



NEWS RELEASE

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Historic sighting spawns new image for Great Falls ball club

In the summer of 1805, Lewis and Clark forever left their mark on the city of Great Falls, Montana. But nearly 150 years later, Great Falls received some very different visitors—ones who traveled a considerably greater distance than the Corps of Discovery—who also left an indelible stamp on the city.

On an August morning in 1950, a bright flash in the sky caught the eye of Nick Mariana, the general manager of the Great Falls baseball club, while he stood in empty Legion Stadium prior to that day's game. Looking up, he was startled to see two rotating, silvery objects approaching at what seemed to be hundreds of miles an hour. He sprinted to his car, grabbed his 16mm movie camera and was able to record 16 seconds of color footage of the flying objects.

Media from across the nation reported on the sighting, and over the next two decades the film was examined and studied by UFO buffs, prominent scientists and engineers, the Air Force and even the CIA. Often disputed but never refuted, the "Mariana Incident" remains to this day one of the strongest cases supporting the existence of UFOs ever captured on film, and Great Falls, Montana maintains its place as one of the most active locations for UFO sightings in North America.

In 2008, those from both near and far who visit Centene Stadium at Legion Park will witness something they too have not seen before: a new age in Great Falls baseball. Though still a proud affiliate of the 2005 World Series champion Chicago White Sox, the team will sport its own fresh, original identity aimed at capturing the fun of Minor League Baseball and celebrating this unique piece of Electric City history.

New team identity belongs to Great Falls

"The community owns this team—and it has for the past 60 years," said the president of the baseball club board, Vinney Purpura. "But it's been hard to capture that feeling of ownership rooting for the Dodgers, Giants, or White Sox. Now the team will continue to be the Great Falls Voyagers even if our major league affiliation happens to change."

He added that use of a proprietary name is popular: "Over 80 percent of minor league teams use their own identity."

Purpura announced the name change at a media event hosted in the corporate hanger of Davidson Companies, where players in new uniforms were escorted through backlit fog by Men In Black. The new team logos, however, are predominantly red and green. One version features a flying saucer and a perky little space alien shaped suspiciously like a baseball.

“We can get creative with activities tied to the new theme,” said Purpura. “The team now has a new personality, and we hope Great Falls will have fun with it.”

The name change was undertaken almost two years ago, but the Voyager name was kept under wraps until this week. “It was a long process, but the change will be great for Great Falls,” said Jim Keough, manager of the now Great Falls Voyagers. “We must have looked at a thousand possible names, but this is the one that really makes contact.”

The Voyagers plan to introduce a new mascot soon. On June 14, a public event at the stadium will launch the baseball season under the new team name when the players are welcomed back. “The Voyagers will be introduced to the community at a fun-filled family day at the ball park,” said Keough. “Everyone will be welcome, and we hope all our fans, supporters and sponsors will be involved.”