

One of Ufology's Gentleman

I receive many emails everyday some are a waste of time, spam, performance enhancing drugs at a too good to miss prices, I'm sure you all get the odd unwanted email from time to time, but one I didn't want to receive contained news that came as quite a shock.

To read that Graham Sheppard had passed away was indeed unwelcome news.

Grahams CV will become apparent as you read the following. He was a long service professional airline pilot, you know the guy who sits up front when you board your holiday flights to who knows where in the world, I suppose we never really think about what kind of person is in charge we just expect he knows what he or she are doing.

Graham knew what could be seen in the high altitude skies he travelled both day and night, so when confronted by an object he knew should not be there reported the incident. This professional and honestly reported observation did Graham no favours with the 'pompous officialdom' that controlled his workplace, it did not stop him taking a great interest in or stop him attending UFO related events or appearing on UFO related documentaries.

Graham both spoke and attended several of The Leeds International UFO Conferences and was one of Graham Birdsalls true highly respected witnesses. I too spent time with Graham and his wife on several occasions and take this opportunity to offer our sincere condolences to the family.

'A true gentleman of ufology'.

Russel Callaghan UFODATA



Picture credit © Timothy Good

Graham Sheppard

An Appreciation by Timothy Good

Graham Sheppard, former British Airways captain and long-time student of the UFO phenomenon, died on Wednesday 24th August at Torbay Hospital, Devon, aged 62, following complications arising from myelofibrosis, a chronic disease of the bone marrow. He is survived by his wife Margaret, and Ian and Richard, his sons from a previous marriage.

Born in Pembrokeshire on 11th December 1942, Graham began his career in the early 1960s as a telecommunications engineer, including work on a modem - in those days the size of an average room! - which entailed signing the Official Secrets Act. He also worked at what is now Goonhilly Satellite Earth Station, Cornwall. In 1966 he graduated as a qualified commercial pilot at the then British European Airways (BEA) /British Overseas Airways Corporation College of Air Training at Hamble, Southampton, to fly as First Officer on the Vickers Vanguard airliner. Coincidentally, Graham had been First

Officer in a Vanguard chartered by the London Symphony Orchestra on our return from Budapest to London, following a series of concerts with André Previn in Europe in September 1970. Graham told me that our post-tour celebrations in the cabin were causing concern on the flight deck to the extent that he ordered us to sit down and fasten seat belts due to 'anticipated turbulence'.

Graham's 50-year interest in UFOs was kindled by a sighting in Wales when he was about eleven years old. I became acquainted with him in 1989, after he'd written to tell me that Above Top Secret had rekindled his enthusiasm, which had waned in the early 1970s. He told me about his two, now well-known sightings in 1967, the first during a flight from Scotland to London, following a radar alert advising the crew of 'high-speed opposite direction traffic, identity unknown'. Within seconds a very fast shining disc, about 30 metres in diameter, came into view on a reciprocal track, below and some 300 metres to the west of the BEA Vanguard airliner. As First Officer in the right-hand seat, Graham had a crystal-clear view of the disc as it shot past. Later that year, on a night flight from Gibraltar to London, he and the crew of a Vanguard were 'treated to an extraordinary display of two very aerobatic UFOs whose presence was confirmed by Bordeaux radar'.

Graham flew with BEA as co-pilot on the Vanguard Merchantman (the cargo variant), the BAC 1-11 jet airliner, then took a two-year sabbatical in Africa in the mid-1970s, first with the Zambia Flying Doctor Service out of Ndola, then with Air Malawi flying the Islander on domestic routes, and the BAC 1-11 475 as co-pilot on the international network.

In 1979, the now merged British Airways (BA) moved Graham to left seat as Captain of the Vickers Viscount, followed over the remainder of his period with BA by command of Boeing 737, Boeing 747 Jumbo, Boeing 757 and 767, ending in December 1994 on the Airbus A320. His 'retirement' included a year's contract flying the Boeing 767 for Alitalia, and a year on the Boeing 747 Classic for Cathay Pacific Cargo.

Although Graham was 'carpeted' by BA's chief pilot for the media exposure following interviews in the 1990s about his UFO sightings, it is due in no small part to him that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) now takes pilot sightings of UFOs more seriously than it once did, particularly those involving 'near misses'. In 1995, he briefed the CAA's Joint Air Miss Working Group, advising that 'the commercial sensibilities of the airlines should now be set aside... Otherwise this discrete and notifiable hazard to aircraft safety will continue to be concealed and gratuitously omitted from the briefing syllabus.'

In my book *Unearthly Disclosure*, Graham describes the alarming 'lateral displacement' which befell him in March 1993 while flying a Cessna 172 from San Juan to Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Shortly after over flying the Arecibo radio telescope, he suddenly found himself 25 miles to the south, and about to infringe restricted airspace.



Picture credit © Timothy Good

On two occasions, in 1998 and 1999, Graham and I hired the same plane to fly the same route, but we were unable to come up with a conventional explanation. 'In 14,000 hours of flying worldwide, I have never experienced such a bizarre and unnerving incident as this one,' wrote Graham.

Graham was a consummate 'pilot's pilot' - his smooth landings appreciated by colleagues and passengers alike. But he enjoyed the occasional deviation from routine. After the Falklands War, he took the first flight out of Buenos Aires and initiated a 'fly-past of friendship' before government ministers, military officials and VIPs, taking the trouble to make the cabin address in Spanish. And during his Australian posting with BA, he once effected a 'figure-of-eight' over Ayers Rock for the benefit of passengers.

In Puerto Rico, I shall never forget our wonderful flights - especially those involving extremely low-level passes over the coast, and the euphoric 'stall turns'. There was also the occasion when he greeted my then girlfriend and me over the FM Air band as he flew a BA 757 above our flat in southeast London, in the landing pattern for Heathrow. Graham's multiple talents were extraordinary. He had acquired all skills relating to the restoration of

buildings, and was an accomplished musician: an excellent jazz clarinetist and saxophonist, he also played the cornet, flute, guitar, mandolin - and even the penny-whistle! He was also a skilled wordsmith. A noted raconteur, his wonderful wit and sense of humour never let him down - even up to his last days. He was a philanthropist, and always generous in his judgment of people. He endured uncomplainingly the extremes of discomfort that he suffered in the last few years with fortitude, seldom allowing his condition to get the better of his heavy workload and social life. I shall miss him, not only as a close friend but also as an irreplaceable principal research associate.

Bon voyage, Captain!

Nick Pope (MoD Officer).

"Graham Sheppard was one of ufology's true heroes. It took extraordinary courage for somebody in his position to speak out on the UFO issue, knowing full well that it was not something that his employers at British Airways would care to see discussed by one of their pilots. His entirely proper concern over the flight safety implications posed by UFOs was, I believe, the factor that prompted him to speak out. His 2 UFO sightings in 1967 are now quite well known, and hearing a senior pilot talk so rationally about sightings of a structured craft seen by aircrew and simultaneously tracked on radar was hugely significant for ufologists, and compelling evidence for even the most hard-hearted of sceptics. I met Graham on several occasions. He was always good company and a mine of information on aeronautical issues. I shall miss him and ufology will miss him too.

"The subject has lost a friend."

