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Fiona Harari

10223374
IN 1972 I saw a UFO at 5am over Darwin Airport with 3 other gentlemen. After 31 years I would like to make contact again with the other witnesses. Two were security guards from Darwin Airport, the other was 'Fred', whose father was the Caretaker at the Darwin German Club. Please contact me on email:
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by mail, Rodney Jarvis, _____

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MOST weeks for the past 30-odd years, Rodney Jarvis has conducted a search that, somehow, has become almost ritual-like in its repetitiveness.

Late at night, when his house is locked and he has showered and changed and is ready for bed, he has headed outside and scanned the night sky, looking for a special kind of illumination. Yet in all those years of staring up at the heavens he has seen nothing to compare with the luminous spectacle he encountered on a Darwin airfield early one morning in the 1970s; a 15-minute occurrence that he can still mostly recall in all its minutiae.

In 1972, Jarvis, then in his early 20s, was working on an oil rig. Having spent some time in Darwin, he was due to catch a 6am flight to return to work. But being a heavy sleeper he worried about missing the connection, so a friend, Fred, with whom he had been sharing a room at a local youth hostel, had offered to drive him to the airport the evening before.

The two men slept at the airport that night in Fred's car, Jarvis spending several uncomfortable hours in the front seat.

"At a quarter to five I woke up . . . with a sore neck," he says now, "and looked out of the window and saw a very large, slow-moving orange light skimming across the top of some nearby houses."

The object was "traditionally shaped . . . like a squashed ball", grey on its upper side, the underside "a brilliantly glowing orange".

"It was about the size of half a house, the light, bright fluorescent orange, and it was travelling very slow."

At this point Jarvis woke his companion and the pair left the car for a better view. "And then we realised that it was zigzagging towards us. It was going about 200m to the right and then 200m to the left." Moving silently, it was changing direction so quickly that Jarvis decided this was no helicopter.

Wanting a better view, he turned on the car lights — at which point, he says, the object stopped overhead.

"Fred was absolutely terrified. He ran and hid underneath the eaves of a nearby building . . . He was almost hysterical saying, 'Get out of there, do you know what this is?'" But Jarvis was intrigued by what he had now decided was a first-hand encounter with a UFO.

"I was thinking at the time this is not a chance in a lifetime; it was a chance in 100 lifetimes."

So he decided to attempt to communicate "with whoever is controlling this thing". Summoning his limited knowledge of morse code — he remembered only four letters — he started to flash his headlights. But what message to signal? "I thought I'm not going to put SOS together; that's a bit corny . . . So I did, I

think, G and then S and then F and then O." And each sequence, he says, was flashed back at him a few seconds later. Fred, meanwhile, was still cowering nearby and yelling at Jarvis to run. "And I thought no way, this is fantastic." So he decided to move communications on a bit further. "I indicated that I wanted to meet whoever this was." He did this by walking into the full glare of his headlights. "[And I thought] maybe I can try and send an ESP message or something. So I reached up with my hands, indicating that I was trying to communicate with them, and, I don't know why, I said this in my mind: 'Don't be afraid of me. I'm not afraid of you. Come down. I want to meet you.'"

Before he could receive a reply, however, a car appeared bearing two airport officials. "They were angry," says Jarvis. "It was, 'What do you think you're doing flashing your lights like that at an international airport? An incoming flight might think there's some kind of an emergency.' And I pointed up in the sky and said, 'Look at that.'"

The airport officials were taken aback, and as they took in the scene overhead Jarvis remembers flashing two more morse code letters, which were in turn reciprocated "and then it didn't respond any more".

By then perhaps 15 minutes had passed. "And then [the object] went straight up in the air and did a huge big loop over the horizon and in a fraction of a second it was gone."

So, too, without another word, were the airport officials, who drove off as fast as they arrived.

In the decades since, Jarvis has never heard from them again. He has also lost contact with Fred. He's now writing a book about that period of his life and would like to contact the trio, if only to learn more about that early morning he has never forgotten.

"Nothing has impacted on my life like this," he says from Melbourne, where he works in finance and lives with his wife of 29 years.

"I would have sacrificed my life to find out who was in that craft then and I would probably do it again — just to find out."

► hararif@theaustralian.com.au

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