



On Assignment

July-August 2005

By Peter Robbins

My Back Pages

In human terms, one of, if not the single most important aspect of UFO investigation has little to do with UFOs per se – it has to do with maintaining confidences. When someone who has had a sighting or an experience – or maintains that they have – shares particulars of it with you that they do not want revealed, you are under a moral obligation to respect their wishes, no matter how tantalizing or significant you feel the information is. An exception to this rule, should you feel you must share it with *someone*, would be a close professional colleague whose personal ethics and proven respect for the privacy of vulnerable individuals has established him or her as someone who will likewise maintain the confidence.

Models for this behaviour abound in the professional world of medicine, law and therapeutics. I've been more fortunate than most in this respect in having several such colleagues, the most consistent and long-time one being Budd Hopkins. I first met and became friends with Budd within a year of his entry into the field; that was in 1976. I've done my best to return this important professional favour, and in my capacity as his assistant throughout many of the intervening years, have been privy to many such confidences, especially in the preparation of his manuscripts for *Intruders* and *Witnessed*, all of which have remained with me.

The same principles guided me through the nine years I worked on *Left At East Gate* with Larry Warren, and much as I may have wished to act otherwise for the sake of additions to our text, certain compelling accounts, interviews, witness statements and evidence were excluded from our manuscript because they were given in confidence. Even so, I must admit to two exceptions, one fully justified, the other being a true error in judgment. The first involved several statements given to Larry and me in an extended interview with the-then recently retired former Deputy Base Commander of R.A.F. Bentwaters, Charles I. Halt, a USAF Lieutenant Colonel at the

time of the incidents. The interview, which you read earlier in the book, remains the most extensive ever published with him. I discussed my reasons for including his three off-the-records on pages 411-413 and feel Mr. Halt accepted them, even begrudgingly, as Larry and I never heard a word of complaint after the fact; he was sent a copy of the book shortly after its publication in 1997. The other breach of confidence, which I also write about on page 411, was a matter of trusting the wrong person which I very much regret. I will say though that he was the single most unethical author/researcher I have ever met in all my years in this field. Admitting such an error in character judgment is not an easy thing to admit, especially in print, but it is a fact none the less. It is an error I have not repeated since.

But two accounts, both of which date back more than fifteen years now, have remained particularly vivid for me. Since that time I have thought long and hard about how I might someday be able to share at least their basics without compromising either party. Both of the individuals in question had approached me in similar manners following talks I'd given in different parts of this country about England's Rendlesham Forest UFO incident; this was

during the first few years I was working the case. Both individuals were able to validate their accounts for me in no uncertain terms. Neither was looking for money, fame or attention – anything but. What follows is my best attempt to share something of one of these episodes with you while not betraying the trust or identity of the person who shared it with me.

The account was given to me by a man I'll call 'Bill.' I had just completed my slide presentation, and after chatting informally with some of the audience members, was packing up before returning to my motel room. It was then that he approached me, introduced himself, gave me his business card, and asked if he could speak with me, in private. Sure, I said. Not in here, he answered, and then asked if I would walk him to his car. Intrigued, I followed him out into the crisp, dark night.

Bill made some small talk as we crossed the parking lot, the far end of which his car was parked. He was both serious and intent, and as we walked told me that he'd enjoyed my talk, and that he had decided to tell me his story as I spoke – on the condition that I agreed not to include it in the book. I told him that I would not. After taking a moment to fully survey the parking lot and make sure that we were truly

alone (we were), Bill leaned against his vehicle and began by telling me that he was a former employee of the National Security Agency, which of course peaked my interest several fold. He then gave me a number of particulars relative to joining the Agency which made me feel that he was speaking very much in earnest, and from experience.

Some years earlier, Bill had been stationed at a remote NSA listening post in Turkey. I asked him exactly where in Turkey and he told me. It had been in the Samsun-Ezrum region, not far from the Iranian border. I was somewhat familiar with the area, having driven across it in the early nineteen seventies. I told him that it had reminded me of the surface of the Moon, a characterization he thought most appropriate. Late one winter night while he was on duty at the listening post, a radar operator called his attention to the anomalous radar tracks of several objects coming in from, well, deep space. Other NSA personnel, along with the facility's supervisor, joined Bill and the technician at the scope, all in full consensus that the unknown's point of origin was somewhere beyond the Earth's atmosphere. All assembled continued to watch in amazement, and ultimately some shock, as the unknowns continued their descent until

they were not only manoeuvring directly over eastern Turkey, but were actually visible to the naked eye of any of them willing to don their parkas and head out into the sub-zero weather; Bill was among those who did. The radar tracks were all recorded (standard operating procedure in such cases), an appropriate entry was made in the listening post's log, and National Security Agency Headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland was informed via a secured channel. For Bill, the events of the evening were, not surprisingly, unforgettable.

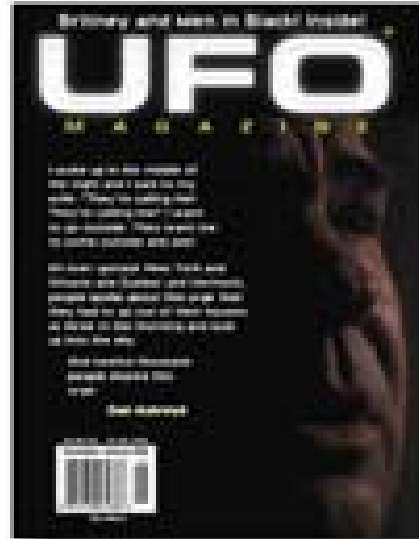
Early the following morning, before Bill and the other personnel who had witnessed and recorded the unknowns went off duty, several ranking NSA personnel appeared on the property, entered the facility and assembled those present. These men asked for, then took possession of the radar recordings and all other records of the previous night's events. They then told the members of the shift that what they had seen and recorded the previous night had never happened, and that they were never to speak of what they had seen again on pain of being prosecuted under the National Security Act of 1947. And that was it.

Bill left the Agency's employee some months later and took a job in the private sector with a company not far from the

lecture venue. Dumbfounded, I asked if he was absolutely sure that I could not use his account in *Left At East Gate*. While he did say that I was free to recount the tale to colleagues, without ascribing it to him of course, yes, he was sure, and the account never made it into the book. Some weeks later I wrote to Bill at the address he'd given me to ask if he would reconsider my request under the condition that I wrote up his story in treatment form that could never be traced back to him, even offering to give him final say on the text. He responded politely, but in the negative, and wished Larry and I well in our pursuit of the Bentwaters story. It's more than fifteen years now since he shared that memory with me as we stood together in that darkened parking lot. I've never forgotten it, and expect that now many of you won't either.

Peter Robbins is a regular contributor to:

UFO Magazine (California).



<http://www.ufomag.com>