

Randles, Jenny. "The Riddle of the Templeton Photograph." *International UFO Reporter* 20,4 (July/August 1995): 12-15.

TURNER CONTACT CLAIM

According to the story he soon would tell friends, acquaintances, employers, reporters, and ufologists, it all began as Harry Joe Turner drove from Winchester to Fredericksburg, Virginia, his 1974 Kenworth tractor-trailer loaded with mustard and ketchup. At 11:15 P.M. on August 28, 1979, he was on Route 17 two miles from Warrenton listening to another trucker talking on the CB radio when both the CB and AM radio "started acting up," he later told investigator Fred Whiting. Then "a noise started up and it wouldn't quit and got louder and louder. I cupped my hand around my ears 'cause I couldn't stand it. It was a screech. Then something grabbed me on the left side at a pressure point on my shoulder. It was like a bionic grip."

A large object loomed over the top of the cab, and two thumps sounded. Just outside the door, though Turner's truck was moving at 70 mph, stood a figure, apparently the possessor of the "bionic grip." When the figure threw open the door, a terrified Turner grabbed a .32 automatic pistol and fired at it eight times, with no apparent effect. "My God," he screamed, "I can't kill the thing!" At that moment he blacked out—or, as he would put it, "it was like walking through a door and into another room."

The next thing Turner knew, he was lying in his cab, which was parked in the Fredericksburg warehouse. He had arrived at his destination, but he had no idea how. He was on the passenger side, while on the driver's side the seatbelt was buckled. In the sleeper section of the cab, his money and credit cards were intact, but his belongings were scattered about, and his tools lay on the ground outside the truck. Turner's watch read 11:17, but the warehouse clock had 3 A.M. The odometer indicated he had traveled 17 miles, though the distance from Winchester to Fredericksburg is 80 miles. The top two inches of the CB antenna appeared to have been melted off. Two and a half feet of the AM/FM antenna was missing as if cut, and a filmy substance covered the truck. Turner would later find that 114 gallons of fuel had been

consumed, though ordinarily that was enough to cover three round trips between the two towns.

As Turner was trying to figure out what had happened, another truck pulled into the parking lot. When the driver stepped out, Turner spoke to him, but the man ignored him and continued to ignore him even as Turner's voice grew louder and more aggressive. Yet a few hours later, when Turner saw him again, the trucker acted friendly. His demeanor changed, however, after Turner asked why he had been so rude earlier. The man looked confused, then walked away with a remark suggesting a belief that Turner was taking drugs.

As he prepared to return to Winchester, Turner noticed that his eyes were becoming painfully sensitive to light. He felt so confused that he had to seek a policeman's guidance on what road to take to get home. Once in Winchester, he told Bill Little, the terminal manager, about his experience. Then he went to his house and crawled into bed to rest up for a trip that evening to Pennsylvania. At 9 P.M. he had barely stepped into his cab than he passed out.

He awoke in the Winchester hospital. A light was shining into his eyes, occasioning such discomfort that Turner grabbed the doctor and pushed it away. The doctor managed to calm him and conducted an examination which led him to diagnose a broken blood vessel behind the left eye as the source of the problem. Turner's account of how he had come to be in this state caused the nurses to giggle and the doctor to urge him to take up the matter with a psychiatrist.

Back home Turner's memory began to return in a flood, and he suddenly lapsed into unconsciousness again. When he revived, the memories resumed their flow into his brain. Now he recalled that he and his truck had been lifted into a UFO. Inside the craft he saw humanlike figures dressed in white shirts and pants. Caps covered their ears and foreheads. From time to time, they removed the caps, revealing a series of numbers on their pale faces. They had webbed hands and spoke a kind of high-pitched gibberish, like a "tape recorder played backwards fast," he told Whiting.

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Turner Contact Claim

High Strangeness

The entity who communicated with Turner had no numbers on his head, but he did have an interesting name: Alpha La Zoo Loo. Slowing his speaking so that Turner could understand him, the alien asked questions about his truck. Turner answered the best he could.

Turner was then taken on a trip through space with the aliens. Apparently at some point he touched one or more of the aliens, who were cold and felt "like they was dead." Some were stronger than others because some had "bionic" parts which had replaced damaged biological body parts. The journey took him to a planet two and a half light years beyond Alpha Centauri. This planet, appearances suggested, had once been through a nuclear war; the devastated landscape contained dome-covered cities.

He remembered nothing of the return trip. Back on earth physical and psychological problems plagued him. Medical examinations found no apparent cause for the former. Winchester psychiatrist Bruce M. Gray diagnosed Turner as suffering from "a hysterical neurosis, conversion type"—in other words, his mental problems were affecting him physically. Dr. Gray gave him Valium, prescribing dosages of 10 mg.

On September 3, after Turner took 50 mg., he fled the house in his mother-in-law's car and ended up driving at a high rate of speed through several counties, with as many as 10 police officers on his tail. Finally stopped, Turner explained that he had thought the aliens were chasing him. Five days later he informed his family that he was returning to the scene of the original incident. Sometime later, when he came home, both he and his truck were soaking wet. He said he had met the aliens and they had sterilized him and his vehicle.

There were other encounters, mostly at his house. He told Whiting, "One of these things grabbed me with that same grip and said, 'The only story they are going to get out of you is that this was all made up. They'll never get the real answers now'." On another occasion he scuffled with an alien in a nearby cornfield. This time there were witnesses. They said they saw Turner flailing away at nothing visible to them. Once, a few weeks after the August 28 incident, Turner got disoriented and found himself at a shopping mall, where a figure he later recognized as Jesus rescued

him. Members of his family confirmed that they had gotten a call from a stranger who asked them to come pick him up.

Turner continued to undergo severe anxiety attacks. As late as October, when Whiting met him, he "put away nearly a pack of cigarettes and several cigars during the initial four-hour interview. He also took several tranquilizers, while relating his story in a dispassionate manner."

From his discussions with those who knew him, Whiting learned that Turner had a reputation as a yarn-spinner. A few acknowledged that this time he could be sincere, inasmuch as they had never seen him take a tale this far before. The minister to whom he had turned for pastoral counseling said, "I have no doubt he is convinced this really happened." On the other hand, Bill Little, the first person to hear the story, grew increasingly skeptical. He was unable to corroborate Turner's claims—the only potentially verifiable ones—about the fuel consumption and the mileage reading. He also caught Turner in other lies and exaggerations after the incident.

A materials testing laboratory examined the damaged CB antenna at the behest of the Center for UFO Studies. The analysts found saw marks at the break-off point. The burns on the other antenna were caused, they determined, by heat directed from a single source (Hendry, 1980).

Nothing about Turner's claim or subsequent behavior inspires confidence that the incident happened as reported.

Sources:

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