

Flying saucer

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Baffling details quietly back UFO story

By George R. Plagenz

A skeptic could find several holes in Bill Herrmann's story of how he had been abducted by a UFO. But one part of his story seemed to lend a measure of credence to what he said.

Herrmann was seen by several people near his home in Charleston, S.C., at 7 p.m. on the night of March 18, 1978 — just before the time he said he was taken aboard the alien space craft.

An hour later, from an overpass above a stretch of railroad tracks 20 miles from his home, he was spotted by a state highway patrolman as he was walking — in a dazed condition — along the tracks. He said that was where he was let out of the UFO.

If you didn't believe his story, how did Herrmann get where he was? He couldn't have walked that distance in an hour. His car was in the garage at home.

If someone had driven him the 20 miles, how did he get on the railroad tracks 40 feet below the highway? It was not possible for a person to negotiate the rough terrain leading down to the tracks.

Had he hitched a ride on a box-car? No train had passed that spot on the tracks in more than two hours.

I was one of about 200 people who heard Herrmann tell his story to a Cleveland audience in 1979. Now his bizarre tale has been put in a book, co-authored by Herrmann and Wendelle Stevens.

The hard-cover book is entitled, "UFO — Contact from Reticulum." That is the name of the place the alien people told Herrmann they came from. They told him how to locate this configuration of stars in our sky.

This is Herrmann's story of his 1978 abduction:

He saw a bell-shaped craft hovering in the sky, 100 feet above the South Carolina Gas and Electric transmission lines near his home on March 18. Within minutes he was taken aboard the shimmering silver flying craft and came face to face with beings from an alien world.

Although it seemed to him as if his abductors were speaking to him in perfect English, their thin, slit-like mouths never moved.

Their skin was marshmallow-colored. Their large heads resembled human features — without any hair. They were about 4-foot-8 and all were dressed in red suede jump suits.

He looked at their hands. Their fingers had no nails.

A recognized UFO investigator and professor at the University of California — Dr. James Harder — who put Herrmann under hypnotic regression to help him recall the details of his spaceship ride said he had "no reason to doubt he was abducted by a UFO."

Two doctors who did a psychiatric profile of Herrmann after his experiences said he was mentally stable.

Herrmann's 1978 experience was followed by another on April 21, 1979.

He was, he said, in the bedroom of his mobile home when a ball of light appeared. As it was fading, Herrmann made out a faint object on the floor. It was a rectangular bar similar to an ingot of metal.

That was a finding that intrigued UFO researchers more than Herrmann's abduction story. If, on analysis, the artifact

which seemingly had materialized before Herrmann's eyes could be found to be composed of materials alien to anything known on earth, that could be considered as evidence of the artifact's extraterrestrial origin.

The metal fragment was sent to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Mass., for testing. The analysis showed the specimen was made of a lead alloy — not unlike something used in lead water pipes or in auto batteries.

Auto Batteries! It was not lost on some skeptics that Herrmann, now 29, worked in an auto repair shop.

But Dr. Walter Walker, a Ph.D. in metallurgy who also examined the Herrmann artifact, was not convinced that it was a fraud.

"Perhaps," said Walker, "the extraterrestrials use methods within our own technology and materials available on earth and therefore their handiwork cannot be distinguished from ours."

The residents of South Carolina in the area where Herrmann lives have reported seeing UFOs for several years.