



AMATEUR UFOLOGY NEWS



ISSUE #19

OCTOBER, 1993

OUR STAFF

Sam A. Uptegrove: Editor and Chief Investigator
Jim Root, Jerry Nieman, and John Waldo: Field Investigators
Kathryn Uptegrove: Subscriptions/Advertising
Eddie Conklin: Banner Graphics

CLOSE ENCOUNTER IN THE RAIN

"Man, I was shaking so hard I still don't know how I drove on home. That thing almost scared me to death." Those were the words that a St. Clair County, Missouri teenager used to describe his reaction to a terrifying close encounter he had with a UFO during the early morning hours of Sunday, September 26th.

Torrential rains had been sweeping across nearly all of the Ozarks region for that entire weekend. The downpours, in fact, resulted in extensive flooding in areas not far removed to the south. The witness, who has requested that he remain anonymous, had originally planned to take his steady girlfriend to Springfield that Saturday evening for dinner and a movie. The young lady's father and mother were not really comfortable with the idea of the couple making the long drive in such inclement weather but did not simply want to say no, their daughter could not go out that night. Instead they decided to offer an enjoyable alternative; how would the young couple feel about renting a couple of videotaped movies locally so the four of them could have supper and pop some popcorn right at home? "It really didn't take a lot to convince us," the young man confided with a chuckle. "We had already heard on the radio that some of the streets in Springfield were starting to flood and just about made up our own minds not to go. But we did hold out long enough to get her mom to throw in buying some pop."

It was nearly one-thirty before the young man told the family good-night and began the twelve mile drive to his own home. The rain had momentarily let up as he ran across the yard to his pickup, but the respite soon proved to be only temporary. By the time he reached a spot just a few miles south of Osceola on Missouri Route 13, approximately fifteen minutes later, it was once again "coming down by the bucketsful." He found himself almost creeping around a gentle curve to the left which ordinarily does not require slowing down at all.

It was then that what would soon become a virtual nightmare began, although it started in a relatively innocent manner.

"There's a little hayfield there on the right [west] side of the road as you curve to the left that's almost impossible to see when

you're driving south until you get right up alongside of it," he told us in a telephone interview on October 1st. There's a real thick row of hedge trees along the north side that hides it. The first thing I noticed was before I got to the trees, and it looked like headlight beams or some thing shining out across the road from behind the hedge-row. Then when I got a little further I could see down along the side of the trees and it looked just like a big car or truck sitting right up against the south side of them with its headlights on bright. I just figured that somebody had either missed seeing the curve in the rain or slid off of the slick road and ended up down in the field back end first so I slowed way down and started looking for a place to pull off. I was thinking I had better go check and make sure nobody was hurt and see if there was still anybody around that might need a ride somewhere to get help."

As the good samaritan looked for a place to get his pickup off of the highway and offer assistance, his attention was suddenly drawn back to what he still assumed at that point to be a wrecked vehicle by an abrupt change in the lights.

"Right when I got up to where they were shining right straight at the side of my truck it looked like they got a whole bunch brighter all of a sudden. That didn't seem to make any sense because I was still thinking about it being a car and I thought the lights were already on bright. I looked over to see what was going on and now there were four lights instead of just two. The new ones were right straight above the ones that were already there but not like a car with its lights like that, because they were at least a couple of feet higher."

The startled teenager was so nearly blinded by looking directly into the combined brilliance of all four lights that he was forced to stop immediately, right in the highway, to keep from driving off into the ditch. "When I looked straight at them they were so bright they hurt my eyes," he said. "It was like having four bright spotlights shining right into your eyes all at the same time. I couldn't even see where I was going."

Although he was beginning to realize by this time that he was being confronted with something far more out of the ordinary than simply a car which had slid off of a rain-slickened curve, it still did not enter his thoughts at that point to equate the strange lights with a UFO. Instead he negotiated the same mental path so many witnesses follow - he continued to consider other possibilities in an almost desperate attempt to find a rational explanation for what he was seeing. "Next I thought about it maybe being a tractor out there, you know, with the bright lights that shine off the back on whatever you're pulling, but I couldn't believe it was out there at that time of the morning and in the pouring down rain. Then I got to thinking that maybe I had been right in the first place, that the first two lights were a car that had gone off of the road and the wrecker was already there. You know how they have those big bright lights on the back of them, too, so they can see to hook a car up at night? Well, that really made sense for a little bit, but then I got to thinking that the car would be in front of the lights on the wrecker and I ought to be able to see it. Besides, with all of the rain we got for two nights in a row that hayfield must have been like a swamp. I knew you couldn't get a wrecker or anything else out there, but I guess that I wanted it to be something normal like that."

Even as the witness was carefully considering these possible explanations for the blinding lights and finding a perfectly logical reason for

rejecting each one, the incident abruptly presented him with a new twist which was probably the last thing he expected. "After the other two lights came on and I got stopped I really only had just a few seconds to think about all of that," he continued. "Then all of a sudden the lights started raising straight up, real slow. They didn't get more than a couple of feet higher than they were and then here they came, right at me. I thought whatever it was was going to smash right into the side of my truck, but when it got just about ten or fifteen feet away it tipped up like this." He obviously had made a sweeping motion with his hand to demonstrate and then realized what he had done, because he laughed nervously before going on with his account. "Hey, I bet you could see that really good over the phone, couldn't you? Anyway, it just sort of tipped up while it was coming and shot up over my truck like a rocket. I just got a quick look at some kind of red lights on the bottom and then it was gone. It might have been just my imagination, because I was pretty shook up, but I would swear that it rocked my truck when it went over. You know, from the wind or something. I don't know how fast it was going, but it was sure moving right along."

This was to be the last the young man was to see of the mysterious object. After he had completed his vivid account, several questions immediately came to the interviewer's mind. The witness was first asked to supply additional details concerning the red lights he had glimpsed briefly as the UFO presented its underside to him in veering up over the truck. "There's not really a whole lot more I can tell you about them," he responded. I was still about halfway blind from looking right into those bright ones and only got to see the red ones for a split-second. I do know there was quite a few of them and they weren't very big." He was unable to describe the pattern they were in and when asked to be more specific about their color he referred to them as being "just plain old red, like a car taillight". He added that they were not extremely bright.

He was able to provide much more detailed information concerning the four white lights. After commenting again upon their intense brilliance, he went on to compare their pure white color to that of more familiar halogen-type headlights. As to their shape and size he commented, "Well, they were just round lights, and the first two were about the same size as regular headlights. The two that came on later were a little bit smaller, like the lights on a compact car, but they were every bit as bright as the bigger ones." He also added that although he was thinking of a car at first, he remembered the lights as being "spread out more than they would be on a car". He estimated this dimension to be approximately ten feet.

When the witness was questioned concerning any possible secondary effects associated with the UFO's presence in such close proximity, an interesting new aspect of the encounter was revealed. While he experienced no problems with the lights or engine, he did report a distinctive interference with the pickup's AM radio. "It started at exactly the same time as when I noticed that the lights were starting to raise up," he explained. "It was a real high-pitched noise, kind of like a squeal. It was strong enough that it blocked out the radio station completely to where it was all that you could hear. Then when the lights came at me it got louder until it actually made my ears hurt and then it started fading out as soon as the thing swooped up and took off. In just a couple of seconds the radio was back to playing

like nothing had ever happened." He specified that only the volume of the interference rose and fell in apparent correlation with the UFO's approach and departure; the pitch did not vary that he could tell. He also said, when asked directly, that it had covered the signal from the radio station "instantly" when it came on but the reverse exchange was more gradual. He stated that he had never experienced any interference on that or any other radio even remotely resembling the "squeal" he heard that night.

The lights from the object shining down along the tree line allowed the young man to pinpoint its location in relation to fixed landmarks with relative certainty. "It was no more than fifty or sixty feet away from the road," he said, referring specifically to the location where he first observed the object, which was stationary at that particular stage of the sighting. He also estimated that the pair of lights situated on the side nearest to the hedgerow were at most no more than five or six feet from the trees.

One crucial element which could unfortunately not be included as a part of this otherwise thorough account, through no fault of the witness, was any real indication of what the object itself actually looked like. He was not able to obtain even the slightest glimpse of any solid body behind the blinding white lights, which masked whatever they may have been attached to from his view quite effectively. He was thus prevented from offering either a complete description of the object's shape or a guess as to its approximate dimensions. The only statement he would make, based upon the horizontal spacing of the "headlights" and the brief glimpse he got of the red lights on the underside, was that he thought the object to be "quite a bit longer than it was wide".

It would seem to be perfectly logical to assume that the four intense white "headlights" shining from out what was apparently the front of the object were probably spaced at equal distances from the center, rather than being noticeably offset to one side or the other. By accepting this single basic premise it becomes possible to establish a reasonable set of limits for one particular dimension, that being the width of the UFO, and be fairly certain of its accuracy. The first key to these calculations is the estimate of eight feet given by the witness as the horizontal distance between the lights. Unless we care to speculate further about some type of outspread appendages to which these lights were attached, this figure becomes an automatic minimum width. The object, on the other hand, could not have extended any more than six feet outward beyond the lights, at least in the direction of the fencerow, without encountering a rather substantial obstacle consisting of the line of trees itself. This distance, when added to the original eight feet between the lights and allowing for an equal extension on the opposite side, mandates that the UFO measured a maximum of approximately twenty feet across. The actual width of the object probably lies somewhere within the twelve foot spread between these two extremes.

The young witness estimates the entire duration of this incident, from the moment he first became aware of the lights shining out from behind the hedgerow until the object passed from sight over the roof of his pickup, as being "right in the neighborhood of forty-five seconds, maybe even a full minute". At no time during this period did he detect any sound which seemed to be coming from the UFO. This does not, however, provide any real evidence that it operated in near or total silence. It must be remembered that this observation was made from inside of a pickup with the windows rolled up, the engine running, and the

radio playing. Adding even further to this blanket of other noises was the steady pounding of a hard rain on the truck's roof and the rhythmic swishing of its windshield wipers. Then, just as the UFO was passing directly over the truck at its closest proximity and was most likely to be heard, the high pitched "squeal" it apparently produced, through his AM radio also reached its deafening peak. Under those circumstances it would have been much more surprising if he had heard anything.

Finally, the witness was asked if he thought the UFO had either been actually resting on the ground or hovering low enough above it to disturb the vegetation. The investigator, of course, was hoping that there could possibly be physical traces or other evidence at the scene. As it turned out, the young man had already considered that very possibility.

"I couldn't really tell," he answered. "The two bottom lights were just about three or four feet above the ground, but I couldn't see if there was anything on down lower than that or not. I went back out there the next morning and looked, but I couldn't see anything from out on the highway. I guess that I probably should have gone ahead and walked out to where the lights had been and looked around a little, but I was already running a few minutes late so I went on to work."

If the object actually was resting on the ground when it was first observed, the tremendous importance of any traces left behind as evidence on either the vegetation or ground itself becomes obvious immediately. If, on the other hand, it was simply hovering a short distance above the field, there was a good possibility of finding no sign of its presence whatsoever. Since the scene of the close encounter is a bit less than five miles from where the witness lives, as opposed to a nearly one hour drive for the closest AUN staff member, it was decided that the young man would return to the field again and examine it more thoroughly. Then, if he should find anything worthwhile, one or more investigators could still be sent to take photographs and obtain the appropriate samples. He agreed to this arrangement quite readily and was given a few brief suggestions concerning specific things to look for.

The teenager's inspection of the possible landing site was made during the afternoon of the day following the telephone interview. It involved not only examining the ground where the lights remained stationary but also checking the tree limbs hanging out over the field near the path of the UFO's departure. Not even the slightest indication of anything out of the ordinary was discovered. Unfortunately, a period of several days had already passed following the sighting before the initial report was made, simply because the witness had no idea who to contact concerning his experience. Whether or not this unavoidable delay resulted in the loss of valuable evidence will never be known.

Analysis of this frightening incident quickly narrowed the list of possible explanations down to a field of only two which were even worthy of further consideration. The first was that the account offered was either a complete fabrication altogether or so riddled with inaccuracies as to be of no real value. This aspect of a sighting report is strictly a judgement call which is frequently difficult to make, especially on no other basis but an interview conducted on the

telephone. In this case there would seem to be no indication that the young witness is anything but sincere. The most glaring omission in any attempt to label him otherwise is the lack of any discernible motive for concocting the story; he did not receive any monetary compensation, and the concept of him reporting a UFO to get attention is instantly erased by his request for anonymity.

As to the accuracy of his account, there is little doubt that the fear which gripped him when the lights suddenly came at him on an apparent collision course was sufficient to cloud his judgement to a certain extent, especially where such details as how close it approached or the speed at which it passed over the truck are concerned. Still, such signs as his repeated attempts to identify the object and the sound logic that he employed prior to eliminating each potential explanation would certainly seem to indicate that he is both intelligent and level-headed. It appears to be highly unlikely that his perception of reality became so distorted by his fear that the basics of his account would be suspect.

Assuming even a reasonable degree of accuracy, the only conventional flying craft capable of performing as described is some type of helicopter. The turbulence produced by its powerful rotors as it passed a few feet overhead could even be utilized to explain the "rocking" of the pickup tentatively reported by the witness. Beyond that point, however, there is virtually nothing to support this theory and much to weaken it. It is extremely difficult to imagine any pilot foolish enough to operate his craft at such low altitude in total darkness, so close to a line of trees and roadside power lines, while a heavy rain was in progress. Some manner of mechanical failure would of course provide the necessary incentive for making a forced landing in whatever location might happen to be available, but the craft certainly gave no indication of being disabled during its rapid departure from the scene. If this argument was not sufficient reason to eliminate a helicopter as a possible explanation, there is still the matter of the object's proximity to the fencerow. There simply was not enough clearance to allow for whirling rotor blades without them ripping into the tree limbs hanging out over the field.

In the final analysis, the teenager's close encounter during those rainy early morning hours of September 26th remains unexplained. In addition, some of its elements fit neatly into patterns developed throughout the ongoing wave of UFO activity in southern Missouri. The brilliant white "headlights" have been attributed to many low-flying unidentified craft during the wave, although in all of the previous reports there were only said to be two. There have also been numerous accounts recently of UFOs being observed either over or alongside of the major highways in the region; this is, in fact, the fourth known sighting made by motorists driving on Missouri Route 13 from Springfield north just so far this year. Additional accounts have originated from U.S. 71 along the western edge of the region and even Interstate 44, which bisects the Missouri Ozarks from southwest to northeast.

This is, however, the only account which involves a UFO seeming to "attack" a vehicle. Area travelers would undoubtedly prefer that it remain that way.
