

NASA film CL 862, "Photo Aberrations, Debris, and UFOs" (May 1979)
Scene description by James E. Oberg, production researcher (Nov 23,1979)

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| 1/ | 00:00 | to | 00:13 | The Gemini program in 1964-1966 was the topic of numerous UFO reports in the popular press; NASA's official position was and is that nothing was seen which cannot be accounted for in terms of prosaic phenomena such as spacecraft debris and nearby satellites. |
| 2/ | 00:13 | to | 00:24 | Most of the film shot on manned space flights has not been seen by the public, but this is not due to any classification or cover-up. All NASA film shot in space is open for release. There is so much of it; and the needs of the news media are such, that much of the film was not of interest. Also, much is overexposed or underexposed or in some other way not particularly suitable for publication -- just like with anybody else's vacation movies. |
| 3/ | 00:24 | to | 00:38 | The most widely publicized Gemini UFO occurred on the Gemini-4 flight in June, 1965. Here, co-pilot Ed White (who later was killed in the Apollo fire) looks out through the spacecraft's small, often badly smudged windows. |
| 4/ | 00:38 | to | 01:19 | Viewing the Earth, the astronauts also caught sight of a passing spacecraft which will appear in the upper right of this film. This object was the nearby Titan-2 second stage which had put them into orbit and with which they had conducted rendezvous maneuvers. They saw it repeatedly in the early hours of the flight, although sometimes the sun's glare made it hard to recognize. |
| 5/ | 01:19 | to | 01:23 | This was the first mission on which photography was a major objective; it was three times as long as the previous longest American flight. Camera settings were still experimental, and most film did not turn out well. |
| 6/ | 01:23 | to | 01:41 | This is a stop-action of the Titan-2 stage as it passed by on this occasion, as it followed an orbit which brought it repeatedly close to the Gemini. The next day, while White slept, McDivitt caught a glimpse of a nearby object which he described as "beer can" shaped -- a description which fits the Titan-2. But McDivitt does not believe it was the Titan-2, preferring to believe that it was some other man-made |

satellite passing nearby. The Gemini was not being tracked by radar, although computer predictions were being generated -- so what was near the Gemini at this point is not known. Most observers imagine that McDivitt, his eyes watering badly from a spill of urine, failed to recognize the Titan-2 because it was in an unexpected quadrant of the sky.

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'7/ 01:41 to 01:51 Here, McDivitt looks out the window at another phase of the mission. His attempts to take photos of the object which he glimpsed were unsuccessful, since a careful search of all flight film did not reveal any objects -- but did show that most of the film was badly exposed due to uncertainties in lighting conditions. Accusations that the "real" McDivitt "UFO photographs" are being kept secret are completely false.

8/ 01:51 to 01:59 This sequence has been widely accepted as showing this spurious "McDivitt UFO". What it actually shows, according to McDivitt, was a few seconds test exposure which caught a reflection off part of White's window. It was not an external object. However, immediately after the conclusion of the Gemini-4 flight, under pressure from the press for the alleged photograph, a technician at NASA headquarters searched the entire flight film and, without checking with McDivitt, guessed that this 'tadpole' shape was possibly the scene McDivitt had referred to.

9/ 01:59 to 02:20 Hence this 'tadpole' UFO has been widely published as showing the "UFO", and some researchers have even identified a 'plasma propulsion stream'. One UFO group called it one of the four best UFO photographs ever taken. However, a complete screening of the on-board flight film would have shown that such lights are not uncommon on the film, and that actual views of spacecraft nearby look quite different.

10/ 02:20 to 02:43 Here is an example of typical flight film, underexposed, and showing points of light which could well be called UFOs. As the spacecraft turns to let in more sunlight through the porthole, it becomes obvious that the gleams of light are highlights on the astronaut's spacesuit. The poor quality of most on-board film from Gemini-4 is not appreciated by the advocates of the authenticity of the "tadpole UFO".

11/ 02:43 to 02~58 On the other hand, this is a sequence showing an actual nearby spacecraft, an Agena target vehicle from the Gemini-10 flight. Photographs of such Agena's which show only the docking lights, or which show double window reflections off highlights on the spacecraft, have also been falsely promoted as UFOs by unscrupulous newsmen and UFO enthusiasts.

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12/ 02:58 to 03:15 In this similar view of the Agena, note the presence of the Gemini's nose section, including the recessed rocket engines used for roll control. The sunlight catches the white interior of these nozzles. On a photograph from Gemini-7 (not shown),

these two nozzles glow brightly against the dark nose and against the dark Earth beneath; they are so bright that a hexagonal image is caught by the camera's optical system. The photograph, with the edge of the Gemini nose structure retouched and subdued, has been widely published as showing two UFOs with glowing undersides and a 'forcefield propulsion system.' Such forgeries have been circulating since at least 1970.

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| 13/ | 03:15 | to | 03:20 | The far more spectacular Apollo flights to the moon attracted even more stories about UFOs seen and photographed by astronauts. As in the Gemini program, these stories were also easily explainable but the explanations were never publicized. |
| 14/ | 03:2Q | to | 03:42 | More views of the Saturn-V launching |
| 15/ | 03:42 | to | 03:51 | |
| 16/ | 03:51 | to | 04:13 | Telescopic cameras record the spaceward climb of a moon-bound manned spaceship. Note the shock wave patterns in the exhaust of the rocket. Early in the program, such shock waves returned radar echoes of significant size, leading to claims from uninformed sources that UFOs would chase space rockets into orbit. But the cameras showed only the rocket. |
| 17/ | 04:13 | to | 05:03 | After the rocket was finished firing, the Apollo would turn around and dock with the lunar module inside its 'garage'. The walls of the garage would be jettisoned, and one so-called "SLA panel" is seen tumbling here. Debris and ice particles would be shaken loose and would surround the Apollo in a blizzard ; note also the tumbling strap which flies from lower right to upper center. These are ordinary space sights -- yet photographs of such pieces of debris have been widely published as UFOs. Sometimes all but one of the particles have been airbrushed out of the published photographs. |
| 18/ | 05:03 | to | 05:29 | The spent S-4B booster also drifted along with the moon-bound astronauts, driven by its own momentum. For days, the booster and the four "SLA panels" would be visible at a range of tens or hundreds of miles, until, nearing the moon, the Apollo changed course by means of its on-board rocket engine. The astronauts, particularly on Apollo-11, spent time viewing and discussing the spacecraft debris which was accompanying them. At no time did these flashing lights ever change course or in any way behave differently than ordinary space objects. |

19/ 05:29 to 05:34 The most spectacular space UFOs have been associated with the flight of Apollo-11 in July 1969, the first landing on another world in space. Here, astronauts Armstrong, Collins, and Aldrin perform routine duties on their way out to the moon.
20-24/

05:34 to 07:13 These scenes from Apollo-11's 'magazine F' have been widely acclaimed as showing two UFOs following the spacecraft. The film was actually shot by Aldrin in lunar orbit, by accident, as he was attaching the camera to its bracket in the right hand window of the lunar module the day before the landing. As can be seen by viewing the film in motion, the 'objects' are smears and glares and reflections -- the two most prominent lights are reflections off of a double-curved surface behind the shoulder of the co-pilot, reflections which the astronauts and ground training personnel were quite familiar with. Yet the photographs were taken by a UFO magazine editor, cropped, contrast-enhanced, and retouched to remove extraneous reflections, and were then published as showing UFOs. Some entirely fabricated 'voice transmissions' were added to the hoax to give the aura of authenticity, but these 'transmissions' used jargon and gobbledegook completely different from the terminology employed by real space people. This hoax has been widely accepted as authentic and has appeared in Japanese, French, New Zealand, and Russian UFO publications as well as in leading UFO books and magazines in the United States; it is the source of the front-page story of UFOs and Apollo-11 which appeared in a weekly American tabloid newspaper in the summer of 1979. No effort was made by any users of the story to contact NASA and seek alternate explanations for the totally fallacious claims.

25/ 07:13 to 07:18 Observers have wondered why the Apollo lunar expeditions were obviously not exciting enough for some agencies in the publications industry, who preferred myths to realities -- and deliberately helped create the myths.

26/ 07:18 to 07:48 During the flight of Apollo-11 near the moon, a UFO allegedly flew past their spacecraft. Watch for it in the lower left corner of the window. In fact, it's a particle of ice shot out of one of the control rocket thrusters which is located at that point -- and you will notice a second piece of ice emerging from exactly the same point, right at the end of this sequence.

27-28/ Astronauts working inside the lunar module as it orbits the moon. This was Apollo-12, which is the alleged scene for yet another 'astronaut UFO encounter'

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29/ 08:00 to 08:06 This view is from an automatic camera in the window of the

30/ 08:05 to 08:16 lunar module, watching the Command Module during rendezvous

maneuvers. Watch the lower left -- an object drifts upwards to center top. Such particles drifting off the exterior of the spacecraft, or floating around inside the spacecraft between the camera and the window, are not at all uncommon; yet selected views of such events can and have been widely published as 'UFOs'.

31-32/ Here's a few of another such particle coming by, which was 08:16 to 08:36 large enough for its shape to be clearly discernable: it was a "horse-shoe crab" UFO, perhaps? No, such material was much more prosaic, and was usually ice flaking off the interior of leaking rocket nozzles. This particular view has not been published before, although it and the tens of thousands of photographs on file in Houston can be easily inspected by newsmen and researchers.

- 33/ 08:36 to 08:41 This is a complete view of the lunar module prior to its descent to the surface of the moon.
- 34/ 08:41 to 09:06 Here is a view of some spacecraft approaching the lunar module; although it is not clear what the object is at first, what is apparent is that hand-held shots of real external objects will follow this bouncy pattern -- a pattern which other 'alleged UFO movies' do not at all follow. And in this case, as the object nears, you can see what it is: the command module which the astronauts are about to safely dock with.
- 35/ 09:06 to 09:23 Some people have claimed that the moonwalks were staged in Nevada somewhere. This shot of the lunar rover in action shows gravity dynamics which cannot be duplicated on Earth. More clearly, look at the way the lunar soil falls back to the ground when it is kicked up by the wheels -- there is no dust cloud, no swirling air-carried puff of smoke: these shots had to have been made in a vacuum.

36-37/

- 09:23 to 09:41 The end of a successful lunar expedition, as the bizarre lunar module spacecraft returns to the command module.
- 38-39/ 09:41 to 10:03 Watch the object in the upper left. It is not a nearby UFO, but is a quarter million miles away: the Earth. On one flight, the moon's reflection off the Indian Ocean was reported as a strange light "between us and the Earth".
[The identification of this light as 'Earth' by the NASA photo technician Piccard turns out to have been erroneous. It was actually the dish of a Mast-mounted light pole for illumination during a planned spacewalk]
- 40/ 10:03 to 10:13 Leaving the moon behind, perhaps we can leave these myths and mysteries of UFOs where they belong: in the realm of fantasy and imagination. The key point to be stressed here is that dozens of these stories have sprung up and flourished in the UFO world and in the mass media as well. Observers may suspect that among "so many stories", some (perhaps one or two) just have to be authentic -- perhaps from among those not shown here. That is not true, but one cannot prove a negative. What can (and probably has) been proven is that these UFO stories are characteristically based on credulous exaggerations, distortions, misinterpretations, and outright frauds -- and that

no attempt has been made to verify them or to inform the public.

41/ 10:13 to 10:29 Let's get cur feet back on the ground as we return to Earth.