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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Budd Hopkins

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Thu, 17 Jun 99 19:58:05 PDT
Fwd Date: Fri, 18 Jun 1999 12:48:32 -0400
Subject: Re: Budd Hopkins

>From: Jenny Randles <nufon@currantbun.com>
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>Subject: Re: Budd Hopkins
>Date: Thu, 17 Jun 1999 11:37:44 +0100

Jenny,

>But there is a broader issue - if hypnosis has a long term
>detrimental effect on ufology. I am absolutely certain the
>latter is the case. Why? Not some arbitrary guesstimate thats
>for sure. I base my conclusion on three things.

>3: Because I have personally been regressed on several
>occasions and therefore seen it unfold first hand. I know how
>tempting it is to see images and presume their reality status.
>My UFO encounter consisted of 50% stuff I could check and 50%
>stuff I never could. The stuff I could check was as much fantasy
>as actual memory. I wrongky reported basic facts in the order of
>the day of the week, etc. With such a track record it would
>obviously be foolish to base opinions on ufology on the
>uncheckable data that emerges via hypnosis because this test
>proves to me that a good portion of it is certain to be fantasy
>and possibly all of it is.

Isn't yours what might be called, uh, anecdotal testimony? And
didn't your experience confirm pretty much what you thought
anyway? I don't say this disrespectfully -- as you know, I have
immense respect for you -- but I'm simply pointing out that the
argument you make here is effectively meaningless.

>I know the counter argument. Ufologists do not rely on hypnosis
>testimony as the judge of truth. If a case matches another case
>then this proves hypnosis has contributed to the quest for
>knowledge. Sadly not.

I think you've overstated the argument, no doubt for rhetorical
effect. I would urge you to read, or reread, Eddie Bullard's
important paper on the apparent irrelevance of hypnosis to the
content of abduction narratives. I don't know anybody we'd
respect who'd be so incautious as to say this "_proves_ hypnosis
has contributed to the quest for knowledge," but it does suggest
that things are not simple and that the usual anti-hypnosis
arguments are not entirely compelling and appear (so far anyway)
empirically undemonstrated. Which is not to say, of course, that
hypnosis should be used carelessly or thoughtlessly. We all
prefer cases without it. It doesn't follow -- as the Hill case
tells us -- that cases with it are ipso facto without merit.

>But, back to hypnosis. The problems with it clearly tell you
>that hypnosis is not the way to access this fundamental reality

>- just to read peoples dreams and fantasies. These may well be
>based on a fundamental reality

Statements like these betray an unhelpful bias. I know at least three abductees on this list -- eminently sane, thoughtful, anything but crazy or suggestable -- who, I am sure, would resent your suggestion that their experiences are mere "dreams and fantasies." (How can they be, by the way, "dreams and fantasies" and yet "a fundamental reality?") I think it would behoove us, when we discuss matters about which much remains unclear, to use neutral words like "narratives" to characterize abduction accounts, unless we have clear and specific reason to identify them as "dreams and fantasies" (or, for that matter, interactions with aliens).

>As you know we had a proper debate in UK Ufology - such as has
>never occurred in the US -

You're wrong. The use of hypnosis in UFO investigations has been a subject of considerable debate here for many years, and it has produced a considerable paper trail. It seems to me what you're saying is that unless such a debate leads to a conclusion you agree with, it hasn't happened. In fact, at least from our perspective, the data bearing on the answer are sufficiently ambiguous to persuade many of us that the discussion should continue before possibly premature conclusions are reached. We may be right or wrong to feel that way, but ours is a perfectly respectable position. A sweeping statement such as the one you make here is not only false but unfair.

>I only wish that more if you understood why we chose this
>option. Because Dennis is absolutely right. The day when a
>genuine researcher gets into serious legal difficulties as a
>result of hypnotic regression is a racing certainty. It may not
>be Budd. It could be anyone. But it will happen and, I'm afraid,
>UFOlogy will be rightly hauled over the coals by the media for
>allowing it to get that far.

And ufology hasn't been hauled over the coals repeatedly already? It's naive to think that if ufologists behave perfectly, journalists (not to mention scientists) will automatically treat them with respect. Fifty years of history tells us that ufologists of all stripes, good, bad, and indifferent, get ridiculed pretty much indiscriminately. There are all kinds of good reasons for ufologists to conduct themselves with sanity and discipline. The expectation that when we do, the press and scientists will pat us on our collective head is not one of them.

Jerry Clark

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