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THE ABDUCTION PHENOMENON IN AUSTRALIA

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In July/August 1988 issue of IUR Budd Hopkins, referring to the testable fantasy-prone hypotheses advanced by Keith Basterfield and Bob Bartholomew, wrote that his advice was "to put their theory on the back burner and to look into any possible abductions that come their way." Unfortunately, within Australia this is easier said than done. There has been an apparent lack of well-documented abduction cases in this country. The authors therefore decided to review the situation on two fronts. First, they undertook an intensive examination of the Australian UFO literature. Second, they undertook to uncover any previously unreported cases. This article documents our findings to date.

In 1976 Keith Basterfield co-authored a work titled "An Australian Catalogue of Close Encounter Type Three Reports". In this work an attempt was made to collect and document all Australian CE3 cases that were known as of that date. The result was a collection of some 36 cases. But none of these could be classed as possessing and characteristics associated with the abduction event.

The following year Bill Chalker of Sydney presented a paper at the national UFOCON 3 at Surfers Paradise and wrote, concerning Australia, "Upon first inspection, we appear to have a complete absence of "time loss", "abduction" and contact cases." Within two years though, Chalker was on the trail of stories along the lines of "interrupted

journeys." Three Australian events came to light.

In 1971, a Finnish couple, Ben and Helen K., left Gladstone, Queensland, at about 11:35 p.m. and upon arrival in Rockhampton found that only 40 minutes had passed on the trip that would normally take much longer. In addition to the rapid trip they could not recall passing through intervening places although they recall seeing an unusual green light at one stage. Their 1971 Valiant sedan was reportedly covered with a thin film of odorless oil, and unusual marks were noted on the car's hood. Attempts at hypnotizing the couple were unsuccessful.

The second account told of an event dated January 10, 1978, at a place called the Balers Creek Falls, New South Wales. Gary P. had been diving alone in the early hours of the morning when he found himself unaccountably stationary on the side of the road at 5:00 a.m. He was unable to clearly remember the previous 160 km. While stationary he noted a really bright light hovering some distance away. Although he tried to get close to it, he could not.

A researcher in Western Australia, Jeff Bell, came across the story of a truck driver. The incident took place near Baladonia in that state in February 1978. A memory lapse of three to 3 1/2 hours is said to have been associated with the observation of two unusual lights. During this time the driver says he recalls "talking to somebody about inventing something ... Also I remember speaking with two voices ..." Investigators have been unable to learn anything more about this account.

The Frederick Valentich case burst on the scene in 1978 and in some

quarters it was suggested he had in fact been abducted. The story is well known, but in condensed form, 20 year old Frederick Valentich disappeared over Bass Strait while flying a Cessna aircraft between Melbourne and King Island. Some think he was abducted by the occupants of the object which he reported observing just before radio contact was lost with his aircraft.

In 1980 Keith Basterfield produced a more definitive study of local CE3 events and broadened the catchment area to include New Zealand as well as Australia. By this date 104 such events had come to light. There were five more cases which relate to todays abduction accounts.

The first one uncovered came via an article in the English "Flying Saucer Review" and it is said to have occurred in Adelaide, South Australia, in 1955. A 10 year-old girl, Janet X, was being treated for a slight nervous disorder. While under hypnosis for this condition she recounted a story of her interaction with aliens and a flying saucer. She spoke of being in the saucer with three "men" and of visiting a planet with and advanced society. Pony Godic of UFORA spoke with one of the case's original investigators in 1989, but despite this we have not been able to relocate Janet X to reinterview her.

Two American paperbacks led us to an abduction report more typical of today; yet it is dated August 11, 1966. A Marlene Travers, of Melbourne, is reported to have observed a large silver disc land near her. She was abducted and raped by and alien wearing a loose fitting metallic green tunic. The above books referenced the original source as the "New York Chronicle" of November 21, 1966. A search by Pony Godic using the U.S. Library of Congress and the South Australian

State Reference Library found a small college newspaper of that name in Hempstead, New York. No reply has yet been received to the inquiry directed to that paper. Any light American researchers could throw on this account would be appreciated.

An interesting case occurred in 1972 and was ably investigated by Gary Little and Bill Stapleton of Melbourne. The significance of it was not understood at the time until it was reexamined for the 1980 catalogue. In early 1972 Maureen Puddy reported observing a disc-shaped object in the sky. Later in July she related that her car stopped itself as the same object hovered overheard. Several months later she recounted being abducted into a room and observing an entity there. This latter event occurred while two other persons were physically present with Mrs. Puddy but they reported only that Mrs. Puddy lapsed into unconsciousness. On a later occasion she said the entity again appeared to her when she was driving the car. The "mental" abduction has led some researchers to support an altered-state-of-consciousness approach to the abduction phenomenon.

The fourth event, unfortunately could not be documented properly, came from Springwood, New South Wales, in 1973. One night two men were asleep in a caravan on a remote building site, when one was awakened by a blue light projecting from a hovering aerial disc. A time lapse of some two hours occurred. He felt some "beings, Caucasian types," were somehow involved.

The fifth case was uncovered by Bill Chalker. In 1974 two young women from Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, felt compelled to get into their car which allegedly drove itself to a remote spot. They were escorted by a brilliant white light source. Vague human

shapes were seen and strange noises heard. There was an episode of missing time.

Two additional cases came to light at about this time. An old man is said to have been abducted near Elliot, Northern Territory, in 1976, after a bright object landed near him. Beings alighted and took him aboard. He said they asked him some questions about life on earth before they returned him unarmed to the pick-up point. Investigations were unable to verify the account even though Pony Godic spent some time in 1989 corresponding with residents of Elliot in an attempt to uncover some leads. The other story emerged from Hobart, Tasmania, on the other side of Australia, again in 1976. A man and his wife had gone to bed. She fell asleep, leaving him awake. Suddenly through the closed door came three figures. One tried to put a bag over the man's legs in an apparent abduction attempt. He tried to awaked his wife, whereupon the figures departed through the window.

The frustrations of being unable to investigate a fascinating report came to the surface in the next case. At about 9:00 p.m. on February 5, 1979, an intense white light lit up the hood of a car driven by a young man, near Lawitta, Tasmania. The car engine stopped, the radio went dead and the lights went out. Later that evening the man was picked up by the police in Hobart for driving the car without lights. They found him to be in a dazed condition and he did not know where he was. He was taken to a hospital apparently suffering from shock. The man, apparently suffering from shock, wished no further investigation of the matter.

INTO THE 1980'S

In 1982 what had all the hallmarks of a classic multiple-witness

abduction case happened. Keith Basterfield produced a short report in "UFO Research Australia Newsletter" describing "Australia's first abduction case?" But despite a promising start to investigations neither of the two witnesses wished to cooperate with inquiries and so the case languished in our files.

The details are as follows: Two young men were traveling in a car near Port Lincoln, South Australia, on October 24, 1981 when they encountered a "white endless space" where a time loss of several hours is said to have occurred. During this loss time they have vague memories of a "being" and recalled "walking into a big room." Just prior to the "space" they had been watching a mysterious light in the sky. Arrangements to have the men undergo a full investigation including hypnotic regression was unsuccessful.

Two years later, while documenting cases of near-death experiences (NDE's), Melbourne researcher Gary Little came across a case that contained aspects of both an NDE and a bedroom abduction. In 1979 a man named Mark retired to bed one night in Melbourne, Victoria, at about 11:00 p.m. Shortly after closing his eyes he lost all sense of sound and feeling and he found himself traveling in a tunnel through space. Looking forward, he noted a light at the end of the tunnel. His next awareness was of lying on a table in a "craft." He was medically examined by three beings, after which he panicked and then awoke in his own bed. The percipient didn't wish to take the matter any further.

At about the same time (1983) Pony Godic and Keith Basterfield were investigating another case from the Northern Territory. A 17 year

old youth, Simon, reported a series of events which included a nightmare close encounter, a number of dreams and also observations of entities about the house. Investigation, however, led to the conclusion that the stories originated from reading Raymond Fowler's "Andreasson Affair". The sketches Simon drew of his "aliens" were carbon copies of drawings from the book. Eventually he admitted he had indeed read the book whose story obsessed him to the point where his school grades suffered.

Finally a well-investigated apparent abduction event emerged and was ably looked into and reported upon by Mark Moravec of Sydney. Two young men, out hunting near Jindabyne, New South Wales, in September 1978, reported seeing a bright spherical light on the ground some little distance away. Next night it was seen again. In 1983 one of the men began to recall memories of a two-hour time lapse on one of those two nights. One memory was of the two men's being floated into a room where they were placed on a table and examined by tall, white-colored beings. Moravec wrote "there is at present no evidence to confirm the 'abduction' experience occurred as a real physical event."

RECENT RESEARCH

Thomas E. Bullard's 1987 compilation of global abduction cases, "UFO Abductions: The Measure of a Mystery", contains 14 entries for Australia. This article presents brief details of 11 out of 14. One of Bullard's cases, case 16, doesn't seen to describe "missing time" and another, case 214, occurred in 1868, and the third, case 26, is spurious. This last event, dated March 28, 1982, was almost certainly explainable by the sighting, by a fatigued driver and passenger, of the planet Venus rising. No missing time or abduction scenario emerged, other than in speculation in the media generated by

over enthusiastic UFO researchers involved in the case.

By 1988, with the upsurge of the discovery of abduction cases in other countries, UFORA believed it was time to explore the dimension of events in this country. Therefore in November 1988 we circulated a carefully worded "Letter to the Editor" to 20 metropolitan daily newspapers requesting potential abductees to contact us. It was published in papers in four different Australian states. Although we received 20 replies to this letter, none was of the nature of an abduction event.

Early 1989 brought five new cases to attention for review. One case (Nildottie) was poorly investigated and reported so far only in a national mass-circulation magazine. Three other cases in New South Wales are currently under investigation by Chalker, and two cases under investigation by Ray Brooke and Basterfield in South Australia.

Here are brief details of the three New South Wales events: A Sydney woman recalls as a young girl, aged four or five years, she saw a small being with large eyes in her bedroom during daytime. She had little conscious recall of the details other than that she felt she went "somewhere else." Another Sydney woman woke up feeling agitated and heard a voice. Figures appeared and said to come with them. She went through a doorway into a room where she watched a scene on a screen. This screen showed pictures of her future life, and the events depicted later came true. The case is currently under active investigation and stretches over the time frame of 1979 - 1982.
Finally, in 1976, a 31 year old woman was overcome be a feeling of sickness while vacuuming her house. Three strange figures were seen

in front of her. There was apparently telepathic communication and advice that she had to go with them. The next thing she remembers, it was five hours later and her boy friend had arrived home. It is interesting to note that no events post 1982 were located.

Meanwhile in 1979, in South Australia at a small country town called Nildottie, two men, Don and Jack, recounted an abduction experience which is alleged to have occurred near the River Murray. They were preparing for dinner when beings entered their house. They experienced a time lapse and found themselves standing by a silver craft. They were subjected to psychological testing for several hours before realizing they were back at their kitchen table. A more recent case from Adelaide in 1988 is one in which a man reports that he is in two-way communication with aliens via an implant in his ear. During investigation he revealed that he had undergone two apparent out-of-body experiences in which he was "sucked-out" of his body. He indicated that during these experiences he had been taken on board a UFO.

CURRENT RESEARCH

To determine the extent of the abduction phenomenon, and in the light of the availability of books by Randles, Hopkins, Klass and Strieber in Australia, we carried out another exercise in June 1989. We forwarded neutrally-worded "Letter to the Editor" to 51 regional newspapers scattered all over the country. Shortly thereafter we forwarded a media release and background briefing paper to selected metropolitan daily newspapers and radio stations because we had no visual material to present. The net result was coverage on two TV shows, items in five major metropolitan newspapers, items in an unknown number of country papers, and 31 interviews on 31 radio

stations, all in one week. This was the most intense media exposure ever given to the subject of abductions to date in Australia. Several previously unknown cases are being investigated.

DISCUSSION

Unlike the United States and the United Kingdom, abduction accounts have never made front-page headlines or featured heavily in the electronic media within Australia. The only exception to this rule was the case of the missing pilot Frederick Valentich; that one made headlines throughout the world. All of the rest of the reports documented here have come to the attention either of UFO research organisations or through low-key press articles. This has meant that to date researchers have been able to pursue cases out of the media spotlight. On the other hand, with little mass publicity abduction cases may lie undiscovered, with potential abductees being unaware that there are responsible organisations to which they could take their stories. The recent UFORA publicity suggests there are indeed a few cases waiting attention. But a balance needs to be maintained between too much media exposure with the inherent risk of exposing people to the intimate details of previous events, and not enough publicity which would keep reports flowing to us.

What then have we leaned about abduction experience in Australia? We have learned that there are cases that parallel those in other countries. Researchers have not been able to pursue and fully document many of these cases. Reasons for this include the sheer vastness of the Australian land mass and distances to percipients; the small number of serious researchers; the attitudes of some UFO investigators; and the unwillingness of percipients to be involved with full investigations.

Are there yet more cases to uncover? UFORA's carefully measured appeal for cases has shown that it is possible to tread the line between too little and too much publicity. With limited resources available to Australian researchers a qualitative rather than quantitative approach seems the best way to proceed. As the recently uncovered cases are investigated, details will be published for the benefit of the broader global UFO research community.