

Terror on the Nullarbor

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She began to scream. Patrick, in the front passenger seat, rolled down his window and dust started pouring into the car.

When Faye pulled her arm back inside it was covered with this dust. She said there was an odor like decayed bodies.

Sean said at one stage he was 'out cold' and could not remember some of the details related by other members of the family. During the time the car was in the air their voices sounded as though they were talking in "slow motion".

When Sean brought the car to a stop, all jumped out and hid in the bushes along the side of the highway until the UFO flew away.

The family described the object as a white light about the size of the car, with a yellow center, five in all

cup". The sound was similar to a humming transformer. They changed the tyre as quickly as possible before speeding on to Mundrabilla, where they talked about the frightful experience with three truck drivers.

Norman and John Auchetti of the Victorian UFO Research Society continued their investigations, starting with the car.

They found the radio, which had played up, was operating perfectly and the dents on the roof of the Telstar were found to be just as the family described — very slight with the largest one about the size and depth of a saucer.

The tyre was found to be damaged from a blow-out and was ripped all the way around the circumference (police reports later said there was no reason, save for a nail or some other object, being picked up, why

the tyre should have blown. All tyres on the Telstar had good treads.

But it was the dust which covered the car which fascinated UFO investigators.

Early reports after limited testing in Adelaide said it was consistent with "brake dust" — something which might appear inside and outside a car when the brakes are blown.

So Norman and Auchetti sent samples to the state-of-the-art Philips Laboratory in the US and, because of the demand on the laboratory's time, had to cool their heels waiting for the report.

It came from Dr Richard Haines, the lab chief, and was dated July 12, 1988, and was headed: "Scanning Electron Microscope Results of Mundrabilla Dust and Other Samples".

Says Mr Norman, "The interior dust was not from the brake swivel at the car's

This was in direct contradiction to the original findings reported by the analysts in Adelaide.

"The Philips Laboratory analysis also revealed the presence of oxygen, carbon, calcium, silicon, potassium and others.

"The analyst found fibres of typical pipe insulation but it is not asbestos ...

"Atomic element 85 (At; astatine) is also possible in the sample as is a relatively long fibre of NaCl, which is unusual."

Mr Norman points out "Astatine is a radioactive chemical element that has no stable isotopes ... synthetically produced in 1940 at the University of California, where scientists bombarded bismuth with accelerated alpha particles (helium nuclei) to yield the element 85. Astatine

is a very rare element, it has

a half life of only seven to eight hours before decaying.

"The Knowles did not arrive in Ceduna, South Australia, until 1pm after the pre-dawn encounter.

"Naturally the Astatine, if that is what it was, would have decayed by that time."

Mr Norman lists other reports of UFOs around the areas of the Nullarbor and the Great Australian Bight on the night the Knowles had their encounter.

But he draws no conclusions in his submission to The UFO Report, 1990, ending with: "Before we know what is happening, there are more reports to check out and much more research remains to be done.

"Meanwhile, the UFOs that have terrorised motorists on the Nullarbor Plain have not as yet been satisfactorily identified."

Adapted from UFO Report, 1990, edited by Timothy Good. Available through Fan Books Australia Ltd, 124 Sturt Street, Adelaide 5000. \$4.95