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UFOs Over Topanga Canyon: Eyewitness Accounts of the California Sightings

Preston Dennett
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Turn on the television set on any given night and chances are there will be at least one show about the paranormal, more if cable is available. By now it is no surprise that there are more people in the U.S. that believe in UFOs than vote.

UFO sightings are not uncommon in the U.S. and there is a healthy growth industry in related media. The field has developed its own jargon, research methods and inside logic, as well as varying degrees of serious or semi-serious investigation of these unidentified flying object sightings. This book is about a series of sightings in the Topanga Canyon area west of Los Angeles, which occurred in the early 1990s, and it is implied, continue today.

Topanga is described, in the lingo of the UFOlogist as a “flap area,” that is, a place where an unusually high incidence of sightings, near-contacts and supposed-contacts between UFOs and humans have occurred. One of the most spectacular flap areas documented occurred in Exeter, New Hampshire in the late 1960s. This book is dedicated to documenting stories from Topanga and in a rather gentle way, to validate these stories. The stories themselves start to feel very similar in nature: hovering lights that move faster than aircraft, etc. The observers seem somewhat embarrassed by their own stories, but seem to be fairly normal people for the most part. Perhaps predictably there is a tie-in with New Age mysticism, an observation that Topanga is a Native American holy site and, a bit stranger, that the Northridge quake was caused by UFOs.

The book does an excellent job of introducing the jargon, and is surprisingly free from hardcore UFO missionary zeal. The author at one point even explores the possibility that these sightings are a social phenomenon. Noticed, if one is familiar with this literature, will be the regular cast of characters, the government cover-up, the explanations such as confusing the sighting of the planet Venus for a space craft, etc. Taken as a sincere document the reader may be surprised by the normalcy of it all. After all, a UFO is simply an unidentified phenomenon, not necessarily little green men.

PETER TERRY (April 15, 1999)

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