

A WEIRD ENCOUNTER IN UTAH

By Jerome Clark

WHAT follows is a story that until fairly recently even ufologists would have dismissed as "unbelievable". Had it occurred, say, five years ago and received publicity then, some of us would probably have attempted to apologise for it, pointing—as a certain late American UFO research organisation was prone to do—to much better-documented but certainly less interesting, less conclusive sightings as proof that "the truth" is not all that hard to swallow.

Fortunately, in the interim we all have had time to grow, and thanks in no small measure to the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, we have come to *expect* "the facts" (if such, of course, they are) to be fantastic. We are dealing, we know now, with forces infinitely more complex, infinitely less susceptible to easy earthbound theorising, than the interplanetary visitors once so beloved by us all.

The incident to be described, which took place in June of 1969, was related to me several months ago (from the time of writing) in the course of a lengthy interview with the two witnesses, both of them acquaintances whom I had known slightly during my days as college student in Minnesota. There is no doubt in my mind that the witnesses gave me a straightforward, honest account of what happened to them (at least as they understood it).

Wendel Meyer and Nancy Jensen are pleasant young people whose life style would cause some to label them as "hippies", whatever that much-abused expression means. Like others involved in the subculture, they harbour some little interest in the occult, but this interest does not necessarily extend to the topic of UFOs. I am establishing this point so that the similarities between their story and other ones (such as the Barney and Betty Hill case) may be appreciated in their proper context.

The witnesses, along with Aaron, Nancy's son from a former marriage, left Moorhead, Minnesota, in the middle of the month on a vacation trip to California. Leaving in the morning, they passed through the Dakota Badlands that night; early the next day they arrived in Yellowstone National Park. From then on Wendel remembers nothing until he saw the lights of Salt Lake City, Utah, about midnight.

Travelling southwest of Salt Lake City sometime between midnight and 1.00 a.m., Wendel "regained consciousness," as he put it. "All of a sudden it was like I woke up," he told me. "I saw a white post in front of me, and I couldn't turn the steering wheel. So I ploughed right into it and knocked four over in all. At 90 mph there should have been more damage."

Damage to the car included nothing more than a flat tyre, a broken shock absorber, mixed-up turn signals and a very slightly-dented bumper where the collision with the posts occurred.

After Wendel had changed the tyre, Nancy offered to drive. Before very long, however, she began to feel "very uncomfortable", suspecting that they were being followed. She glanced into the rear-view mirror to see yellow and white lights behind the car, but the sight did not especially strike her.

The lights were moving toward them from the wrong side of the divided highway. Nancy finally called Wendel's attention to them and they watched them for about five minutes before the lights made an abrupt turn to the left. "I don't remember seeing any turn-off there either," Wendel observed.

Wendel and Nancy were travelling through the salt flats and through fairly mountainous territory. Seeing something flying over the hills, Wendel said, "It's in the air now."

"That," Nancy remarked to me much later, "is when we started getting paranoid."

The object was travelling the same speed as they were, staying at an even distance behind them. Then, shifting tactics, it flew closer—to within a hundred feet of the car—and emitted a faint humming sound, "like an electronic wail in a flying saucer movie." The frightened couple were nearly blinded by the light, and they felt "funny vibrations" all through their bodies. In the backseat 2½-year-old Aaron started crying.

The back window opened one inch, apparently on its own, then closed. Aaron stopped crying.

At this point Wendel panicked and stepped down on the accelerator, but whereas before the car had been doing 70 mph, now it dropped down to 60. "Oh Christ," Wendel swore as he watched the light loom close behind them, "it's going to get us!" But then the UFO drifted back to where it had been before.

Wendel pulled the car into a rest area and turned it to face the divided highway. The object stopped in the air on the other side and hovered quietly.

It was then that they noticed a "camper" parked nearby. There were lights on inside, indicating that whoever was there might be awake. Nancy suggested that Wendel walk over and inform the inhabitants about the UFO, but he declined, feeling inexplicably uneasy. Shortly thereafter both of them saw what they could describe only as a "ghostly face" peering out at them from the camper. What happened next, however, made them forget *that* for the

For when Wendel looked across the divided highway, he gasped in astonishment and fear. Something

that resembled a "big snowman"—with round head and body—was moving toward them slowly. Although shadows covered the left half of the creature, Wendel could discern roundish arms and legs, bent but without joints in the middle (See accompanying sketch).

Nancy, acting under Wendel's instruction, turned the car lights on. When she had done so, the thing disappeared. Sighing in relief, Wendel opined that it must have been a highway sign he saw. But when the lights went out again, the "snowman" was half again as close as it had been.

Oddly enough, Nancy saw nothing. She offers her own explanation: "I was just trying so hard to keep my sanity. I know how one's imagination can run away with one. Maybe I didn't want to see it."

Switching the lights on once more, they drove away, and when they found some other traffic, they positioned their car between two others—but not for long, because they had to stop to change drivers regularly. Whoever was driving, it seemed, developed extreme "mental strain" and would become too exhausted to continue.

The UFO kept on pacing them until they approached a small town, at which point it shot up into the sky and aligned itself with what looked like a star. Stopping at a gas station, Wendel showed the lights to the attendant, who watched them both go out. "Some drunk fired at a flying saucer yesterday," he said chuckling.

Outside the town, though, the "stars" reappeared and the UFO descended to resume the tailing. But as daylight appeared and other cars dotted the highway, it stayed farther and farther behind them until it entered clouds at the top of a mountain and was not seen again.

Drained of all energy, strained mentally and physically, Wendel and Nancy fell asleep on the side of the road. Two hours later, at 8.30 a.m., they resumed their journey.

An hour later, they passed a camper that they identified as probably the same one parked some hours earlier at the roadside rest area. Nancy glanced over at the camper's occupants, turned away, stared again, almost unable to credit her senses.

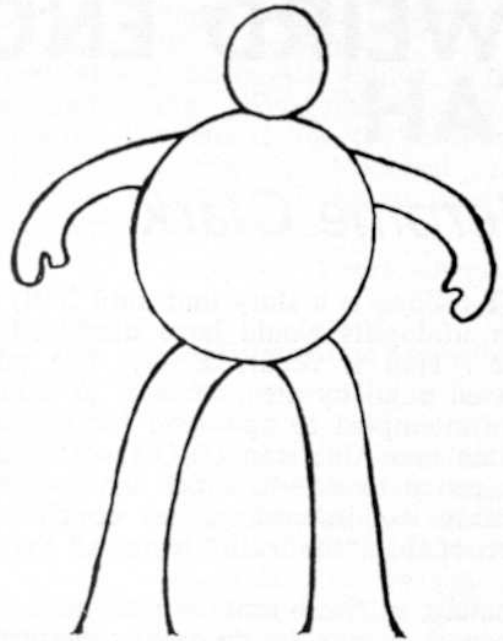
"Wendel," she screamed, "those people don't have any heads!"

Before Wendel could see for himself, the car rounded a curve and the camper was momentarily lost from view. Wendel was sceptical, however. "You're just shaken up", he said. "I'll slow down and we'll let the camper pass us—then we'll know for sure."

But the camper did not appear. *And there had been no road on to which it could have turned off.*

Not long afterwards they entered a little town that looked completely closed up. Nothing was moving, not a person could be seen—but there were parked cars all over. "It was like stepping into the Twilight Zone." Wendel remembered. They did not linger to investigate.

This was not to be the end of their experiences



The "snowman"

with strange phenomena. One night the next month, Wendel's car broke down 15 miles north of Moorhead on Highway 75. As he got out to look under the hood, he saw red, green and blue lights that "didn't fit the form of an airplane." The lights turned across the highway, circled around behind the car and drifted closer and closer before stopping and then vanishing.

Since then Wendel and Nancy have been "haunted" by a hooded man without facial features. When Wendel first saw it, it lunged at him and disappeared. Nancy was scrubbing the bathroom floor one day when she got a "trembling feeling". Turning around, she glimpsed a hooded, faceless figure—"a little bit more than an outline, but nothing distinct"—that jumped at her.

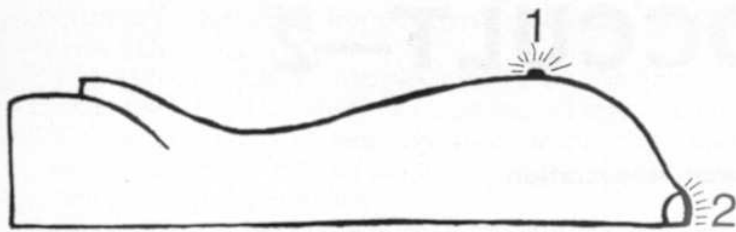
Wendel started to suffer from near-paranoid fears that he was being followed. At work during his noon lunch break he thought he saw the figure walking by. At home, each new time he saw it, the entity had grown larger. Another time, on a trip home from Minneapolis, he felt certain that someone or something was in the back seat. Out of the side of one eye he could sense some sort of "luminous light".

The next February, while resting in a hospital from a minor ailment, Wendel suffered from recurring thoughts of someone "cold and lifeless, like a part of me, like a premonition." At the side of his bed appeared a form without distinct facial features. "I could have seen the face if I'd wanted to. It was a man with long, thin fingers. I could tell it was trying to communicate with me, but I wouldn't let it. It kept coming back, though I couldn't shut it off."

Wendel concluded, "For a long time I felt as if I were fighting evil forces inside me. But I feel cleansed now."

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A few closing observations: Wendel's "snowman" reminds me more than anything else of the entity



The UFO.

Jim Templeton photographed in a field in the English countryside back in 1963.

Finally, as one whose own locks are fully as long as any Venusian's, I have had a fair amount of experience in the "hippie" or "freak" subculture, which is the place one must be, I am firmly convinced, to begin to understand the fundamental, earth-shaking changes our planet is going through—and also the relationship of these changes to the enigmas of the Fortean Era.

For a long time contactees and their followers talked freely of the "New Age", while the rest of us, with the collected works of Ruppelt and Keyhoe clutched firmly to our breasts, merely sneered. Now there is considerable talk, even a popular song, about the coming of the Aquarian Age. One of the features of the New Age, as contactees predicted years ago, is the revival of interest in the occult: astrology, the Tarot, palmistry, telepathy, spiritualism, magic, witchcraft, the ouija board, etc. Also involved, of course, are such obvious features as changes in clothing and hair styles, complicated by the widespread use of powerful hallucinogenic drugs like LSD and mescaline.

All of it seems tailor-made for the unknown forces we are dealing with. On basic strategic grounds it is easier now for "them" to walk in our midst unnoticed (a long-haired blond male, for example, would now attract little if any attention in the streets of most good-sized Western cities, nor would "strange" behaviour patterns be any particular cause for alarm in a culture born of non-conformity). On another, higher level the consciousness of young people and, increasingly, older people as well is opening up to an incredible extent.

But curiously, Wendel and Nancy are rare among their kind in having a UFO experience, for while the hip young (from my own observation) have more "psychic" incidents occur to them than occur to most other people, UFO sightings are fairly rare among them. Why?

Perhaps it is because the whole idea of the UFO is basically a *technological* one and part of the ethic of the young is, to some considerable degree, a *rejection* of technology. Just as in the past the "ultraterrestrials" (to borrow John Keel's phrase) have appeared to us in forms most suited to the temperament of the times (everything from "angels" to "airships" to "spaceships"), now they are assuming new forms for new times.

Could it be (God forbid!) that in the years ahead, as the human race alters its perception of the universe, the UFO will be phased pretty much out of existence? I, for one, would not be much surprised. It may well be that in the future we shall be seeing the influx into our time-space continuum of phenomena even stranger, even weirder, even more mysterious than Unidentified Flying Objects.

MAN SHOOTS AT UFO . . .

UFO Blinds Man

Sensational claim from Brazil: report translated by Dr. P. M. H. Edwards.

News of a startling incident on August 30th came hotfoot in a collection of newspaper cuttings (*O Dia*, *Ultima Hora*, *O Globo* and *Diario de Noticias* of September 3, 1970) kindly sent to FSR by Dr. Walter Buhler. The headlines in *O Dia* were sensational:

WITH WEAPON IN HAND, HE WAS SHOUTING: "DON'T LOOK!" and: MYSTERIOUS FLASH BLINDED A WATCHMAN.

Gordon Creighton was saved an urgent task when, within a few days, there arrived a translation of the *O Dia* story from Dr. Edwards, Professor of linguistics at Victoria University, B.C. It runs:

"Almiro Martins, who became paralyzed on shooting at a strange object, was taken to a hospital of the Guanabara (state). The object was giving off jets of multicoloured lights. He had an uncommon sensation of heat, and heard a deafening sound. Authorities will investigate the case. Doctors say his blindness is from psychological causes. A motorist and another watchman were the first to help him.

* * *

"Already 72 hours have elapsed, and the Security Watchman Almiro Martins de Freitas, 31, married, with 3 children, is still practically blind. His story is being duly investigated, not only by psychiatric doctors and ophthalmologists, but

also by the authorities. Almiro works for the Special Internal Security Patrol Service (SESVI); and all his tests, especially the psychiatric one, are normal.

"Last Sunday, about 21.30 o'clock, he was on duty at the Funil Dam, in Itatiânia, (Rio de Janeiro state). It had rained a lot, and Almiro was concluding an inspection of the area. Upon looking at a nearby mound, he discerned, at a certain altitude, a row of lights, orange, blue, and of other colours. His first reaction was to leave at once; but he changed his mind, and after hesitating, he decided to approach the thing.

"He reached a spot about 15 metres from the place where the

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