soil specimens The luminous watch dial paint theory dulled considerably [Cannon 1969c]

This latter point is particularly disturbing Could experienced nuclear technicians have made such a mistake? The matter becomes more curious when one considers the results of reanalyses by the Ufology Research of Manitoba (UFOROM) during 1977 to 1983 Soil samples allegedly from the Falcon Lake site were provided by a former CAPRO representative and tested for UFOROM at the University of Manitoba The samples showed natural uranium activity but no radium signatures This suggested that earlier indications of the presence of radium were in error

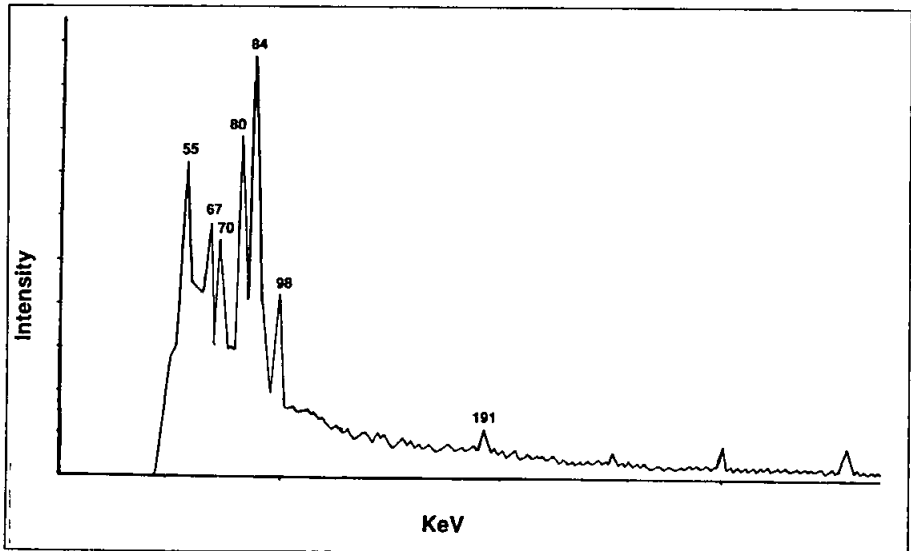


Fig 7 Results of a 1980 analysis of soil samples from the Michalak site. The samples were obtained in 1967. The graph shows identified peaks of radioactivity that can be shown to be indicative of natural uranium.

In an internal Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment memorandum, lab analyst J.D. Chien reported on the analyses of "chared [sic] fabric," native silver, mineral fragments, twig fragments and jack pine needles. He wrote that

The gamma spectra showed an abnormally large 190 KeV photopeak which was thought to be due to enrichment of U 235. However, chemical extraction for uranium of the 100 mesh sample and subsequent mass spectrometric analysis indicated the samples containing uranium were of natural U 235 content. Experiments are being continued to identify the cause of the large 190 KeV photopeak. [Chien 1968]

A further analysis of a soil sample was done in 1994 by UFOROM associate Greg Kennedy of Montreal. Gamma-ray spectroscopy found four radionuclides: U235, Pb214, Bi214 and Cs137. The cesium was probably due to fallout from nuclear weapons tests. Again, no enriched uranium was found, and no metal particles. The soil was simply naturally high in uranium, a typical finding in the Whiteshell region.

The original soil samples retrieved from the site contained only natural radioactivity. However, radium 226 was detected by some investigators. It is not clear whether or not this was an error. The metal samples, on the other hand, are definitely mysterious and do not appear natural. To solve the puzzle, it would be most useful to obtain a small metal sample for reanalysis.

SITE INVESTIGATION

The most scientific report on the case was published by the infamous Condon Committee Dr Roy Craig and Mary Lou Armstrong of the University of Colorado both visited Michalak in June 1967 Accompanying them was John Fried of *Life* magazine, which wanted to do a feature on the incident Unfortunately, when Michalak tried to lead them to the site on June 4th, he was unsuccessful As he explained

Nature changes quickly at that time of the year and the forest was very much different . . . than it had been when I was there before The same thing happened later when the members of the RCAF and the RCMP went with me to search for the spot

We even used a helicopter, but it was no use It seemed as if the place had disappeared from the face of the earth [Michalak 1967 29–30]

Michalak noted that the investigators were “disenchanted” with his inability to find the site Who could blame them? Their first visit was only two weeks after the incident, and already the story had a serious flaw (It is probably because of this that the case was not regarded very highly by the Condon Committee and the USAF Indeed, if *Life* magazine had found the site, the story would have attracted much more attention and might have been more carefully documented)

Access to Information requests by several ufologists (including this writer) have uncovered documents which provide more insight into the incident but also raise many more questions In some cases, there are outright contradictions between civilian and government or military records of the investigations

The official RCAF report is undated but is thought to have been submitted in mid-June 1967 by Squadron Leader Paul Bissky Bissky noted he first led a search party to Falcon Lake on May 25, but could not find the site On May 30, he visited Michalak to see if he felt well enough to accompany an investigation team Michalak declined, but he drew a sketch of the area, described the site in detail and identified the likely area on an aerial photograph On May 31, four RCMP, two RCAF and one other set of investigators in an H112 helicopter searched for the site, with no success

In his report, Bissky wrote

The RCMP returned to Winnipeg that evening and persuaded Mr Michalak to accompany them to Falcon Lake the next day Thinking he may be able to quickly locate the site from the air, Mr Michalak was taken over the area by helicopter but he found no recognizable features He stated he could probably do better on the ground The search then proceeded with him leading the ground party, with the helicopter monitoring the proceedings from the air With the aid of RCMP

portable radios, an air/ground link was possible and this greatly assisted in directing the ground party to the most likely-looking areas as described by Mr Michalak. Following a frustrating afternoon and evening search, Mr Michalak insisted the ground party had been very very close to the sought-after location as he recognized several physical features and areas where he had chipped rocks during his last prospecting visit [RCAF 1967a 2]

It should be remembered that this was a joint investigation by military and police officers, armed with sophisticated rescue and detection equipment. Their search on June 2 was also unsuccessful.

The RCAF team did not return to the area until July 28, when they had convinced Michalak to lead them to the site that he and Gerald Hart had found on June 25. In his supplemental report, dated September 1, 1967, Bissky wrote

Following an informal report from the RCMP to the effect that the samples submitted to CFHQ for analysis had proven to contain considerable radioactivity, and that a representative from the Dept of National Health and Welfare was being sent out to investigate further, contact was made with all those concerned and a decision was made to

- a Interrogate [sic] Mr Michalak again with the view to ascertaining the possibilities of his home and himself being contaminated by the materials which he brought out as samples, and
- b Investigate the alleged landing site of the object, since Mr Michalak had now been to the sight [sic] twice since his initial encounter [Author's note with Hart and Thompson]

Although Mr Michalak had previously been most uncooperative regarding taking either the military or RCMP into the site, once the possible gravity and implications were made clear to him, he volunteered to lead a party into the area [RCAF 1967b 2]

In other words, it was Bissky's opinion that Michalak did not want to take the officials to the site until they convinced him that radioactive contamination was a serious possibility. Michalak's distrust of officials and hesitancy was noted in Bissky's earlier report as well.

When asked to provide the location of the site, Mr Michalak objected very strongly on the basis that during his 25 June hunt he had in fact located what he had searched for originally and until such time as he could stake his claim, he had no intention of having anyone go near this area. It was pointed out to him that there was no intention of jumping his claim and that it was in the interest of the Canadian Public that he show the site to S/L Bissky. Mr Michalak stated that no matter what

anyone thought of him, he would not cooperate until his claim was filed. It turns out, however, that he now has to share his claim with his new-found partner, Mr Hart, whom he had never met before. This was particularly surprising since he was very noticeably suspicious of the RCMP during the visit, so much so that he did not invite the RCMP into the basement to examine some [of] the latest samples brought back from the latest "hot find" [RCAF 1967a Addendum]

However, when they finally did convince Michalak to lead them to the site on July 28, they were baffled by its appearance and location

Mr Michalak successfully led the party to the sight [sic], in approximately 45 minutes going through considerable heavy bush, brush and undergrowth. The site was within 50 yards from where the ground party had searched on 1 June 67, but was not visible at that time because of the heavy bush located between the two areas [RCAF 1967b 2]

In other words, there was a reasonable explanation why the site had not been found by earlier searchers. This seemed to quell some doubts based solely on the inability to locate the site. They found

the outline of an approximate 15 foot diameter circle on the rock surface where the moss and earth covering has been cleared to the rock surface by a force such as made by air at very high velocity [RCAF 1967b 2]

The investigators took samples of the dirt, rock and vegetation and also examined trees within a few yards of the circle. This latter point was because there was some concern that the alleged size of the UFO (35 to 40 feet in diameter) would infringe upon several trees and saplings. There was no indication of burns or other "disturbances." This in itself was curious, since Michalak said he brushed against the craft, burning his glove. It seems logical that, at the very least, some leaves or limbs would have been seared or broken.

Considering the size of the alleged object (35-40 ft across), it is highly unlikely that it could have made a descent into and ascent from the area searched without having made contact with some of the surrounding trees. Even if it was not completely heated on the surface, there should have been some evidence of having brushed a tree or some bark removed. Yet there was no indication at all [RCAF 1967b 3]

One possible explanation is that the burned leaves fell and decayed during the two months since the event. None of the investigators were plant pathologists, so some

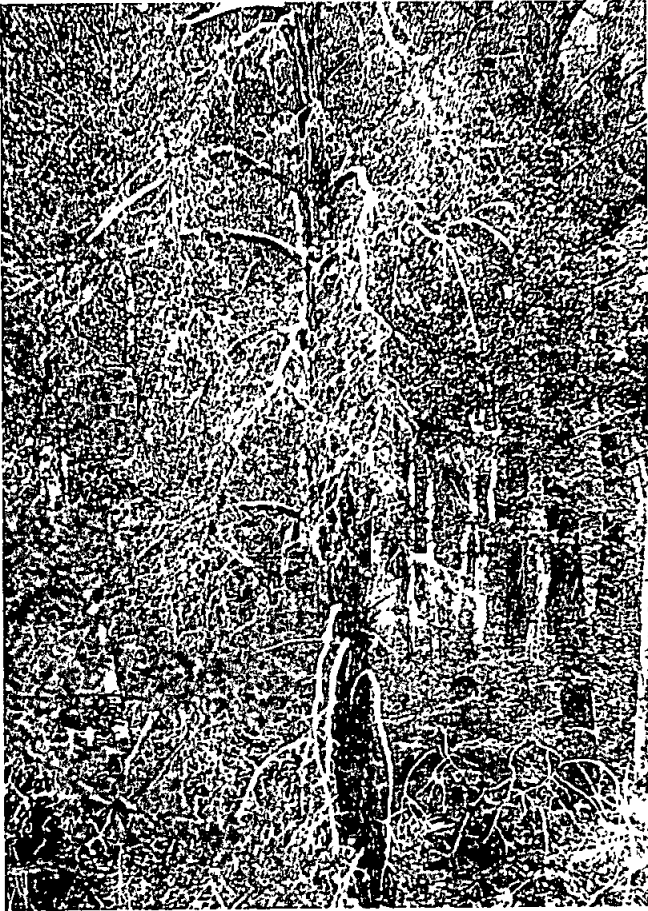


Fig 8 A tree next to the site, showing what was thought to be signs of "radiation" or "burning" caused by the landing and takeoff of the craft Photo was taken in 1967

evidence might have escaped them. However, some investigators (and Michalak) insist that some trees were damaged and the evidence ignored. This is borne out by the following description of the site in the *CAPRO Bulletin*:

The clearing consists of three main outcroppings of rock covered with the usual covering of lichens and moss. One of these outcroppings, the one over which the object hovered, was pitted extensively and had slight radioactivity. The lichen and moss that covered the other rocks in the group was blown clear and was heaped in a ring around the edges of the rock over which the object was said to have hovered.

A small tree which was growing through a crack in the rock had been bent and broken at the base and now lay on its side. The leaves of this tree discoloured in the following manner: on each leaf there was a round circle of brown within which was an area of red in the centre of which there was a hole. This sample was confiscated by the investigator sent by the National Research Council [Cannon 1968: 4].

As this tree was not mentioned in the official report, this issue has not yet been resolved.

But Craig had noted that there were no signs of any disturbances on the trees or other flora. When Michalak visited the site again in the fall of 1967, he found ample evidence that something had occurred there.

On September 30th I returned to the place where the craft had landed—to see if there were any other changes. I could not believe what I saw.

The leaves in the area looked as if they had been sprayed with some killing chemical. All were withered and dead. No vegetation grew within a 50 foot radius of the landing site. The area where the craft had touched down was still visible. [Michalak 1967: 36].

If someone had tried to make the site look “good,” the embellishment of a circle of affected vegetation would certainly have been an excellent idea.

What didn’t escape the investigators was the complete absence of physical evidence besides the ring of debris.

...the complete removal of all evidence from the site makes it highly suspect that it was never there. One would have thought that some shreds or burned shreds or burned shirt particles would have remained, even after the two months elapsed time. [RCAF 1967b: 4].

Hart and Michalak appeared to have taken confirmatory evidence that might have bolstered the credibility of the story. However, had “burned shirt particles” been found, they would likely have been thought to be suspicious as well, perhaps planted by someone to support the case. One can ask whether or not any evidence would have been considered bonafide, given Bissky’s personal conviction that the case was a hoax.

GOVERNMENT INTEREST

The Canadian government seemed to refuse access to information about the Falcon Lake incident when a question was raised in the House of Commons in 1967. On June 29, 1967, it was reported that a member of parliament, Edward Schreyer, asked about UFO investigations, specifically with regard to the Michalak case. The

Speaker of the House immediately "cut off the subject without government reply" On November 6, 1967, Defence Minister Leo Cadieux stated

it is not the intention of the Department of National Defence to make public the report of the alleged sighting [House of Commons 1967]

This was in response to requests by several cabinet members to obtain information on the incident On November 11, 1967, Schreyer formally placed a written question on the Commons order paper seeking information on UFOs However, the question did not solicit a useful response

On October 14, 1968, House Leader Donald MacDonald again refused an MP, this time Barry Mather, access to reports on the Michalak case However, on February 6, 1969, Mather was given permission by a member of the Privy Council to examine their file on UFOs "from which a few pages have simply been removed" It was reported that outright release of the file "would not be in the public interest," and could create a dangerous precedent that would not "contribute to the good administration of the country's business" (House of Commons 1969)

Bondarchuk (1979) reported that "portions of the complete government report are available for public scrutiny" at the National Research Council in Ottawa However, "noticeably missing are the RCMP study of the burned items, as well as the government's final conclusion, if indeed one exists"

POSSIBLE CORROBORATIVE REPORTS

When Michalak's experience was covered by the local media, many people reported their own UFO sightings from around the same time and area On May 19, 1967, residents of Lockport, near Winnipeg, reported a UFO with a "glowing ring of heat" moving at "indescribable speed" On May 21 three people watched a "round reddish glowing object at treetop level" from their cottage at Eleanor Lake in the Whiteshell They reported it to the RCMP on May 23, after Michalak's story was published Two men watched a "large, cigar-shaped object travel across the horizon at a tremendous speed" on May 25 That same night, a large, orange, egg-shaped object was seen near Souris, and two other witnesses saw "two very brilliant stars in close proximity to each other" over Winnipeg (All cases in UFOROM files)

In 1978, a man contacted UFOROM with information about his encounter at West Hawk Lake one night in May 1967 Although he could not recall the exact date, he claimed it had occurred "the same time as Michalak" He and a companion were walking from West Hawk Lake to Caddy Lake along a highway They had walked three of the four miles to their destination when his companion stopped to tie his shoelace The man, looking straight ahead, was startled to see a large, disc-shaped object glide silently into view above the trees and move across the highway It flew

over the trees on the other side of the highway and was lost to sight. Needless to say, the man's companion did not look up in time to see the object. The man's detailed sketch of the object had some resemblance to the Michalak's drawings, with some discrepancies.

In July 1992, a woman called UFOFORUM with information that she and her daughter had observed a UFO as they were traveling home from Falcon Lake along the Trans-Canada Highway the same weekend as the Michalak case. Around 4:00 p.m., they had left their cottage at Star Lake and were heading west when they saw a "perfect flying saucer" over the trees on the north side of the road. It was hat-shaped, with windows on its upper surface which were giving off "pinkish-mauve" light. The rest of the object was silver, and it appeared to be spinning counterclockwise. Her daughter sketched the object, and as they watched, it "disappeared into thin air." Independent sketches of the object by both witnesses agree in detail and seem to show a craft similar to that encountered by Michalak.

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

In 1989, a producer of the NBC program *Unsolved Mysteries* contacted the Michalaks and other individuals (including the author) for information relating to the Falcon Lake case. In June 1992, Mr. and Mrs. Michalak, their son Stan and the author were flown by NBC to a remote set in South Dakota for a re-creation of Michalak's UFO encounter.

The segment aired on November 4, 1992. On the air date, 22 calls were received by UFOFORUM and 20 were received by the NBC operators in California. None of the local calls provided any information directly relating to the Falcon Lake case, but seven callers reported their own UFO experiences. One caller reported seeing a bright orange light over Winnipeg "the same night as Michalak did."

The next day, November 5, 1992, the author was interviewed on a radio talk show devoted to the case. Only one caller provided any relevant information. This woman claimed that she was a former employee at the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment at the time of the incident. She said that her supervisors candidly noted that the Falcon Lake site was "very radioactive."

The *Unsolved Mysteries* segment was rerun on March 17, 1993, with similar results. No new solid leads were received.

CONCLUSIONS

In the report of the United States government-sponsored UFO project, Michalak's experience was described as "unknown," meaning there was no explanation. Their concluding remarks were impressive.

if [Michalak's UFO encounter] were physically real, it would show the existence of alien flying vehicles in our environment [Condon 1969 323]

What really happened at Falcon Lake? There is no question that some level of radiation was found at the site where Michalak said he had his experience. As well, he did exhibit some very unusual ailments, including reported weight loss, peculiar burn marks on his chest and stomach, charred hair, an odd rash and recurrent dizziness. Some UFO investigators have said he had met alien beings; some say he stumbled upon a secret government or military craft. Skeptics have proposed the only other explanation that would explain many of the facts—a hoax.

The only published comment by a skeptic about the incident was that by Donald Menzel and Ernest Taves, who dismissed the case by noting

First, the project investigator and the prospector together were unable to locate the area of the happening. Second, the "illness" appeared to have been caused by nothing more exotic than insect bites. And third, the project's attempts to establish the reality event revealed "many inconsistencies and incongruities." [Therefore] we regard the case as a badly executed hoax [Menzel and Taves 1977: 104]

Since the RCAF conceded that the site was difficult to find and since Michalak's illness was substantially more than insect bites, this dismissal appears somewhat abrupt. And, while there are certainly many incongruities in the case, these tend to heighten the mystery and not force dismissal by themselves. Even if the case was a hoax, it is not clear as to who might have been responsible, what was the motive, or the gain. In fact, even Bissky conceded the hoax was of a high caliber. If it was a hoax, its execution was quite elaborate, as it fooled several different levels of investigation, and there are still many unanswered questions today.

If the incident is a hoax, there are several possibilities for the identity of the perpetrator. If Stefan Michalak alone was the hoaxer, he would have needed many resources in addition to the stamina to stick to his story under intense questioning for more than 25 years.

The silver pieces found at the site are definitely suspicious. The hoaxer would have needed to have visited the site at least once prior to the placement of the items in order to locate a suitable position to hide them. The hoaxer would also have had to have had access to pitchblende ore and a way to cast the silver bars in order to give the appearance of "found" objects. (For its re-creation of the incident, *Unsolved Mysteries* used an amalgam of solder and other materials to make convincing replicas of the metal pieces.) In addition, the hoaxer would have known that someone with a Geiger counter would return to the site so that the items could be discovered. Since the metal bars were not discovered after a thorough search of the area by the official investigators in 1967, the hoaxer had several months to prepare the site.

for discovery by Michalak in 1968. During this period, dozens of persons likely had access to the site.

Other inconsistencies make the story problematic. It is interesting that the location of the encounter was within view of a forest ranger tower. Craig reports that the forest ranger on duty at the time of the incident did not observe either the landing or flight of the UFOs, or the smoke which resulted from the ignition of vegetation. This would seem to flaw Michalak's story effectively, although the individual in the tower might not have been looking in the direction of the site constantly. But since the object was landed for at least 45 minutes, and if it gleamed in the sun or emitted an "intense purple light" (as it was said to have done), it is puzzling as to why the individual in the tower did not see it.

Another problem that the Condon report noted was the direction in which the object departed. This direction was 255 degrees, which would have the object pass within a mile of the local golf course. No objects were reported by anyone from the golf course, although if the speed of the UFO had been great, this is not necessarily unusual. Craig noted that a northward-opening gap in the trees was inconsistent with the 255 degree bearing. However, Michalak clearly stated that the object rose vertically before departing.

If Michalak made the story up, why would he have gone to so much trouble to make it appear authentic? The Mayo Clinic psychiatric report concluded that Michalak was not the type of person to fabricate stories of this nature. If he had "fallen on a barbecue" (suggested by one skeptic) and burned himself while partying at Falcon Lake, why would it be necessary to claim it was the result of a UFO encounter? If he wanted to make it look good, would he not have made sure the site was found easily, especially since *Life* magazine was going to give the story publicity? A hoaxer of this caliber would certainly have wanted that kind of attention.

Another possibility is that Michalak had a real encounter with something, but someone else decided to improve the evidence so that the case seemed better. Given the number of people involved in both the military and civilian investigations, this is much more likely than a solo hoax attempt on Michalak's part. The problem is in the elimination of suspects.

Finally, a note should be made about the use of hypnosis in the investigation of the case. CAPRO investigators located two clinicians who used hypnosis in their practices. In one of the earliest examples of hypnosis employed in ufology, Michalak underwent at least one hypnosis session in the late 1960s. Recently, a tape recording of a session was made available for study. Unfortunately, little information that Michalak had not already recalled consciously was uncovered during the session. (The issue is complicated by the fact that one of the hypnotists now denies that Michalak ever underwent hypnosis, yet the tape recording clearly indicates such a session took place.)

If we assume that Michalak's story is truthful, then we have a solid report of a landed UFO, complete with physical and physiological effects. Personal interviews with the Michalaks have shown them to be sincere people. They are intelligent,

levelheaded individuals, and well-read on many subjects. Their annoyance at their notoriety is apparent, and their defensiveness at further proddings show that they have been subjected to severe ridicule and criticism since the incident first hit the media in 1967.

It is likely that much more information about the case is still in various files—lost, hidden or otherwise yet unavailable to researchers piecing together the puzzle of that afternoon in 1967. It is hoped that anyone reading this report will reexamine their files and perhaps make researchers with UFOROM, CUFOs or other bodies aware of the relevant material.

Investigations are continuing. If officials were convinced Michalak was a hoaxer, why was he not prosecuted for public mischief? There was definitely evidence towards this end. It certainly would have been an interesting court case, arguing about the existence of UFOs. It is even possible that Michalak would have won.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has proven very challenging to recover useful documents and piece together the Falcon Lake investigations. I would like to thank the following people for their kind cooperation and assistance in the preparation of this article: Roy Bauer, George Eberhart, Greg Kennedy, Maria Michalak, Stanley Michalak, Stefan Michalak, Mark Rodeghier, Berthold Schwarz, Vladimir Simosko, and Michael Swords.

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