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## UNH to host Barney and Betty Hill exhibit; couple claimed alien abduction

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Staff Writer | Portsmouth Herald

DURHAM — As Portsmouth resident Betty Hill drove her mother home on Route 108 at 8 p.m. Sept. 7, 1977, she saw large red and green lights on what she believed to be a UFO as she neared Trickle Falls in East Kingston. Later as she was driving home, she saw another UFO with red and green lights following railroad tracks near Route 107.

Betty Hill's report of a UFO sighting is one of thousands she catalogued during her lifetime after she and her husband, Barney Hill, became known internationally for reporting they had been abducted by aliens in 1961 in New Hampshire's White Mountains.

The University of New Hampshire will host a public forum and celebrate the opening of the Betty and Barney Hill Collection exhibition Friday, April 17, 2009. The forum and exhibition highlight the couple's reported alien abduction in 1961, and Barney Hill's civil rights activism in New Hampshire in the 1960s.

The public forum, "Betty and Barney Hill: Tales of Alien Abduction and Civil Rights Activism in New Hampshire," begins at 1 p.m. in the Memorial Union Building, Room 334/336.

Following the forum, UNH celebrates the opening of the Betty and Barney Hill Collection exhibition with a reception at 3:30 p.m. in Milne Special Collections and Archives and The University Museum, Dimond Library, Level 1. All events are free and open to the public.

The exhibit features "Junior," the leader of the aliens depicted in a sculpture and drawings, the dress Betty wore the night of the abduction, notebooks, photographs, and documents about the abduction, as well as materials commemorating Barney Hill's work in the NAACP and on the New Hampshire Advisory Committee for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Speakers include Kathleen Marden, Betty Hill's niece, who will present "Captured! The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Experience: The True Story of the World's First Documented Alien Abduction;" J. Dennis Robinson, editor of SeacoastNH.com, who will discuss Betty Hill's fame as the "First Lady of Flying Saucers;" and Valerie Cunningham, founder of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail, who will talk about "Barney and Betty Hill: The Civil Rights Story."

The events are sponsored by the UNH Center for New England Culture's Heritage New Hampshire Lecture Series, which is supported by an endowment from Heritage New Hampshire.

"The Betty and Barney Hill collection preserves two great New Hampshire stories. Barney Hill, an African-American U.S. postal employee, was a leading figure in the New Hampshire Civil Rights movement. At a time of segregated public facilities in Portsmouth in the early 1960s, he worked to ensure that the civil rights movement ended segregation in the North even as the eyes of the nation were on dramatic events in the South," said David Watters, director of the Center for New England Culture at UNH.

Betty Hill was a state social worker and a white woman whose mixed-race marriage was unusual at the time, Watters said. "What might have been a relatively private life for the couple changed forever when the story of their supposed abduction and examination by aliens in a spacecraft, not many miles below the Old Man of the Mountain, became public in 1965."

The Betty and Barney Hill Collection at UNH consists of thousands of items stored in 87 folders, including correspondence, personal journals and essays, manuscripts, newspaper clippings, photographs, slides, films, audio tapes and artwork.

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"UNH is a fitting place for the collection, since it connects to the growing collection of New Hampshire African American materials. The alien abduction collection will always be the primary source for study of the first and most famous case of this interesting American phenomenon," Watters said.

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