

# An Extraordinary Experiment Will Owens Produce a UFO for Me? <sup>1</sup>

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## **Will Owens Produce a UFO for Me?**

After meeting Ted Owens, and learning of his many psychokinetic demonstrations, at the 1976 Parascience Foundation Conference at the University of London, England, I decided to design and monitor an experiment with him. I was sufficiently curious that, in spite of the pressures to focus on my doctoral dissertation at Berkeley, I began working directly with this strange character who liked to call himself “PK Man”. I was particularly interested in the signed statement from Mensa Director of Science and Education, Max L. Fogel, Ph.D., stating that Owens had produced a bona fide UFO sighting on demand. Owens had written to Fogel on October 23, 1973, claiming that he was about to contact the Space Intelligences and make a UFO appear to police within 100 miles of Cape Charles, Virginia. Two days later, a UFO appeared directly over the head of a Chase City, Virginia, policeman – and was reported in the news.

This seemed to me to get right to the heart of two questions: did Owens have unusual powers, and was he in communication with UFO entities? So I asked him if he could repeat such a demonstration for me. I suggested to Owens that he try to replicate this type of demonstration in the San Francisco area.

At the time, I did not realize just what I was getting into. Owens wrote back to me on November 7, promising a performance more provocative than a simple UFO appearance:

*In the interest of science, I am going to give a demonstration of my psi force abilities to the people who live in the San Francisco area 100 miles in circumference, using San Francisco as the bull's-eye of my target.*

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*As of today, and daily for the following ninety days, I will telepath to living entities in another dimension for them to appear in the above target area, so that they maybe seen by police, scientists, or other responsible observers who are qualified to report the sightings, also for them to cause electromagnetic and magnetic anomalies within the above-described area. It is my intent to produce not one, but at least three major UFO sightings, as described above, within the above-named time period . . . to be reported in the newspapers in order for the experiment to be a valid one.*

Owens went on to promise that the San Francisco area would also suffer "power blackouts, perhaps massive ones" and "small and large power failures." He also wrote that alien life-forms would be seen in the target area.

I was a little taken aback by this announcement since I had asked for a much less extravagant, and more easily analyzable, demonstration. I had not expected Owens to devise an *immediate* and major demonstration, as I had merely asked for a UFO appearance. Owens had given me no time to design a properly controlled experiment. When I asked the psychic to defer the test until I had more time to work out an experimental design, he responded that, once he had set his PK forces in motion, nothing could be done to abort their manifestation. It seemed then that I had to play the game by Owens' rules or not at all.

### **Scientific Considerations: The San Diego Control Group**

To begin with, I mailed out announcements to seventy scientists and other interested parties acquainting them with the ninety-day project. This was done in order to establish advance notification and in hopes that it would help me gather information such as news clippings and personal reports regarding any possible events conforming to Owens' predictions.

Because I was a doctoral student at the time, I decided to consult with my research advisors, Charles Tart, a psychologist and parapsychologist at the University of California-Davis, and Dr. James Harder, a noted ufologist and professor of hydraulic engineering at the University of California- Berkeley. They warned me that it would be hard to assess the demonstration even if Owens' predictions proved correct. It was Harder's view that the UFO predictions could easily come about by coincidence, since he had already investigated two cases within the target area during the previous sixty days. It would not be surprising if a few more cropped up between November and February, Harder maintained. Tart's attitude toward the experiment was just as empirical. He urged me to gather databases regarding electromagnetic and meteorological anomalies in the San Francisco area so that I could objectively evaluate how truly unusual any event reflecting Owens' psychic intentions might be.

Of course, I was not totally oblivious to the great difficulties I had to face in assessing this experiment. Even if a flurry of unusual events did occur in the target area during the time period set, I would need to have some sort of control condition. Therefore, I arranged for a group of graduate students at the University of California at San Diego to send out an announcement similar to my own to seventy local scientists and government officials in their area.

San Diego is a West Coast city with a population close to that of San Francisco. The letter from the UCSD group went out on January 11, more than midway through the experiment. This letter asked the seventy contacts to report any information they might have concerning blackouts, UFO sightings, and electro- magnetic effects during the November 17 to February 7 period. Although the plan was a good one, I realized that this effort would be an imperfect control. I could not rely on the San Diego people to laboriously check the past two months of news reports. And one might expect a larger number of reports to be recorded from San Francisco and its surrounding communities since they have a larger population, although the statistical database of UFO sightings suggests that most occur in rural areas with a low population density. In any case, not one single incident was reported from my San Diego contacts. This result seemed curious in light of what took place in Northern California during this time.

### **A Power Outage Frightens Me**

The San Francisco experiment began formally on November 7, 1976. The first anomaly to strike the Bay Area came about two and one-half weeks later when a windstorm struck the city, resulting in a massive blackout. According to a November 27 *San Francisco Examiner* story, the winds "gusting up to 60 to 70 miles per hour – the fiercest in years – created havoc and widespread damage within the Bay Area ... " The story went on to relate that over 200 burglar alarms had been activated by the winds and that power outages had darkened as many as 100,000 homes. The winds had struck at an inopportune time as well. Since it was Thanksgiving weekend, many of the Pacific Gas and Electric's workers were out of town, making immediate repair work difficult to accomplish.

A subsequent report on the storm, published in the *Examiner* two days later, reported that 130,000 customers in the Bay Area had finally had their power restored. So this Bay Area blackout was certainly massive, to use Owens' term. The winds, the *Examiner* explained, had been produced by polar Canadian air streaming in from the north. The National Weather Service was cited as the source of this information.

I remember, vividly, standing outside my office that windy evening. The moonlight highlighted the clouds roiling in the strong winds. I felt then that, if a UFO were to land in San Francisco, I would rather not be present. I was, frankly, frightened by the possibility that I might be dealing with forces beyond my comprehension.

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The winds and resultant blackout, if considered within the context of the Owens' demonstration, are interesting. It could certainly be argued that his prediction about a massive blackout had been fulfilled. However, it is hard to accept that there was anything truly unusual or mysterious about this blackout. Just how common are blackouts and such destructive winds in the area?

I began by calculating that for massive blackouts to be considered significant for my purposes, they could occur in the Bay Area only once every five years. I thereupon contacted, by both phone and letter, several Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) officials, hoping that they could provide me with the necessary information and statistics. Unfortunately, I was uniformly unsuccessful at obtaining any information on the history or rate of blackouts in the San Francisco area from them. It should also be noted that the November blackout was caused by winds and was not an electromagnetic effect as Owens had promised. I pointed this out to Owens, as he was eagerly taking credit for the mishap, but the psychic responded by claiming that the Space Intelligences had obviously produced the winds. He also offered the flimsy explanation that the blackout occurred at the worst possible time, on a holiday weekend, and that this was a trade-mark the Sis had used in order to focus attention on their work. In any case, there have been few comparable power blackouts in the San Francisco area in the twenty years subsequent to that time. So, with the benefit of hindsight, I would say that this was a mildly significant event – almost meaningless by itself and interesting only in the context of the larger Owens story.

I soon figured out a way to test Owens' claims. The psychic was maintaining that the gales must have been unexpected since PG&E would have kept reserve repair crews on the alert had they been aware of the upcoming winds. This seemed to be a reasonable point to me because PG&E does have its own weather department. So, to explore the possibility that the winds were psychically mediated, I contacted the National Weather Service and inquired about the frequency of gale winds in the San Francisco area. The National Weather Service (NWS) responded on December 1, but

their expert opinion did nothing to support Owens' interpretation. The NWS merely pointed out that winds, strong enough to cause damage, occur in the Bay Area several times a year. The gusts that struck San Francisco on November 27, they added, occur about once every two years. Furthermore, they informed me, the winds that had caused the blackout had been forecast and were due to natural conditions. It is hard to judge whether there is any significance in the fact that winds expected only once in two years struck right in the middle of Owens' demonstration. Again, we are faced with the possibility that he may have somehow intensified winds that were already in the making. But, as I pointed out in my subsequent, privately published report on this experiment, "It was clear that if Owens wanted to count this demonstration as a success, he would have to produce greater quality and quantity of phenomena."

### **UFO Sighting with Multiple Witnesses, Photographed and Videotaped**

Owens' chance for another demonstration came during the first week of December. On December 3, he told me over the phone that one of his predicted UFO sightings was about to occur within the next few days. He made a point of reminding me that the sighting would be seen by many reputable witnesses and even be reported on the front page of a local newspaper.

The fulfillment of this specific prediction came on December 8, when the best documented UFO sighting ever reported from the Bay Area startled hundreds of onlookers. Since Owens had warned me of the upcoming sighting, this incident serves as a conceptual replication of the Cape Charles UFO demonstration for researcher Max Fogel, which is just what I wanted in the first place. The story of the sighting made front page headlines in the *Berkeley Gazette* on December 10. The accompanying story read:

*Stephan Poleskie, who, wind permitting, creates aerial art by flying a stunt plane overhead while leaving trails of colored smoke, was startled Wednesday while performing over Cal State Sonoma. Poleskie suddenly became aware of a circular white object only 1,000 feet away. The event was also captured on Channel 9 TV cameras, and Poleskie said videotape reruns check out and confirm the existence of a curious copilot in the sky. Poleskie, a visiting art professor at UC-Berkeley, may have attracted a vast new audience for his unique art forms.*

There was at least one minor inaccuracy in the story. It is not true that Channel 9 TV had filmed the UFO. The object had been videotaped by one of the onlookers, Bill Morehouse, chairman of the art department at California State College at Sonoma (now known as Sonoma State University). He subsequently lent the tape to the television station, which had shown the footage on its nightly news program. I still have that videotape made almost half a century ago.

Even so, the UFO had been widely viewed and filmed. Although it had been videotaped for only a few seconds, the craft was in view of the witnesses for ten to twenty minutes. Hundreds of students and other onlookers attending the aerial art show had observed the UFO as well.

Stephan Poleskie told reporters that the object had been within his air zone at an altitude of from 500 to 3,000 feet above ground. At first, Poleskie thought that the UFO, which was hovering when he first spotted it, was a helicopter. He rejected this theory when he noticed that the craft didn't have a rotor or pontoons. The UFO didn't seem to be any larger than Poleskie's own plane, which sported a wingspan of seventeen feet. The object had first appeared hovering in one location of the sky for about ten minutes and had then reappeared in another location in relation to Poleskie's plane. Yet no one could recall actually seeing the object move between the two points. And after about fifteen minutes, several witnesses claimed that they had seen the mysterious object disappear into thin air.

I was impressed by the incident, especially since UFO sightings witnessed and videotaped by so many onlookers are extremely rare and were even more so in 1976, before the advent of camcorders. Of course, I was intrigued by the possibility that the sighting directly related to Owens' prediction. I wrote in my report:

*I would estimate the probability of such an excellent sighting within the space-time limits of the experiment to be considerably less than one in a hundred. This estimate is based on the fact that in the past twenty-five years no such sightings are known to have taken place within the target area. When one considers that such well-documented sightings have not been reported elsewhere in the world, the probabilities become much smaller. Such an estimate, of course, is predicated upon assumptions that will remain unverified until either further research establishes a reliable database or the UFOs make themselves publicly known.*

It was an unusual sighting as well as a stunning one. The fact that it occurred so soon after Owens' specific prediction is especially noteworthy. Now, with the advent of camcorders, recordings of presumed UFOs are much more common. I have a shelf full of videotaped documentaries on this subject. Still; they are rare enough, and I do not know of another sighting as dramatic as this one in the San Francisco Bay Area in the decades following. This event crystallized my thinking with regard to Owens' claims.

I could not determine whether he predicted this UFO sighting or caused it through psychokinesis or arranged for it by telepathically communicating with alien Space Intelligences. But it was dear to me that such a dramatic event was no mere coincidence. It had to involve some combination of the aforementioned three factors.

## **Short, Grey-Skinned Men with Elongated Skulls and No Hair**

In his original communication to me, Owens had predicted three major UFO sightings. He also specifically forecast that alien life-forms would be seen in the target area as well. Just a few days before Owens' February 7 deadline, a second major UFO case came to light in the San Francisco area, one that indeed involved the sighting of an alien life-form.

On February 2, the *Concord Transcript* announced that a bizarre UFO abduction had been reported by a local resident. Concord, a quiet little city east of Berkeley; is well within the fifty-mile target radius centering on San Francisco. The *Transcript* reported:

*A 24-year-old Concord man told police early today. He was whisked away and examined by five-foot grey beings from a flying saucer. According to the report, he left a Willow Pass Road restaurant about 4:10 A.M. and was confronted by two short, grey-skinned men with enlarged skulls, no hair and black pupils.*

The next thing he knew, he said, was that he had been transported to a field at Willow Creek, Elementary School. There he said he was facing a circular craft with a ladder extending toward him. Suddenly, he was inside the ship. While there, he said he stuck his left hand in a chamber and "all sorts of lights went off." He asked what was happening and telepathically he was told the aliens were on a "mission to study life habits" on Earth. The beings also noted that their craft was from a larger ship located outside the planet's atmosphere.

The next thing he knew, according to the report, he was outside an apartment complex on Mohr Lane. For about 15 minutes, he said, he was unable to move. He called the Concord Police Department at 5:33 A.M. The Oakland center of the Federal Aviation Administration noted it had no reports this morning of unidentified flying objects.

By coincidence (or was it synchronicity?), I happened to be visiting in the Concord area on the day that the story hit the press. The report hadn't been picked up by any other news media, so before the case could be polluted by publicity, I contacted Professor James Harder who made arrangements, through the cooperation of the Concord Police Department, to visit the witness. Harder, who has specialized in investigating abduction and close-encounter cases, was impressed with the witness.

The abductee turned out to be a married salesman who made his home in the Concord area. He told us the same story as had been printed in the *Transcript*. He claimed to have had no previous psychic experiences, and had read nothing on the subject of UFOs. Unfortunately, the case could not be further investigated because the witness was wary of publicity, and he resisted Harder's suggestion that hypnotic regression might help him to remember more about his frightening experience.

Despite the unsatisfactory resolution of the case, this report is disturbingly impressive in one respect. Many abduction cases are recorded in the United States each year, and it is surprising how many of the witnesses involved tend to describe very similar entities. The "short, grey-skinned men with elongated skulls [and] no hair," as reported by the Concord salesman, also have been reported from New Mexico, Arizona and New York.

In 1978, long before Whitley Strieber's popular books, such as *Communion*, created a new wave of interest in abductions, my associate D. Scott Rogo helped investigate a series of related UFO close encounters and abductions that took place in Southern California. Several of his witnesses said they were abducted by small, dome-headed, hairless entities. If the Concord witness was genuinely ignorant of UFOs and UFO encounter cases, then the parallels between his report and the many others extant in the literature of the field is remarkable.

### **Kicking the Hell out of the San Francisco Area**

The blackout of November 27 and the two aforementioned UFO encounters, one, indeed, involving an alien life-form, were the major events conforming to Owens' predictions – not quite as spectacular as Owens had boasted but intriguing enough to suggest that something unusual was happening in the Bay Area during the course of the ninety-day test. Also, because Owens had stated that many odd things would occur in the target zone during his ninety-day exhibition, I kept careful note of any anomalies occurring there from November to February. Several did, and these represent an added bit of evidence that Owens was making good on his promise.

On January 7, for instance, as the experiment headed into its final days, a series of earthquakes struck. If these were Owens' doing at the close of his exhibition, the psychic was going out with a bang! Eight quakes rattled the Bay Area in rapid succession, one of which was 5.0 on the Richter scale, the strongest recorded in eleven years. The epicenter of the temblors was located only twenty miles east of San Francisco itself.

It must be remembered that Owens never specifically predicted an earthquake as part of the demonstration. However, I was reluctant to rule out the possibility that the quakes were somehow related to the San Francisco experiment. "Owens himself may not be totally conscious of the phenomena that are produced during his demonstrations," I noted in my report. After all, a major, unpredicted earthquake had struck in Texas during Owens' demonstration there in 1974, and I found the parallel intriguing. There were also some personal interactions between the two of us during the period immediately preceding the quakes that suggested to me a relationship between the quakes and the psychic. My notes from the period read:



*On December 31, 1976, Owens became furious with me during a telephone conversation in which I told him that, after reading through the files of his past cases, it was clear to me that he "sometimes failed." He got very angry and promised to "kick the hell out of the San Francisco area." Owens also telephoned me on January 7, 1977, several hours before the earthquakes. The message that he called was recorded on my answering device, but I did not speak to him until several days later.*

Had Owens told me on the telephone that he had phoned me on the seventh to warn me about the earthquakes, I would have been somewhat impressed. However, he admitted that he did not specifically know that an earthquake was coming. He did feel that "something" was going to happen very soon as a special message to him from the Space Intelligences. It is a totally open question at this point as to whether that something was the earthquakes.

Another odd coincidence, possibly related to the demonstration, occurred during this time as well. Sometime in early December, Owens had told me over the phone that a giant UFO was en route to San Francisco. While remaining invisible to the eye, it would cover the entire target zone. The result would be "crazy phenomena" all over the place. "Things are going to look like a three-ring circus," the psychic warned.

Since San Francisco can be a crazy town anyway and Berkeley, for instance, is commonly referred to as Berzerkeley, this prediction was less than overwhelmingly impressive. Yet indeed many people started acting peculiarly soon after Owens' announcement – just as they had done in Chicago and Cleveland during prior demonstrations. A crime wave that had been steadily rising in the area reached its peak during the ninety-day experiment. The city's crime statistics were so bad that they were even reported in *Newsweek* on December 20. A rash of bomb threats against PG&E installations in the area were made, and some of these threats were carried out. The bombings were the work of the New World Liberation Front, which also stooped to threatening members of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors. On December 20, a hijacking drama was staged at San Francisco International Airport. And for the first time in history, a San Francisco county sheriff, Richard Hongisto, was given a jail sentence for refusing to obey a court order.

Of course, none of these events can be solely attributed to Owens or the Space Intelligences. People are a strange lot and all too often do strange things. It does seem that the incidents listed above are odder than what might be expected to occur in any large metropolis during a ninety-day period, although none of these events can be solely attributed to Owens or the Space Intelligences. People are a strange lot and all too often do strange things. It does seem that the incidents listed above are odder than what might be expected to occur in any large metropolis during a ninety-day period, although this is

impossible to measure with precision. One item, however, did catch my special attention: a newspaper account of a hairdresser in Walnut Creek named Owen who experienced ostensible poltergeist phenomena in his house. This seeming coincidence of names also occurred in the Chase City, Virginia, demonstration in which a UFO was seen by a radio dispatcher named Owen.

Was my experiment a success or a failure? The answer to this question is as oblique today as it was twenty-two years ago when the experiment was first initiated. The most impressive aspect of the case was Owens' UFO prediction. This forecast the Poleskie sighting so precisely that one cannot help be impressed by it. In fact, the whole San Francisco experiment is, in one respect, tinged with irony. It could be argued that it was a failure, since it did not come off exactly as Owens had predicted. What did come off extremely well was Owens' one UFO prediction and its subsequent fulfillment. And this was all I had wanted in the first place. So, I got what I wanted, but only as part of a 90-day ordeal. I will say that, in the context of Owens' entire career, the strange phenomena observed during the San Francisco experiment seem entirely normal.

For me, the experiment was more of an initiation ceremony than a controlled demonstration of Owens' powers – something of a preparation for encountering Owens' final gift. And I survived, all the wiser for the experience, although my interest in this case began to trigger concerns among my University of California faculty members about their own professional survival. My official opinion about the San Francisco experiment is contained in a privately distributed sixty-page report on Owens that I wrote shortly after the end of the demonstration.

It would be rash to draw any solid conclusions from the Ted Owens material at this time. The historical material is very suggestive of the possibility that Owens does in fact wield enormous psi powers that could possibly be used for significant practical application. While the events that Owens predicted for his ninety-day demonstration period in San Francisco did not happen precisely as Owens suggested they would, the data nevertheless strongly warrant further investigation of Owens' claims. This investigation should be oriented to further practical applications of Owens' apparent abilities and also a deeper theoretical understanding of the phenomena.

Following the San Francisco experiment, the earlier Owens' demonstrations in England and the snowstorm that ended the California drought, I became highly motivated to dig more deeply into the mystery of Ted Owens. I continued to follow his activities and demonstrations until his death in 1987. The results of that ten-year case study are reported in my 1999 book, *The PK Man* (from which this chapter has also been derived).

I still have the files documenting over 160 comparable demonstrations performed by Ted Owens. The events involved power blackouts, control of hurricanes, cold spells, heat waves, ending droughts, influencing volcanic activity, and influencing athletic events. Throughout this entire period, Owens' purpose was to attract the attention of mainstream government and scientific personnel. My rough estimate is that two-thirds of these demonstrations resulted in phenomena that were, conservatively, improbable at the  $p < .01$  level. My main regret is that, in spite of these ostensibly successful demonstrations, neither Owens nor myself were able to secure the scientific support and funding to probe these phenomena more deeply.

Mishlove, J. (1999). *The PK Man*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.

**Bio:** Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove received an interdisciplinary Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1980. Dr. Mishlove recently won an international competition for the best essay that provides the best evidence for survival of human consciousness after permanent bodily death and was awarded the \$500 thousand grand prize from the Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies. Dr. Mishlove is one of the world's leading scholars and researchers on the topic of "What is Consciousness" which first began with his Ph.D. dissertation in 1980 which later was presented in his book titled *The Roots of Consciousness: The Classic Encyclopedia of Consciousness Studies* which was published in 1995. Dr. Mishlove has also published *The PSI Development Systems* and *The PK Man: A True Story of Mind Over Matter*. Between 1986 and 2002 Dr. Mishlove hosted and co-produced the original Thinking Allowed public television series. For many years, Jeffrey has hosted hundreds of video interviews with the world's leading thinkers and scholars on the topics of Consciousness, Parapsychology and Psychical Research, Philosophy of Mind, Religion and Consciousness, Entheogens and Consciousness, and almost all of the Contact Modalities (Near Death Experiences, Out of Body Experiences, Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon (UFOs), sightings and communication with deceased humans (ghosts/spirits), Channeling, among many others. Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove is indeed one of the world's leading authorities on the diverse topic of "What is Consciousness".

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