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## Of outer space and civil rights: Betty and Barney Hill forum and exhibit at UNH Friday

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ROBERT M. COOK | Fosters Daily Democrat

DURHAM — The story of Betty and Barney Hill's alien abduction in 1961 will be retold Friday with a special forum and exhibit at the University of New Hampshire.

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.

It will feature "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.

The exhibit will also feature materials commemorating Barney Hill's work in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and on the New Hampshire Advisory Committee for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Kathleen Marden, Betty Hill's niece, will present "Captured! The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Experience: The True Story of the World's First Documented Alien Abduction."

Other forum speakers include 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 Hill's were on their way home to Portsmouth from a vacation in Canada on the evening of Sept. 19, 1961, when they say the abduction occurred in the White Mountains. The couple said they observed a large spacecraft and that they were taken aboard it by aliens who examined them and released them unharmed.

The couple later gained international fame as their story about their alien encounter spread.

"Betty Hill was a state social worker and a white woman whose mixed-race marriage was unusual at the time," said David Watters, director of the Center for New England Culture at UNH.

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."

Watters said the exhibit also shows how Barney Hill, an African-American U.S. postal employee, was a leading figure in the New Hampshire Civil Rights movement.

Watters said Portsmouth had its share of segregated facilities in the 1960s and Hill worked to end that even though much of the nation was focused on the South during the Civil Rights movement.

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. For more on the collection, people can visit [www.library.unh.edu/special/index.php/betty-and-barney-hill](http://www.library.unh.edu/special/index.php/betty-and-barney-hill).

"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.

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 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.

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