



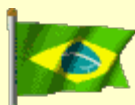
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UFOS Are Still Haunting Valley of the Old Women

This story was written by Bob Pratt in collaboration with Cynthia Luce, Tom Tulien and Vera Filizzola. It is based on interviews the four of us had with UFO witnesses in May 2003. Cynthia is an American researcher of anomalous phenomena who has lived in Brazil since the 1970s. Tom lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is a founder of the Sign Oral History Project, the purpose of which is to preserve important historical UFO information and to make it available for scholarly study. Vera is a native Brazilian, living most of her life in Belo Horizonte. She has long been interested in UFOs and other paranormal phenomena and has a website, <http://www.jornalinfinito.com.br/>. Our interviews were conducted while Cynthia, Tom

and I were guests at Vera's farm. Some of the photos were taken by Tom and some by me.

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Anyone wanting to study the UFO phenomenon up close should head for the Valley of the Old Women in central Brazil. For at least half a century now, the valley has been one of the most active UFO regions in the world. Countless sightings have been reported over the years and UFOs are still being seen there.

Its proper name is **Vale do Rio das Velhas**, or the Valley of the River of the Old Women. We will discuss the origin of the curious name later but for now we will simply call it the Valley of the Old Women.



The valley encompasses 27,867 square kilometers of cattle ranches and farmland in low mountains and rolling hills in the center of the state of Minas Gerais. The river has many small smaller streams feeding it. The system originates near the city of Ouro Preto, southeast of the state capital, Belo Horizonte, and meanders north-northwest about five hundred kilometers before emptying into the **Rio São Francisco**, one of Brazil's largest rivers.

Just how much of the valley has been visited by UFOs is not known. To our knowledge, UFO investigators have searched only a small portion of the valley, but that research has yielded rich results.

Members of the Belo Horizonte UFO group CICOANI went to the valley hundreds of times since the late 1960s, documenting about fifteen hundred sightings and encounters. The valley has proved to be irresistible to us too.

For one week in May 2003, Cynthia Luce, Tom Tulien and I were guests of Vera





Filizzola at her farm, Fazenda dos Poções, sixteen kilometers north of São Vicente. Some of the encounters that we heard about took place as long ago as the 1950s and some just two to three months before our visit. We learned later that there were sightings after we left. São Vicente is a small town about fifty kilometers in a straight line north of Belo Horizonte but about one hundred kilometers by car. Three veteran investigators

who live in São Vicente, Ivan Leóncio Soares, José Cimália and Maria Mércia Rodrigues, worked with us. Ivan is a former professional soccer player and a retired police officer, José is a businessman and Mércia is a mathematics teacher. Altogether, we

looked into twenty-six cases, many of them with two or more witnesses. Most of the people reported seeing a big ball of light in the sky that lit up everything around it.



SCARED MOM HAS HER HANDS FULL

Most of the people we talked to were frightened during their encounters. In 1991, Celsa de Fátima Soares, now forty-four, had one of the most terrifying incidents. She is a cook at Fazenda dos Poções and lives about ten kilometers from the farm.

"It was around 11 or 11:30 at night and I was going home in a pickup truck with my eight-year-old son and my baby," Celsa said. "The baby was eight months old."

She had to park the truck some distance from her house because the house is in the woods and there was no driveway.

"I was getting down from the truck, had a sack over my shoulder, held the boy with one hand and my baby in my other arm," she said. "As we started down the path toward the house, a light appeared in the sky ahead and lit up the ground all around us. I panicked and started running, pulling my boy with me and juggling my baby and the sack. I couldn't go very fast. We had to run through a lot of dense bushes and then over a log bridge over a stream. The light was going up and down, up and down and



it was right behind us. I thought it was chasing us. I really wanted to get away from it.

"I ran past a big tree and finally got to the veranda of my house and was screaming at my husband. I looked back and the light was right above that big tree, only fifteen meters away. It was red like fire. It was fifty to sixty centimeters in diameter in the beginning but was getting smaller, maybe thirty-five to forty centimeters. By the time my husband came out, it had gone away. It just went out and disappeared."

Celsa said she is afraid to go out at night anymore. "I always look to see if there's a light around and I'm always ready to run if I see one. My brother Wilson saw a light one night shortly after that and he had to stay hidden in the bushes all night long because he couldn't get away from the light."

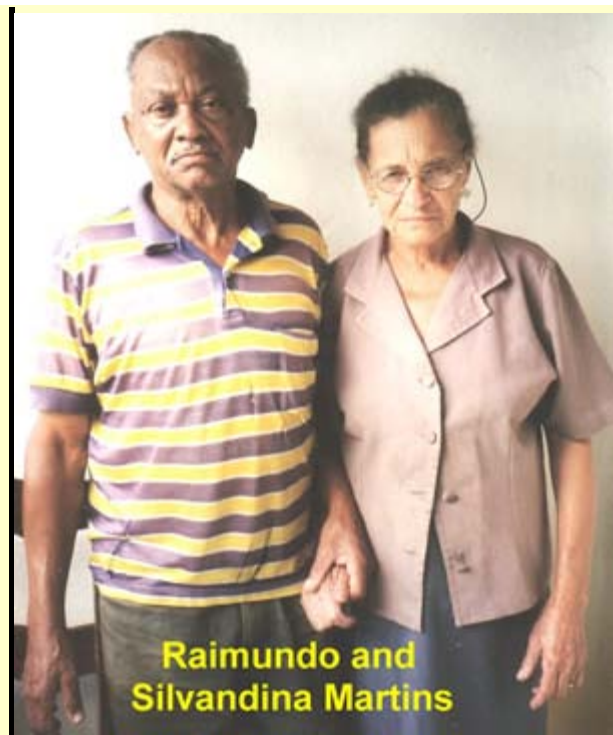
COUPLE TERRIFIED

The fear that these objects induced seems to be common in such encounters. For Silvandina Martins, such an encounter was the most terrifying event in her life. One evening in 1993, she and her husband Raimundo, both then in their mid-sixties, had walked from their home in São Vicente to a friend's farm three kilometers to the north. The friend had butchered a hog and the Martins bought a piece of it.

As they were walking back home

with the pork in a basket about 10:30, a bright light appeared in the sky and came toward them. "We were afraid and we started running," Silvandina said.

As they ran, Raimundo abruptly fell down and the light flew directly over them. Silvandina was terrified and thought he had died.



"Oh, my God, I lost my husband," she told herself, but Raimundo quickly got back up, and they continued running. "We found a tree with vines around it and hid under the vines. It was the color of fire, very strong. Everything was so bright. Everything was lit up and the light kept going around and around above us. We heard a noise, like a low buzzing sound."

Sometimes the light hovered directly above their hiding place. The tree was about ten meters tall and the light was just above the tree.

"I was so afraid I wet my pants," Silvandina said. "I am not ashamed. All my clothes were wet. I kept thinking, 'I am going to die. I am going to die.' "

A few minutes later the light disappeared and the couple went on home. But Silvandina was depressed for two weeks and finally went to a doctor for help. "I have never gone outside at night since then," she said.

Asked if he goes outside at night, Raimundo said, "Yes, but I stay close to home. When friends ask me to go fishing with them, I say no."

RED OBJECT IN THE ROAD

One of the more curious encounters occurred when a fifty-seven-year-old dairy farmer named Mozart José de Alencar was driving home one night. Just as he was going over a hill he saw twelve to fifteen cars, trucks and motorcycles parked in the highway just ahead of him.

Most of the drivers and passengers were standing looking at a brightly glowing object on the ground a hundred meters or so beyond them. It was shaped like an upside down washbasin and was the size of a car or truck. It appeared to be sitting on the pavement, and it glowed so brightly that everything around was bathed in red light.

"It was all red," said Mozart when we interviewed him at his farm near São Vicente. "The whole area was lit up."

The object made no sound. No one seemed to be afraid but no one knew what to expect.

About five minutes later, the object began to rise slowly into the air, still not making any sound. As it went up, it still glowed red but now seemed to give off greenish rays. A few seconds later, the object circled around as it rose still higher, and a minute later it blinked off and disappeared.

Mozart and the other people stood for a few minutes talking about what they had seen. "We all thought it was a flying saucer," he said.



His sighting took place in 1997, but he doesn't remember what month. It happened on the highway going from the town of Baldim to São Vicente, five kilometers to the south.

These accounts gave us a glimpse of the long-term presence of UFOs in the valley. What these people saw was more or less typical of what's been happening in and around Baldim and São Vicente from the beginning and may be typical of the entire valley.

A STARTLING SWIFT LIGHT

Many of the lights that we heard about were described as being so bright that the shape of the objects behind them could not be determined. Such was the case in one of the most recent sightings. That occurred about 10 o'clock one dark night last February as Cosme Rodrigues de Araújo was sitting in the doorway of his house on a farm near São Vicente. There was no moon.



**Cynthia Luce and Cosme
Rodrigues Araujo**

Cosme's sons, ten-year-old Henrique and nine-year-old Danilo, were sitting beside him. They were simply watching the sky in the west.

"I could see lots of stars and then I saw a light coming in the sky," said Cosme, a thirty-eight-year-old farm worker. "It was like the headlight on a car. It was bright and was all colors of the rainbow."

The object flew swiftly toward them but stopped suddenly just above some banana trees about three hundred meters away. Cosme and the boys were

so frightened that all three rushed inside the house. "I wanted to get a knife," Cosme admitted. "I felt I had to protect myself."

He and his boys watched the light from a window. It made no sound. To Cosme, it appeared to be five to six meters in diameter as it hovered above the trees. About fifteen seconds later, the light suddenly shot back in the direction from which it had come and vanished. "It disappeared in seconds," said Cosme.

EVERYTHING AROUND IS LIT UP

Less than a year earlier, Dalcy Ferreira, thirty-three-year-old manager of the Isaura Cachaça distillery on the grounds of Fazenda dos Poções, saw a similarly fast-moving light but from a different angle.

About 7 o'clock one evening in June 2002, Dalcy and another employee were the last to leave work for the day.

"Suddenly, everything just lit up around us," he said. Then he realized the light was coming from a huge ball of light moving through the sky. It was about six hundred meters west of them and was

moving south, or to their left. He was more startled than anything else.

“It looked like light was streaming behind it, like a comet. It was a bright yellow and about the size of a volleyball. It lit up the ground under it as it moved. It lasted only two or three seconds. It was very fast.”

Dalcy pointed to some palm trees about a thousand meters to his left and said, “When it got to those coconut trees, the light went out. Then everything went dark again. It was beautiful.”



SIGHTINGS NOT UNCOMMON AT FARM

A number of sightings have occurred on or near Vera’s farm. One of the earliest took place in the spring of 1986 (spring in the southern hemisphere being September through November). The witnesses were Luciene Donata Gonçalves, then eight, and her brother Leonardo Malaquias Gonçalves, twelve. Their father is one of the managers of the farm.



“My brother and I were very young,” said Luciene. “About 9 or 10 o’clock one night, we saw a light had been left on in the corral so we decided to go turn it off.”

The corral is one to two hundred meters from the house where they lived. About halfway to the corral is a gate.

“The minute we got to the gate, a bright light turned on above the corral,” she said. “It was about thirty meters above the silo and corncrib in the corral. It was about fifty centimeters in diameter, kind of bluish and it was lighting up everything.”

When the light turned on, it frightened them so much that they ran

back to their house as fast as they could.

Her brother Leonardo, now one of Vera's sons-in-law, said, "When we got to the house I turned around and could see the light was getting smaller. It looked like it pulled back and was going away from us. It kept getting smaller and smaller and then it went out completely."

SIZZLING SOUND HEARD

Two or three months later that same year, 1986, Erlânia Maria Elias, now thirty-four, had a sighting within four hundred meters of that same corral as she was going home for the night. Now a cook for Vera's family, she was then a seventeen-year-old maid.

"It was about 8 o'clock at night and we had just finished fixing dinner for Dona Vera and her family," said Erlânia. With her that night was Maria Pinto, then fifteen or sixteen, who also worked in the house. "We left and went out the gate near the veranda and as we were passing a stand of eucalyptus trees, Maria said, 'Look, there's a light!' "

They continued walking through the trees but seconds later they realized the light was getting bigger. "We thought it must be a car stopped at the entrance to the farm, but Maria was scared and thought it might be a robber. The light was near the ground and then it started to go up into the air. We could hear a low sizzling sound. It was shaped like a washbasin and everything around us was lit up. It was so bright we had trouble seeing. It started to go up. I turned to Maria and said, 'This is a flying saucer!' We started screaming and ran back to the house."



Vera was still on the veranda and heard them screaming but she didn't see the light. By then, the light had shrunk in size and soon disappeared.

WOMAN AND DAUGHTER CHASED

In almost half of the cases that we investigated, witnesses heard a noise. All described the sound as like a low or soft sizzling, buzzing or frying noise, and one said a whirring noise like a fan.

In February 1985, Vildevina Marques Moura, now sixty-six and living in São Vicente, heard such a sound. She had gone to a nearby village to sell wood to a relative. Her eight-year-old daughter Maristela was with

her. It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon but the man who would pay for the wood wasn't there at the time.

When he returned about 6 o'clock and Vildevina got her money, she and her daughter started walking home. She stopped for a few minutes at a friend's house near São Vicente. It was getting dark and her friend urged her to stay for the night, but Vildevina had to go because another child was waiting for them at home.

Not long after they continued on their way home, a bright light suddenly appeared in the sky behind them.

"We thought it was a car and maybe would give us a ride," said Vildevina. "But the light came up and passed right over our heads. We were very frightened. It seemed to be going around and around above our heads."



They started running but Vildevina lost her sandals and fell down an embankment beside the road. Both of them scrambled up the bank and ran into the woods.

"We hid in the underbrush and it was going around over our heads and it lit up the whole area. It was making all this noise, a low buzzing sound."

The light was the size of a tire and had come within fifteen meters of them, she said. "It was a black color with the light coming from the middle. It kept making that noise. It went off (northeast) toward Gentil. I will never go on that road again."

'WHUMPH!

Two unusual cases involved three children in each incident. The first occurred in 1955 when Anterino Goulart da Silva was seven years old. Anterino, now fifty-five, is a farm worker who had another sighting in 1974. In that one, he was fishing one night when a big light came down with a loud noise so close it scared him and he cut himself on a barbed wire fence running away.

Anterino said that when he was a child, his family lived in the village of Cana-Brava, thirty-seven kilometers northeast of São Vicente. After dark one evening he, his ten-year-old sister and eight-year-old brother were playing outside their



house. Their parents had gone to a festival and their grandmother was watching the children.

“We were running around in the yard when we saw a fire on the horizon in the sky. It was the color of fire. It would get very bright and then go out. About every twenty meters or so it would come on and then go out again. When it went out, it seemed to shoot out fire and made a noise, like ‘WHUMPF!’ And when it came on again, it went ‘WHUMPF!’ again. And then it would go out and move twenty meters again.”

Each time the light went on or off, it made that sound. The object was moving southwest toward Belo Horizonte as it disappeared. “My grandmother got afraid and shoed us back in the house. I’ll never forget it.”

CHILDREN ARE COWED

A more spectacular case occurred many years later in the village of Baú, twenty-two kilometers north of São Vicente. The witnesses were three other children and their story came to us from Mércia Rodrigues, the math teacher and ufologist who lives in São Vicente.

“This happened on a moonlit night in January 1988,” Mércia said. “The children involved were Adriana Goulart, eight, and her bothers, Djalma, twelve, and Claudio, ten. I heard the story some months later when Adriana came to live with me and worked as a babysitter.



“The night this happened, these children had to walk across the countryside to a place about six kilometers away. When they were walking through a pasture, a light appeared in the sky. Everything lit up. It was a very intense light of many colors. They were frightened. There was no place to hide, no trees or anything, but a cow was standing nearby and the



Cynthia Luce
and Maria
Mércia Rodrigues

three of them ran underneath the cow. It was frightened too and the light came very close. The children clung to each other and stayed hidden under the cow as the light kept going around and around in a circle above them. The cow was in a state of shock and she just stood there the whole time, not moving.

"The children felt a lot of heat from the UFO and Adriana said the wind was so strong as the light circled around that the grass was blown sideways."

Mércia said this went on for several hours before the light disappeared. "They were there the whole time until it got light. There wasn't anybody around, nobody there, just them and the cow."

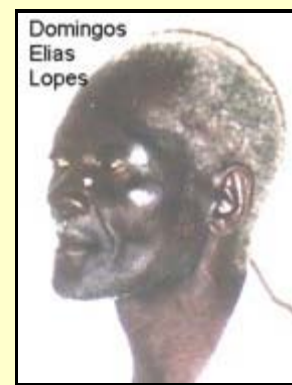
FARMER IS BURNED

Some witnesses that we talked to believe the UFOs chased them. Domingos Elias Lopes has no doubt about it, and it happened to him twice. He is a sixty-eight-year-old farmer whose farm is next to Vera's.

"I was coming home at midnight," he said, telling about the first incident, which took place in 1984. "I saw a star crossing the sky from right to left. When I got close to (a neighbor's) gate I saw a light up on a hill like a car headlight. Then it came toward me and grew larger. Then everything around me got as bright as day.

"When it got closer, I could see it was shaped like an upside down washbasin. I jumped over a fence and hid in tall grass. The thing passed over me and everything went dark again.

"I jumped back over the fence and started walking in the road, but then I saw a tiny reddish light ahead of me. It would get bigger and smaller, and I thought it was a man coming toward me smoking a cigar. Then it became a big light again and started toward me, making a sizzling sound. I jumped over the fence again and hid under a tree."



The light went out again but Domingos stayed hidden until he heard a car coming. When it drew near, he jumped out into the road and stopped it. That frightened the driver, José Gazire, who had not seen the light and thought someone was going to rob him. But when he saw it was Domingos, he let him in and they drove off. Neither man saw the object after that.

In the other encounter, the object came even closer to him. "That was ten or eleven years ago," Domingos said. "It was about 8 o'clock at night and I saw a light in a soccer field not far from my home."

Suddenly the light started rising into the air, making a low buzzing or sizzling sound. "It was sort of a wheel of light, but like fire. It was shaped like a washtub turned over. It was coming toward me and I began running to get away from it. It was so close I could feel heat on my back. When I reached my home I was in such a hurry that I kicked the door open and broke it."

His wife Dorvalina thought a thief was trying to break in. She armed herself with a club and started outside before realizing it was her husband. She saw the light as it flew out of sight, making a sizzling sound.

The next day Domingos had blisters on his back and later he came down with what appeared to be jaundice.

MAN DIES AFTER ENCOUNTER

To our knowledge, a jaundice-like illness is not common after being exposed to a UFO, but during our week in São Vicente we heard about two other such incidents.

For José Edígio Vieira, then seventy, a close encounter one night in July 1975 may have contributed to his death. He had worked that day delivering bread for a bakery in São Vicente, assisted by a nephew, José Antônio Vieira, thirteen.

José Antônio, now forty-one, said that about 11 o'clock that night as they were taking their horses to a pasture, "A big light suddenly appeared in the sky. I asked Edígio what it was. He said, 'It must be a flying saucer!' It scared us and we ran and hid in some bushes.

"It lit up the whole area. It looked like two plates, one upside down on the other. It kept going around and around in small circles



just twelve to fifteen meters above us. It made a whirring sound like a fan, and it was shining a greenish light down from the center. It stayed for half an hour or more and then it went away."

When he and Edígio thought it was safe, they went back home, arriving about 12:30 in the morning. The next day Edígio woke up sick with symptoms of jaundice, and shortly after went to a hospital.

"He died in the hospital fifteen days later," José Antônio said. "The diagnosis was hepatitis." (Jaundice is often associated with hepatitis.)

SHERIFF BADLY FRIGHTENED

The victim in the other "jaundice case" was a sheriff in Funilandia, a town eighteen kilometers west of São Vicente. The man is now dead and the story came to us from Anterino Goulart da Silva, whose sighting in 1955 when he was seven and was playing with a brother and sister outside their house was described earlier.

The sheriff's name was José Leiro, and Anterino, seventeen at the time of the 1965 incident, worked for him.

"José Leiro had investigated the deaths of two men and was riding back home on his horse when a big light lit up above him," Anterino said. "He was very much afraid. He jumped off his horse and hid in the bushes.

"The light was right above him and he stayed hidden until everything got dark again and he sensed the light had gone away. He got back on his horse and went home. But he got sick with jaundice and it was a long time before he got well."

FAMILY WELL ACQUAINTED WITH UFOS

It was not unusual for several members of some families to have been witnesses in the same encounters. We also talked with several members of one family who all had encounters but none of them at the same time.

Earlier Erlânia Maria Elias told about her encounter when walking home one night with a friend, Maria Pinto. Then we heard about the two encounters that Erlânia's father Domingos had, one of which left him with blisters on his back. And now we come to another incident involving Dorvalina Lopes, the wife of Domingos and Erlânia's mother.

One night in 1985, Dorvalina and another daughter, Edna, then fifteen, were walking across a field filled with dense bushes and trees. "We saw a light way up high," said Dorvalina, now sixty-seven. "It was small. People had been seeing a light circulating in the region and we were afraid. They said it comes right down on you. We ran to a big tree and the light was coming slowly down toward us. Edna said, 'Mama, there's a flying saucer coming! Let's run!'

"So we started running and the light came after us, and Edna sprained her ankle on rocks in the ground. She was having a lot of pain. She was limping along and we got under a tree.

"We stayed there for ten or fifteen minutes, quiet. The light had gone out, so we started hobbling along from one tree to the next, but the light came on again and was jumping along with us. It was making a soft buzzing sound."

After dashing from tree to tree for several minutes, they came to streetlights at the edge of a village, at which time the thing went away.

UFO PACES SPEEDING TRUCK

One man had a close encounter with a UFO even though he was speeding trying to get away from it. One morning in early 2000, João Batista Pinto and his teenage son Juninho were driving in a pickup truck to a rented pasture four kilometers south of São Vicente where he kept some milk cows.

"It was about 4:30 in the morning," said João, who also owns a small shop in São Vicente where he sells sandwiches and drinks. "As we got near the farm I saw a light in the sky. It was quite far away but I could see it was coming closer.

"I had to slow down to turn onto a side road and at that moment the light passed right over us and it looked like it landed on the road. I said, 'Let's keep going,' but Juninho didn't want to because the light was there in the road ahead of us."

João quickly turned around and started back toward São Vicente. The light had been on his left side before and the next thing he knew, it had lifted off the ground, passed over the truck and took up a position on his left side again.

"It was only three meters away from the truck. It was really close. It was round and there were rays of different lights going out of it. It was many different colors, green, red, blue-green. There was a rose color, and they varied in intensity. It would get bigger and smaller. I went faster, but it seemed like the faster I went the closer it would come."

When they finally reached a gas station on the outskirts of São Vicente, the light went away. João and his son waited until daylight arrived and then went back to the farm to milk the cows.

TAKING REFUGE IN AN outhouse

Some debunkers say anyone who sees a UFO is crazy or drunk. Dalton Castro isn't crazy but he had been drinking the night of April 25, 1998 when he had a run-in with what apparently were two UFOs, one just above the other.

"A friend had died and I was at a wake at his house," said Dalton, a forty-six-year-old factory worker. "Sometime after midnight I left to go home. When I came out of the house I saw this big thing in the sky and it was coming closer.

"The center was bluish and it was dull





yellow around the edge, a flashing yellow light. It was about sixty centimeters in diameter and there was a smaller object just above it. It was blue. I was scared and I ran. I looked back and stopped, and it stopped too. I hid under a mango tree for a while and thought it had gone away.

“But when I came out from under the tree, it came back again. So I ran down the street to an uncle’s home, ran into the backyard and hid in an outdoor toilet. After about a half hour, I peeked out, saw nothing and went on home.

“But it came back again and I could still see it from my porch. I stood watching for a while and then they started going up, up, up and then the two objects merged into one and disappeared.”

Dalton saw another blue UFO in 2001 when he and a friend were fishing in a stream five kilometers east of São Vicente. “It was about 1 o'clock in the morning and suddenly a big round blue light rose up out of the forest. It was about fifty centimeters in diameter. We got scared and began running. It chased us for a while but when we got close to home it went up and disappeared.”

WITNESSES SMELL SULPHUR

In only one case did anyone smell anything out of the ordinary. The witnesses, two women who are related by marriage saw the same light but from different locations.

Ivete Clemência Felipe, twenty-three at the time, was alone in the home of a sister-in-law, Ana Lúcia Felipe Silva, three kilometers from São Vicente. It was around 7 o'clock one evening in 1978 and the sky was dark.

“I looked out the window and saw a little blue light in the sky quite far away,” Ivete said. “Then it got bigger and turned reddish. It was moving faster and faster and coming closer. It was giving off flashes of light like fireworks. There were lots of

different colors.

"I could hear a buzzing sound. It was going around and around. All the doors and windows were shut but it lit up the inside of the house. I was so scared that I ran and hid under a bed."



About the same time that Ivete first saw the light, her sister-in-law Ana Lúcia, then twenty-five, was walking home from a sewing class in São Vicente. She was within forty meters of the gate in front of the house when the light appeared in the sky. A cousin, Eurico Aprígio, then fifty, was with her at the time.

"We had taken a shortcut through woods and when we came out of the woods we saw the light," Ana Lúcia said. "We thought it was a car with one light. We didn't see any shape, just a bright headlight coming toward us. It lit up everything, the road. It was coming toward us and we started running. Eurico lost one of his sandals."



Instead of trying to reach the house, they turned back and ran into a grove of trees. Afraid to leave the woods, they stayed hidden until about 10 p.m. before deciding it was safe to go on to Ana Lúcia's home.

We interviewed both women in Ivete's home and both said they smelled an odor during the encounter. "There was a smell of gas, like sulphur," Ana Lúcia said. "Yes, I forgot to say there was a smell of sulphur," said Ivete.

It is interesting to note that in five cases that occurred over an eighteen-year period, the UFOs circled around and around above the heads of the witnesses: José Edígio and his nephew José Antonio in 1975, Ivete and Ana Lúcia in 1978, Vildevina and her daughter in 1985, eight-year-old Adriana Goulart and her two brothers in 1988, and Silvandina and Raimundo in 1993.

CATTLE RANCH ATTRACTS UFOS

Many of the reports we received came from people living or working at Vera's farm, Fazenda dos Poções. Nearly all involved a very bright light in the sky.



A typical sighting occurred about 11 o'clock one night in 1996. Tarcísio Malaquias Gonçalves, now fifty-three, was in the main corral at the farm, artificially inseminating a cow. The farm has more than six hundred cattle and Tarcísio is in charge of them. He is also the father of Luciene and Leonardo Gonçalves, mentioned earlier in another sighting.

"I saw a light in the sky and suddenly everything around me was lit up," Tarcísio said. "I looked up and it was like a great headlight, very, very bright."

A few minutes later, the light disappeared. Tarcísio said none of the cattle in the corral reacted to the light.

The farm has two corrals. The main one is located next to a milk barn and several other buildings. Cattle are also milked at the other corral about two kilometers away.

One night in early 2002, a bright light suddenly appeared in the sky above the second corral. The lone witness was Wanderley dos Santos Costa, a twenty-five-year-old cowboy who was riding a horse on his way back to the corral.

"A cow had just given birth and a man got hurt when the cow smashed him up against a fence," Wanderley said. "I had taken him to be treated and was returning to the corral about 9:20 when I saw a bright light in the sky. It was a big ball of light that lit up everything below it."

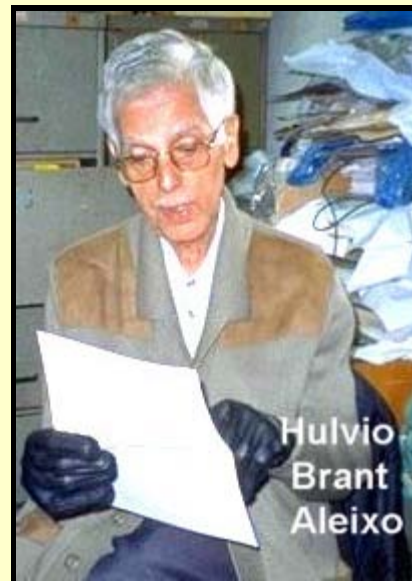
The cattle in the corral paid no attention to the light, but Wanderley's horse was spooked. It bolted and took off running. Wanderley simply loosened the reins and let the horse run until it calmed down. "After about twenty minutes, the light went away."



A VALLEY OF ENCOUNTERS

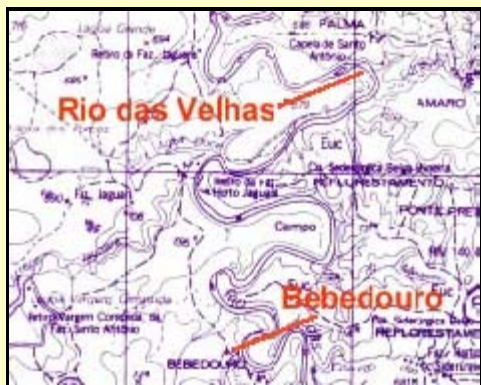
Although there have been several sightings on or near Fazenda dos Poções, the farm is not the center of UFO activity in the Valley of the Old Women.

For more than thirty years, Hulvio Brant Aleixo and members of the UFO group CICOANI investigated more than a thousand cases all around Belo Horizonte, but primarily in the valley to the north. A list of their field trips includes the names of more than one hundred and fifty towns, villages and hamlets – many so small they do not appear on maps of the state – and dozens of cattle ranches and farms.



Hulvio
Brant
Aleixo

ONE OF THE STRANGEST INCIDENTS in Brazilian ufology occurred in Vargem Grande, a village adjacent to Vera's farm. On the night of September 9, 1976, Hermelindo da Silva, the owner of a small roadside bar, tangled with a humanoid creature that slid down a cable dangling from a UFO. The creature was stronger and was able to slip a hook around Hermelindo's right ankle. Hermelindo was yanked off the ground and was being reeled up toward the UFO when his left foot hit the bottom of the UFO and knocked him loose as the UFO went away.



ANOTHER INCIDENT, perhaps even better known, occurred near the village of Bebedouro, twenty kilometers south of São Vicente. On the afternoon of May 4, 1969, a twenty-four-year-old military policeman named José Antônio da Silva was fishing in a lagoon when he was overpowered by two small beings and forcibly taken aboard a UFO. He was released four and a half days later in a city far to the east.

MORE TRAGICALLY, near the small town of Jaboticatubas, twenty-seven kilometers southeast of São Vicente, a close encounter led to the death of Cecílio Higino Pereira, a farm worker.

On the night of August 9, 1976, thirty-year-old Cecílio left Jaboticatubas with two neighbor women to walk to their homes near the hamlet of Barreira da Paciência. On the way they saw a bright light in the sky coming rapidly toward them. They ran but a strap broke on one of Cecílio's sandals. He had to stop and the women ran on without him.

As he tried to fix the sandal, the object came down and hovered just above his head, lighting up everything around him. He was momentarily levitated off the ground before the UFO went away. Cecílio became violently ill and never recovered, dying several weeks later.

It is interesting to note that the attacks on Cecílio and Hermelindo were one month apart and within thirty-five kilometers of each other.

MANY ENCOUNTERS in the valley were nowhere near as dramatic but were still of high interest. In Mocambo, eight kilometers northeast of São Vicente, a teenage boy felt an intermittent upward pull from a UFO as it passed over him one night.

In 1983 near the village of Patrimônio, eight kilometers northwest of São Vicente, a UFO levitated a young farmer about half a meter off the ground and carried him about ten meters before his wife could pull him back down.

Most of the time the CICOANI investigators were limited to localities that could be reached in a drive of sixty to ninety minutes from Belo Horizonte, and nearly always on weekends since everyone worked or was going to school. They went to São Vicente more than forty times and to Fazenda dos Poções at least twice.

UFO ZOOMS BIG AND SMALL

At the farm, Vera has had three sightings over the years. The first was in 1990, when the family's new house was being built. It is located four to five hundred meters north of the old house where Vera and her husband Arthur, known by the nickname of Souto, raised their seven children. The new house was almost completed but Vera and Souto still spent much of their time at the old



house. It was a Sunday night and she and Souto had fallen asleep at the old house while watching TV.

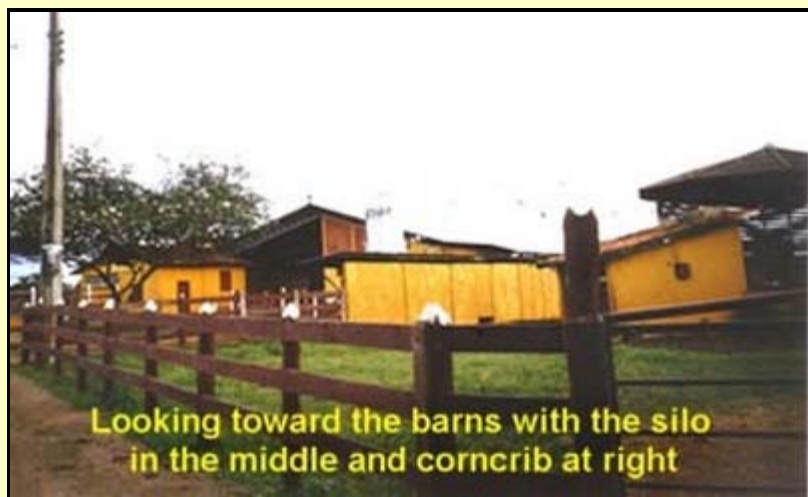


Ivan Leóncio Soares, Cynthia Luce, Vera Filizzola and José Cimália

They woke up when they heard dogs barking, and decided to go to the new house to sleep there, Vera said.

"We were walking and all of a sudden, Souto said, 'Look at the light!' There was a light above the silo next to the barns. Souto said he had seen it from the beginning but it was going on and off. It was a yellow light, very beautiful. It didn't hurt your eyes."

At that time they were standing beside a gate about a hundred meters from the barns. "Then Souto said there was another light above the corn crib that didn't go off. It was a red one and looked like a glowing coal. We were watching and Souto said, 'Notice how silent everything is.' We couldn't hear any birds or animals or anything making noise.



Looking toward the barns with the silo in the middle and corncrib at right

sound, a very low sound, but Souto said he couldn't hear anything. The light kept pulsing, from very small like a star and then zooming very large."

"The two dogs seemed paralyzed, looking at the light. I could hear a faint sizzling or frying

Souto wanted to get closer but Vera was afraid, and a few minutes later they arrived at the new house. "I opened a window in the kitchen and watched the light for half an hour," she said. "It was still pulsing all that time."

She went to bed without knowing when the light disappeared. "The next morning I went to the silo and looked all around but everything was OK, no burns or anything else."

That evening, however, she, Souto and a maid left the house in a car to drive to Belo Horizonte. "When we got to the place where we had watched the light the night before, something very strange happened. All of a sudden from the direction of the silo came an astonishingly fluorescent green light that flew rapidly in a diagonal direction right over the car and disappeared in front of us. It turned off quickly.

"My husband was astonished. He stopped the car, got out and searched for the light but he didn't find anything. That time he became nervous!"

THE NIGHT OF THE BARKING DOGS

CICOANI's investigations into the Valley of the Old Women slowly came to an end in 2001, for various reasons, but UFO sightings in the region never stopped.

"I have eight dogs at my farm," said Vera (right). "Six sleep in the kennel all night and two of them, a boxer and a basset hound, run free. On the night of September 13, 2002, about 9:30, all the dogs started barking very much. All of a sudden the boxer went through the bushes and started to sniff everything and then ran into the darkness of our big garden. The basset hound followed and soon both of them started to sniff, then immediately stopped to bark and snarl.



"I had been watching TV and at 11 o'clock I went to my room to sleep. The two windows were open and I started to close one. It was almost closed when I saw a light next to our orchard. I opened the window quickly to watch it.

"It was hovering over a tree just beyond the fence. It was like a fireball twinkling all colors, red, yellow and white. All of a sudden the ball opened like a yellow flower, very beautiful. It was similar to a yellow poppy with a black center, and then the thing disappeared. It was there one minute and then it wasn't! The dogs kept barking all the time."

UFO RETURNS TO FAZENDA

Cynthia, Tom (right) and I spent a week at Vera's farm in mid-May, going with Vera to São Vicente and nearby farms almost every day. Shortly after we went back to our own homes, the former mayor told local investigators José Cimália and Ivan Soares that had he known we were there, he could have taken us

to meet a man who had a sighting just three days before we first arrived.

That would have been around May 10. Further proof that the phenomenon is still around came a month later, on the evening of June 9, and again at Fazenda dos Poções.



"My husband Souto was driving back to the farm with my son-in-law Leonardo," Vera said later. "About 8 o'clock in the evening, just as they were driving through the gate at the entrance to the farm, they saw a bright light in the distance ahead of them. It was on the other side of the (**Das Velhas**) river, beyond the house.

"Souto rushed into the house shouting, 'Vera, the light is there on the other side of the river!' We ran to the veranda and it was there, beautiful with golden yellow sparkling rays like I saw from my window the night of September 13 last year. But this time it was bigger than the one I saw before.

"It changed shaped inside its aura. Sometimes it was shaped like a pyramid with two balls of light below and one ball on top. Then it seemed like that 'flower' shape (in the 2002 sighting), but very much bigger. My husband is an engineer accustomed to calculations, and I asked him how big he thought it was from that distance. He said fifteen centimeters."

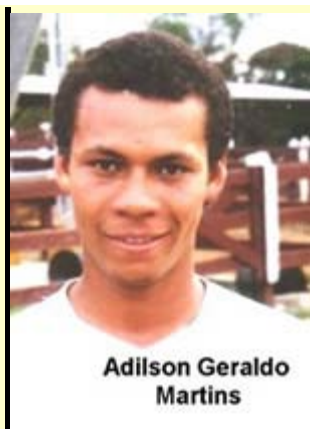
About 8:30 they went in to eat dinner and about 9 Vera looked for the light again. It was gone. "I felt sad. I sat down to watch TV but I was so excited that from time to time I jumped up to look again. And at 9:30 it was there again."

It was still there when she went to bed. She slept fitfully, waking up from time to time to look and each time it was still there. But when she looked again at 4:30 in the morning, it was gone.

A NATURAL PHENOMENON?

One of the most recent sightings took place just two months before our interviews. The witness is another cowboy at the farm, Adilson Geraldo Martins, twenty-one.

"I hadwalked my girlfriend home," said Adilson, who lives on the farm. "It was about 1 o'clock in the morning and I had just crossed a small stream when a big red light appeared. It was getting bigger and smaller."



Adilson was so frightened that he took off running, jumped over a fence and dashed into his house. Asked if he heard or smelled anything unusual, he said, "No, I just wanted to get away from it." He never looked back and never saw where the UFO went.

Actually, Adilson may have seen something other than a UFO. It might have seen another phenomenon known in Brazil as the "Mãe Do Ouro" (pronounced "MY due OR-owe" but the "MY" is nasalized as if you were saying "MAN" without articulating the N).

This is a mysterious ball of light that has been seen since at least the 1800s. Legend says the Mãe do Ouro, or the Mother of Gold, is seen over places where gold can be found in the earth, and sometimes the wandering light is said to be the "Mother" moving her children.

Similar strange lights are seen around the world and have various names, such as spook lights, ghost lights, will o' the wisp, foxfire, and others.

Such lights are almost always seen within two meters of the ground. They can be faint or bright although not blinding, and are almost any color except that they're usually white, golden colored or orangish-red. They do not light up a large area around it. They make little or no sound, move slowly from side to side or up and down, and vanish or move away if someone approaches, sometimes to re-appear elsewhere. The Mãe do Ouro has similar characteristics.

No one has satisfactorily explained these mysterious lights. Some scientists say the light is simply a superstitious interpretation of a natural phenomenon. Some say they're caused by methane gas, which is sometimes created by rotting vegetation and if ignited somehow forms flames.

Another explanation is that bones of dead animals lying around unburied can form, through a natural chemical process, pure phosphorous. That can be highly flammable and when ignited in some way causes a will-o'-the-wisp.

Still other scientists claim the lights are electrical discharges caused by tectonic forces and are sometimes called "earthquake lights".

Cynthia Luce (below) has seen the Mãe do Ouro several times. She

lives in the village of São José do Vale do Rio Preto, two hours northwest of Rio de Janeiro. She described her most vivid sighting this way:

"The first time I saw the light on my land was one evening in June 1980 around 7:45 p.m. There were five witnesses: my daughter aged eight, two maids, the gardener and myself. A yellow-orange glowing ball, slightly smaller than a volleyball, passed in front of us from east to west with the wavering flight of a butterfly about a meter and a half off the ground. It was about ten meters away from us and was passing between the garage and the house. It made a wide curving turn and headed off towards the stables and vegetable garden near the spring. My gardener was fascinated and he went after it. Foolishly, he reached out to touch it.



"The ball faded away to nothing as he put out his hand, then reappeared about five meters ahead of him. He came back to the house rather unnerved because the phenomenon seemed to him to have intelligence."

The Mãe do Ouro has been seen in the Valley of the Old Women, perhaps a number of times. In March 1996, during a visit to the village of Calabouço, not far from Vera Filizzola's farm, veteran investigator Hulvio Brant Aleixo said:

"There are lots of sightings of red lights in this region. The Mãe de Ouro goes from one place to another, is small, volleyball size... I have noticed through the years the Mãe de Ouro always seems to have some rock formation when it comes out and goes in, and usually the trajectory is short enough that the person sees where it comes from and goes to, and usually it is at a low altitude, a slightly parabolic line and usually horizontally."

Hulvio made these remarks shortly after interviewing a thirteen-year-old boy named Sérgio at a bus stop in Calabouço. The youngster lived with his family on a nearby farm and was about to get on a bus that was ready to depart.

"We see the light all the time," Sérgio said. "It is large and red. It goes around and around about fifteen meters high but sometimes it comes down lower. It doesn't follow us but just seems to be there, circling above us. There seem to be sparks coming out of the back. Sometimes it goes up and down a bit. I have seen it many times. It is more of an orange color. It makes hissing or sizzling sounds, a noise like static."

Cynthia Luce and I were with Hulvio at the time, along with five or six members of his Belo Horizonte UFO group.

Just after Sérgio left, we interviewed another youngster, Eduardo Vita da Silva, sixteen, who had a sighting just two months earlier.

"I was on a horse when I saw an orange light above that cross on the church," Eduardo said, pointing to a church sixty meters away from us. "This was at 7:30 at night. I was coming home and got so scared that I went back to the farm."

It's difficult to tell whether Sérgio or Eduardo had seen a UFO or the Mãe do Ouro. What they saw usually moved a good fifteen meters or more above the ground, much higher than the Mãe do Ouro is usually seen. The ones Sérgio saw also made a hissing or sizzling sound, much like the sounds made by UFOs in some of the our São Vicente cases. Yet other aspects of the lights that both saw are similar to those of the Mãe do Ouro.

On the other hand, most of the lights or objects described in this report were in the sky far from the ground, and the few that were seen on or near the ground usually rose into the sky as they went away. Many lit up a large around area them. Many moved swiftly rather than drifting around slowly, and some had definite shapes, such as an upside down washbasin or a disc. Some displayed lights of many different colors and at least eleven emitted a low sizzling, buzzing, frying or whirring sound. And at least one gave off enough heat to burn a man's back. These are not characteristics of the Mãe do Ouro.



THE OLD WOMEN OF THE VALLEY

What does all this mean? Nothing more than that UFOs – whatever they may be – have been visiting this region for a long time and still are.

UFOs may actually have been around in the valley for at least three hundred years, since the time the river got its unusual name.

Alberto Francisco do Carmo is familiar with the region and has researched the name. He is a physicist and former science teacher who now works in the cultural heritage area of the federal government in Brasília. He was an early member of CICOANI and worked with Hulvio Brant Aleixo investigating UFO cases for about thirty years.

Alberto (right) found an interesting historical story about the River of the Old Women in the book "Lendas da Terra do Ouro" or "Legends From the Land of Gold" (published in 1947 by Editora Melhoramentos in São Paulo). The "land of gold" refers to the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil's main source of gold in colonial times.



Lúcia Machado de Almeida, once one of Brazil's most important authors, wrote the book. A highly respected, careful and honest author, she wrote a number of books, some for young people and others for adults. "Lendas da Terra do Ouro" has long been out of print but Alberto found a copy in the rare book division of the Minas Gerais Public Library in Belo Horizonte.

One of the legends Lúcia Machado de Almeida recounts is "A Lenda do Rio das Velhas" or "The Legend of the River of the Old Women."

It starts with an adventurer named Manoel Borba Gato, who was jailed in 1681 after being accused of killing a Spanish nobleman. But he escaped from jail and fled into the interior. The charge was later dropped but for eighteen years he lived as an outlaw and explored the region, sometimes finding gold.

During much of that time, another explorer named Garcia Rodrigues, an African slave named Julião, and two peaceful Indians who were his interpreters, accompanied Borba Gato. According to Lúcia Machado de Almeida, one day during those eighteen years, Borba Gato and his men came under attack by hostile Indians on the banks of the river, which was then known as the Uaimi-I.

They were under siege for days, and arrows killed the two Indians with Borba Gato. Then one night during a full moon Borba Gato, Rodrigues and Julião realized the attackers had vanished.

Several days later they found three old Indian women who had been

abandoned when the attacking tribe left. One woman was very sick and died within days.

Borba Gato let the other two women join the expedition. They were grateful and helped however possible. Julião befriended the women and as time passed he came to learn a few words of their language, such as those that meant fish, fire and moon.

The explorers had noticed that when nights of a full moon approached, the women became fearful and almost frantic. The men came to believe the women were warning them that something bad would happen.

The explorers had watched uncomprehendingly as the women scratched an "S" in the sand. Later, Julião came to believe it might mean a seahorse or serpent or some other creature. He learned that during nights of a full moon the women believed a huge beast with fiery eyes would come down the river and had the power to pull people toward it.

In spite of the warning, one full moon night when Borba Gato and Rodrigues had gone to sleep, Julião and the old women walked toward the riverbank.

The next morning, all three were missing. The following day, Julião was found wandering through the bushes. He was delirious.

Julião told them he and the women had seen a giant "seahorse" coming down the river. It had fiery eyes and sparks were coming out of it. He suddenly felt something pulling him, and then the women seemed to fly through the air toward the apparition.

Julião managed to grab the trunk of a tree and hang on with his eyes closed until the pulling sensation stopped. When he opened his eyes, the women had vanished and the "monster" was disappearing around a curve in the river.

Borba Gato and Rodrigues thought Julião had gone half-mad or was sick with malaria. The women were never seen again. Borba Gato thought they had gone back to their tribe.

Neither he nor Rodrigues believed Julião's story even though he kept telling it over and over. One night about a month later, he too disappeared forever.

Borba Gato gave the river a new name and since then it has been known as Rio das Velhas, or the River of the Old Women.

This legend is very similar to one more widely known, the "Cobra

Grande". Each year, that legend says, a big snake flies over the Amazon River at night and snatches away the most beautiful Indian woman of the forest.

Whatever the source of the name, much of the Valley of the Old Women remains unexplored by ufologists. Who knows what other sightings and encounters have occurred in this region? Borba Gato found gold in this valley three hundred years ago. Determined ufologists could find another kind of gold there, one that might help solve the mysteries of the phenomenon.

END

(For a guide to pronouncing unfamiliar Brazilian names, [click here](#).)

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