

UFO landing at South Fremantle

Nancy L. Wilson

Miss Wilson is a reader of both our magazines. She submitted a short account of this incident and was asked if she could carry out a detailed investigation. Her excellent contribution is the result

IN the early hours of a cold, dark, winter's morning in 1970, five Western Australians met with a UFO experience which they will long remember. Of these people, four constituted a young family, with whom I have spoken at length, while the fifth, a nightwatchman, has preferred to remain anonymous and uninvolved.

Witnesses

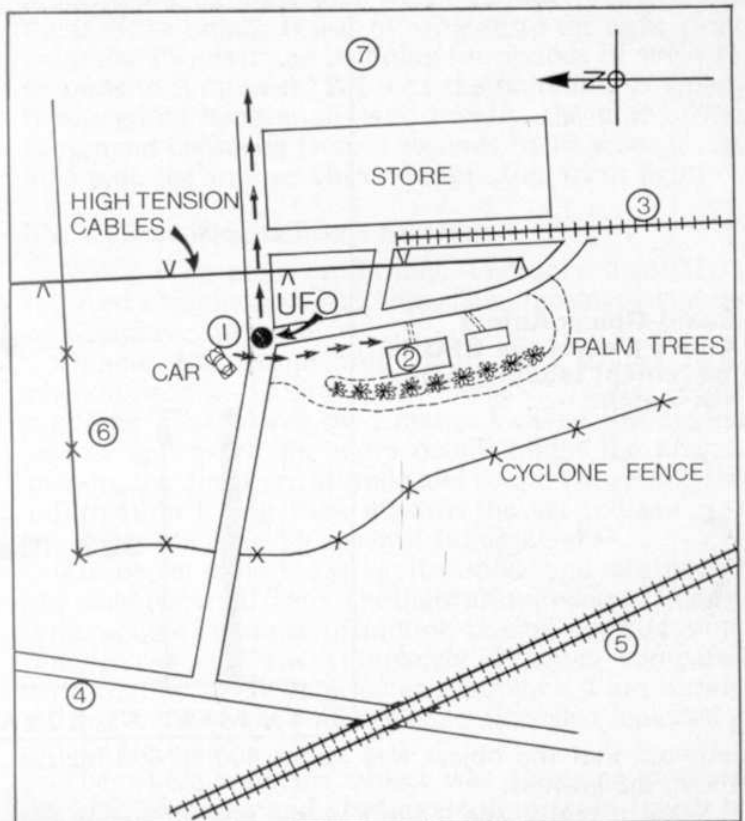
The Durant family, who live at 12 Goneril Way, Coolbellup (an outer suburb of Perth), consists of:

- Vernon Durant, a contract cleaner who runs his own business,
 - Wendy, his wife, who helps with the business,
 - Robert and Carol, their children, who were aged 6 and 5 years respectively at the time of the sighting.
- An un-named nightwatchman.

Vernon Durant is an excitable, talkative, emotional and aggressive young man who can neither read nor write. He is a self-confessed practical joker, is proud of his illiteracy coupled with business success, and describes himself as highly-strung, not easily frightened, and one who always jeered at such things as flying saucers. He has had experience at brawling as well as boxing, from which he has learnt to protect his hands by making use of the nearest weapon—an instinctive reaction which is relevant to his behaviour during the UFO incident. Despite his apparently unstable temperament, Vern has a very credible directness and honesty both about himself and towards others.

Wendy is quiet and retiring but well able to speak up for herself firmly and convincingly. She does not regard herself as highly emotional. Besides helping her husband actively on the job, she takes care of all the paper work connected with the business.

The children, from babyhood, have accompanied



KEY:
1. Position of night watchman. 2. Office. 3. Private railway. 4. South terrace. 5. Main line railway. 6. & 7. Sand hills.

their parents to work at night and are accustomed to sleeping soundly in the car parked outside the place of work. They know the location of toilets and are quite used to finding their own way there and back in the dark without alarm or any disturbance to their parents.

Of the nightwatchman I have only the Durants' description. He works for a prominent night patrol firm and, no doubt in view of the character requirements of his job, had no intention of risking it by being associated in any way with UFO reports. While still shocked by his novel experience, he surprised the Durants by expressing a determination to forget the whole incident and has since consistently refused to be drawn into discussion of it. Typically, this man was described as being burly, confident, unflustered, never nervous and obviously well able to take care of himself.

Conditions

The early morning of Monday, June 16, 1970, was dark, with no moon in evidence, cold and damp, and "with a fair bit of wind." Roads and lawns were wet with recent rain. Patchy cloud drifted across the sky.

Sequence of Events

At approximately 3.30 a.m. the Durant family arrived to begin work at Wesfarmers building in South Fremantle.¹ The area was comparatively isolated, being set back from the highway and well away from houses. Access was by a private road flanked by low sand dunes and through a locked gate to the parking area adjacent to the building (see map). Usually the

nightwatchman, arriving first, would open this gate and leave it open for the Durants. On this occasion, as on some others, they preceded him by 1½ hours, unlocked the gate and left it open for him, then pulled into the parking lot where they left the two children asleep in the car and entered the office which they were to clean.

About an hour later (ca. 4.30 a.m.) they were surprised by the entry of their daughter Carol who was crying with fright. This was most unusual, but when Vern investigated outside he found nothing out of the ordinary except for the sound made by a flock of pigeons. He wondered briefly if there were pigeons hidden in the roof, then dismissed the thought. Assuming this noise had disturbed the child, he reassured her, settled her down again beside her brother who was still sleeping soundly, and returned to work.

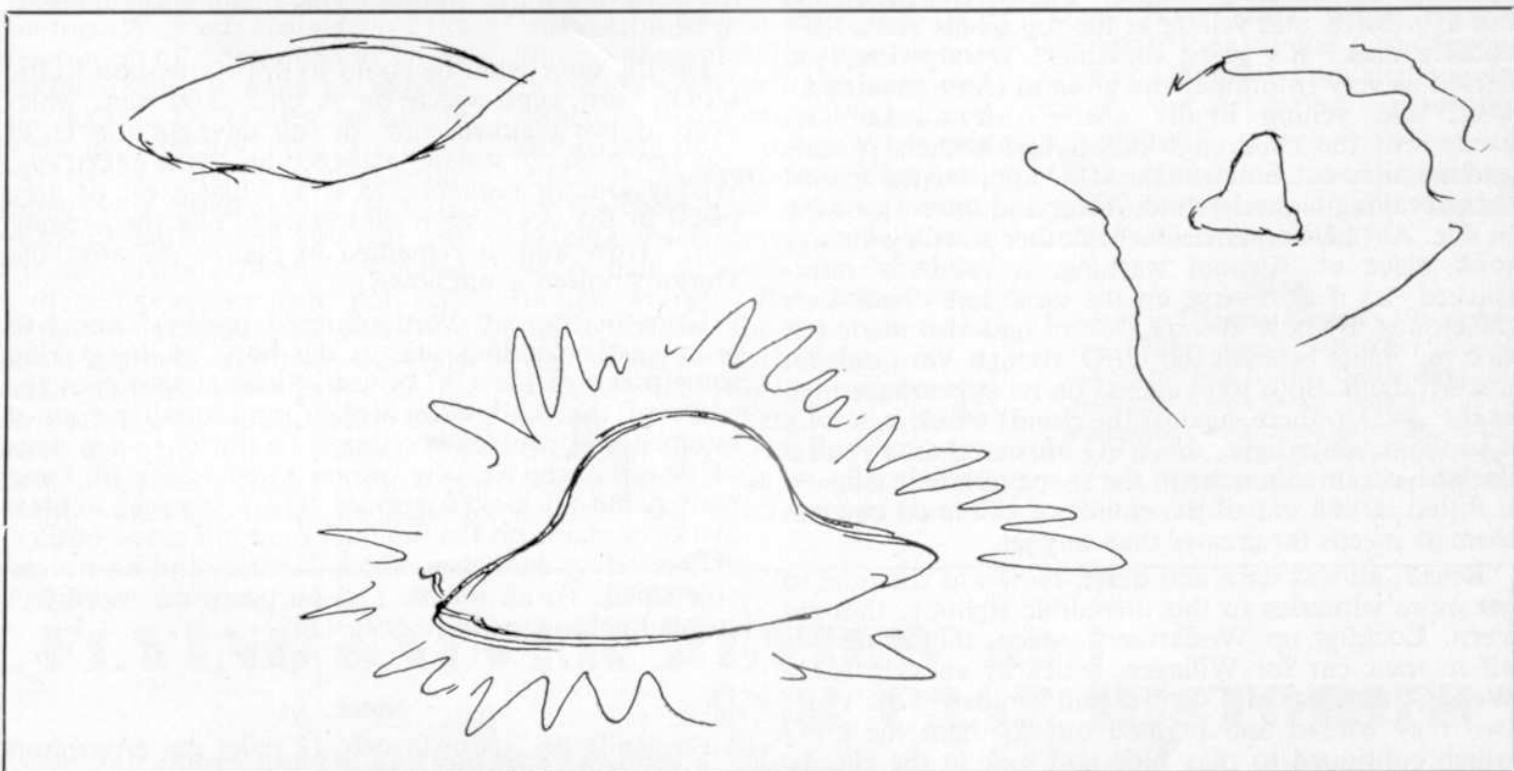
For a further half hour all was peaceful. Suddenly, at about 5.00 a.m., there was a great commotion and in through the front door burst the nightwatchman, panting, white-faced, shaking, and shouting that there was a flying saucer outside. At first they disbelieved him, thinking it a practical joke, but the utterly foreign and agitated behaviour of this normally phlegmatic man aroused their curiosity. This was the story he told them:

Driving his VW along Wesfarmers' private road, he noticed that the cleaners had left the gate open for him and so drove through without slackening speed. Suddenly the car lights picked up a huge shape directly ahead which completely blocked the road. Not knowing what it was, and acting instinctively to avoid a collision, he swung the car sharply off the road, burying it nose-deep in a sand dune at the side. There were no warning lights, just a battleship-grey shape standing astride the road.

Leaving his car, the nightwatchman approached the

"vehicle" on foot, thinking it might be a big truck, but when he saw what it really was, panic struck. At close quarters it was a dull grey, domed object, unilluminated and silent. He had time to notice a rim about it and "a couple of windows"—but not the undercarriage—before unreasoning fear caused him to bolt for safety. His consuming thought was to reach other human beings. Knowing the cleaners were in the lighted building across the way and afraid to spend time extricating his car from the sand, he dashed on foot past the object and plunged at top speed through the darkness to the safety of Wesfarmers. Had the roadside gate been locked and the nightwatchman forced to pull up while opening it, he could not have failed to see the UFO in his headlights. Unfortunately for him, the gate was already open! Obviously the UFO had not landed there at the time Durants arrived on the scene.

While the Durants considered whether or not they were being hoaxed, the nightwatchman took another look outside and again hurtled back through the door, yelling "It's left! It's taking off!" At this, all three rushed out of the building in time to witness an astonishing spectacle. Outside, the darkness was lit up like day with a brilliant electric blue pulsating light. A whirring sound "like a flock of pigeons taking off" filled the air—the same sound heard half an hour earlier when Carol Durant awoke in fright.² Everything—roads, lawns, trees, buildings—was brilliantly illuminated in detail, bathed in the weird blue glow. And at its centre, clearly seen at the junction of roads to their left, a metallic craft approximately 12ft. in diameter and 14ft. high hovered above the bitumen. Already it was slipping slowly forward in a flat trajectory, following the course of the road which would take it past the end of the two-storey wool store opposite, and out of view. No light shone within the UFO; there seemed no source for the



Mr. V. Durant's sketches: (top left) the UFO near the ground, and (top right) surrounded by light and silhouetted against cloud. Bottom: Mrs. Durant's sketch of the UFO when about to take off

blue glare it produced. Of the three observers, only the nightwatchman saw that there were two red lights beneath it. To Vern Durant's startled eyes the moving object appeared like a football, from Wendy's point of view it was domed like a hat or bell, but all were agreed that *the whole* object appeared to be rotating as it moved off at an estimated 20 mph.

Directly across its path high-tension wires soared at the height of the wool store roof and collision seemed inevitable, but keeping to its trajectory the UFO slid safely beneath, then skimmed on at roof height along the side of the store.

Out across the car park dashed the three workers, yelling their wonderment as they sought a view unobstructed by the tall building. As the UFO cleared the end of the store it tilted and, gathering speed, soared away over the sand hills and nearby rubbish tip until, further away to the east, it approached a hotel. Here it was seen to tilt again and accelerate sharply upwards, to disappear into the clouds.

By this time the Durants were close to the UFO's landing site and the noise and excitement had wakened the children who now joined their parents. Moments later, pandemonium broke loose as the vanished craft suddenly re-emerged from the clouds and raced at incredible speed back towards the alarmed group. It was coming in to land again on the same spot, they felt sure, the very spot where they stood. Instinctively Vern Durant sought about for a weapon—a brick, a chunk of stone—anything to hurl at this menacing thing. He was torn between the possible need to bundle wife and children into the car and away to safety, and his natural instinct to defy any threat of danger. Fighting instinct won and they stood their ground.

Thinking back to those moments, Vern Durant remembered himself as intensely excited, not frightened but aggressive, and yelling at the top of his voice "It's coming back! It's going to land!" Wendy described herself as very emotional and close to tears, shaking all over, and yelling loudly also. Wide awake with excitement the children watched beside their parents and the nightwatchman as the UFO approached against the prevailing westerly wind, lower and lower, growing in size. At "helicopter height" another startling change took place as, without warning, it suddenly backtracked "as if in reverse on the same line" back into the clouds. By now Wendy Durant had also made out two red lights beneath the UFO, though Vern did not discern them. Both were agreed on its appearance high in the sky. Up there, against the clouds which it lit with a brilliant white light, the UFO appeared as a central dark object or silhouette in the shape of a bell. Silently it flitted in and out of the clouds or skimmed beneath them at speeds far greater than any jet.

Below, all was dark and quiet. Now was the time to get more witnesses to this incredible sighting, thought Vern. Locking up Wesfarmers' office, the family set off in their car for Willagee, a nearby suburb where Wendy's mother (Mrs. Rowe) and brother lived. These two they roused and pointed out to them the UFO which continued to play hide and seek in the clouds. Surrounded by its halo of light it would dart out into view, flash across the sky at bewildering speed, then

disappear upwards only to reappear from the cloud layer at some different spot, but always in the same limited region of sky.

By now it was almost 6.00 a.m., though still dark. Resuming their journey homewards, the Durants rounded a corner in Willagee and spotted two nurses to whom they also pointed out the UFO. About 2½ miles further on, they came across a milkman on his round. Busily engaged in delivering bottles, he was most reluctant to be delayed, and understandably suspicious at being accosted by agitated strangers bearing a fantastic tale. It took a deal of talking to persuade him to raise his eyes but eventually, as he extracted two bottles from a crate on his utility, he glanced upwards where indicated and saw the "flying bell". In one startled movement he dropped the milk bottles back into the craft, then leapt into the driving seat and took off at break-neck speed down the road, filled with panic. Here at last was comic relief, and both Durants roared with laughter as they remarked in recounting their story: "Those poor people in that house never did get their two bottles of milk!"

Daylight was approaching and they continued home to Coolbellup without further interruption, still keeping the UFO in view. Arriving at their house, Vern rang the Civil Defence, a commercial radio station, and one of the local newspapers (*Daily News*). Civil Defence showed little interest other than to enquire "has it landed again?" The radio station was more encouraging but the announcer found it impossible to locate the UFO in the sky from a telephoned description. Finally, the newspaper showed immediate interest and took down over the phone all particulars of the sighting from beginning to end. However, the report was not published until the evening of Wednesday, June 18, 1970, hard on the heels of another sighting which later was confessed to be a hoax.

Having done what he could to draw attention to the UFO, Vern kept watch on it until 8.00 a.m. when sleep at last claimed him. In full daylight the UFO was very high but still quite discernible to the naked eye. Wendy Durant remembered it as "like a bit of grey metal in the sky." Vern said it was "like the evening star." How long it remained in plain view after the Durants retired is unknown.

Later in the day Vern returned to Wesfarmers to examine the landing site, in the hope of discovering some proof of the UFO's visit. Since at that spot the edges of the road were broken, and small pieces of bitumen and pebbles lay about, he hoped to see signs of disturbance, e.g. the verges swept clear of loose matter, but all looked normal. There were no tell-tale marks or stains on the bitumen road, no grass, bushes, or trees close enough to show damage, and no noticeable smell. To all intents and purposes the morning's events might never have occurred.

Notes

- 1 Fremantle lies approximately 12 miles downriver from Perth, at the mouth of the Swan River.
- 2 As a keen fancier of long standing, Vern. Durant was emphatic that this was the exact description.

Stone Age Statuette

A shape well-known to UFO researchers

John E. Ben

HERE is a photograph which permits us to make a rather interesting comparison. It is of a famous prehistoric sculpture known as the "Statuette in the Hood". It is a head of a young woman carved in mammoth ivory which was found in the Grotte du Pape at Bassemppouy (Landes). It is regarded as one of the most original works of the Aurignacian Period.

It was at first thought that the head was covered with a sort of hood, but the current theory is that the artist meant to represent a plaited hair-style closely held in a net. Monsieur Henri-Paul Eydoux said in his book *History of Archaeological Discoveries*: "(the artist) carved neither eyes nor mouth and was satisfied with an overall impression of a face; even so he succeeded in imparting a very remarkable expression to the features."

However, while looking at the photograph, I was reminded of the description of the woman given by Antônio Villas Boas in his deposition made in Dr. Fontes' consulting room in February 1958. He said: "Moreover, she was beautiful, though of a different type from the women I had known. Her hair was fair, almost white (like hair bleached with peroxide), smooth, not very abundant, reaching to half way down her neck and with the ends curling inwards; and parted in the centre. Her eyes were large and blue, more elongated than round, being slanted outwards (like the slit eyes of those girls who make themselves



up fancifully to look like Arabian princesses; that is how they were, with a difference that here the thing was natural, for there was no make-up whatever). Her nose was straight without being pointed, nor turned up, nor too big. What was different was the contour of her face, for the cheekbones were very high, making the face very wide (much wider than in the South American Indian women). But then, immediately below, the face narrowed very sharply, terminating in a pointed chin. This feature gave the lower half of her face a quite triangular shape. Her lips were very thin, hardly visible. Her ears (which I saw later) were small and

appeared no different from those of the women I know. The cheeks gave the impression that there was a projecting bone underneath, but, as I saw later, they were soft and fleshy to the touch, and there was no sensation of bone."*

It is also interesting to note that the area in which the statuette was found is one which figures prominently in prehistoric cave drawings, as discussed in Aimé Michel's article "Palaeolithic U.F.O. shapes" which appeared in the November/December 1969 issue of *Flying Saucer Review*. If one draws a line between the caves of the Cantabrian regions of Northern Spain and those of the Vézère regions of the Dordogne, the area in which this statuette was found is very close to the centre of the line.

Could it be, I wonder, that an "ancestor" of the young lady who featured so prominently in the Villas Boas story made herself known to one of the Cromagnon artists? Obviously, we shall never know, but it is an interesting speculation.

The statuette is now housed in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales at Saint-Germain-en Laye.

Note

* See also Charles Bowen's "Interesting Comparisons" in *The Humanoïds* in which the description of Antônio Villas Boas' lady friend is compared with those given by Betty and Barney Hill (New Hampshire, U.S.A., 1961) and Maurice Masse (Valensole, France, 1965).

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