

MYSTERY ON THE MOHAWK

Jennifer Stevens

Founder of the Extraterrestrial Phenomena Investigating Committee, Jennifer Stevens is the editor and publisher of *UFO—Skywatch* magazine.

OVER a period of approximately two years an area on the banks of the New York State Barge Canal (Mohawk River) in Scotia, N.Y., has been the scene of some very strange activities. During periods ranging from several days to several weeks, residents of the area have observed UFOs.

In April of 1967, a woman living in the area was walking a visitor to her car at about 11 o'clock at night. The two women stopped to watch what appeared to be a very large bright star. As they watched, the "star" began to descend. In a matter of moments it was hovering above the trees across the street from them. They were "fascinated" and a little fearful. Suddenly, a baseball-sized projectile, that one of them later described as "an ugly red colour", shot from the UFO, went whizzing over their heads and disappeared into the trees across the street from where they were standing. The starlike UFO then sped away.

One of the women, whom I shall call Peggy G., was still puzzling over the experience the next morning when a neighbour dropped in, remarking: "The strangest thing happened last night. Johnny (her 12-year-old) got up to go to the bathroom about 11 o'clock and rushed into my room all upset. He said he saw a ball of fire go by the bathroom window!" Her home is directly opposite Peggy's driveway.

When Peggy first called me, one evening after our "Skywatch" programme had just gone off the air, she was reluctant to even give me her name. She was, however, deeply troubled and told me a bit about her sighting. It was not until six weeks later that she called me again and gave me her name and consented to an interview. What she told me was strange indeed.

It seems that there had been a great many sightings in the immediate vicinity of Peggy's home. Several of her neighbours had reported dogs missing. One of these neighbours had told several people that "little men" had taken her dog. She became obsessed with the idea

that she should report this to the government. When she attempted to do so, her family was advised that she was suffering from a nervous breakdown. She was confined to a mental hospital for a period of observation and treatment. She refuses to discuss the matter now, but those who are close to her state that she still swears her original story of "little men" is true. People who have known her for many years attest to the fact that she has nothing in her past emotional history that would indicate she was in any way unstable.¹

Peggy also told me that she had experienced "poltergeist" activity in her home since the time of her sighting. She had seen the shadow of a man "materialize and then disappear" on several occasions and had also seen objects in the house moving, apparently by themselves. Her cat, she said, had taken to suddenly hissing and spitting, arching its back at NOTHING.

All during the time of our interviews Peggy begged me not to reveal her identity due to the fact that she held (and still holds) a responsible position with the U.S. Government. I assured her that it was our policy to guarantee anonymity to those who wished it.

In February of this year (1968) I received a call one evening from a 15-year-old boy who lived in the same area as Peggy. It seems that he and a friend had been packing snow on the river bank to make a slide so their toboggan could zoom out on to the then frozen river. Darkness was approaching, and as the boys turned to go home they saw rising from behind some bushes on an island in the river, a glowing fireball (they described it as "about the size of a basketball") which hovered for some moments before disappearing. One of the boys thought he could distinguish a white-suited "human" form behind one of the bushes. They ran home and told their parents, who in turn called local authorities and were referred to me.

The next morning, approximately 300 yards from where the fireball was sighted, a 16-year-old boy was

found dead. His body was frozen deeply into the ice. Police expressed surprise at this due to the fact that the boy had not been dead for more than nine hours when he was found. He had talked to his girl friend a little past 11 o'clock the night before. When his grandparents, with whom he was staying, returned home around midnight, they had found a note: "Going for a walk. Be right back. Don't worry."

Police called it death "due to exposure", but they were unable to explain why the boy's tracks showed that he had apparently been running, then dragging one foot as if pulled from above. There were no other tracks. A zipper tag from his jacket was found approximately 25ft. from his body.

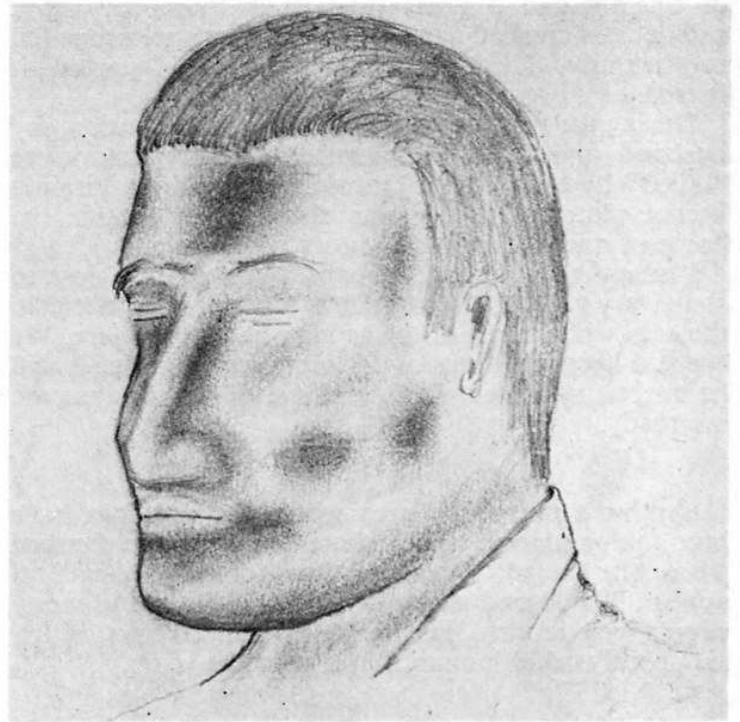
It was about 24 hours before we could go discreetly into the area to examine the tracks and take geiger-counter readings. We noted the tracks coming down the bank on to the river (there had been some slushy snow about four days earlier), then running, dragging, to that grim melted circle on the ice. The geiger-counter readings showed nothing but normal background radiation.

The boys who found the body told me that in their opinion the dead youngster had a "real scared look on his face". I was (and still am) convinced of a connection between the boy's death and the UFO activity in the area. The coroner's verdict was: "Death due to exposure" . . . cut and dried, just like that.² I talked it over with my most trusted investigators and we decided to patrol the river bank each night and see if we could get any clues.

After several nights of freezing toes and noses we had a sighting. An oval red-glowing object fluttered in silently over the island. It hovered, blinking on and off silently 5-4 5-4 5-4 5-4. Impulsively, I grabbed a big flashlight and signalled back 5-4 5-4 5-4 5-4. In a moment it blinked back.

This interchange went on for several minutes and then the object began to come toward us.³ The hair began to rise on the back of my neck. Had I done a stupid thing? Were we in trouble? Just as we were about to duck back to our car a big jet came over and the UFO did an abrupt about face and sped toward the mountains on the other side of the river.

That night when my husband Peter and I returned home we found Jenny, our 15-year-old daughter, in a highly nervous state. She said that the phone had been ringing all evening. She would answer it and hear nothing at the other end but heavy breathing. When her boy-friend called they were interrupted several times by high-pitched beeping noises and were also cut off twice. The next day the calls continued. Sometimes there would be mechanical sounds, and others, the high-pitched whining, beeping sound that sent sharp pains through the mastoid bones. Our number is unlisted, so I knew that no one could have gotten it out of the phone book or through the operator. We had long since screened all calls through another number in order to avoid cranks. I called the telephone company and they gave our line a complete check with NO findings. The service man offered his personal opinion that the line "could have been tapped". I had not made public any information at this time so no one except me and my team of investigators knew what our suspicions were.⁴



Sketch of "saturnine" man who spoke to Mr. Stevens. Height - 6' 2", dressed in brown suit and hat. Wore dark glasses which he removed while talking to Mr. Peter Stevens (drawing by Mrs. Jennifer Stevens)

Several days after our telephone problems began, my husband, who is a building contractor, was in a large downtown Schenectady store inspecting some work, and dropped into the snack bar for a cup of coffee. A few moments after he seated himself, a tall, tan, "saturnine"-looking man, whom my husband had never seen before, sat down next to him and began discussing the case. He began with: "There have been people watching the sky every night down by the river in Scotia." Since Peter was one of "those people", he was shocked . . . but kept cool and said: "I beg your pardon?"

The man then proceeded to talk about UFOs. Peter tried to draw him out and asked his name, and so on. All his questions were either parried or avoided. My husband was beginning to feel a bit uncomfortable when the stranger finally excused himself after noting: "People who look for UFOs should be very, very careful."⁵

There was also evidence at this time that Peggy's phone had been tampered with. She observed two "light negroid types", with completely expressionless faces, stringing "silver tape" on the wires near her home. Since they did not have an official Telephone Company car, Peggy called the police. The men left before the officers arrived and the only comment made by police was: "Oh, the silver tape again."⁶

The phone problems continued spasmodically. However, another problem came up that was so bizarre that it all but obliterated the others from our minds. Suddenly we had a "poltergeist". There were strange noises in our house. Our Siamese cat Kimmie was extremely jumpy, huffing up and spitting at "nothing". Doors would open and close by themselves when there was not the slightest draught. One evening a pair

of scissors and a brass candlestick "jumped" off a cabinet and crashed to the floor. My son's telescope fell mysteriously. Then, as suddenly as it had started, it ceased.

During the weeks that followed our investigation, my husband and I and a member of our group were "tailed" by a light-blue Lincoln bearing West Virginia licence plates. This car was also parked outside the home of one of our investigators one evening.⁷

I have the feeling that perhaps we have come close to some very valuable information. Sightings still occur in the area where most of the activity has taken place. We are still keeping things under quiet surveillance. It will be interesting to see what develops. Whatever does, we are ready.

* * *

(Author's note: The area where the sightings have been taking place is only a short distance from the spot where the famed "Ghost of the Mohawk" is said to appear. The legend stems from Indian days, and many people have reported seeing the mysterious mist, which supposedly takes human shape, over the years.)

NOTES BY JOHN KEEL

¹ Although this anecdote is hearsay, it was felt that it should be included since this type of incident seems to be becoming commonplace throughout the U.S.

² During one of my visits to Cherry Hill, N.J., early in 1967, the body of a young man was found on a nearby highway. It had been bitter cold that night and from the footprints and other evidence, the youth had apparently thrown off his heavy overcoat and started to run. His coat was found some distance from his body. He had not been struck by a vehicle and there were no marks of violence on the corpse. Two autopsies failed to reveal the cause of death. I had seen a reddish-UFO in the area that night. There were other witnesses. While there is still insufficient data to make direct correlations, it is possible that some of these mysterious deaths are UFO-related.

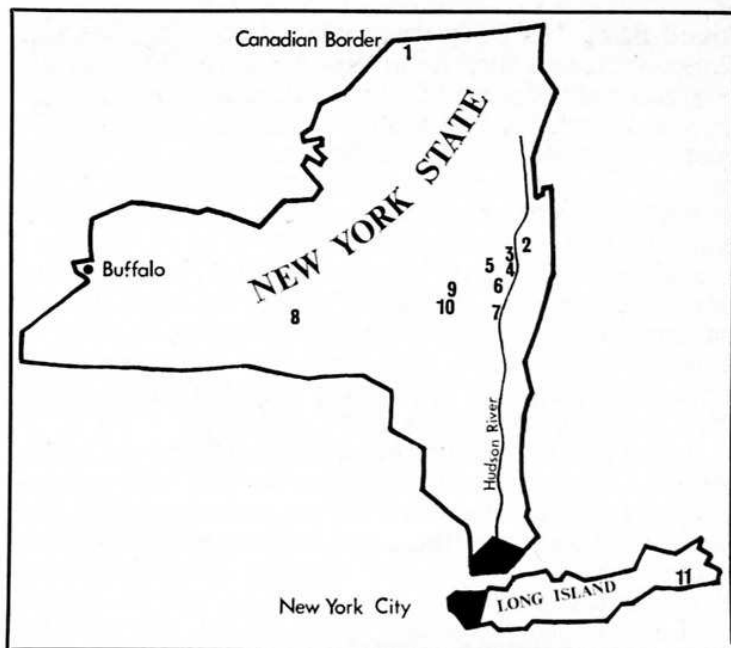
³ UFO-watchers around the U.S. have been signalling to UFOs and getting a response. I have done this myself on several occasions. See affidavit published in *Saga*, October, 1968.

⁴ See other references to telephone problems elsewhere in this issue. It is interesting that in this case the phone calls began while Mr. and Mrs. Stevens were elsewhere watching UFOs. The obvious—though incredible—implication is that the UFOs somehow not only know the identity of their "watchers", but that "they" also know the witnesses' phone numbers!

⁵ There have been countless episodes of this type but the witnesses are usually reluctant to discuss them with random investigators.

⁶ Here's another interesting "coincidence": In March, 1968, a large four-engined plane with no visible markings passed at treetop level over Henderson, West Virginia (across the Kanawha River from Point Pleasant, West Virginia) and discharged a large quantity of silver tape which draped itself over trees and telephone poles. The sheriff of Mason County, West Virginia, obtained samples of this tape and passed them on to me. The tape was backed with a very strong adhesive and is similar to "gaffer" tape used by photographers to fasten lights to walls, etc. Later I checked with the Air National Guard in Charleston, West Virginia, to find if this kind of tape was used in any way by conventional aircraft. The answer was negative. There were many witnesses to this incident but none could positively identify the model of the plane. The tape could not have fallen from the plane but had to be deliberately discharged in some manner. This may have absolutely no relevance to Peggy's story, but it should be recorded.

⁷ Large, expensive cars (Cadillacs, Buicks and Lincolns) bearing West Virginia licence plates have been reported in other states around the homes of UFO witnesses and investigators. I have mentioned a number of specific instances in my various magazine pieces, and have several unpublished accounts in my files. I have seen these cars a number of times myself. For example, late one night in March, 1967, I was cruising through the desolate back roads of the TNT area outside of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, when I came upon a large, late model Cadillac, dark blue, parked in the darkness. I stopped and approached it. It was occupied by a distinguished, well-dressed, normal-looking man of about 50. He had a microphone in his hand and was talking over an elaborate CB radio when I walked over to him. I identified myself and tried to engage him in conversation. He refused to identify himself and acted rather uncomfortable, stating laconically that he was "just looking". Two local residents were in my car and they said they'd never seen him before. There are, of course, many Cadillacs and Lincolns in the U.S. and it is a mistake to believe that everyone is being driven by a sinister "Man in Black" or a "C.I.A. Agent". But it is curious that these vehicles have a talent for turning up again and again in flap areas.



1. Massena, N.Y., August 2, 1967: Two State Troopers, L. E. Kelsey and D. Reardon, chased a UFO. Their sighting was confirmed on radar by the Boston flight controller after it had crossed the state line. Massena is an important point on the St. Lawrence Seaway.

2. East Greenwich, N.Y.: Mrs. Linda Peterson, a teacher, was photographing some property from a plane flown by her husband, in April, 1968. When photos were developed two saucer-like objects appeared. They had no been visible to the naked eye. Mrs. Peterson reported to the Plattsburg AFB who told her they had been investigating sightings in that area for six weeks.

3. Malta, N.Y.: Location of West Milton Atomic Site and Naval installation.

4. East Glenville, N.Y.: Site of a series of sightings that took place in March, 1967. A woman's car was stalled on the Northway by a huge "red, glowing object". Nearby points of interest: G. E. Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory, New York State Barge Canal.

5. Scotia, N.Y.: Sightings in 1967 and 1968 on the N.Y.S. Barge Canal. Boy found dead under mysterious circumstances. Poltergeist activity. Near G.E. main plant.

6. Schenectady, N.Y.: Sightings were reported here throughout 1967-68.

7. Albany, N.Y.: State capital.

8. Newfield, N.Y.: Near Ithaca. An astonishing series of sightings, probably exceeding 1,000, took place here during the fall of 1967 and during 1968. Two youngsters, Donald Chizar and Patrick Crosier, reported seeing a craft with dark "bumpy looking" occupants. Others, notably a woman named Rita Malley, claimed to have had "contacts". Area points of interest: Cornell University which boasts the world's only electron synchrotron . . . a super-sophisticated atom smasher. Dr. Thomas Gold of Cornell is involved with this country's "space signals" project.

9. Sloansville, N.Y.: October 10, 1967. Mrs. B. (name on file) reported seeing an object shaped "like a big, metal, hamburger bun". Her car began to "act as if it was running out of gas". Suddenly the object disappeared and her car was "O.K." once more.

10. East Cobelskill, N.Y.: September 10, 1968. Two women reported a landing. Upon investigation, E.P.I.C. found several pieces of metal. Analysis showed them to be pure lead. A new State reservoir is planned nearby. [Shredded strips of lead were also found near Lampeer, Mich., after the "meteor" overflight of December 9, 1965.] There have been many more sightings in New York State in 1967-1968. These provide a fair cross-section. UFO news is seldom printed in the capital district area. I feel one of the reasons may be due to the fact that there are so many points of Military and Classified interest.

PART TWO

The Problem of Communicating Experience

UFO WATCHERS: THE LONELY CROWD

Mort Young

The author was a reporter and feature writer on the *New York Journal-American* when the Michigan 'flap' of 1966 began. His book 'UFO—Top Secret', published in 1967, fully outlines his findings.

FOR a full 45 days in the early spring of 1966, and again for nine days that June, unidentified flying objects visited communities within a 100-mile radius of New York City.

Few New Yorkers learned of the sightings. Newspapers and radio and television stations ignored them with only a few exceptions. Outside the communities affected, only one New York newspaper—my own, the *Journal-American* (now defunct)—briefly mentioned two sightings. The nation's largest city remained uninformed.

The situation was neither unusual nor unique. The inhabitants of most, if not all, major American cities have been kept ignorant of nearby UFO visits for the last 20 years.

At first glance, it seemed that collusion between the press and the government was the answer. Such a marriage of expediency is alluded to by those claiming that a massive plot is underfoot to keep the truth about flying saucers from the public.

But if that were so, then I would not have been assigned to cover the Michigan sightings and told to continue to explore UFOs in as many articles as I deemed necessary. Nor would syndicated columnists have written series of articles outlining the UFO problem and the Air Force methods of handling it.

Officially, newsmen have been told for the last two decades that UFO reports are inadequately detailed by lay observers. When the reports come from trained personnel, an answer is always found: radar malfunctions, balloons seen at an unusual angle. Other explanations involve planets, stars, and meteorite showers, as well as people catching glimpses of secret, experimental airborne devices.

Privately, newsmen puzzled by a continual stream of UFO reports have been assured that such reports are nonsense sent in by cranks, publicity seekers, and honestly mistaken people who, once having called attention to themselves, are loath to admit that they embroidered their story.

As far as the public is concerned, of the UFOs reported and officially investigated between 1947 and 1966, only 5 per cent, or 6 per cent, or 1 per cent—depending on which official is talking—remain unexplained.

Yet, after studying the cases and the explanations, the official identifications of the UFOs are often more unbelievable than the incidents which they pretend to explain. The result is an atmosphere of ridicule which automatically descends on people honest—or foolish—enough to report a UFO.

After an unprecedented series of sightings in the spring of 1966 in

upstate New York, a woman whose family watched the UFOs night after night commented: "Do you think there's something wrong with us?" In Pennsylvania, a father said he had hesitated to report a UFO incident "because I was afraid people would say we were crazy".

The nation at large is left with no "realistic" alternative but to consider UFO witnesses liars and fools—a conclusion that hundreds of people who have known and respected them for years reject. Nonetheless, it is a conclusion that is in agreement with the official policy that unidentified flying objects are beneath the dignity of intelligent men.

Men and women who have seen UFOs are not unique and their separate sightings are not unique. What was seen yesterday has been seen before.

Still, the past 20 years have taught people to keep their silence, to remain isolated in their knowledge, alone in their wonderment, frightened of being thought ridiculous.

Perhaps most frightening of all the effects is the reluctance to report unidentified flying objects—a reluctance shared by Air Force pilots, including members of the Strategic Air Command. Are they all paranoiacs? Can five million Americans share identical illusions?¹