

The I-5 Flying Triangle

An Oregon MUFON Case Study

by

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Abstract

Keywords: Triangle—Maneuvering—Hovering—Bright lights

Description	Two motorists in separate vehicles and unknown to each other apparently observed the same triangular object flying low and slow over I-5.
Witnesses	Two: Betty Wilson (CMS case 18734) and James Carney (CMS case 20928). (Names are pseudonyms.)
Time and Date	August 12, 2009, at 8:15 - 8:30 PM.
Place	On Interstate 5, northbound between Brooks, OR, and Woodburn, OR.
Weather	Scattered clouds; wind from the west at 2 mph with gusts to 10 mph; humidity 73%; temperature about 68° F.
Duration	Betty Wilson's observation: 30 to 60 seconds; James Carney's observation: about 7 minutes.

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INTRODUCTION

In this incident, two independent witnesses reported a very similar object within 15 minutes and within eight miles. Neither witness knew about the other, but both were certain that someone else must have seen what each of them saw due to the size of the brightly lit object and its proximity to a busy interstate highway.

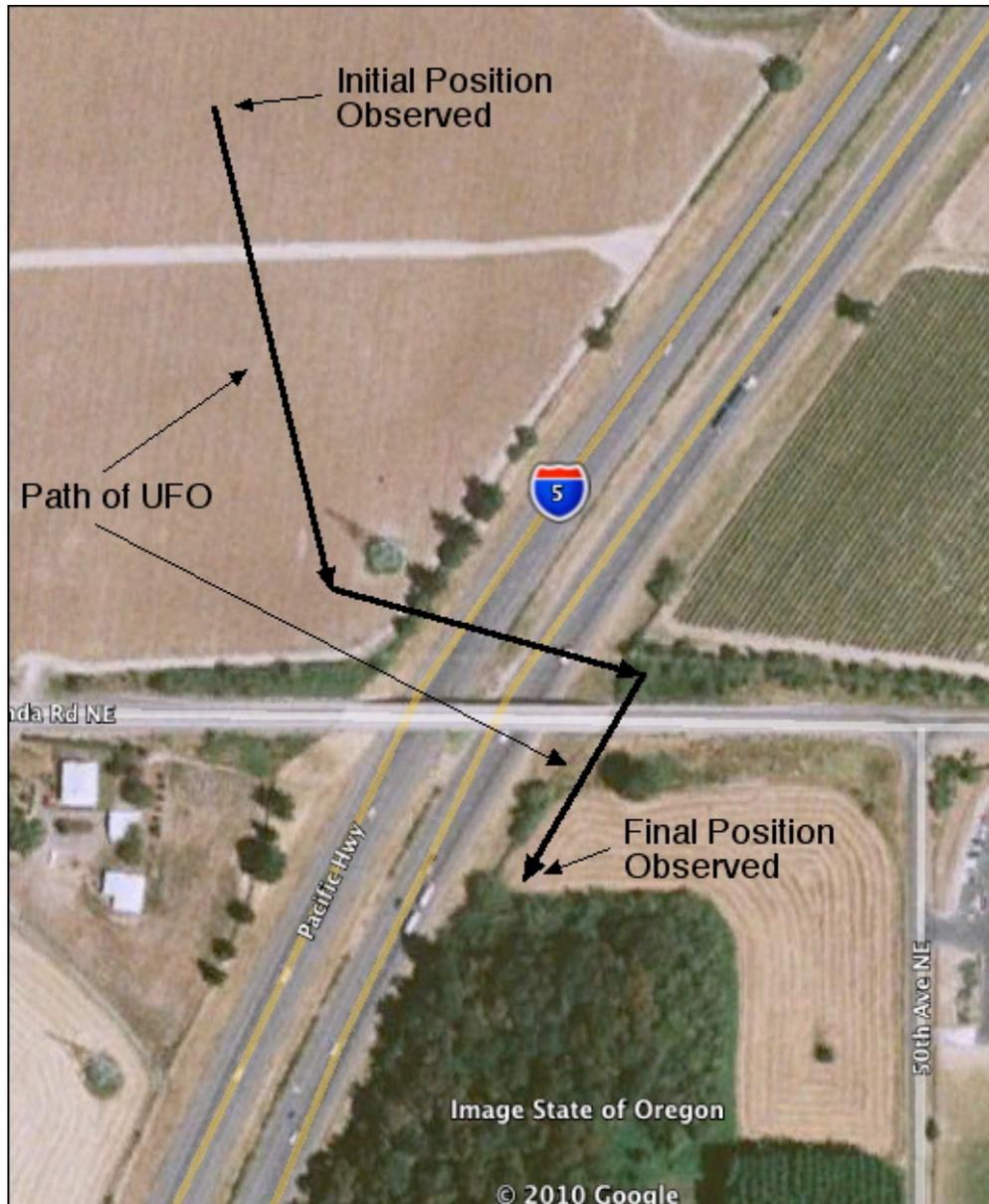
This case is also valuable since the witnesses appeared to have seen the same thing from significantly different vantage points. Since both witnesses were driving on Oregon's I-5 Interstate Highway, no real cross-checking of positions and angles of observations can be done with the information given; however, the basic information given by each witness confirms the other's description very well.

I would like to thank both Betty Wilson (pseudonym) and James Carney (pseudonym) for cooperating in such a forthright and willing manner throughout the course of the investigation. So often, what separates an IFO from a UFO is a witness's willingness to continue to answer an investigator's questions after the initial interview. As the investigator tries to figure out just what a witness has seen, new questions pop up along the way and both witnesses stayed with the investigation to answer those later questions. I want to thank James Carney especially for taking the time to do fine illustrations of his experience, which appear in this report.

EVENT DESCRIPTION

Betty Wilson (pseudonym), a 19 year old woman, was driving northbound on I-5 near the Woodburn exit on August 12, 2009, at about 8:15 PM when she noticed a dark object hovering in the sky to her left. The object had three bright lights in the middle of the bottom. As it moved from northwest to southeast across the highway at an estimated altitude of 100 to 120 feet, she saw that it appeared to be a black triangular object about 200 feet long. No sound was reported. She pulled over to the side of the highway to take a better look, but by the time she was able to look for it, the object was gone from her view.

On the same evening, several miles further south, James Carney (pseudonym), a 27 year old man, noticed a bright light at about 8:30 PM above the Pilot Fueling Station truck stop on the west side of I-5, at the Brooklake Rd. exit near the town of Brooks. He watch the object as he continued to drive northbound and observed that it approached to within an estimated distance of 300 feet from him as it crossed over I-5 at an estimated altitude of 60 to 80 feet. See *Figure 1, Carney's Drawing of Path of UFO*.



Source: James Carney, Keith Rowell, Google Maps

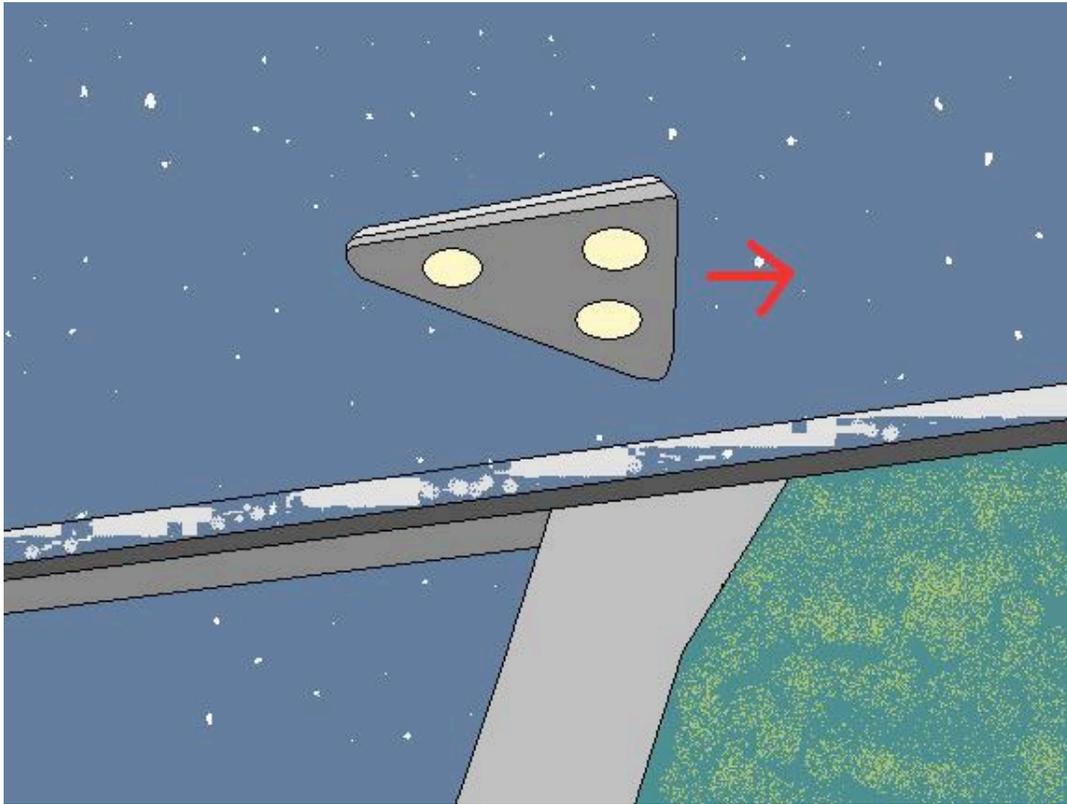
Figure 1. Carney's Drawing of Path of UFO.

James Carney was driving northbound on I-5 coming up I-5 from the bottom of the map when he observed the UFO at the initial position as it followed the approximate path shown. He last saw the UFO about the final position, which was approximately where his car was on the highway at the time. He got a very close look at the UFO.

At this point, he could see that there were three bright white lights in a triangle pattern on the bottom of the triangular object with a single, smaller red light somewhere on the bottom. He continued to watch as it moved over near the NORPAC Foods cannery on the east side of I-5 and hovered over some fields. At first James thought the object might be a helicopter, but from the side, the body appeared more like a wingless jet plane, and he could not see any sort of propeller or rotor on the object. See *Figure 2, Carney's Drawing of the UFO.*

James reported that at the closest approach, as the object descended over the fields to his right, its apparent size was about a foot at arm's length. At even half this estimated angular size of over 20

degrees of arc, it appears he had a very close view. This tends to support his claim that he saw an anomalous airborne object without wings, tail fins, propellers or rotors.



Source: James Carney

Figure 2. Carney's Drawing of the UFO.

James Carney drew this illustration to show what he saw. Note the triangular shape and three prominent lights underneath the object. The starry sky is shown above and the red arrow shows the direction of travel as the UFO zigzagged over I-5 as he drove north along the highway.

Two Views of the Same Object?

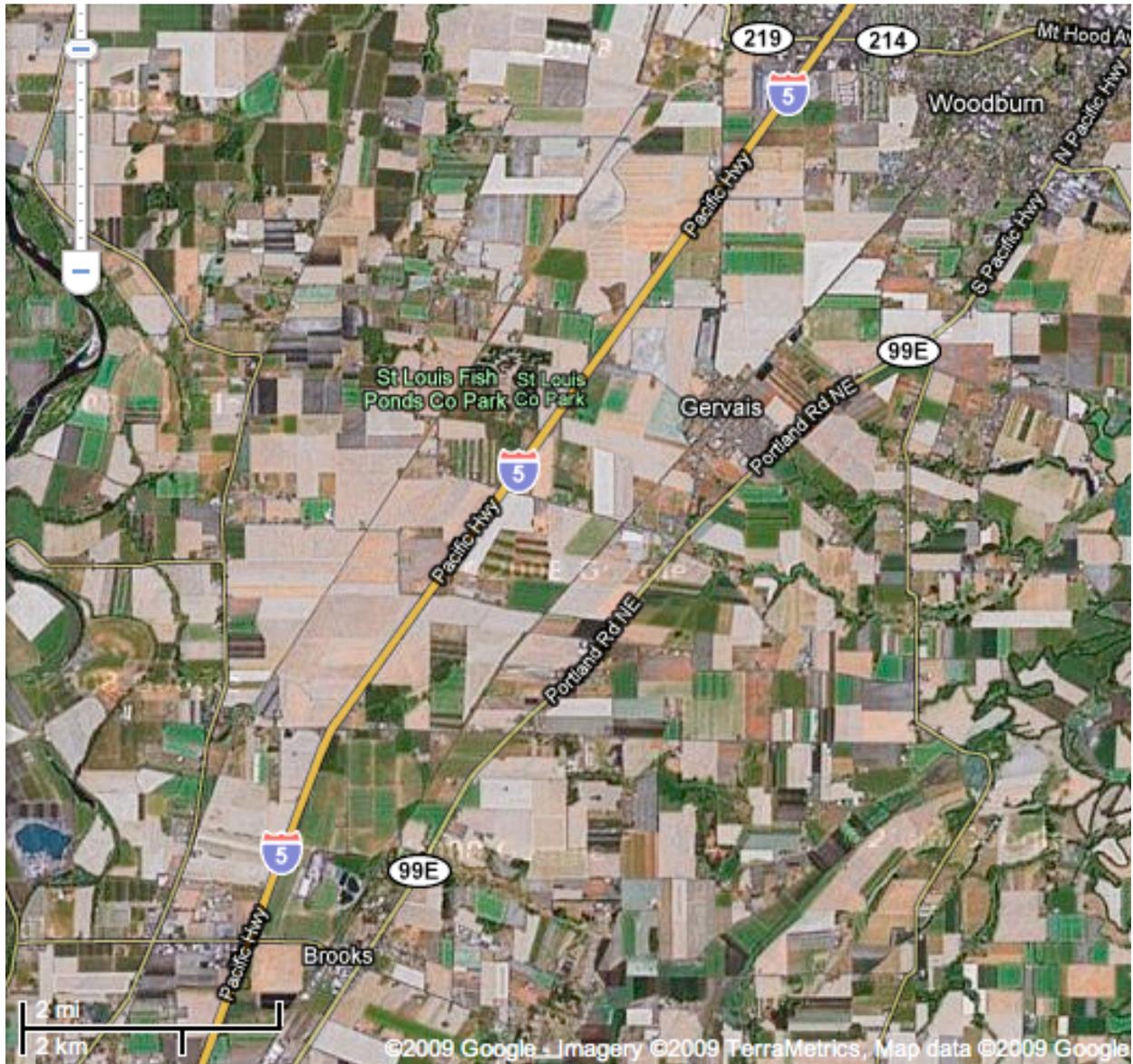
Betty reported seeing a large triangular object with three bright lights on the bottom at 8:15 PM. She estimated that the object travelled about 100 to 120 feet above ground level.

Meanwhile, James reported seeing a triangular object with three bright white lights in a triangular pattern on the bottom at about 8:30 PM about eight miles south of where Betty saw a very similar object. He estimated the object's altitude to be 90 to 110 feet at one point, but then 60 to 80 feet when it was closer to him.

Is it possible to determine if the two independent witnesses observed the same object?

ENVIRONMENT

The sighting vicinity is a rural agricultural and industrial area along the busiest interstate highway in Oregon, the Interstate I-5 Highway. Brooks, Oregon, is the location of a large food packing plant, NORPAC Foods, Inc. At the Woodburn exit, there is a large shopping complex of outlet stores known as the Woodburn Outlet Mall. See *Figure 3, Map of Sighting Area*.



Source: Google Maps

Figure 3. Map of Sighting Area.

Betty Wilson was driving northbound on I-5 near Woodburn in the upper right area of this map. James Carney was driving northbound on I-5 near Brooks in the lower left corner of this map.

EVIDENCE

The evidence in this case consists of the following:

- The MUFON CMS (Case Management System) reports made by Betty Wilson and James Carney.
- The testimony from a telephone interview with Betty Wilson.
- Several email exchanges and a telephone interview with James Carney.
- Geographic information obtained from Google Maps.

Both witnesses cooperated fully with my investigation, and I have no reason to doubt their testimony. I thank these witnesses for taking their valuable time to deal with a MUFON investigator.

The Investigation

On December 12, 2009, I attempted to telephone each of the witnesses. I left voicemail messages for both of them. I also sent an email to each of the witnesses requesting more information.

I received a prompt reply from James Carney in which he answered most of my questions. I followed up with two more emails and received good responses to both.

On December 19, I again telephoned Betty Wilson, and this time I spoke with her for about 20 minutes. She answered all of my questions regarding some missing details in her initial report.

Both witnesses seemed sincere and forthcoming with the information I requested to the best of their knowledge and ability. Both witnesses stated that they have 20/20 vision.

Neither witness has behaved in a deceptive manner. James expressed reluctance to discuss the case with anyone else because of his concern that they would doubt his sanity. This is not the sentiment of a person trying to perpetrate a hoax.

ANALYSIS

Because the witnesses were driving on I-5 at the time of their sightings, their observations were limited somewhat. Also, certain types of data are not available in this case because the witnesses didn't have stable positions from which to locate the observed object in relation to fixed landmarks. Even so, James described the object he saw as having crossed over I-5 above the Waconda Road overpass near Mile Marker 265, which does give us a fairly good location for one event within the span of his sighting.

In this case, the similarity in the appearance of the object reported by each witness is close enough to postulate that they probably both observed the same object. The witnesses agree that the object had three large, bright lights on the bottom in a triangular pattern. They also agree that the object traveled in the range of 60 to 120 feet above ground level and that its speed was relatively slow (30 mph or less) as compared to a conventional fixed-wing aircraft, the slowest cruising speed of which is about 90 mph.

Betty's sighting was near Woodburn (Exit 271) at around 8:15 p.m., while James observed a similar object near Brooks (Exit 263) at 8:30 p.m. The distance between these exits is about 8 miles.

Since a vehicle traveling at 60 miles per hour moves about one mile per minute, a vehicle traveling at 30 miles per hour moves about one mile in two minutes; thus an object traveling at 30 miles per hour would travel 8 miles in about 16 minutes.

It seems very likely that Betty and James observed the same object at different points as it traveled southward along I-5. The witnesses agree on the description of the object's appearance and its altitude above ground.

CONCLUSION

Two witnesses independently observed an unidentified aerial vehicle, apparently under intelligent control. As explained below, no alternative explanations seem to fit with the observations of the witnesses.

Identification Candidates

The candidates for identification of the unknown object are as follows:

- **Planets or Moon.** Both witnesses reported an object whose appearance and movement were inconsistent with any planetary object. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Star.** Both witnesses reported an object whose appearance and movement were inconsistent with any star. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Helicopter.** Both witnesses reported that they saw an object that does not appear to be a helicopter. Both witness claim to have 20/20 vision and saw the object closely enough to clearly see that it was not any known type of helicopter. At any altitude of 120 feet or less, the sound of the helicopter would have been unmistakable, yet neither witness reported any such sound. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Airplane.** Both witnesses report very slow airspeeds for an object observed at relatively close range and at altitudes below 150 feet above ground level. Large aircraft with the ability to maintain altitude at airspeeds of 30 mph or less are unknown, except for helicopters and VTOL jet aircraft such as the Harrier. If a Harrier were operating at 100 feet altitude in the vicinity of the witnesses, they would have reported the unmistakable noise of the jet engines. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Blimp.** No triangular blimps are known to exist. If the object were a conventional blimp, one or both of the witnesses would have almost certainly been able to identify it. If any advanced lighter-than-air crafts of triangular shape are being tested by the Department of Defense or any private defense contractors, it would be highly unusual to fly these craft near a very busy major highway. No confirmed reports of DoD aircraft of this type being flown at low level in busy traffic corridors are known to exist. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*

Reports of crashes of secret, experimental DoD craft do surface occasionally such as the F117 Stealth Fighter crash on July 11, 1986, near Bakersfield, CA, and sightings of strange (but identifiable as aircraft) secret DoD craft are occasionally made coming and going from secret DoD bases like Groom Lake, NV, and various MOAs over the Pacific Ocean. However, flights of secret DoD craft are just not undertaken at low altitude over populated areas. In our understanding and experience, flights of genuine UFOs (objects fitting the massively documented history of UFOs starting in the 1940s) are far more common over populated areas than flights of secret DoD craft.

Since the identification candidates fail for the reasons stated, this UFO observation is classified as an unidentified aerial vehicle.