

Note: the following is excerpted from the upcoming book “**Dark Mission – Book One: The Secret History of the NASA Aeronautics and Space Administration**” by Richard C. Hoagland and Michael Bara. The book will be published by Feral House Books (<http://www.feralhouse.com/>, ap@feralhouse.com)

Data’s Head

“Mr Data, your head is not an artifact.”

-- Commander Riker, from the Star Trek the Next Generation episode

“Time’s Arrow.”

Along the way to Shorty crater, a black halo rimmed crater on the outskirts of the light mantle material from the South polar avalanche, Schmitt and Cernan stopped to take some samples along the rim of a small crater. The stop, which was supposed to last 20 minutes, was made to take a double core sample, get a gravimeter reading, and take some 500 millimeter pans of soil from a general area. The station turned out to be a disaster, as the astronauts had numerous equipment problems and Schmitt had a spectacular spill trying to retrieve some sample bags. The crew later named the station “Ballet Crater,” in honor of Schmitt’s fall, and the astronaut later attempted a few ballet moves in his suit after being kidded that the Houston Ballet Foundation had called to enquire about his services.

It took nearly 37 minutes for the astronauts to complete their tasks at Ballet Crater, and from there it was straight on to Shorty which was a primary stop for the EVA along with Nansen. Upon arrival at Shorty, the astronauts took care of some housekeeping chores, and then got their first look at the crater.

145:22:22 Schmitt: Shorty is a crater, the size of which you know (about 100 meters in diameter.) It's obviously rimmed, although the fragment population for most of the blanket does not seem too different than the light mantle inside...Whoo, whoo, whoo!

145:22:38 Cernan: Man, are you going to get a picture now.

145:22:40 Schmitt: Oh, yeah.

145:22:41 Parker: We can hardly wait.

Schmitt’s description seemed to imply that while Shorty was relatively unspectacular on the outside, the area inside the crater was at least very interesting. Unfortunately, when the camera started up, it was pointed at the rover and the distant South Massif. It stayed positioned there as Schmitt moved away to take a panorama of the crater. Several minutes into this sequence Cernan oddly states “O-kaay! O-kaay.” At this point, Schmitt begins to discuss something odd he noticed through his filter. Raising his filter, he suddenly absorbed what he was seeing.

145:26:25 Schmitt: Wait a minute...

145:26:26 Cernan: What?

145:26:27 Schmitt: Where are the reflections? I've been fooled once. There is orange soil!!

145:26:32 Cernan: Well, don't move it until I see it.

145:26:35 Schmitt: (Very excited) It's all over!! Orange!!!

145:26:38 Cernan: Don't move it until I see it.

145:26:40 Schmitt: I stirred it up with my feet.

145:26:42 Cernan: (Excited, too) Hey, it is!! I can see it from here!

145:26:44 Schmitt: It's orange!

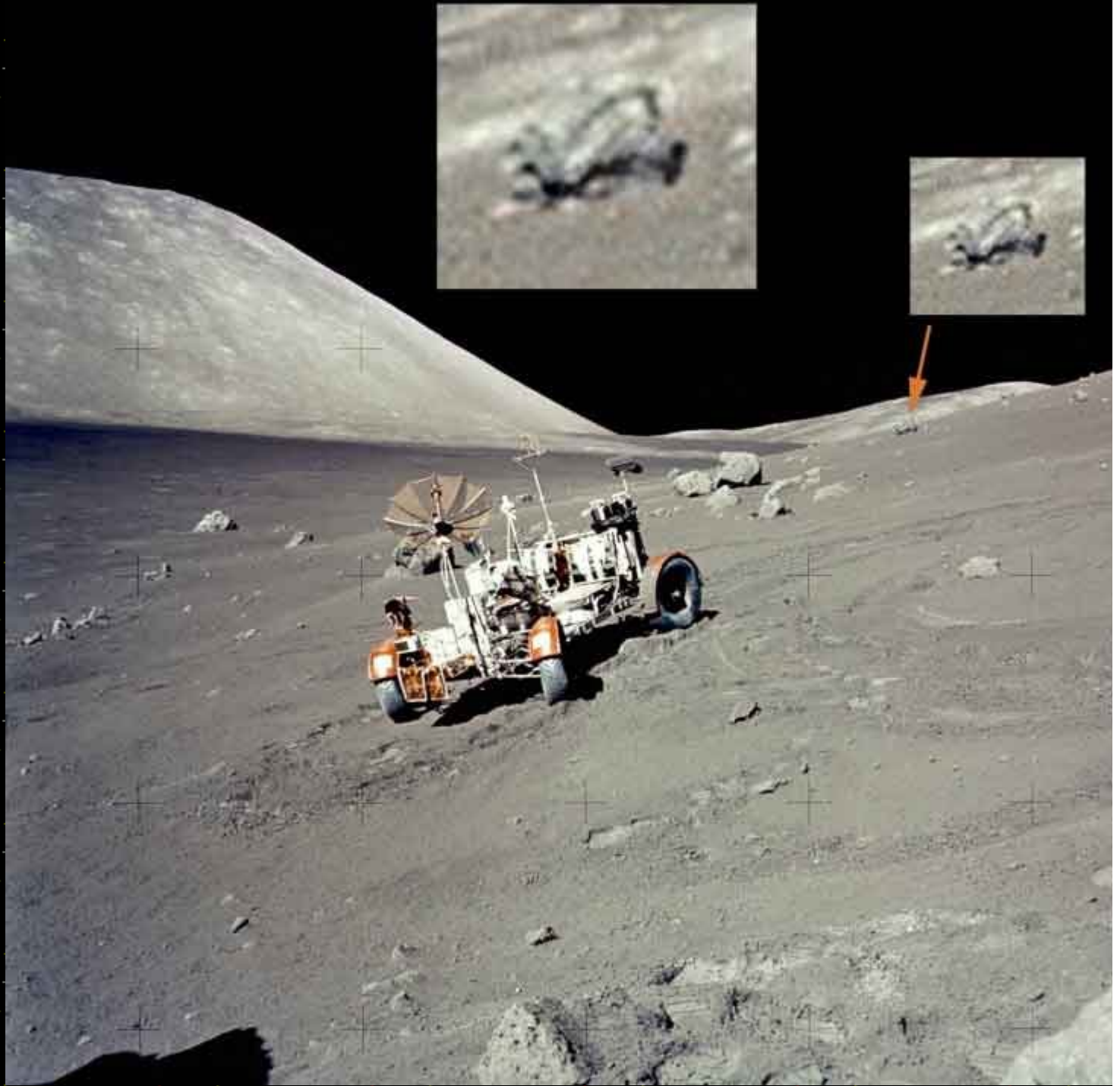
145:26:46 Cernan: Wait a minute, let me put my visor up. It's still orange!

145:26:49 Schmitt: Sure it is! Crazy!

145:26:53 Cernan: Orange!

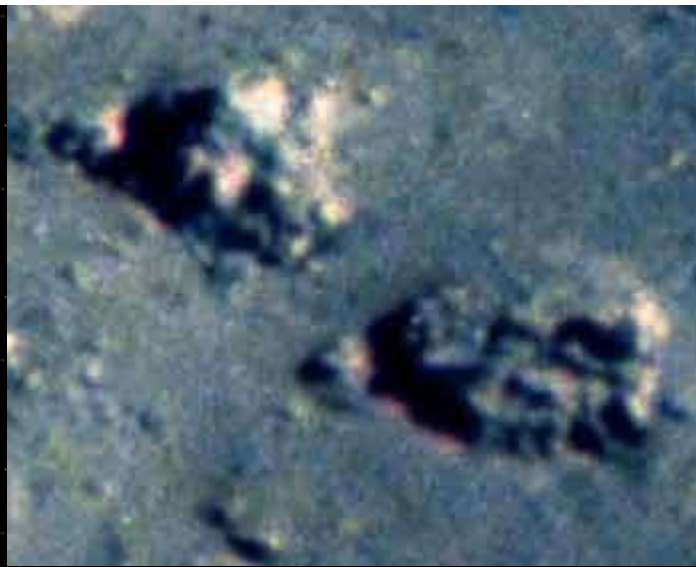
145:26:54 Schmitt: I've got to dig a trench, Houston.

The astronauts then begin to sample the orange soil, which was later found to be highly oxidized, a discovery which had tremendous implications for later colonization of the Moon. Extracting oxygen from the lunar surface would make the establishment of a permanent lunar base much more viable. After the scooping and core samples were taken, Schmitt moves off to the side to take numerous images of the interior of the crater. In some of these images, strange objects can be seen which do not resemble the fractured, volcanic rocks which would be expected at this site.



Instead, they look like large chunks of broken machinery. Shortly before leaving for the next station, Schmitt stops and takes several high resolution pans of the inside of Shorty crater and the area around it. Intrigued by other images of mechanical looking debris and orange soil in the area, we obtained early generation negatives of the pans, and subjected them to digital processing and color enhancement.

In doing so, it became clear that some of the debris in Shorty was unusual, to say the least. Color enhancement showed that many of the “rocks” had highly unusual spectral qualities, reflecting light more like crystals or highly polished metallic surfaces than a simple “rock garden” would suggest.



Two apparently metal cased or forged objects from the rim of Shorty Crater



Another shattered mechanical housing from the interior of Shorty Crater (NASA Frame AS17-132-21000)

As we scanned the center of Shorty, we noticed a very large and strange looking artifact that strongly resembled a pump mechanism or engine housing. Nicknamed “the turkey” because of its odd resemblance that terrestrial creature, this object appears to have a series of tubes and mechanical features extending from a geometric, metallic case. There are even what appear to be forged connectors or mounting points on the object.



It was in studying this particular object more closely that Hoagland first spotted an even more bizarre discovery, lying on the crater wall beyond the “turkey.” His eye drifted, as it always did, to that which did not belong in the picture. Even as he studied it, he couldn’t quite bring himself to admit what it appeared to be.



A human head. In a crater. On the moon.



Color enhanced version of "Data's head" in Shorty crater.
Red stripe is not an artifact of image processing

After overcoming his initial shock, he swiftly surmised that it couldn't possibly be a human skull. After all, it was lying in a debris field from an impact crater, which had tossed up all manner of junk and material from just below the regolith of the valley floor. Something as fragile as a fossilized bone could not possibly survive such an impact. Further, exposure to solar and cosmic radiation would have long since reduced organic material to a fine powder. No, this object had to be something other than everything else he was seeing in this frame, which was unmistakably of mechanical origin.

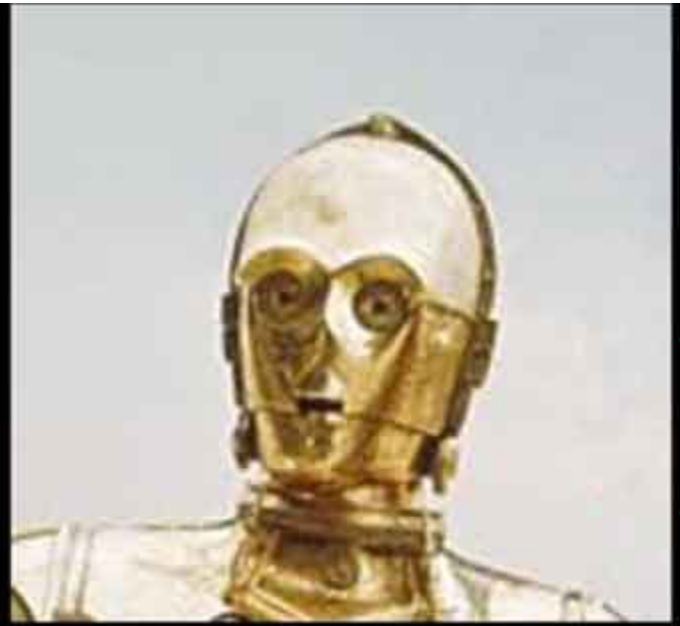
A robot's head then?

As his mind grappled with even that incredible possibility, he kept coming back to Schmitt and Cernan's previous statements on what they were seeing on this entire EVA. As Cernan put it, even though he was seeing it with his own eyes, he still couldn't quite bring himself to believe it. And he had dubbed the entire valley "one mysterious looking place." Had he, like Schmitt, gazed into the abyss at Nansen, seen chunks of similar looking mechanical debris, and then stashed the photos for later breakdown? Was Shorty simply another example of the kind of "unbelievable" things they had seen all along the second EVA?



Four frame color composite of "Data's head"

Color enhancements showed that the "head" had a distinctive red stripe around the area where the upper lip should be, a feature that clearly appeared to be *painted or anodized* on the object. Composites of other frames showed that the head had two eye-sockets, a forehead, brow ridges, a nose with nostrils, twin cheek bones and the upper half of the jaw. The "lower jaw" seemed to be missing. Still, it was an astonishing photographic find. And the resemblance to another, even more mysterious figure did not escape the authors...



What was most striking about the C3-PO comparison – and most telling – was the *eyes*. Like C3-PO, our robots' head indented, stereoscopic, *rounded eyes*.

Camera lenses. Just like C3-PO.

In looking at the context panoramas from which it was taken, Hoagland was able to confirm that the head was approximately the same size as human head, which meant, among other things, that they could have brought it back.

The transcripts for the Shorty EVA show that the astronauts were certainly rushed at this station because of the time they lost at Ballet crater. It is possible that Schmitt and Cernan never saw the object in question, or that they decided it would be too risky to try and retrieve. However, they certainly had enough off-camera time to descend the crater and retrieve it if they wanted to.

In looking at these images, the authors are reminded of a Star Trek, the Next Generation episode called “Time’s Arrow” where the Enterprise is summoned to 24th century Earth to an archeological dig below San Francisco. In this dig, Captain Picard and Commander Data – an android -- are shown a puzzling artifact. Mr. Data’s disassembled robotic head.



In the course of the story, Data’s head, and the information contained in his “positronic brain,” are crucial to unlocking the mystery of Earth’s past. By tapping into the memory of this ancient and damaged artifact, the crew of the Enterprise is able to stop human history from unraveling and their very existence from being threatened.

Was this perhaps the great secret of Apollo 17? Was this the reason for Cernan’s odd behavior at the NASA ceremony where he waited in vain for decades for NASA to reveal the contents of “Data’s head?” Was he angry that he was being asked to participate in another ruse on the American public, after having already participated once, on Apollo 17, only to wait 30 years for a chance to go back, and perhaps set the record straight?

Ultimately, it doesn't matter if it was truly "Data's head," or some other mechanical artifact that Cernan and Schmitt brought back from the Taurus-Littrow valley. As we have seen over the preceding pages, there was plenty of evidence that sub-areas in the vicinity of the lander were artificial, but in ruins. Even ruins are going to leave some indications behind of majesty with which they once stood. Nothing stays buried forever.

Not even, perhaps, the knowledge that those who would serve us were once our masters....

