

Skybald  
Some Comments on the Goodland, Kansas  
Double Abduction of November 7, 1989

by Martin Kottmeyer

John S. Carpenter has written up this case in at least two papers. The first was Double Abduction Case: Correlation of Hypnosis Data and appeared in the Journal of UFO Studies, new series # 3 (1991) pp. 91-114. The second was Investigating and Correlating Simultaneous Abductions and was delivered at the Abduction Study Conference held at M.I.T. June 13-17, 1992, and recently published in Andrea Pritchard, et. al. Alien Discussions (North Cambridge Press, 1994, pp. 246-54). The two individuals involved are referred to by the pseudonyms of "Susan" and "Jennifer." It has since been revealed that "Susan" is really Skye Ambrose. Though the pseudonyms will be retained in this discussion for convenience, I felt it worth mentioning for the benefit of people like myself who first became aware of the case from an appearance on television where Skye used her own name. The poetry of an UFO percipient being named Skye sticks in the mind.

Briefly, the story is that Susan and Jennifer were returning home to St. Louis from a conference (nature undisclosed) in Aspen, Colorado when, outside Flagler, Colorado around 11:40 p.m., they noticed a bright object ahead of them in the east, very high up and slightly to the south. They observed the object to be flashing, showing colored lights on it, and making occasional little movements. They also noticed the sudden appearance of many smaller green lights near the brighter UFO. They watched this for nearly an hour, pulling over their car several times to get a better look with the lights off.

After 12:40 a.m. a ball of light suddenly descended to within a hundred feet of their vehicle. It hovered in a field to their right. Below the light appeared a V-shaped "cone" of "fluffy" white light which reached toward the ground with colored rays of pastel pink, blue, and lavender. These beams established the edge of the cone and they criss-crossed slightly at the bottom point. They also noted "black waves" through the lower part of the car's windshields reminiscent of heat waves on the horizon of a desert highway. They felt a rush of adrenaline and pulled back onto the highway. They subsequently both felt suddenly exhausted and irritable with a desire for silence. Stopping at a rest area farther along they could still see the bright object. They arrived at their motel destination in Goodland, Kansas, soon after at 2:30 a.m.

In due course it was determined that the 72-mile drive to Goodland from Flagler took three hours. Thus rose the specter of missing time and a potential alien abduction. Hypnosis was performed yielding abduction stories from both UFO witnesses. Various correlations between their hypnotically-derived testimonies were tallied up and found to be impressive. Additionally, some details matched obscure bits of other abduction accounts. Carpenter concluded the case argued for the "bizarre reality" of the UFO enigma. M.I.T. conferees offered no on-the-spot criticisms of the case. Comment fell along the lines of such double abductions as this being enormously important and extremely common. C.D.B. Bryan devoted a dozen pages of his account of the M.I.T. conference -- Close Encounters of the 4th Kind -- to popularizing the case. He asks how does one explain it? (p. 140.) Fair question, but it may be answerable. The Goodman, Kansas, case almost has the air of nostalgia about it, a throwback to an earlier time when abductees still had conscious recall of having encountered a UFO before they had their regressions. I'm not forgetting Allagash and Gulf Breeze, but it still seems bedroom visitations are more the norm nowadays. It is nice to be reminded that alien nightmares and regression tales still have their ties to the UFO phenomenon proper, but this is a double-edged sword. UFO sightings were always tricky things. As investigators like Allan Hendry used to admit, upwards of 90 percent of sightings were explicable in prosaic terms. They tended to involve misinterpretations of things like stars, advertising planes, balloons, and such.

It is an inevitable question to wonder if the Goodman, Kansas, sighting might have a prosaic solution. This is especially so because the initial bright object was seen for close to an hour and that is usually a danger flag that a star or planet is

being mistaken for something more mysterious. Even worse, Carpenter admits there were no other UFO reports in that part of Kansas at that time despite the fact it is described as being high up in the sky. This doubt elevates to practical certainty when one checks the star chart for the evening and learns that high up in the east and slightly to the south was sitting Jupiter shining at magnitude -2.6, brighter than anything else except the first quarter moon down near the horizon. Carpenter realizes Jupiter is a possibility but dismisses it with a peculiar remark. He said, "It was only half as bright as Venus (-4.4) and less likely to draw as much attention." What renders the comment ridiculous is that Venus had set hours earlier and was not around for visual comparison. A magnitude of -2.6 would impress any amateur astronomer as unusually bright and there are ample examples of misinterpretations involving lesser magnitude objects than this.

Carpenter correctly grants the flashing lights, the colors, and little motions are interpretable as the effects of scintillation and autokinesis, but states the witnesses are adamant the bright UFO was not a star and that it paced their car. Pacing however is also a common illusion with stars seen from moving objects. (Allan Hendry, *The UFO Handbook*, Doubleday, 1979, p.27.) The smaller green lights seen next to the main object likely include stars like Castor and Pollux which were located very near Jupiter that evening. The green color may, but not necessarily, be from green tinting commonly part of car windshields.

I suspect the real main reason Carpenter rejects the involvement of Jupiter despite the clear match in position is that he considers the part of the experience involving the close encounter in the field with a light bearing the cone and emitting "black waves" as being with the same stimulus. Jupiter could not be responsible for those phenomena. But something else could have. It was Susan's description of the cone when I saw her on television which first made me suspect this was not a real alien experience.

I, too, had once been witness to an unexpected spectacle of a brilliant white light from which a cone-shaped beam extended to the ground. Unlike Susan I even saw a human figure silhouetted against the cone apparently inspecting or attempting repairs on his craft. The craft however, in my case, had been of very terrestrial design. It was a corn-picker.

The headlight often rides about 10 feet above the ground and partially points down to illuminate the gathering mechanism so the driver can guide the picker down the rows of corn. Seen from the front most of the picker is simply invisible because it is night and the glare of the light hides all but the gathering header. Even that is not fully seen, the light only reflects off the cylindrical surface below the light and off the nose in front. The nose floats along the ground to pick up any corn plants that have fallen over due to wind or soft ground. I suspect the sense of intersection arises from the structure of the nose which is sometimes reinforced by extra metal at the tip, also the nose as a whole does not extend straight out from the unit but forms a shallower angle and may thus reflect more light. The fluffy nature of the cone of light may be due either to light reflecting off the convex curve of the gatherer or to the cloud of dust and air-borne debris kicked up by the picker when it is moving. The only thing that I wondered after I heard Susan's experience was whether it happened at the right time of year.

Did it happen during corn harvest season? Answer: Yes, November 7th is well within the normal limits of corn harvest season which tends to run mid-October to mid-November.

There is still, however, the matter of that enigmatic detail of the "black waves" on the windshields during the close encounter. Actually, they don't seem particularly mysterious to me. Anyone who regularly drives at night in sparsely trafficked rural areas is familiar with this effect. When a bright enough point of light forms a screen of light on the windshield, heat currents and small-scale air turbulence will form silhouettes on it. As one speeds up or slows down the car, the amount of turbulence alters in response. It is an optical effect which is utilized in schlieren photography and helps aeronautics researchers study turbulence effects and shock patterns formed by design changes in planes and rockets. Whether Jennifer and Susan were unfamiliar with this phenomenon because of more urban habits or because their adrenaline rush fogged their thinking can be speculated on, but the issue is probably unimportant.

As for the missing time in this sequence of events, my guess is that it was eaten up in those several occasions Susan and Jennifer stopped to get a better look at the UFO. How long they gazed at Jupiter or how much conversation they engaged in is difficult to guess at. Might they have lost track of time talking about the conference they had been to or about their lives in general? Probably the most damning consideration is inadvertently offered by Carpenter himself. He

observes that Susan mistakenly thought an hour-and-a-half hypnosis session only took 15 minutes. Jennifer thought her session also took 15 minutes, but it was actually two-and-a-half hours long. Given such proven errors in their time sense, what credence can be given to whatever self-estimates of the length of their several stops they gave?

Add it all up and we get a sighting event which is interpretable in entirely prosaic terms. To prefer this interpretation over the assumption of alien involvement, a person does not even need to invoke Occam's Razor. The absence of corroborative witnesses to this event which lasted up to three hours and a UFO high up in a clear night sky argues against a hard reality and for some kind of mistaken interpretation. The assumption of alien intelligence falters with an obvious question: Why would they dawdle around for so long? An intelligently guided operation would probably have the aliens come straight down, do their stuff, and leave. Why would they hesitate for over an hour? Why would they hang around afterwards?

Yet what of those hypnosis sessions and those 42 correlations? There indeed is the paradox. The rest of the case looks so nicely handled, so exemplary. How can Susan and Jennifer's accounts match so well if they are as illusory as the sighting event which triggered them?

Carpenter points out both women deny any familiarity with the subject of UFOs, never read books or saw films about them. He even points to certain details like the entities being too tall and the abductees not being nude as departing from publicized norms. This is admittedly a little bit "Heads I win, tails you lose" -- such departures should argue against the reality of the accounts. The point however remains. The numerous correlations are puzzling if they are as ufologically virginal as they profess to be.

It is likely significant that the movie *Communion* was scheduled to open on November 10th, three days after the sighting event, but before the hypnosis sessions that same month on the 12th and 24th. (MUFON UFO Journal #259, November 1989, p. 27) There are usually publicity blitzes associated with such openings and it would be expected there had been television and radio spots about Strieber and other abductees, both nationally and locally. Susan and Jennifer's account repeat a number of details seen in Strieber's personal account.

The Gray in Susan's drawing seems basically the same as Strieber's. The face is triangular. The eyes are large, tilted and completely black. The body is thin. The 5' foot height is only slightly taller than Strieber's Gray which he reported as 5 feet tall. Susan and Jennifer descend on floating platforms which, though rarely seen in accounts generally, is consistent with Strieber's transport on a magical palette (*Communion*, p.14). Susan and Jennifer both describe an auditorium or operating theater with tiers of seating which, again, is rare generally, but appears in Strieber's account (*Communion*, p. 20). Other details in their accounts do not point to Strieber specifically. Things like gliding movements by the entities and nasal implanting and wraparound eyes are found in many accounts, but do not speak well for the reality of the experience for they have cultural origins (see my papers *Curse of the Space Mummies*, *The Alien Booger Menace*, and *The Eyes that Spoke* in various issue of *The REALL News*). Other correlations like the sparkly diamond/glass mushroom and the ankle strap/stirrup are not so readily explained, but may potentially be explicable if the two ladies both saw a program involving lesser known abductees put together during the *Communion* run. Though this may be a researchable avenue, it would probably require both resources and luck. I prefer to leave this loose end dangle for I question the effort. Anyone still undecided as to whether this case has enormous importance in the face of the considerations already offered probably will be unswayed by additional effort.

Carpenter would likely, in counterpoint to these evidences of influence, reiterate his claim that the case also presents details which correlate with details in other cases that had never had media exposure. In his Journal paper he speaks of the sucker fingers described by Jennifer as an example. This claim deserves an article to itself and, indeed, it has already been done: my paper *Alien Suckers*, *The REALL News*, vol. 2, #2 (February, 1994) pp. 1,3,10. I will simply say here, UFO virginity can remain unsullied by this detail.

There doesn't seem to be any larger implications worth noting that are new. It basically comes down to one more case with a prosaic ending. Nobody said it was the case of the century. Carpenter's assessment was fairly tame and suggested to me he felt he was adding one more board to building the case for abductions as real. I, thus, will regard this as one more board in building the case against.

{Editor's Note: The definition of "skybald" -- a worthless one, a "good for nothing."}

[Martin Kottmeyer is a frequent contributor to The REALL News.]

From the Editor

Bob Ladendorf

This month, our veteran writer, Martin Kottmeyer, takes a critical look at one of the major alien sightings/abductions that allegedly took place in the Midwest. As always, he provides provocative explanations of supposed paranormal encounters.

As we approach the New Year and the end of the third year of REALL's existence, I wanted to take a moment to thank all our supporters and fellow skeptics who strive for the truth (corny as that might sound). On the horizon, we plan to redesign The REALL News and to include more graphics and short digest news pieces. If you have any suggestions about what you would like to see in the newsletter, write or e-mail me at the addresses below.

For those interested in how I have put together The REALL News, I have produced it on my little old Macintosh Classic using a Publish It! Easy program that I bought for about \$25! While they have been reliable over the years, I plan to modernize my publishing capabilities in the near future.

Happy Holidays!

/s/ Bob Ladendorf

From the Chairman

David Bloomberg

As I mentioned last month, our regular (first Tuesday) meeting at the library for December was bumped, and I noted that we may have a lunch meeting instead. Since several members let me know that they thought this was a good idea, we are doing just that. The meeting will be Saturday, December 9, at 11 a.m., at Shakey's Pizza & Buffet (see back page). I encourage everybody who make it to come out, since we will be discussing not only the usual gamut of paranormal and fringe science topics, but also (and perhaps more importantly) REALL's plans for 1996 and beyond. Please come and give us your ideas and opinions!

In other, more general, news, I hope everybody had a good Thanksgiving. Even with the rest of the holidays coming up, we expect to get an issue of the newsletter to you by the end of December, since our first 1996 meeting will put us back on our regular schedule of the first Tuesday of the month -- Tuesday, Jan. 2, at 7 p.m. at the library. The topic has yet to be determined, so if you have an idea, please feel free to let us know (if, for some reason, you can't make it to the lunch meeting to share your ideas, please feel free to drop us a line or give us a call). We're currently working out plans with several speakers for upcoming months, including one who is coming all the way from Germany just to talk to us (ok, ok, he's not really coming just to talk to us, but he did go out of his way to let us know he'd be around and would be happy to give us some of his time). You'll hear more about these speakers as we finalize the dates and locations.

On a somewhat different topic, let me talk to you a little bit about the newsletter. You might have noticed that recently we've had a lot of articles written by yours truly. While I enjoy writing such articles, I've begun to fall behind. To be precise, I'm currently working on at least three full articles (remember that Greta Alexander article I mentioned a couple months ago?) plus smaller bits for inclusion in upcoming "REALLity Check" columns. I was recently able to convince one loyal member to write something about another topic I was otherwise going to have to tackle, and I'd like to see other members also get involved.

This past year has seen articles from several members who had not written any previously, and I'd like that trend to continue. If you are interested in a topic that relates to REALL, by all means please feel free to submit an article! If you

don't know where to begin, contact me and I might be able to get you a starting point (heck, I might have something here that's been put on the back burner because I don't have the time and/or knowledge to write about it.) Articles can be anything from a book review of a recent skeptical (or not-so-skeptical) tome you've recently read (even if it's an older book, REALL members might not know about it) to a general article on any number of topics. Heck, even if it's nothing more than a letter to the editor, we enjoy hearing from our members!

/s/ David Bloomberg

REALLity Check

by David Bloomberg  
\$ubliminal Me\$\$age\$

CBS News (11/8) with Dan Rather had a short feature on subliminals. Yes, that's right -- another subject that we figured had died a while ago rears its nonsensical head yet again. So what if scientific tests have shown "subliminal messages" to have no effect? So what if there isn't any positive evidence on their side? They have personal anecdotes!

The story began with interviews of a few people who are making money off of subliminals -- by selling tapes, video games and whatnot. They tell us that the subliminals use high technology methods to bypass the senses and go straight to the brain. No, I haven't figured that one out either.

Next, they continued discussing the subject as if it were scientifically valid and worried about the possibilities of using this technology for mind control. Of course, if the technology doesn't actually do anything...

Finally, they got around to mentioning the old "Eat popcorn" hoax (where a theater owner claimed to have flashed that phrase during movies and said his sales went up -- but it was later found that the entire thing was a hoax) and talked to a guy who said that nobody has proven that subliminal messages work. Ah, finally, a scientific skeptic, right? Wrong. This guy sells subliminals, too. He puts supposedly subliminal church music on the Muzak tracks played in some department stores, claiming that this puts people in a holier state of mind (or something like that), which makes them less likely to shoplift. Essentially, his claim boils down to: Their subliminals don't work, but mine do. Sounds remarkably similar to the claims we often hear from psychics and the like: That other guy is a fake, but I'm the real thing.

Unfortunately for all of them, none has proven their case yet.  
Wenatchee Witchhunt

On the same night, Dateline NBC devoted almost its entire hour to looking at claims of a huge child abuse conspiracy in Wenatchee, Washington. Unfortunately, the entire story should seem unsettlingly familiar to longtime readers of this newsletter and those familiar with the false memory problem.

The basic story is that the police have arrested almost 40 people and charged them with a variety of sex crimes against children. These charges all stem from the original claims of one young girl, who just happens to be the foster child of the police officer (Det. Perez) who "found" this huge conspiracy -- a conspiracy that supposedly engaged in these activities for many years before this detective was rotated into the sex crimes department. Strangely enough, according to the show, many of the people who were arrested had recently questioned the methods of the investigation.

To summarize the entire story here is difficult, but I'll do my best. This all began with the arrest of about 10 adults, most of whom were retarded, illiterate or "low-functioning." All of these either plead guilty or no contest, and so the accusing children were never cross-examined (it seems likely that one of the first accused did, in fact, molest a child, but that was not addressed in much detail). One who confessed has a history of psychological problems and recanted the very next day, saying she had been bullied into her confession. However, that confession is still being used in trials against other supposed sex ring members. From then on, the investigation/persecution grew almost exponentially, in much the way the Salem witch trials did.

The star witness, D.E., a 10-year-old girl who is Det. Perez's foster child, took him on a tour of the town, pointing out houses that were supposedly used in the huge sex ring. One of those houses belonged to a man who has helped many foster children over the years. D.E. claimed he would have the other sex-ring members over, would dismantle the bunk beds to make them singles, and would line up all the foster girls to have sex with all the adults. The problem is that Dateline talked to a number of the girls who were at his house when all of this was supposedly occurring, and they say none of it ever happened. In fact, they accuse D.E. of being a liar and say she has falsely accused others of sex crimes in the past.

Speaking of false accusations, another girl accused her foster father of being part of this sex ring, but the next day told a social worker that she was pressured by the detective and had lied to him. When the social worker reported this, he was arrested for tampering with a witness, and later became wanted for supposedly being part of this sex ring!

What about the evidence? Surely this detective couldn't arrest all these people without evidence, right? Wrong. As previously noted, the charges are all based on the word of a couple young girls, including those who have made false accusations in the past. In fact, Det. Perez didn't even tape his interviews with the girls; he just wrote down some notes several days later.

Perez's methods here seem to leave something to be desired. As has been shown in several studies, if you repeatedly question a child about something that never happened, the child may eventually falsely claim it did, indeed, happen. I am, frankly, somewhat surprised that this type of trial is still going on today. But it shows that just because we think a subject has been adequately explained doesn't mean others won't ignore that explanation.

There is some good news here. When one of the accused made it to trial, the jury was astonished at the lack of evidence presented, and acquitted the defendant almost immediately. The accusing girl couldn't give any details or descriptions, didn't know the supposed crime scene, etc. In response, the prosecutors dropped other charges in another case, but they still apparently decided to ignore reality and continued on with other cases. Indeed, another jury convicted a poor, non-English speaking Mexican who could not afford a lawyer that could properly point out the lack of evidence (now, it seems to me that any lawyer should be able to do that, but...). In general, so far whites with good lawyers who put up a fight were found not guilty, but others under worse circumstances have been found guilty, and the prosecutions are continuing.

In response, one of the accused (and acquitted) is suing, and some Washington officials have asked the U.S. Attorney General's office to investigate possible official wrongdoing. Hopefully, such an investigation can straighten out this mess, and those who decided to turn Wenatchee into Salem will be punished. Meanwhile, though, numerous people who are probably innocent of any wrongdoing have been sent to prison because of a failure to take a rational look at extraordinary claims.

Masthead Information  
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The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land (REALL) is a non-profit educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe-science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL not not reject paranormal claims on a priori grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

The REALL News is its official newsletter.

Membership information is provided elsewhere in this newsletter.

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