

## **AUGUST 26, 1968 – GLEESON ARIZONA**

From *The Tucson Daily Citizen* dated Saturday, October 19, 1968 article written by Cecil James and Dan Tortorell (staff members):

“Gleeson UFO Leaves Traces” – The smile was kind and gentle. The strong grey-blue eyes seemed to say, “howdy, stranger.” You immediately liked her.

And the pioneer Arizona teacher and rancher – Mrs. Pearl Christiansen, of Gleeson – in her 71<sup>st</sup> year reported seeing unidentified flying objects (UFOs) to the east of her ranch-house Aug. 26.

“I was happily excited about the beauty if the thing,” she beamed. “I never was afraid, I had no fear – just like a full moon, or bigger. Later there were two of them.”

In this world of modern, strange phenomena, one wonders why such objects land. Was it (if real) investigating the Army’s communications installation at Fort Huachuca? Recharging its power units or repairing some malfunction?

The afternoon was warm recently when Citizen photographer Dan Tortorell (a UFO buff) and I journeyed to Gleeson in southeastern Arizona to interview Mrs. Christiansen. The trip also took us over mountain trails to the top of Brown’s Peak, the site of the UFO landings, which is a mile and a quarter from the ranch house. Strange fires also had scorched parts of the peak – the burning pattern of the cactus and grass was erratic – but one student of the UFO mystery does not believe

there was any connection between the two events. I think there may be.

And while standing on the 7,200-foot peak, I felt I was walking where the unknown had been. The view of the surrounding mountains and valleys was overwhelming. It is doubtful that the area has changed in centuries.

A native of the Colorado Territory, Mrs. Christiansen moved to Gleeson in 1920 to teach the youngsters of the 81 mining community families. Later she met her late husband and became a ranch wife and part-time teacher.

During the past half-century, the slender woman has seen many events in the nearby uninhabited country – floods, droughts, rattlesnakes, wildlife and meteorites – but never until this August a UFO.

At 10 minutes to eight on that Monday evening while driving home, Mrs. Christiansen saw a huge silver circular object seated on the south side of Brown's Peak.

"I had just lowered the chain gate on the road to my house when I saw it," she said. "I drove across the chain, sat in the car for five minutes and wondered what I should do. It looked as though there were a train of lights trailing from one side. Should I drive to Tombstone to report it? No... I thought maybe it would disappear, so I drove on. But it remained, when I went through another gate, I saw a second object – very shiny and gold. It also was stationary and once in a while both would glow simultaneously."

Mrs. Christiansen, sensing a doubt from us, quipped that her eyesight was good “and I don’t drink anything stronger than Orange Crush or 7-Up.!”

She continued that the second object had a bright pink band around its outer edge. There also was a red band, which turned wine in color and then purple. Several minutes later it was gold.

With a pair of old field glasses, she looked at the “unreal happening” and said the object appeared blurred. “It also hurt my eyes to look at its brightness,” she added.

A cool breeze developed around 9 o’clock and Mrs. Christiansen brought a pillow and blanket to the porch seat for warmth and continued the watch.

“A few minutes before midnight they disappeared,” she added.

Did the objects fly away? We asked.

“No. they seemed to back off into the valley behind the peak,” she recalled.

Fort Huachuca personnel heard of the story and she filled out papers for the Army. A Fort spokesman, however, said the Army would not investigate. “The Air Force has that responsibility,” he added.

Also seeing a bright light on the peak that night was Mrs. Willard Mayfield, who operates the Gleeson museum with her husband. She, however, did not pay much attention to the light – thinking it to be a reflection in the glass portion of the outside door.

Still, Mrs. Christiansen and Mayfield were concerned.

Nearly 48 hours after the incident they traveled up the steep trail by pickup truck to a “saddle area” between Brown’s Peak and Turquoise Mountain. Named for its mineral content, Turquoise Mountain still is believed to be owned by the Tiffany jewelers in New York City. From there, the final half mile was up an incline measuring as much as 60 degrees at times. Both noticed a strange aroma when arriving at the top.

“It was queer, acid-like,” Mayfield explained. It was nothing like our fuels smell – gasoline or diesel – or at least nothing like what we know of. Rocks on the peak also were hot – a terrific heat. You couldn’t hold your hands on them, it was like a hot iron.”

Later Jim and Coral Lorenzen, directors of the Tucson based Aerial Phenomena Research Organization, visited the site and believe Mrs. Christiansen probably did see some type of UFO’s. Lorenzen, however, doesn’t think the fire was connected with them.

“It may have been set by some of the hippies who live in the Valley east of the peak,” he remarked. “They are quite ritualistic,” he added. “The UFO authority also said the fires were reported on the peak during the afternoon preceding the UFO sighting.

While Mrs. Christiansen doctored one of her horses, Tortorell, Mayfield and I struggled up the rocky burned areas. I doubt if “our mortal beings” set the fires.

Individual cactus plants (a member of the century plant family) were badly charred at their bases, but not burned at the top. Others were burned by a fierce heat which left only the blackened base of the plant. A direct row of four plants – measuring about 40 feet in length – appeared to have been hit by a flame thrower. Still, a plant near the forth one hardly was singed.

Also the peak – which measured about 150 feet north and south and 75 feet east and west – had burned spots no more than four to eight inches in diameter. And there were many dead clumps of grass and pieces of dry wood which were not touched at all. Rocks showed signs of terrific heat. None of the fires appeared to have resulted from lightning strikes.

Surveying the area, Mayfield waved a hand to the east and said. “you can see Fort Hunchuca and Tucson from here at night.” Tortorell and I also wondered if the strange objects were over-looking the areas.

The sun was falling behind the ranges when we bounced down the trail back to Mrs. Christiansen’s home, where our dusty throats welcomed cool well water.

It had been a long, exhausting and exciting day. And as we left the ranch house. Mrs. Christiansen was still smiling her sweet, gentle smile...



*William Mayfield of the Gleeson Museum examining the burned rocks and cacti at the UFO site.*

*(Credit: Arizona Daily Star/Tucson Citizen/Dan Tortorell)*



*The view from atop Brown's Peak in 1968. The scorched earth allegedly caused by the UFOs can be seen in the foreground.*

*(Credit: Arizona Daily Star/Tucson Citizen/Dan Tortorell)*



*Pearl Christiansen describing the UFOs she saw*

*(Credit: Arizona Daily Star/Tucson Citizen/Dan Tortorell)*



**Reliability evaluation:**  
**very high**  
**one witness only (Mr. Mayfield did not go out to check),**  
**helicopters and crews checking in connection with the fire**  
**cannot be excluded, lights in connection with ritualistic**  
**cannot be excluded, incomplete investigation**

