

A DRAMATIC UFO ENCOUNTER IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS, N. H.

SEPTEMBER 19 -- 20, 1961

On October 19, 1961 (about a month after the alleged incident took place), I received a letter from Richard Hall of NICAP, enclosing a letter (dated September 26) from a Portsmouth, N. H. woman who described a close-up observation of a UFO and its occupants. An interview with the witnesses was suggested.

One, of course, must maintain a proper skepticism whenever occupants or creatures are involved in UFO cases simply because of the sensational nature of the claim. Unfortunately, the possibility always exists that someone is seeking publicity, perpetrating a hoax, or suffering from a mental aberration. Even so, I was impressed by the woman's report which sounded like an honest, straightforward account of a frightening experience that occurred quite unexpectedly to two innocent people. I decided the 60-mile trip to Portsmouth would definitely be worthwhile. On October 21, I questioned the witnesses thoroughly in an interview that lasted six hours.

On the night of September 19-20, Barney and Betty Hill of 953 State Street, Portsmouth, N. H., were returning home via U.S. Route 3 (Daniel Webster Highway) after a vacation in Montreal. Their dog "Delsey" was riding in the back seat of the car.

The UFO observation began approximately around midnight (the exact time is uncertain) in the Groveton, N. H. area where the Hills spotted a bright moving star-like object in the southwest sky. The sky was clear and brightly illuminated by a gibbous moon. The object moved from below the moon and the planet Jupiter, which were low in the sky, upward to west of the moon and then proceeded north. Mrs. Hill said it was brighter than the "star" (planet Jupiter) and seemed far away. The couple thought they were seeing a "falling star" (except that it was falling "up"), a plane, or a satellite.

As they continued driving south along Route 3 (at speeds never over 30 mph. according to Mr. Hill who was driving) Mrs. Hill became quite excited about the object, and so her husband stopped the car several times so that she could observe the thing through their 7x50 binoculars (Crescent). Mr. Hill insisted it was nothing to be concerned about, probably just an airliner on its way to Montreal. But it suddenly began curving around toward the west,

and then finally traveled eastward in their direction. This maneuver puzzled Mr. Hill; no airliner should suddenly decide to change its course like that. It was almost as if the object had seen them and was coming over to investigate, perhaps a jet aircraft flying on a low-level mission. Their car was the only one on the highway, and no others had passed them for a long time that night. Further, they were driving through an almost uninhabited region.

The UFO, still off to their right as they drove along, was moving in close enough and low enough so that Mrs. Hill could make out something through the binoculars -- a band of light first straight then somewhat convex as if conforming to the edge of a flattened disc. Mrs. Hill could also detect something else; the strange object was traveling very erratically, in a step-like flight pattern, tilting vertically as it climbed each step, leveling out, dropping vertically, leveling out, tilting upward again, etc. All the time it seemed to be spinning.

The thing drew even closer. Now they could see that the band of light was not continuous completely around the object but occupied only about half of the entire rim, and the other half was dark, causing a twinkling or blinking effect as the object rotated. At no time during the sighting did the witnesses get a good look at the surface behind the lighted band; they did have the impression that the object was a flattened circular disc.

Mr. Hill slowed down the car. He was somewhere in the Franconia Notch region of the White Mountains (in the vicinity of The Flume and Indian Head, he thought, which is about five miles north of North Woodstock). The UFO came around in front of the car and stopped in mid-air to the right of the highway "8 to 10 stories" (80 to 100 feet) above the ground. The height given was a rough guess and the distance was even more difficult to estimate, but the object probably was not much more than 100 feet away, which meant the Hills had to look up at about a 45 degree angle to see the UFO. The lighted edge of the object, a row of windows through which a cold bluish-white fluorescent glow shown, was visible and a red light on each side of the object could be seen. The UFO was no longer spinning.

Mr. Hill braked the car to a halt but left the headlights on and the engine running. His wife handed him the binoculars and he tried to look through the windshield with them. Then he opened the door on his side and stepped out on the highway for a better look. At that moment the UFO shifted position from right to left in front of the car and hovered again in mid-air. Barney Hill still believed what he was seeing had a rational explanation - a military helicopter perhaps having some fun with them. What amazed him, though, was the ease with which this craft seemed to move and stop, and the absolute lack of any sound at this close range.

Looking through the binoculars, he watched in fascination as the object, tilted downward slightly, began descending slowly in his direction. He could see eight to eleven separate figures watching him at the windows. They seemed to be standing in a corridor that encircled a central section. Suddenly, there was a "burst of activity" -- the figures scurried about, turned their backs, and acted as if they were pulling levers on the wall. One figure remained at the window. At that instant, the red lights began moving away from the object, and Mr. Hill could see that the lights were on the tips of two pointed fin-like structures sliding outward from the sides of the "ship".

Mr. Hill's wife kept watching her husband on the road and heard him repeat over and over again! "I don't believe it ... I don't believe it!" And he said: "This is ridiculous!" She did not look at the UFO or see it descend.

The figures, according to Barney Hill, were of human form dressed in shiny black uniforms and black caps with peaks or bills on them (which could be seen when the figures turned their heads). The uniforms were like glossy leather. When they were standing at the windows, he could see down to their waists. When they moved backward to the wall, their legs were partly visible. The figures reminded the observer of the cold precision of German officers; they moved smoothly and efficiently and showed no emotion except for one fellow operating a lever who, Mr. Hill claims, looked over his shoulder and smiled.

The approaching UFO finally filled up the entire field of the binoculars. The "leader" at the window held a special attraction for the witness and frightened him terribly. The witness said he could almost feel this figure's intense concentration to do something, to carry out a plan. Mr. Hill believed he was going to be captured "like a bug in a net". That is when he knew it was no conventional aircraft he was observing but something alien and unearthly containing beings of a superior type, beings that were somehow not human.

"I don't believe it!" he said as he put down the binoculars. He could see the figures in the object with the naked eye (an inch long at arm's length, but this is highly uncertain in my opinion). The UFO was now an estimated "5 to 8 stories" (50 to 80 feet) up and possibly between 50 and 100 feet away (again hard to judge or to recall). The Hills remember that no light from the thing fell on the ground and there was no sound.

At this point Mr. Hill panicked. His wife, who apparently preferred not to watch the approaching UFO, said her husband began laughing in an hysterical manner and repeating, "They're going to capture us", whereupon he jumped into the car, stepped on the gas, and took off down the highway. Neither witness looked out immed-

ately. Mrs. Hill cranked down her window, looked back, and saw no sign of the UFO.

But the strange adventure was not yet over. The car had traveled only a short distance ("5 or 6 blocks") when the Hills heard a series of beeping or buzzing sounds, as if in code, on the rear trunk. Each beep caused the car to vibrate. About 35 miles further south, at Ashland, Mrs. Hill asked her husband for the first time, "Do you believe in flying saucers?" and he replied, "Don't be ridiculous. That wasn't a flying saucer." Both claim that at once they heard five or six beeps on the rear trunk. (This aspect of the incident is difficult to account for but is included in the report as part of the story given to the investigator.)

The couple estimated that they had observed the strange object for at least 30 to 40 minutes for some 45 miles sometime between midnight and 1:00 A.M. Both witnesses were very uncertain as to how long Mr. Hill had watched the UFO descend toward them at the end of the sighting; estimates here ranged from at least half a minute to several minutes.

When they arrived home in Portsmouth, they at first weren't going to tell anyone about what had happened. But Mrs. Hill changed her mind and decided to call her sister Janet in Kingston, N. H. and tell her about their experience. It happened that the police chief of nearby Newton was visiting the sister, and he advised Mrs. Hill to call Pease Air Force Base and report the sighting.

The next day, she called the Base and spoke to an unnamed officer who asked her to give him the report, location of sighting, description of object, etc. Mrs. Hill did so and said the man seemed to be very interested in the wing-like structures, a new feature in such UFO sightings, and in the two red lights. She did not report her husband's observayion of the figures as it seemed too fantastic to be believed. Before he hung up, the Pease officer told Mrs. Hill that someone might contact her again about the sighting.

A Major Henderson called back later and spoke to both witnesses. He told them the conversation was being monitered. Henderson phoned again the next day, said he had worked on the UFO report all night, and asked for a few more details. He said they might contact them again. But that was the last the witnesses heard from the Air Force. According to the Hills, Major Henderson told them that the government knows of the UFO's existence, and the Air Force is very interested in finding out more about them.

It is the opinion of this investigator, after questioning these two people for a period of six hours and studying their reactions and personalities during that time, that they were telling the truth, and the incident occurred exactly as reported except for some minor uncertainties and technicalities that must be tolerated in any such observation where human judgment is involved (i.e., exact time and length of visibility, apparent sizes of object and occupants, distance and height of object, etc.) Although their occupations do not especially qualify the witnesses as trained scientific observers, I was impressed by their intelligence, apparent honesty, and obvious desire to get at the facts and to underplay the more sensational aspects of the sighting. Mr. Hill had been a complete UFO skeptic before the sighting (he still detests the term "flying saucer"). In fact, the experience so jolted his reason and sensibilities that his mind evidently could not make the adjustment. In his conversation with me (and with his wife since the sighting) a mental block occurred when he mentioned the "leader" peering out the window at him. Mr. Hill believes he saw something he doesn't want to remember. He claimed he was not close enough to see any facial characteristics on the figures although at another time he referred to one of them looking over his shoulder and grinning, and to the leader's expressionless face. However, it is my view that the observer's blackout is not of any great significance. I think the whole experience was so improbable and fantastic to the witness -- along with the very real fear of being captured added to imagined fears -- that his mind finally refused to believe what his eyes were perceiving and a mental block resulted.

Needless to say, neither Mr. Hill nor his wife are UFO doubters any longer. Both are now quite interested in the UFO subject and wish to know more about it and read as much as they can. Near the conclusion of the interview, I was asked many questions concerning the possible nature and origin of such objects. Mrs. Hill commented in her letter to NICAP: "We both have been quite frightened by this experience but fascinated. We feel a compelling urge to return to the spot where this occurred in the hope that we may again come in contact with this object. We realize this possibility is slight and we should, however, have more recent information regarding developments in the last six years."

It will be noted that there were no electromagnetic disturbances, such as engine and headlight failure (mentioned in some close-range UFO observations). However, the code-like beeping sounds on the rear of the car (a 1957 Chevrolet two-door hardtop) are an unexplained feature of this case. Neither did the witnesses notice any physiological effects - warmth, burns, shock, or paralysis. The dog did not appear to be alarmed at any time during the whole sighting. There were no other aircraft in the sky. Just for the record - not that there is any connection at all - the Hill sighting took place a day before Hurricane Esther's rains and winds hit New England (also see North Scituate, Mass., case - Sept. 10, 1960

The Hills live at 953 State Street, Portsmouth, N. H., phone 603-GEneva 6-3803. Barney, 39, is a clerk at a Boston, Mass. post office (South Station) and Betty, 41, is a child welfare worker employed at Portsmouth by the New Hampshire Department of Public Welfare.

New Hampshire has furnished quite a number of UFO reports in recent years. For example, in 1960 NICAP recorded seven sightings from the Granite State, six of them in the White Mountains area, especially around Plymouth. Of particular interest were the red cigar-shaped objects seen during April -- twice from Plymouth (on the 15th and 25th) and once from West Thornton (on the 28th). See NICAP Special Bulletin, May 1960, p. 4. Another "cigar" was observed in the same area, near Rumney, on August 24. See NICAP report form on case.

Mrs. Hill was acquainted with several sightings. One occurred near Plymouth about two weeks after theirs. She recalled that it involved an unidentified object hovering in the sky (appeared as if it were over Vermont). And last summer, said Mrs. Hill, a Portsmouth man phoned an "express your opinion" show at Radio Station WHEB (Portsmouth) and said he and his wife had been frightened by a UFO as they drove from Lake Winnepesaukee. An Air Force man listening to the program called the station and said something like this: don't be alarmed, these things are seen by numerous people.

About eight years ago, Mrs. Hill's sister, Janet, was driving from Kingston, N. H. to Haverhill, Mass. on Route 125 and saw near Plaistow, N. H. a large glowing object in the sky with smaller objects flying around it. She ran to a house and got others to look at the strange apparition. They all saw the smaller objects fly into the larger one which then took off.

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W. N. Webb