

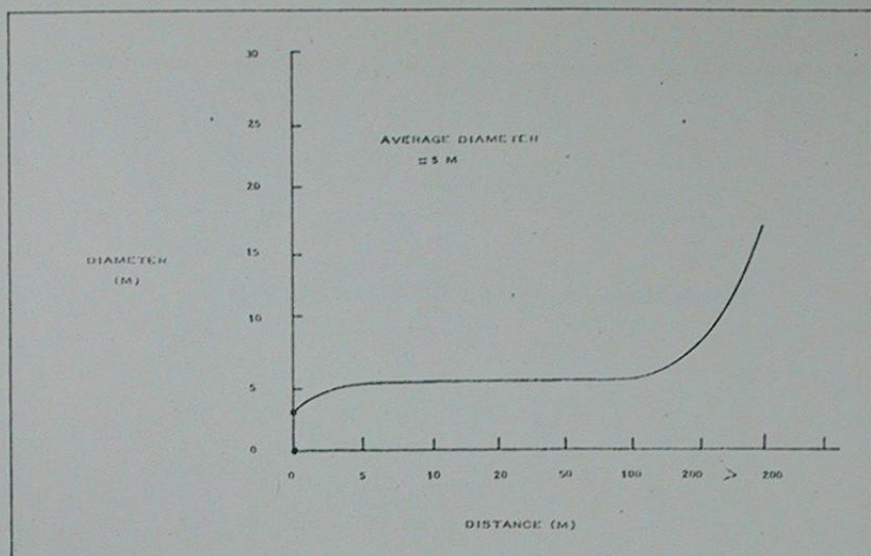


Figure 33-1. UFO: Distance of observer versus estimated diameter, for UFO's which are lower than tree height.

overzealous individuals who are trying to eliminate all data due to known natural phenomena). In addition, those data, which do appear to be valid, exhibit an excessive amount of variety relative to the statistical samples available. This has led to very clumsy classification systems, which in turn provide quite unfertile ground for formulation of hypotheses.

One hypothesis which looked promising for a time was that of ORTHOTENY (i.e., UFO sightings fall on "great circle" routes). At first, plots of sightings seemed to verify the concept of orthoteny but recent use of computers has revealed that even random numbers yield "great circle" plots as neatly as do UFO sightings.

There is one solid advance that has been made though. Jacques and Janine Vallee have taken a particular type of UFO—namely those that are lower than tree-top level when sighted—and plotted the UFO's estimated diameter versus the estimated distance from the observer. The result is shown in Figure 33-1, and it yields an average diameter of 5 meters with a very characteristic drop for short viewing distances, and rise for long viewing distances. This behavior at the extremes of the curve is well-known to astronomers and psychologists as the "moon illusion." The illusion only occurs when the object being viewed is a real, physical object. Because this implies that the observers have viewed a real object, it permits us to accept also their statement that these particular UFO's had a rotational axis of symmetry.