

The Thousand Oaks Incident

Thousand Oaks is a sprawling suburb of Los Angeles, some forty miles from the City of Angels. To the east rise the Santa Monica Mountains and twelve miles to the west shimmers the Pacific Ocean.

Sapra Street was originally intended to cut across the hills that border the eastern portion of Thousand Oaks and work began from either side, but, for some reason, they never met, so now there are two Sapra Streets, separated by about a third of a mile of scrubland and two hundred and fifty feet of elevation, both ending in cul-de-sacs.

Steve's family lived at 2130 Sapra, the lower section of the unfinished road, in 1975 and during November of that year, they had an extraordinary encounter with something that may have been literally 'out-of-this-world'.

Interviewed by Brian Vike for his HBCCUFO Radio Show, Steve and other members of his family recounted what happened over several nights and the impact it had on their lives over the following years. This article will also reference the written statement that was sent by Steve to Brian's website, www.hbccufo.org.

The house, recounts Steve, was the last house on a cul-de-sac and the hills beyond stretched out to Simi Valley for miles and miles. The incident happened in several different stages over a number of nights. The first night, at about seven or eight o'clock, Steve, who was

twenty-years old at the time, his brother, Rick (19), their cousin and a few friends were sitting outside, playing guitar and generally hanging out as young men do, when all of a sudden, from over the house, a blue fireball, about a third larger than a basketball, about two feet in diameter or so, came shooting over their heads and hit in the field across the street.

"The minute it hit, it let out tentacles of energy in all directions that covered the whole field," Steve recalled. "It didn't make a sound at all. Me, my brother and this guy name Mark were the only ones who saw it and we were like, 'Whoa! What was that?' But it dissipated instantly and you could see nothing, so everybody was laughing at us, telling us that they didn't see anything and things like that."

They continued playing guitar and hanging out and about a half hour later, a pine tree a couple of streets away spontaneously burst into flames. They watched as a fire truck arrived and the fire was extinguished. Steve, Rick and Mark remembered seeing this fireball and thought it was probably related, despite the tree being about half a mile from the point where the fireball came down in the field. According to a local newspaper, the fire had been caused by the shorting-out of an electrical transformer. Steve did not recall if there were any power failures in the area that night, but he was certain that if there had been any, he would have noticed. If a power transformer had blown, he would have expected to see some

lights go out, but none did, as far as he was aware.

The next morning, Steve and his brother set out to investigate the field across the way, hoping to find some evidence of what they had witnessed the previous night. Expecting to see burn marks in the grass where the fireball had struck the ground, they were surprised to find nothing at all. Everything was undisturbed, as though nothing had happened.

Steve and his wife at the time, Viv, who was pregnant, had just moved back to his parents' house after living for a while in Alaska. They were in their bedroom later that day when Rick came in and said that he could hear something in the hills behind their house. It was about seven-thirty or eight o'clock in the evening.

They all listened and, roughly a mile or so in the distance, they could hear a bizarre scream. They had no idea whether or not it was a person or an animal, but it would scream three or four times, then fall silent for a while before screaming again. They mused that it might have been some kids goofing off in the hills, although to get up there meant a rough trek through thick bushes. There were no roads or tracks up in the hills. It was also dark and would probably be dangerous to go tromping out there without a flashlight. Westlake village now exists in the spot where they heard the eerie screams coming from, but thirty-two years ago, it was raw, undeveloped land.

The following night, Steve and his brother, Rick, were sitting up in his

room, watching television, when Rick suddenly shushed everybody and turned down the volume on the TV set. Only a hundred yards or so up the hill, the screaming had started again!

Steve described it as 'the most incredible scream that I've ever heard in my life'. He said it was otherworldly and primeval, though sounding more human than animal. He researched animal screams on the internet, even going as far as to listen to alleged Bigfoot recordings, but he never found a match for what was heard in Thousand Oaks that night. He described it as sounding more female than male. In his written account to Brian, he wrote: "Part human, part animal? Pain? Fear? Certainly wasn't happy." Whatever was producing this shriek, Steve and his family knew that something was wrong out there in the dark.

As they listened, the screaming appeared to be slowly getting closer to the house, while moving from left to right on the hill. This was an area that was covered with purple sage so dense that only small animals would be able to get through, certainly not a person. With each scream, it sounded three or four feet closer to their position. When it seemed no further than fifty yards away, the three of them decided that 'it was time to get Dad'! He was a tough veteran of the Korean War and very little could shake him.

Steve realised that he had not heard a sound from either of their German shepherd dogs. At the slightest noise, they would start barking, but he had

not heard anything. So, while Rick and Viv went to get dad, Steve went to check on the dogs. He opened the garage door to the backyard and expected, as usual, to have the large animals bound on top of him, but they were nowhere to be seen. Not willing to go out into the backyard alone, he closed the door and followed Rick and his dad out of the front door of the house. As Rick and their father headed down the driveway, Steve decided to go around to the gate that led to the backyard and give it a rattle to see if it provoked a reaction from the dogs.

Meanwhile, whatever was up on the hill was still screaming at about thirty second intervals.

With no reaction from the dogs, Steve went back round to the front of the house and could see his dad and Rick looking up the hill, about fifty feet from him. Suddenly, they both looked up into the sky and then ducked. Just then the thing out there on the hill emitted a 'horrendous scream' that was at least twice as loud as anything they had heard before. They ran back up the driveway to Steve's location, partially behind the house.

"Did you see that?" asked Dad. Steve had only seen them duck down. Rick and their father explained that two, blue fireballs had streaked over their heads and hit the hill as the loud scream had cut through the night air. There were a couple more shrieks and 'the thing' fell silent for a while.

Steve was perplexed, as he should have been able to see what had happened, despite being partially

behind the house. He had seen them duck, so he should have seen the fireballs. He could not explain it. They described the fireballs as being much larger than the one that they had witnessed two nights earlier. Steve said it was the only time in his life that he had seen his dad scared.

Steve recalled that during the whole incident, 'it was like being in a vacuum'. Normally, they would hear traffic on the road, crickets and other animals out in the hills, but while this thing was shrieking, there was nothing.

They went back inside the house and tried to call Steve's cousin, who lived next door, but nobody answered the phone. They then called the Thousand Oaks Police Department. At about eight-thirty, a pair of police officers arrived in a squad car.

Their dad explained what had happened to the policemen, but did not mention the fireballs. He said that they had heard what sounded like somebody in distress up on the hill, perhaps a child or a woman being assaulted. The family did not really believe what was being recounted to the police officers, but they wanted somebody in authority to check it out.

The officers shone their flashlights up onto the hill, but nothing could be seen. All was silent – no screams, no animals, nothing. They stayed for about twenty to thirty minutes before climbing back into their squad car and driving away.

As soon as the police car turned right onto Erbes Road, less than three

hundred yards from their house, a huge scream came from the hill behind their home. Should they call the police again? The screaming continued and, by this time, it seemed quite close to the back of their cousin's house.

Steve estimated that his cousin Kim's room was level with where the screams were coming from and barely fifteen feet away. "Even with her stereo on, she should have heard it," he said. They were told later that nobody had heard a thing.

After the police had gone, they took a flashlight out to the backyard and found the two dogs in their doghouse, shaking. They managed to get them into the garage, dragging them by the collar.

They went back inside and their father told them about an incident that happened when he was a radar technician for the US Air Force at Sioux City in 1952. One night, they got an alert that something was coming down from Canada at eighteen-hundred miles per hour and at an altitude of about eighty-thousand feet. He did not know what it was, but everybody was told not to discuss it at the time.

Anyway, they attempted to continue their evening in a normal way. Steve, Viv and Rick returned upstairs and Mom and Dad watched television downstairs. There had been no noise from the hill for a while and everything seemed tranquil.

Then at about eleven-thirty or twelve o'clock, a huge scream erupted from outside. Steve yelled down for his

dad and both their parents came rushing upstairs. All five of them piled into the bathroom that adjoined the parents' bedroom - it had the best vantage point to look out at the back of the house.

At this point, Steve estimated that 'the thing' was only thirty feet away, moving from right to left right at the edge of their property. He said that it sounded like the screaming was coming from just above the level of the purple sage that covered the hill, as though whatever it was out there was on top of the dense brush rather than inside it.

Another shriek was heard, this time followed by a loud, electronic-sounding beep. The thing screamed two more times, each utterance being followed by the odd beep, and Viv 'freaked out'.

Steve admitted that they had seen *The UFO Incident*, the TV movie about the Betty and Barney Hill abduction, just a month or so before. Viv, being six months pregnant, had recalled Betty describing having a needle inserted into her stomach and she went hysterical.

Steve stepped from the window and went out into the hall to where Viv had retreated. Suddenly, a brilliant, white light filled the entire house. Steve said that it appeared to come from downstairs, make its way up the stairs and filled the rest of the house. As it came up the steps, he thought he could see dark shapes moving about, then it was blinding before blinking out in an instant. This all happened in about half a second.

As soon as the light went out, everybody calmly walked to their rooms. They could still hear the screaming from the hill, but now it seemed further away. Steve looked at the clock in his bedroom and it read four-thirty in the morning! Somehow they had lost four hours. It was between twelve and twelve thirty when they had been in the bathroom and now it was close to dawn.

Rick said that he had to be up for work and went to bed. Everybody did likewise, as though nothing had happened.

Before he went to sleep, Steve remembered hearing the thing screaming on the hill and could not now, thirty-odd years later, imagine being able to sleep with that cacophony ringing out in the early morning.

The next morning, Viv demanded that Steve stay home, but Rick and their parents went off to work. Steve scrambled up the hill as far as he could get, confident in the light of day, but found nothing up there except two odd, intersecting circles in the weeds, about eight feet in diameter.

Later, Steve's mother would learn from a friend that, at about eight o'clock that night, she had seen two cars parked on Erbes Road, with the occupants watching a bright, white light hovering over the area near their house, before blinking out. Bizarrely, this lady quite her job that day and committed suicide two weeks later.

Steve's cousin said that they had not heard a thing, despite being home all night. They had not even heard the telephone ring when the family had tried calling them.

The dogs became sick and the younger male lost control of his nervous system, resulting in him dragging his back legs. He was put down a few weeks after the incident. The veterinarians had no idea what had caused his illness. At first they thought it was an incidence of the hip problems that German shepherds are prone to, but tests ruled that out. The older female went blind and was put to sleep a few months after that night.

Just after his daughter, Cynthia, was born, Steve and Viv moved to their own home, about five miles away. One day, several months after the incident, Steve returned home to help his dad move some things and decided to go up on the hill again. He was surprised to find the two interlocking circles still plainly visible in the weeds. That night, Steve went to sleep, feeling perfectly fine, and woke up the next day in hospital with a temperature of 106 degrees F. For the next year, he would be sick and endure a battery of tests, but nobody could find anything wrong with him, beyond his blood having some unknown abnormalities and that he should not give blood. At one point, it was suggested that he had cancer. He still has occasional liver problems, but has come to the conclusion that, seeing as he has lived for over thirty years with this, it is not going to kill him now!

Their dad, who was a strong, fit man, passed a physical with flying colours over a year after the incident. During a company softball game at a picnic, he hit the ball, ran to first base, had a heart attack and died. This was about eighteen months after that night.

As to the missing time, the family say that they are willing to undergo hypnotic regression in an effort to discover what happened in this stolen four hours. Brian Vike is attempting to find a reputable hypnotherapist that will be able to help these completely ordinary people find out what really happened that night.

This case is absolutely fascinating and must be one of the most intriguing stories of the last few years. What were those fireballs? What was screaming out there in the dead of night? Why did everything go deathly quiet and why did the neighbours seemingly not hear anything, despite the shrieking being only feet away? Were the health problems experienced by the family and their pets afterwards connected with what they witnessed?

Brian Vike is trying to get to the bottom of this and will keep us posted.

Steve Johnson