

THE KEY WEST INCIDENT

Joseph Ule

Our contributor, who lives at Big Coppitt Key, Key West, Florida, has requested that we withhold the witnesses' names. In spite of this we feel this unusual case could be an important one in the annals of the subject of UFOs. The names and addresses of the witnesses are on file with *Flying Saucer Review*.

THIS incident first came to light in the pages of the *Key West Citizen*, but I am afraid I do not have the date of the issue in which the story appeared. I went along to see the witnesses, and sent a report to Ramona Clark, editor of the *Caper News*, a small UFO newsletter, and the report duly appeared in the April 1969 issue.

I have re-jigged the story as published in *Caper News* so that events now appear in chronological order. The account is as follows:

At about 11.15 p.m. on the night of Wednesday, January 1, 1969, the two witnesses, George, 18, and Jane, 16 (their names have been changed), were sitting in the front seat of George's station wagon, parked near his home in the rear area behind a Food Fair Supermarket. They were suddenly startled by a hollow, deep penetrating sound from topside, as though it came through a vast long tunnel. It was the type of sound connected with horror movies, they both said. This caused them both to look up and at the same time there came down a rain of what was apparently a concentrated hail, slow moving and small needlelike pieces, which hit the compact area of the windshield and front portion of the roof of the car. Then the awesome part of their experience began.

They both experienced a sense of sudden warmth and a sensation of complete weightlessness as they felt an uncontrollable force tug at their solar plexus and travel upwards through their chests and into their heads to the top of their craniums. They could not move. Tingling-warm electric shudders and waves coursed throughout their whole bodies and an enormous sense of complete blankness came over them, as their eyes were guided upwards without any apparent volition of their own and riveted upon a brilliant silver-hued object way "out in space". They had by then lost all sense of volition. They each recalled that as they looked upwards they had the distinct feeling of penetrating millions of miles into the outer distance and the source of the silver light made it

possible to look right through what appeared to be a dense cloud. They felt as though they were looking through a force field which made it possible for them to penetrate space with their power of vision. Their feelings were eerie, uncanny, but in no way harmful. They could not, or rather they had no desire to fight this force field and actually could not judge how long they were riveted by its powerful force.

They recalled a tapering funnel like a stream of light issuing from the silver object to encompass the area of the car. During the suspended state they once more heard the hollow, deep tunnel-like, cryptic sound, and instantly the force field, ray and beam with its powerful effect upon them dissipated. They at once clasped hands, and felt a "deep freeze" chill like dry ice and the inability to let go, just as intensely cold objects will glue to the skin, and resist all efforts towards removal without tearing the skin. When this condition vanished they bolted out of the car. They looked all around and neither of them saw or heard anything.

In recalling the experience, George said that upon first noticing the deep hollow sound, he had attempted to start the car and it refused to turn over.

An inspection of the stationwagon showed small pittings on the windshield and front portion of the roof caused by the "hail".

Both George and Jane's hands showed the effects of their attempts to clasp and unclasp them. On George's right thumb tip and Jane's left thumb there were cuts which had bled.

In an interview with Jane's aunt sometime later, she said that the day after all this happened Jane was in an "out of this world state". It took some time to snap her out of the pale, concentrated trance-like state. It was as though the sensation of it had left her hypnotised.

Lieutenant Terry Jones of the Sheriff's department called to see if the objects George and Jane had recalled during questioning had been mentioned to me. Jane remembered four "greyish" objects on the roof of a

nearby dime store, but when she returned to the spot an hour after the incident, only two such objects could be spotted.

George recalled four "fire plug-looking" objects, about two and a half feet high, two of which had a helmet-like upper portion and a flaring pyramid base.

These objects were nowhere to be seen when I visited the area with the young couple on January 5. George parked the stationwagon in the exact spot where he thought it was parked on the night of the strange happening. I noted that the feed wires leading to the shopping centre were about 20ft. to the right and the high tension lines at a much greater distance. The large transformers directly behind the store were about 100ft. away.

The young couple, accompanied by George's mother, visited me on the evening of January 2. I was immediately struck by the pale and nervous appearance of the two young people.

Postscript

I was visited by George and his mother, father and elderly aunt, on the afternoon of May 10. I asked George if he had had any further experiences of an unusual nature.

I saw that George appeared to be in a sort of mild daze, and he said he'd had no further unusual experiences, except that he was very afraid to be alone *anywhere* in the dark. He had a nervous and a pervasive fear of something. His mother cut in and said: "You can say that again! He crawled into bed with me the other night because he was afraid of something."

A little later George's mother said she was at a local doctor's office recently and he had poo-pooed the whole experience as impossible. A middle-aged man and his wife (names available) spoke up and said: "Doctor, it *is* true. We were on Fleming Key at the precise time the paper said this thing occurred." The location is about two and a half miles directly due north of the Food Fair store in question. "We were very startled to see this hazy beam out of space directed to the area where this supermarket is located. The beam was hazy and the source of it was brilliant and it seemed to broaden slightly as it 'rayed' earthwards. Also, Doctor, there were two civilian employees of the Navy with us; they were the night watchmen for the ammunition dump at the Fleming Key. They were very perturbed when they saw what we saw and wanted to leave immediately. They did not like this and some of the other things they had observed at night on this lonely and uninhabited

big Key. They said they were going to ask the Navy officials to transfer them to another job." The doctor looked puzzled and worried, but did not comment. This testimony came out of the blue without any coercive effort on anyone's part.

The above possible corroboration of this incident must stand as hearsay until we can locate and interview the couple mentioned.

* * *

Note: The Florida "Keys" are a chain of islands off the southern tip of Florida.

The follow-up

On Saturday, May 3, 1969, I revisited George at the special request of Mr. John A. Keel.

He did not appear too willing to talk and had a sort of knowing and faraway look in his eyes. He was very restless and something seemed to be crowding him. Upon casually questioning him I discovered that he had done much better in school than heretofore and was especially interested in electronics and maths. In fact, his mother had already told me that he had been recommended for a scholarship.

He told me he was highly elated about Jane. *She had never been more than an E or F-grade student and now she was receiving A and B grades.* He impressed me as still being slightly stunned and that since the incident his relations with his family have definitely disintegrated. This is due primarily to his family being solidly against his marrying Jane. His mother told me that a few weeks ago George packed up in a huff and left home but he returned after a week. Where he had stayed in the interim they didn't know.

George stated that Jane has changed for the better since the incident. She shows definite scholastic improvement and has become more sociable and likeable. She is a much more interesting and companionable person than before the experience. George has had an unprecedented fear of the dark ever since his experience. Jane, too, is now afraid of being alone in the night, and afraid of darkness.

George was pleased that Jane has become more "middle-class" and conventional since the episode.

I have gone to interview the girl on three different occasions. Her aunt and uncle are known to have been at home at the time but they refused to answer the doorbell.

Note: In the American school system E and F grades are below passing. An A grade is superior.

A FINAL WORD FROM THE FOUNDER OF UFOLOGY

THE last word rightfully belongs to the man who started it all—the late Charles Fort. After spending a lifetime burrowing into forgotten newspapers and scientific journals to extract the bits and pieces of the gigantic UFO puzzle, Fort fixed his tongue in his cheek and assaulted the scientific establishment for their apparent blindness and inability to cope with paranormal events. Many took his waggery seriously and paradoxically overlooked his more profound observations and correlations.

In his *"Book of the Damned"*, first published in 1919, he made many comments which seemed ridiculous at the time, and still seem ridiculous to many. But perhaps we have done him a great injustice. His tongue may not have been as deep in his cheek as many think. In the *"Book of the Damned"* he remarks (p. 157, ACE paperback version):

"I think we are property.

"I should say we belong to something.

"That once upon a time, this earth was No-man's Land, that other worlds explored and colonized here, and fought among themselves for possession, but that now it's owned by something:

"That something owns this earth—All other warned off."

We Ufologists seem to be trying to cope with that "something". We have given "it" a thousand labels and only now are we making an effort to systematically examine "its" many weird manifestations. It is time for us to heed Mr. Fort and take the giant step outwards, not into space, but away from scientific and religious dogma into the great unknown that surrounds us and occasionally engulfs us.

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