

mankind persisted in its warlike ways, human civilization would be destroyed.

He continued to experience sightings, and he began to channel alien writings. Once, he claimed, a man identifying himself as UFO investigator Thomas M. Olsen called on him and gave him a polygraph examination. Olsen, a Maryland ufologist, denied ever meeting Hermann. Hermann also produced a small rectangular bar with symbols, saying it had appeared in a ball of blue light. Two separate tests, one at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the other by metallurgist and APRO consultant Walter W. Walker, determined that it was a casting of hard lead containing 6% antimony—exactly like the substance used in lead water pipes and automobile batteries. Hermann worked in an auto-repair shop.

Another meeting took place on May 17, 1979, at the same location. He encountered the same ship and the same crew, though this time the leader wore an emblem like a winged serpent on his chest. The leader told Hermann that Frederick Valentich (a young Australian pilot who had disappeared a few months earlier in what some thought of as a UFO-generated kidnapping [see **Valentich Disappearance**], was safe). The metallic object he had been given earlier would help Hermann understand them. The ship went on a short flight, and Hermann observed a larger craft and got a three-dimensional view of the stars. In due course Hermann was returned to a spot near his car.

Early on Hermann linked up with flying-saucer entrepreneur Wendelle C. Stevens, one of the leading American promoters of the dubious **Meier contact claims**. In 1981 the two published a book recounting Hermann's various space adventures, by now generally viewed as of dubious credibility. His story seemed to be a hodge-podge of elements borrowed from much-published encounters such as the **Hill abduction case** and the **Schirmer abduction case**.

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HIGDON CONTACT CLAIM

The rescue party found **E. Carl Higdon, Jr.**, at 11:40 P.M. on Friday, October 25, 1974, five hours after he had radioed his boss, Roy Fleming of the AM Well Service, Riverton, Wyoming, to report his location. The rescue party, which included Fleming, the Carbon County sheriff, a deputy, and three other men, entered the area in several four-wheel-drive pickup trucks. When the sheriff opened the door of Higdon's vehicle—a two-wheel-drive pick-up truck—Higdon looked at him blankly and asked, "Why aren't you dressed like the rest of 'em?"

Higdon, a 41-year-old oil-well digger and Rawlins, Wyoming, resident, acted dazed and confused, and he had trouble speaking. He did not recognize his wife Margery. He kept shouting, "They took my elk!" and would not let his wife touch him. She grew so alarmed that she asked Fleming to take Higdon's rifle out of his reach. With much difficulty Higdon's vehicle was towed out of the mudhole in which it was sunk.

He was taken to Carbon County Memorial Hospital, unable to remember his own name. On his arrival, at 2 A.M., he spoke obsessively about lights and pills and complained that the hospital lights were hurting his eyes. Finally a nurse put damp cloths over them. When the attending physician arrived, he turned out the overhead light. Higdon would not recover memo-

ry of his own identity until Sunday evening. R. C. Tongco, the doctor who examined him, found nothing wrong with him physically. Dr. Tongco's report laconically notes, "The patient's history was one of seeing some strange people that took him for a ride and went 163,000 miles out of the earth orbit and he had definite descriptions about his meeting with these strange people" (Sprinkle, 1979).

By the time of his discharge at 10 A.M., Higdon remembered everything and spoke about it to *Rawlins Daily Times* reporter Sue Taylor (whose story appeared in the October 29 issue) and later to UFO investigators.

Ausso and his world. As Higdon told it, he had been hunting elk on the northern edge of Medicine Bow National Forest, some 40 miles south of Rawlins, Wyoming. Around 4:15 P.M. he went over a hill and spotted five elk standing motionless. He brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired. Then he heard a *splat* sound, and the bullet fell about 50 feet from him as if it had hit an invisible obstruction.

Higdon's memories of what happened next were less than complete, but he recalled enough of it to tell Taylor that he had met a space man who had given him pills. He had been taken into a cubicle with two extraterrestrials and the five elk. According to Taylor's story:

"He asked me if I wanted to go with him, and I said "yes." I told my wife a long time ago, when these stories about UFOs and strange creatures were coming out, that, if I ever got a chance, I would talk with them or go with them." Higdon said the "men" placed a helmet on him, with a strap around his neck. Six wires were sticking out from it on three sides. The "men" then told him they were going "home," which was 163,000 miles away.

"In no time we arrived at this tall tower similar to a rotating restaurant, like the Seattle Space Needle," said Higdon. "The lights there were so intense and hurt my eyes a lot, and the 'men' said our sun affects them in the same way."

Higdon noted that the "men" were never in the sunlight, but always in the shade.

Because the light was so intense on his eyes, Higdon said that the "men" said that they would take him home.

"The next thing I remember," said Higdon, "was talking to Roy Fleming on the radio."

More details emerged when R. Leo Sprinkle, a ufologist and University of Wyoming psychologist, interviewed Higdon under hypnosis on November 2 and 17. In this fuller narrative, consisting of both consciously recalled and hypnotically elicited testimony, Higdon said that when he went over the hill, there was no sound. "It was like you was in a void," he said. He fired his rifle at the elk and then walked over to retrieve the bullet when it failed to reach its destination. The snapping of a twig caused him to look around.

A humanoid being, over six feet tall, stood under a tree approximately 50 feet away. His face was generally humanlike, though he had no chin and only six visible teeth, three on top, three on the bottom. His nose was flat, and he had no visible ears or brows. From the top of his head, his hair stuck up like wheat straw. He was bow-legged and wore a black coverall suit and black shoes. Two belts crossed his chest, and another was wrapped around his waist. This last belt had a buckle carrying a starlike emblem. Just beneath it was a small flap. No left hand could be seen; where the right should have been, a cone-shaped device pointed out.

The being, who moved his lips only slightly when he spoke, addressed him casually, asking how he was doing. "Pretty good," Higdon replied. "Are you hungry?" he was asked. When Higdon said, "Yeah, a little," the being tossed him a package of pills, instructing him to take one; it would last him for four days. For reasons Higdon could not explain, he took the pill without question. He then accepted an invitation to go with the stranger.

Higdon looked up the hill and saw, as he would tell Dr. Sprinkle, "a thin outline . . . of this transparent cubicle." It was illuminated. Suddenly he was inside it, in the company of the stranger (whose name Higdon would learn was "Ausso One") and one other like him. The elk were there, too, frozen in a cage.

Higdon was bewildered. The cubicle looked to be only seven by five feet and seven feet high. How could something so small contain so much? Besides the occupants, the cubicle carried four seats, a control panel, a mirror, and something Higdon assumed to be a map. Higdon wondered if in some fashion they had all been shrunk.

Higdon was strapped to a seat. He had a helmet on his head. Ausso and his friend were also seated, but they could move their arms freely. When Ausso pointed to the controls, the cubicle rose rapidly. Under him Higdon watched the earth which from their vantage point in space looked like a basketball.

In what seemed like a few moments, they were approaching another planet. It was dark except for a mushroom-shaped tower, over 100 feet tall. From it flashed a light bright enough to hurt Higdon's eyes. A buzzing sound also emanated from the structure. The cubicle landed nearby. Higdon did not know what happened to the other humanoid; all he knew was that he and Ausso—the two moved by floating—were heading toward the tower.

Higdon and Ausso entered the structure and stepped into an elevator. They then passed down a long hallway to a room with a platform. As Higdon stood on this platform, Ausso stepped back, and a glassy shield moved out from the wall. After three or four minutes it went back into the wall. Then Ausso said, "We'll take you back. You're not any good for what we need." Ausso pointed the cone at him, and the pills, which Higdon had been keeping in his shirt pocket, "just floated away." ("The pills . . . went up towards the 'star,' on the left-hand side, and they stopped. They *stayed* there. Maybe there was a shelf—transparent, or something. They just laid there.") As always Ausso had only to point his "gun"—as the cone-shaped device at the end of his right arm was called—and things would operate or move.

The two returned to the elevator and went down to the main floor. Outside the tower Higdon saw five normal-looking, conventionally dressed human beings engaged in conversation with each other. The group consisted of a gray-haired, middle-aged man and three girls and a boy whose apparent ages ranged from seven to 18. They were walking into the building.

Higdon found himself back inside a cubicle, different from the first in that this one had only two seats. ("We just . . . were *here* . . . and then *there*.") His rifle hung suspended in the air in front of Ausso, who expressed the wish that he could keep this "primitive weapon." Unfortunately he was not permitted to keep such souvenirs. "Then he had it move over and set down by the seat where I was settin'," Higdon told Sprinkle. "When I left and he said, 'We'll see you,' I grabbed hold of the rifle, and the next thing I was on the ground." Higdon was floated down to the side of a hill, where he slipped on a rock and rolled down the slope, hurting his head, neck, and shoulder.

The "we'll see you" was more like a polite good-bye than a promise of a future meeting. Higdon thought the aliens might be looking for someone younger.

Through the course of their interaction, Ausso told Higdon various things about himself and his mission. His home planet was "163,000 light miles" from earth. The aliens wanted earth animals for breeding purposes; they also collected fish because their seas could not sustain life. Ausso was "a hunter or explorer. That's all he does." The sun on his planet was different; earth's sun burned him and his people; thus they stood in the shade when they were on the earth's surface. For some reason Higdon was never permitted to stand too close to Ausso or to see him from the side or rear.

Aftermath. Sprinkle was permitted to borrow the smashed bullet, which ended up in the hands of metallurgist W. W. Walker. The bullet's condition puzzled Dr. Walker. Clearly it had collided with something, but the scratches he would have expected to find if it had hit a rock were not there. The lead core was also missing. Higdon subsequently would look for it with a metal detector, without success.

Sprinkle also interviewed the nurse and doctor who had attended to Higdon after his rescue. They could only confirm his physical discomfort, amnesia, and talk of a strange experience. A polygraph examination given him in the fall of 1975 produced inconclusive results; so did a second one conducted by the same operator in June 1976. Psychiatrist Angela L. Howdeshell interviewed Higdon and judged him free of mental illness. Formal psychological inventories placed him in the normal range. In September 1978

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Higdon Contact Claim

High Strangeness

Charles R. McQuiston, co-inventor of a controversial "lie-detection" device, the Psychological Stress Evaluator (PSE), subjected a tape of Higdon's testimony to PSE examination. He told the *National Enquirer* that Higdon was "being truthful" (Burt, 1978).

Inquiries conducted among Higdon's friends and acquaintances made it clear that he was regarded as an honest man, and from his observation Sprinkle did not doubt that Higdon's wife and children believed his UFO story. Higdon did not try to capitalize on it and was philosophical about other people's incredulity. Sprinkle himself thought Higdon was sincere. Nonetheless, he wrote, "In my opinion, the investigation of the alleged encounter between the alien being and Carl Higdon . . . has not been successful in establishing the *validity* of the UFO experience" (Sprinkle, *op. cit.*). He speculated that perhaps Higdon had undergone a powerful psychological or even paranormal experience (perhaps generated by an unknown alien intelligence) as opposed to a literal voyage to another world.

At 12:30 A.M. on March 1, 1977, Higdon's right shoulder began to bother him, and as he lay there in pain, he had the curious sensation of being in three places at once: in his bed, 20 miles north of Rawlins, and 12 miles south of the town. In the second location he was observing antelope and a landed cubicle. At the third he was seeing three deer and a cubicle. At both "direct communication" was coming from an individual in each cubicle. Sprinkle writes:

Carl was shown a "black box" in the vision; the box appeared to be under a cliff on a hillside, 12 or 13 miles south of Rawlins, where there is a stream of water; next, there was no water, and the box was shown in a crevice, with the "cubicle" in front of it. When Carl asked if "they" could help his son, Kenneth [in hospital with a head injury from a traffic accident], he was told that they would be back in ten days [*ibid.*].

Nothing out of the ordinary happened, however. This probably was nothing more than a vivid dream. Subsequently Higdon would assert, however, that he had a "feeling when a UFO will be near." He and his family would see lights in the sky which they took to

be the "aliens." Higdon claimed that his UFO experience was responsible for dramatic improvements in his health. According to him, he was cured of recurring uric acid gout, and tuberculosis scars disappeared from his lungs (Gansberg and Gansberg, 1980).

Though Higdon's story is usually treated as an abduction (Beckley, 1975; Bullard, 1987; Lorenzen and Lorenzen, 1977), it has little in common with other abduction reports. Higdon was not taken against his will, and he was not subjected to a physical examination. Moreover, Ausso is a unique sort of alien. Nothing comparable figures in any other CE3 or contact claim. No specific evidence of a **hoax** has ever come to light. At the same time neither has any compelling evidence which would lend credence to Higdon's fantastic tale. Beyond that it is impossible to say anything with any degree of certainty.

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