

This One's a Keeper

by Martin Kottmeyer

Late in the evening of November 19, 1980, a man and woman were driving home to Longmont, Colorado, and had a strange experience. An intense beam of blue light locked onto their car. A noise as loud as a jet engine at takeoff but similar to the whish-whish of a bull whip accompanied the light. The radio filled with static and faded out. The headlights on the car dimmed. The rear wheels of the station-wagon left the pavement as the car lifted up at an angle. Then, abruptly, sound and light ceased and they were rolling along at 50 m.p.h. Checking their watches they discovered over an hour had vanished from their lives. Though, technically, they had not actually seen a UFO, nobody could doubt one was present. The resemblance to Neary's railroad crossing encounter in Spielberg's blockbuster *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* leaps out at you.

Stopping at a gas station to pick up some cigarettes, the husband found his equilibrium was messed up and walked straight into a door jamb. The attendant looked at him like he was drunk. Subsequently, his wife found a rectangular shape on her abdomen and had a vivid dream of a strange craft in a field and an unusual, charismatic man or entity who communicated without speaking. She later contracted an extremely severe case of streptococcal pneumonia which nearly killed her.

The man asked around about who to discuss all this with and ended up with Richard Sigismond, a social psychologist with a developed technique in regressive hypnosis. Linda Howe acted as a technical assistant. Three hypnosis sessions ensued with the man and a story emerged to fill in the missing time. The car had not, of course, just been lifted halfway, but taken wholly into the UFO. A heavy mist with an electrical smell reminiscent of a missile base the man once worked in surrounded him and his wife.

He met a gray-skinned, big-bald-headed humanoid wearing a shiny gold uniform of unusual design. It had very long fingers. The inside of the craft had glowing walls with arches that radiated orange on their outside edges. The man was restrained by silver bands on his arms and found himself lying naked on a table. A light floated overhead. His wife was similarly naked but was standing in a zombie-like state, "switched off" in contemporary UFO parlance. The entity stripped his mind, but put it all back and more. He was given certain abilities. "Knowledge! The man gave me something," he remarked. He now knew "there are more dimensions...things co-existing..." He had a new power to go into himself, but it was a strength that he resisted wanting to develop. He had too many responsibilities as it was.

Torn by conflicts involving this responsibility and his conservative conditioning to "regard UFO people as fringe people," the man bowed out and subsequently moved on, leaving no forwarding address or phone number. The hope that his wife might be eventually hypnotized to give corroborative testimony had been put aside because of the severity of her illness at the time. Now it was completely eliminated. This left the case with an ambiguous status, as the investigators were the first to admit.

The case of the Longmont couple's alien abduction was still thought interesting enough to write up and publish. They were given the pseudonyms of Michael and Mary and an account appeared in the *Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) International UFO Reporter* (Volume 7, #5, September/October 1982, pp. 9-15) with a forward by J. Allen Hynek asserting the instructive value of the case despite its frustrating denouement. It was reprinted verbatim in *Flying Saucer Review* a year later (Volume 29, #2, December 1983, pp. 21-26) and demonstrates the case had a cachet to it. The reprint drew a letter from Paul Johnson, a British investigator, who asserted two unnamed couples were attacked by a whish-whish noise the very evening as the Longmont abduction over in Norfolk county in England, an area full of military airfields. Nothing is said of bright light or other Longmont-type effects, however.

A capsule account of the Longmont abduction appeared in Richard Hall's *Uninvited Guests* (Aurora, 1988, pp. 311-

312). Still better, in Bullard's exhaustive survey of pre-1985 abductions, the case's match to standard patterns not only got it into his list of top 50 cases but got it a ranking of #16. This places it well above such classics as Antonio Villas Boas, Herb Schirmer, Pascagoula, and Travis Walton. Beyond this, however, the case has languished in obscurity. Most works never cite it, even those that aspire to a measure of historical comprehensiveness like those by Jenny Randles and Peter Brookesmith.

Most UFO buffs would have a hard time trying to recall the case, but a few might recognize one thing about it. The man in the Longmont abduction was an art instructor and he produced some charcoal sketches of his encounter. His drawing of the humanoid he encountered is memorable and has been reproduced. In a few respects, it seems like your standard Gray. The head is bald and larger than normal. There are no ears. The long fingers seemed to Sigismond very similar to an autopsy drawing of a Gray's hand in Len Stringfield's retrievalist file.

Yet it is also quite different. The eyes are way too small and undistinctive. The neck should be long and thin, but probably isn't. A layered ornamental collar, something never reported before or since, surrounds it. The nose is not vestigial and seems peculiarly folded or wrinkled or slitted like gills. It wears clothes, and they are loose-fitting rather than skin-tight. Sigismond did not remark on these departures from type. In fairness, the type in part did not yet exist as we now describe it. Yet such departures are clearly a problem now. Do they prove the case is flawed, or the current image of Grays?

Some additional information should help you answer part of this question. On December 5, 1964, an episode of a science fiction/horror anthology series called *The Outer Limits* aired, which offers a necessary clue. Its title was "Keeper of the Purple Twilight." The episode has been described as a wild potpourri of science fiction stereotypes: neurotic mad scientist, death rays, emotionless aliens, and a threat of invasion. The erstwhile villain of the piece is a big-domed alien named Ikar. He swaps minds with a frustrated scientist working on a disintegrator weapon. The faces of the aliens consist of a big set of horizontally aligned gills with a pair of eyes wedged in it. Photos of Ikar and his alien storm-troopers were widely used in promoting the series. Set those photos next to the Longmont humanoid and the similarities seem hard to dismiss.

The gills or folds in combo with the big-bald-head immediately evoke the sense of a resemblance. The Longmont version is conventionalized to be sure, the folds covering less of the face, but they are so unusual that no other alien even comes to mind as close. We soon notice the very long fingers shared by both. The outfits are both loose-fitting jumpsuits with a cummerbund about the waist. The suits are single-colored and patternless with no zippers or buttons in evidence. Both show a ridge around the wrist. The shape of the brow above the eyes also matches well.

It needs to be granted the match is imperfect in some interesting respects. Ikar has no ceremonial collar, albeit one might regard the bunching of fabric around the neck as a potential jump-off point for the elaboration. Ikar has pointy ears in contrast to the earless Longmont alien. Understandable that the post-Star Trek Longmont artists might want to suppress embarrassing allusions to Spock that the pre-Star Trek make-up artist could not foresee. The eyes are small and completely black in the Longmont alien while Ikar's eyes are whitish and faintly goofy. The Longmont alien's jumpsuit has ridges around the elbows and knees; Ikar's doesn't. The differences seem deliberate improvements rather than haphazard.

Part of the plot of the Longmont abduction may also have been derived from the *Outer Limits* episode. The conflicted protagonist of "Keeper of the Purple Twilight" trades off his emotions to acquire the knowledge and ability to complete the equations necessary to finish his science project. The Longmont artist's sense that his mind was taken and knowledge added hinges on the same magical assumptions about alien mind powers that underpin "Keeper." It is not identical to the extent that emotions are not traded off in the Longmont abduction, but with such exotica, coincidence would still be hard to argue.

With a fictional source revealed as an influence on the imagery and plot of this case, the departures from type are readily understood. The case is flawed. It will inevitably be wondered if the fault is methodological -- hypnosis? cryptamnesia? -- or witness-centered -- a hoax? delusion? The presenting claim of being in a car partially lifted off the road while rolling at 50 m.p.h. as a brilliant light and tremendous noise assaults two witnesses' senses seems solidly immune from prosaic explanation. It is either pure fiction or an alien close encounter. Sigismond gives no evidence of

looking for corroborative witnesses. A tremendous noise and brilliant light could hardly have escaped attention over a significant area if the encounter was real. No claims of validating physical evidence are offered. The fact that the witness pulled out with no forwarding address some time after the wife became deathly ill looks suspiciously like it was an aborted hoax, the husband either having the fear of God thrown into him by the unexpected calamity or unwilling to try to pull it off alone. If some want to regard that as too facile a judgment, be warned that the flaw an artifact of hypnosis and memory. Skeptics would probably enjoy that conclusion more, but sincerely it seems irrelevant here. The drawing seems more a conscious than unconscious invention in my opinion.

Ufologists will reject this and blame the presence of cultural material as a red herring. Deeper probing would have got Sigismond the true image of the present Gray. The methods of the time, the investigative assumptions, were more primitive. The tricky corollary, however, is this: how does the hypno-ufologist ever know when he has gone deep enough? Sigismond mentioned no doubts and nobody at the time complained that the image looked dubious. Are present investigators stopping at a layer where cultural assumptions stop or just where they stop recognizing them? Does deeper really mean truer? Or is it an extra chance to get a story straight?

Tough questions admittedly face ufologists accepting that a hoax is involved here. Do they just throw it away? Yet it got into Bullard's Top 50 because of how well it fitted in with the main patterns of the abduction phenomenon. There must be lessons here both needless to articulate and still to be learned. You won't finish the jigsaw puzzle if you start throwing pieces away. This one is a keeper.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

About 15 years ago I remember an incident in England in which the head of the Exchequer -- what we might call Secretary of the Treasury -- publicly denied that a certain prominent bank in London was near bankruptcy. Despite persistent rumors to the contrary, the bank, he said, was fiscally healthy and that there were no plans for the government to take it over. A week or so later, the bank failed. The doors were locked. The government took it over. People who had their savings in the bank were greatly inconvenienced, not to mention outraged that the government had lied to them.

After this happened the government official was asked by the press why he had lied to the public. As I recall, his answer was approximately as follows. "It would have been immoral for me to tell the truth. If I had told the truth two weeks ago, there would have been a run on that bank. Chaos would have occurred. The bank would have totally collapsed before we could take it over and protect its customers' assets. A great many individuals would have hurt -- wiped out. No responsible government official would have done otherwise."

As it turned out, he was right. Minor inconveniences and a little righteous indignation for a few were a small price to pay for the general good of a smooth transition to government control and legal protection of everyone's interests. Such is the moral dilemma of truth and consequences.

Fascinating. There are, indeed, difficult times or circumstances when lying is morally superior to the alternatives. As Ollie North put it, "When one must choose between lives and lies." If Nazi SS soldiers had asked you where Jews in your community were hiding and you knew, would you have told them the truth? Should you? Thus, truth telling is not a moral absolute. The decision of whether one should tell the truth rests entirely on the reasons, i.e., the motive behind it, given the larger context in which it perforce occurs.

Thus, it was with great interest that I read David Bloomberg's "REALLity Check" (The REALL News, July, 1996) in which he announced that he was canceling his subscription to Newsweek because both its editor and writer lied to the press and public about knowing the author of Primary Colors. Indeed, the author was Newsweek journalist Joe Klein. Is Bloomberg's reaction appropriate or merely a fit of decontextualized righteous indignation that fails to understand the larger issue?

Bloomberg is to be commended for his action because there was no justifiable motive whatsoever for lying about the authorship. As Bloomberg clearly put it:

When they were questioned about the ethics of the situation, they came up with all sorts of excuses, including one about it being 'entertainment,' as if this made it okay. [p. 8]

Thus, what offends is not the lying per se, but the banality of it -- as if betraying the truth and public trust is acceptable for trivial reasons, for entertainment. The only motives -- such as they were -- were personal, petty, and pointless, far beneath any threshold that could justify violating the integrity of the written and spoken word. Such pointless lying and lame excuses, especially by those whose professions and honor require the courage of truth, is, indeed, as Bloomberg put it, "sad, sad news." Worse, it is pathetic. Worse, it is a sign of the times -- the flight from standards grounded in objective reality and the shallowness of character and poverty of reason to which such flight inevitably leads.

I have been a subscriber to Newsweek without interruption for more than 25 years. I, too, am canceling my subscription, not so much out of righteous indignation as from sullen disappointment.

Right on -- and write on -- Bloomberg!

Skeptically,
Rich Walker

Editor's Response:

While I was not caught up in the firestorm of protest of Joe Klein's "lies" about being the author Anonymous, I can understand the arguments against his actions. I have cancelled my subscription to Newsweek in the past -- for a brief time because of the proliferation of cover stories on celebrities -- but I came back to it because of the range of information it provides. Having subscribed to it initially since 1962, when I was 13, I have a hard time leaving it again.

That's no defense for Joe Klein, of course, so let's listen to a few excerpts from his explanation in Newsweek ("A Brush with Anonymity," July 29, 1996): "... I was out covering the Republican campaign, telling my little white lies all along, speculating with friends about who might have done it, feeling uneasy The things said about me in the [press] release [by the New York magazine who hired a Vassar professor to analyze styles of suspects with a computer program] and the accompanying article were insulting, inaccurate and ridiculous.... Then I began to receive strong signals, via my agent Kathy Robbins, that Random House thought the author should remain anonymous. I had made the deal on that basis.... If I came forward now, my whole life would be different.... I'd be That Anonymous Guy.... all this was taking place in...two hours. I felt trapped, stunned. I was caught between two commitments, two different ethical systems -- book publishing and journalism. I must have changed my mind a dozen times... I [kept] my commitment to the publisher and my book.

"It was a tough call. A lot of colleagues believe it was the wrong one. A lot of friends do. And they have a case. But I made the decision I made -- also justifiable, I believe -- and will have to live with the consequences. The worst consequences stem from my adamant denials of authorship....

"Could I have handled this mind-boggling situation better? Sure. I've said some things I'll probably always regret. I'm sorry and horrified that my actions have caused pain for people at Newsweek. But the world really didn't need to know who "Anonymous" was. I've also learned this: what it's like to live as a politician. . . . Now that I've lived it, I hope I'll show a little more mercy on this page for the brave, frail fools and heroes who live our public lives. I hope you will, too."

/s/ B.L.

REALLity Check

by David Bloomberg

This mini edition of "REALLity Check" is brought to you by... Well, actually, we don't have any advertisers here. But

there are advertisers out there who have gotten my attention – though not in a good way. Below are a couple of them.
I'm Getting A Headache

A company that sells over-the-counter pain relief medication has a confusing series of commercials running. In one commercial, a woman talks about why she uses this medication for her headaches and describes how there are scientific studies which prove it works best, etc. In another commercial, a guy says he uses it because it works for him, and he doesn't believe all those charts and graphs from the studies.

Is it any wonder that the general public is confused about science? This company can't even make up its own mind about whether to (correctly) point to the evidence or whether to sneer at the evidence and go for an appeal based on what some unknown actor says. I'd be interested to see if there was some sort of pattern as to when each of these is shown (for example, showing the scientific one during news shows and showing the anti-science one during daytime talk shows), but, frankly, I don't have the time to do that extensive a survey. In any case, just the fact that this company is trying to confuse the public is bad enough.

E.T. Phone Nevada

A short while ago, Nevada changed the name of Highway 375, which apparently runs near the legendary "Area 51" to the "Extraterrestrial Highway." Those of us who heard about it mostly just sighed and ignored the silliness.

Now, however, they have made it more difficult for me to ignore it by invading one of the magazines I read. Nevada has a 2/3-page ad in the September issue of Discover, promoting the "ET Experience" as a tourist attraction. Half of the ad is taken up by a drawing of a flying saucer with a beam of light coming down from it onto a cow in the road (what's a cow doing in the road? I don't know). It goes on to say, "A desolate desert highway. The allure of the unknown. And the possibility of that chance encounter. It's Nevada Highway 375, the newly-designated Extraterrestrial Highway that's the talk of the galaxy. But, since inexplicable phenomena happen randomly, we've created the ET Experience, a club and membership kit featuring some of the more reliable attractions along the route. So make contact. Celebrate the road where few have gone before. Call or write for your free ET Experience kit today. Then, get out there. Because seeing is believing."

I don't know – I see the ad but I really don't believe a state tourism commission (even Nevada's) would go to these bizarre lengths to get more business. I'll have to write for the kit and see what other nonsense they have in store for me.

The flip side of this ad is the question: Do you really want to visit a state where they advertise that you might be kidnapped and have strange experiments done on you?

A Call for Reviews

Here at The REALL News, we are gathering reviews of books, films and multimedia for an upcoming special bonus issue. You, too, can contribute to this special issue by submitting your own reviews. Just make sure they are interesting for our readers — and short, just a few paragraphs. (Of course, you're always welcome to submit longer articles for consideration in any issue — not just the special issue.)

Submit your articles to either our chairman or me by any way you can get them to us. See page 2 for our mailing address, as well as e-mail addresses.

We'll announce a deadline in a future issue.

From the Editor

Bob Ladendorf

Another fine article on UFO lore appears in this issue by regular contributor Martin Kottmeyer, who, by the way, is mentioned in Carl Sagan's new book, *The Demon-Haunted World*. Hope you enjoy the article.

We're already at work on future issues and are planning new features to give you the latest and most interesting news, information, and articles. I still plan to write some more articles about the Skeptics Congress held in June. (See last issue for a news story about the Congress.)

As always, we're on the lookout for speakers at future meetings. If you know of anyone who would be interested in speaking to our group, contact our chairman, David, or me anytime.

Stay in touch!

/s/ Bob Ladendorf

From the Chairman

David Bloomberg

This month marks something of a minor milestone for us here at REALL. We received our first “real” letter to the editor. We’ve had letters before (though not many), but this is the first to respond directly to an issue brought up in one of our articles. Considering the controversial nature of some of the articles we’ve had, this has always been somewhat of a surprise to me. Even now, the letter is one that isn’t even about a paranormal or fringe science item, though it definitely is a subject that I consider important.

We are always interested in hearing the thoughts and ideas of our members. Whether you agree, disagree, or just have an interesting comment, please feel free to send it to us. Who knows what kind of dialogue it might start (as of this writing, I have heard that our Editor has put together a response of sorts to the letter – though I haven’t read that response yet – and I may have to respond back to that).

This month’s meeting (September 3 at Lincoln Library) features another Skeptics Society video presentation. This one is “The 50 Greatest Conspiracies of All Time & Why People Believe Them,” by investigative journalist John Whalen, who wrote a book on that very subject. It definitely promises to be interesting!

On another note, one that I will probably address further in next month’s “REALLity Check,” I was interviewed for a story on urban legends in the State Journal-Register by Kathy Rem, and that story appeared in the August 25 edition. While I was only quoted a couple of times (most of the story just listed interesting legends), the last one ended the story on a good note. I said that when people hear extraordinary stories like these, the best thing to do is to be skeptical. I’d say that pretty much sums it up. So, until next month, stay skeptical!

/s/ David Bloomberg

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.

Board of Directors: Chairman, David Bloomberg; Assistant Chairman, Prof. Ron Larkin; Secretary-Treasurer, Kevin Brown; Newsletter Editor, Bob Ladendorf; At-Large Members, Prof. Steve Egger, Wally Hartshorn, and Frank Mazo.

Editorial Board: Bob Ladendorf (Newsletter Editor), David Bloomberg (electronic version editor), (one vacancy).

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A Nod to Our Patrons

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