

# GRAVE CREEK "SHINIES"

By Ron Wilder July 2007

## Here's the really short story.

Southern Oregon, near where the lower Rogue River meets Whiskey Creek, while backpacking. A little orb passed by me. It looked like a luminous soap bubble about 3 inches in diameter. It followed what I had first thought to be an animal trail, about 2 feet above the ground. The orb did not flash. It floated by, ending its journey by rising toward the top of a tree near the creek. I felt so strange and peaceful while watching it, that I don't know if I was looking when it disappeared.

A few months later, a friend was in his sleeping bag, straddling the "animal trail". He awoke, seemingly being electrocuted. At the same time, I awoke experiencing a strong shock, but I was a few feet from the "trail".

Two nights after the first sighting, at a different location, I viewed several flashing lights traveling toward the river at about 4am.

## Backstory

I'm retired. My last job of my real career was Chief Scientist and VP of technology of ReGenisys Corp, a software company that marketed a suite of AI products. After retirement, I moved back to Grants Pass, Oregon, from whence I came, kinda like the fish.

Having gotten tired of retirement, I looked for a job. I found an ideal one, helping people with developmental disabilities. This job fulfilled one of my childhood dreams—they let me drive a forklift. One of my coworkers was Ken.

Ken used to tell me of the lights that visited him in the vicinity of Picket Creek near Merlin, Oregon. He was under the impression that they talked to him in an ESP kind of way. Sounded goofy to me, but he was so hyper about it, it interested me. He obviously believes these stories to be true. I am a skeptic, but I was convinced that these stories contained some amount of truth.

Ken called them "shinies".

His first sighting occurred while he was jobless, living in a tent with his wife and child. He was lying on a cot at night. This little shiny orb appeared in the tent, floated to the top of the tent, and hovered there. Ken, being really frustrated at the time, he said "Oh, great, what the #\$@% do you want?". I don't remember the rest of the story, but it involved a conversation between Ken and the "shiny".

Another story, relevant to my own later experience, goes like this. Ken took a friend to the shiny area. It was a very dark night. They waited. Eventually a shiny appeared over them. It said, "Stop at the tree with the eagle", which they both "heard", says Ken. Then, according to Ken, a powerful earthquake began, shaking them up and down in a very violent way. The friend yelled, "Let's get outta here!", and they both started running for their lives. On their way to the truck, they ran by a tree that had a huge eagle sitting on a limb,

which further terrified them. They got to the truck, piled in, and drove down the logging road with admirable haste.

I wanted to ask Ken, "Why was there no mention of a Merlin earthquake in the local paper?", but I considered that to be rude, so I kept quiet.

## **My Sightings**

There are three incidents, beginning about a year after Ken told me his shiny stories. Being a creative kind of guy, I've given them very clever names, I1, I2 and I3. I1 and I2 happened during the first trip, with Ken, to Whiskey Creek. I3 happened during the second trip, with Rick. Photos 1 thru 3 were taken during the second trip.

### **I1**

I mentioned to Ken that I was planning to go backpacking down the Rogue River, to a place I found on the map, where Whiskey Creek meets the river. He wanted to go along. I'm not good with time, but I think the trip occurred around July or August, 2003. The weather was hot and dry. The vegetation was fully green.

We camped along Whiskey Creek.



**Photo 1 was taken as Rick and I started back home. In the middle, you see what appear to be animal trails. The dark structures just to the right of lower center are the remains of the bridge the pioneer used to cart his provisions from the river to his cabin, which is about a quarter-mile from upper right. The name of the creek refers to the time his mules fell into the creek, spilling his case of whiskey, which wound up floating down the river to oblivion. That's why he built the bridge.**

If you look very closely, you can see the embankment at the very center of the photo. The "animal trail" proceeds down the embankment, from the upper right of the photo, gently bends to photo-left, passing by the photo-far side of the bridge remains, to the base of the tree in left-center foreground, then taking the sharp turn down to the creek.

I remember wondering, "Why would thirsty animals repeatedly take such an odd path to the creek?".

Ken laid out his sleeping bag on the only reasonably smooth spot, right on the path at photo-right. I put mine on the next-best spot.



**Photo 2 The guy is Rick from trip 2. The ground cloth and mattress in the center is Rick's. The other is mine. These are situated very much like Ken's and mine during the first trip, except Rick has moved his a little closer to us, due to his experience (I3). Behind Rick, you can see the tree we will soon mention.**

Back to I1, long about dusk, Ken went off to relieve himself. I was sitting on my sleeping bag. For some reason, I turned around and looked at the embankment. The embankment lies in the direction Rick is looking.

I saw an orb floating down the "animal trail". It was about 3 inches in diameter. It seemed to be self-illuminated. It looked like the most perfect and gravity-resistant soap bubble I had ever seen. It floated at an altitude of 1 or 2 feet above the ground. I watched it as it floated by, at approximately 1 foot per second, traveling precisely over Ken's sleeping bag. It followed the trail to the tree, then ascended toward the top of the tree, where it began to hover.

I wondered if it was going to say something. I just sat there, looking up at it. Soon came a moment that I realized that it had disappeared. I sat there in a daze, thinking something like, "Wow, there really are phenomena like Ken's shinies".



Then, across the creek, I saw Ken coming back. I was in such awe and so peaceful feeling, I failed to speak when Ken got back to the campsite. Later that night, we both went to sleep with me not having mentioned the sighting.

## I2

Toward the second evening of trip 1, Ken suggested we camp closer to the trailhead, to make it an easier trip back on the third day. We packed up and went to Rainie Falls. Eventually, we went to sleep.

I awoke in near darkness. I sat up. About 40 feet away, there's a wooden outhouse. Two lights were flickering above the outhouse. I immediately wondered, "That must be Ken in the outhouse, holding up two flashlights and waving them around". I looked at Ken's sleeping bag. There he was, in it.

I looked back at the outhouse, realizing that the lights were a couple of feet beyond the outhouse, slowly making their way to the river, which was maybe 60 feet from them.

I looked at my watch and pushed the light button. It was a little after 4am. There was a hint of light from the soon-to-rise sun. I could make out trees, the river, and so on. But I couldn't make out who was holding the flashlights.

The lights sort of bounced and flickered as they approached the riverbank. They reached the river, went out over it, and stopped. During this trip, they maintained an altitude of somewhere between 7 and 10 feet, and maintained a distance between them of about 2 feet. When they stopped, I could see that they were hovering directly over a rock which was situated a little bit offshore.

Something across the river caught my eye, so my head jerked that way. I could see several lights floating down the mountain on the other side. They were floating at what appeared to be a constant altitude. I could see them disappearing behind trees, the reappearing as they floated back into the open.

I looked back toward the first pair, but they were gone. I should have been excited. I should have gone over and shook Ken awake. But I felt sleepy, so I laid back down and went to sleep.

Later, Ken and I got up and fixed breakfast. I told him about I1 and I2. He was quite excited that I had seen them.

I went down to the riverbank to check out the rock that had been hovered over. It was about 15 feet into the river. There were no footprints in the damp sand. The path followed by the two lights could be described as a tiny ravine, a few inches deep.

Wanting to devise a natural explanation for this sighting, all I could come up with is the following.

A guy had two long fishing poles. He attached a little flashlight to the end of each. He rested each pole on a shoulder and walked by the outhouse, toward the river. When he got within 8 feet of the riverbank, he stopped while the flashlights wavered at the end of the poles. For him to leave no footprints,

each pole was at least 23 feet long. No explanation for the lights across the river. A problem with this model is that, by the time the lights hovered over the rock, the bodies of the flashlights would have obscured the emitted light.

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Rick wanted to take a trip with me to see if we could see more shinies. This time, I took the Minolta 35mm camera. The approximate time was April 2004.

We arrived at Whiskey Creek and set up camp just like Ken and I did. Eventually we went to sleep. The campsite had become so foggy that we were getting too wet to stay up.

I sleep on my stomach. Rick sleeps on his back.

I remember a dream in which something was screwing around with my left eye. I awoke with a start, feeling like a bolt of electricity had just gone from the ground into the eye. I fretted for awhile, but felt like I should go back to sleep. I fearfully put my head back down and drifted away.

I awoke in the morning and started a fire in the cement remains of the bridge. Rick awoke and took the cup of coffee I poured for him. He began pacing back and forth, sometimes giving me a strange look, then resuming the pacing. I felt he wanted to say something. Finally he did.

With a sheepish look, he said...

"I don't know if I should say this or not, but a really weird thing happened to me last night. It was 10 minutes after 1. I woke up feeling like I was being electrocuted. This powerful current was going through my body. I was being thrown up and down. My body was flailing uncontrollably. It lasted for several seconds, but it seemed like a lifetime. I thought I was going to die."

I looked up and said, "Mine came through my left eye". He looked at me and suddenly took on the appearance of relief, as if knowing he wasn't insane after all.

We talked about it. I pointed out that he had been sleeping right on the "shiny path", whereas I was a few feet from it.

We came upon the idea that there might be some structure underground. Sometimes there might be some form of energy passing through the structure, causing the orbs to form. The "animal trail" might be an artifact of the phenomenon.

Photo 2 was taken during the conversation, shortly after Rick moved his mattress a little bit off the path.

## After I3



**Photo 3 That's me on the left.  
Rick on the right.**

I found Ken. I reminded him of the story in which the earthquake appeared. I asked him how he knew the ground was shaking. He immediately got a little testy and began to rant about the story being true.

When I finally got the chance to speak again, I said, "It was totally dark. You couldn't see the ground very well. How do you know that it wasn't just you shaking up and down?"

He thought for a moment and replied, "Good point—I guess I don't know, but that would make more sense."

### Where did all this occur?

The Rogue River passes through Galice, Oregon. A few miles downstream from Galice, we find the Grave Creek bridge.

The trailhead is at the bridge. 2 or 3 miles downstream is Rainie Falls, named after old man Rainey, who used to have a cabin there. Another mile or two downstream is Whiskey Creek.

To the east of Galice, we find the Siskiyou Mountains, then the Cascades. To the west of Galice, we find the coast range. The entire region shows signs of geologic activity.

## Thinking about Trip 3

I plan to take the digital camera, hoping to get a nice close-up of a "shiny".

Since I suspect some form of electromagnetic phenomena along the orb paths, I wonder what kind of back-packable equipment I could take to get some kind of meaningful measurements at those pathways.

## Questions and answers from IEA

**IEA:** *Will you add some more details to the report such as more detailed light descriptions? Were the lights actually translucent/transparent like a bubble? Were all the light sightings similar? What color was the first light? What were the sizes of the second lights. What color were they? How bright were they?*

**RW:** I'll be a bit of a disappointment on the issue of color—I'm one of the 5% of males that are afflicted with red-green color-blindness. For example, when I used to make my stereos and TVs from kits, I had to use all of my deductive powers to separate and classify components such as resistors, which have little color bands to indicate their attributes.

**The I1 orb** appeared to me as a mathematically correct sphere, meaning it seemed to be a 2-dimensional surface of constant positive curvature embedded in 3-space.

Look at Photo 2. Just beyond Rick's mattress, you can see the "trail". It looks like heavy animals had trod on the small rocks many times, pressing the rocks into the dirt (more on this below). I plan to get better photos next time, but for now, I presume you see what I'm talking about. Rick is about 6 feet tall, so I'm guessing that my mattress is a little over 6 feet from the trail.

The orb traveled in the air, a foot or so above the trail. I was sitting on my mattress, so the orb passed within approximately 6 feet of me. The orb's trajectory was almost regal in nature. It proceeded at constant altitude, never wavering or wobbling—I would expect such a perfect path only as a CGI effect in a movie. The curve it took as it rose toward the top of the tree was equally smooth and graceful.

I remember it as being a very pure form of milky white. My color-blindness does not allow me to rule out a light shade of pink.

I remember it as being transparent, but I can't recall whether I saw through it to the landscape on the other side.

I do not recall seeing anything illuminated by it.

There was no flashing. The appearance of the orb reminds me of depictions of plasma.

**The I2 lights** were like flashlights. The reason I first thought Ken was acting goofy is that I had packed two backpack headlights. The I2 lights first resulted in my thinking that Ken had taken both headlights, and was waving them around, with a radius of a couple of inches. In retrospect, the perceived waving may have been solely due to flicker. Those particular headlights have front lenses which are roughly rectangular, perhaps 1 inch by 2 inches.

The color of the lights was yellowish, as if tungsten bulbs were being powered by partially-depleted batteries. Another way to describe the color is "the color of a Star Wars light saber being wielded by a guy from the dark side".

The lights across the river did not seem to flicker, and they appeared to be pure white.

**IEA:** *Do you recall shadows or objects illuminated by them for instance?*

**RW:** I have no such recall.

**IEA:** *Aside from the fog, do you recall what weather followed on your 2004 trip?*

**RW:** About 24 hours after I3, a steady rain began. It lasted for about 8 hours.

**IEA:** *Do you think there may be a connection between the old man's mule incident in the creek and electrical shocks from the same area?*

**RW:** Hmm...interesting idea. I hadn't thought about this. I, of course, being very much at sea about these lights, have no evidence on this. This question reminds me that the rocky part of the trail (upon which my companions' slept) could have been "carved" by the mules (perhaps there was only one mule), but it would seem to be quite a coincidence that the orb and the mules took the same path. The paths created by mules that I've seen in other areas had more of a "dug" appearance than the gently rounded orb trail.

**IEA:** *Is there any other lore about the area?*

**RW:** This is embarrassing. I have asked around, usually receiving only responses like "what have you been smoking". But I did get one positive response. But a wedding was going on, and I failed to follow up. I must try to find that person. Also, I suppose I should check at the ranger stations in the area.

**IEA:** *What did the old man do and what became of him?*

**RW:** There are two men. Man 1 and his wife lived in the Whiskey Creek Cabin, which remains. It is ¼ mile up the hill from our Whiskey Creek campsite. I would need to do a little research to acquire his name. I'll try to find out more about this guy.

Man 2 is old man Rainie. I don't recall what he did. He had a cabin very close to Rainie Falls. My first introduction to Rainie Falls and that cabin was when I was 7 or 8 years old. I would accompany my dad once a year to Rainie Falls. We would sleep in the cabin. The next day, we would walk 100 yards or so around the corner and work on Dad's placer gold mine. He would lose the mine unless the rangers could see evidence of yearly work. However, the real purpose of the trip seemed to be the drinking of vast amounts of beer after the mine work.

Hmmm...for the first time of my life, I'm puzzled about how my dad acquired the mine. It was sold to him by Les and Hoag Painter, two members of the Indian tribe my dad and I belong to. I wonder how they happened to own it? Our tribe is the California Karuk tribe. The night Dad bought the mine, he was drunk. Grandma told me that the three of them came home late at night, and one of the Painter boys laughed and told Grandma "We took the boy to a cleaning." Seems like it must have been a legit claim, since the rangers were supposed to check every year for work.

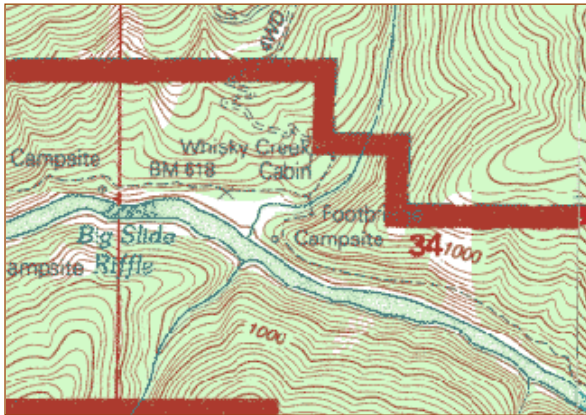


**IEA:** *Do you have any sense about the geology of the area? Is this area near the top of a hill or in the flats or in a depression? Can you identify the type of rocks in the area?*

**RW:** I'm not so good at geology. The area is pretty close to the edge of the Pacific Plate. There is much evidence of landslides. The hills are pretty steep.

I'm not much of a rock-identifier. I'll try to get close-up photos of rocks next time, and maybe bring some back.

Below is a map fragment and a couple of aerial photos of the Whiskey Creek area. The campsite is a few feet to the left of "footbridge". In the future, I'll give coordinates and scale.



**IEA:** *Your report mentions tranquility and sleepiness. Was this feeling only when the lights were present, or was it a characteristic of the area?*

**RW:** I think the feeling occurred only in connection with the lights, but I'll try to be more aware of this in the future.