

Captured! The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Experience by Stanton T. Friedman and Kathleen Marden. Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2007. 319 pp. \$16.99 (paper) ISBN-10: 156414-971-4.

Captured! re-tells a New Hampshire couple's (Betty and Barney Hill) 1961 account of a close encounter with a UFO and their subsequent memories of a roadside alien abduction. The Hill case was the first widely publicized tale of this kind, subjected not only to repeated scrutiny from dedicated ufologists and debunkers, but also to public exposure in best-selling books (e.g., John Fuller's *The Interrupted Journey*, 1966) and a two-hour docu-drama on NBC (*The UFO Incident*, 1975). Consequently, it has become one of the most (in)famous cases in all of ufology.

Because so much of this has been told before, it is fair to ask whether another book on the Betty and Barney Hill experience is needed. The authors of *Captured!* argue that it is. Extensive attention to the case has not ensured accuracy. Instead, distortions, omissions, and commissions have invariably resulted from the second- and third-person renditions of the events as first reported by the Hills. Even Betty's own testimony has suffered over time from the inevitable toll that time and experience take on original memory.

The book's authors are well suited for setting the record straight. Stanton Friedman is a long time (and full-time) ufologist and a seasoned veteran of the ufology wars. No one has ever accused him of shying away from an opinion, and Friedman's belief in the Hill case has been expressed elsewhere in no uncertain terms. Nevertheless, *Captured!* is largely a documentation of facts, transcripts, and chronological records, and admirably light on adamant conclusions (the authors clearly think that the case speaks for itself). Kathleen Marden is Betty Hill's niece, and as Betty's sister's daughter (at the age of 13), was able to follow the events surrounding her aunt and uncle's reported experience, the notoriety that followed, and the evolution of Betty into a ufological cult figure—all from the unique vantage point of a family "insider." In addition, Marden was witness to some of the physical evidence associated with the incident (more on this later) and to the Hills' behavioral and emotional reactions to their initial experience and subsequent memories. This Friedman/Marden duo of fact-finder/scientist and confidant/intimate work well together in providing one of the most accurate portrayals of the alleged affair, the investigations into it, and its recounting (for better or worse) by others. Indeed, the book does succeed in reconciling many of the discrepancies found in the extant versions of the described encounter.

The reader of *Captured!* will realize that the Betty and Barney Hill story is really three stories in one: a UFO sighting, an alien abduction, and the impact of a popularized abduction report on the lives and times of its reporters. Certainly the abduction part of the story is its most sensational aspect, but the UFO sighting is itself a doozy. It is a "close encounter of the third kind," including the following features:

- Multiple witnesses
- Instrumentally assisted (binocular) visual observation
- Vehicle interference effects
- Animal reaction (Hills' dog)
- Physiological effects (Barney develops a ring of genital warts)
- Physical evidence (magnetized spots on car, residue on Betty's dress, damaged shoes and binoculars, stopped watches)
- Corroborating witness testimony (in regard to both the physical evidence and to the psychological/behavioral characteristics of the Hills in response to their sighting)
- An Air Force radar report of an anomalous target at the apparent time/vicinity of the alleged encounter (although most investigators remain unconvinced of a causal relationship)

Even in the absence of any abduction report, the sighting belongs among the most interesting in ufology.

The sighting was reported almost immediately to both Pease Air Force Base and NICAP (National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena) and stemmed directly from conscious recall. Two post-experience situations led to the next part of the Hills' story—the more attention-grabbing account of alien abduction. First, the Hills are confused by what seems to them an unaccounted-for delay between the time of their sighting and their arrival at home (what is now commonly referred to as "missing time"). Second, Betty starts to have vivid dreams of being taken by aliens and examined aboard their craft. These two situations lead the Hills to seek help from a prominent psychiatrist (Dr. Benjamin Simon) in the hope of using hypnosis to retrieve memory for the period of missing time. It is this hypnotically elicited recall (tempered by Betty's dream episodes) that forms the content of their story of capture by extraterrestrial beings.

But the story is still not complete without an examination of its effect on the Hills' lives. Barney dies early on (1969), and Betty lives out her life until 2004. In the general public arena, alien abduction becomes a *cause celebre* of ufologists, debunkers, the media, and False Memory Syndrome proponents. All the while, Betty becomes progressively more influenced by her experience as an "abductee" and increasingly more involved with the UFO phenomenon. In what Friedman and Marden call her "fall from grace," she reports regular UFO sightings, claims successful attempts to solicit alien contact, and tells of occasional alien intervention in her daily affairs. Eventually, Betty becomes almost as notorious (at least in the ufology community) for these reports as she had for the formative incident that made her the iconic abductee.

In documenting this history, Friedman and Marden provide numerous transcripts from the Hills' early testimonials, communications, and therapy sessions, as well as details from the work of others who have chronicled their case. Ultimately, the Hills' story of contact and capture foreshadows (some

would argue creates) much of what will become the "standard motif for alien abduction reports:

- Memory loss for portions of the experience, later "retrieved" through hypnotic regression
- Short, grey, large-eyed entities
- Physical examination including the scandalous anal probes and pregnancy tests
- Alien assurances of amnesia
- Telepathic communication
- The mind-controlling effect of alien eyes
- Characteristic alien writing
- An apparently hierarchical alien command structure

The list goes on and on (a notable exception to the Hills' seminal account has been the strong shift from vehicle to bedroom abduction sites), and, like the story itself, the response to it (by ufologists, skeptics, and experiencers) has also been largely stereotypical. Consider the following "classic" reactions to UFO and abduction reports and how they manifest in the Hill case:

- *Dismissal of complex sightings as mundane misperceptions.* The Hills' UFO report involves two witnesses' close-up observation of a highly detailed and structured craft performing exotic maneuvers in different locations over an extended period of time. This has been dismissed by debunkers as misperception of common celestial objects.
- *Openness to UFO reports but not to abduction reports.* Psychiatrist Simon was convinced that the Hills' sighting report was veridical, but he remained steadfastly certain their abduction memories could not be.
- *The focus in ufology on abduction reports over sighting reports.* The Hills' abduction account has completely eclipsed the sighting component of their case.
- *The tendency of abductees (after their experience) to see alien activity in mundane events.* Betty's fall from grace may be an example.
- *Selective use of data and theory.* Numerous aspects of the Hill case are used, ignored, or interpreted to the particular advantage of one's own *per se* view on alien abduction (much of this, I'm sure, reflects legitimate differences of opinion, but it is hard not to attribute to this behavior some strategic manipulation as well). Some weapons from the proponent and skeptic arsenals:
 - Using statistical arguments to show that Betty's "star map" (her reproduction of a three-dimensional display of the aliens' travel routes, subsequently replicated using terrestrial astronomical charts) is just a random pattern or, conversely, beyond any chance probability.
 - Trumpeting the "Bellerophon Shield" affair (an episode from the Outer Limits TV show reputed to depict—prior to Barney's recall—an alien

just like the one he describes during hypnosis) as unquestionable proof of cultural influence on Barney's imagination or, conversely, dismissing the similarities as simple coincidence.

- Arguing against a causative role for hypnotic suggestibility, highlighting Simon's conspicuously unsuccessful attempts to "lead" the Hills into accepting his dream confabulation theory or, conversely, arguing for suggestibility as the source of the Hills' common memories, while completely ignoring Simon's failure to sway.
- Proposing hypothetical reconstructions of the Hills' "interrupted journey" to establish a chronology consistent with—or, conversely, inconsistent with—the notion of missing time.

As has always been the norm with abduction reports, investigators have used these and many other aspects of the Hill episode to provide completely contrary perspectives on the claimed abduction events. (As a further case in point, the interested reader may want to explore yet another just-published book: *Encounters at Indian Head: The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Abduction Revisited*, Karl Pflock and Peter Brookesmith, Eds., Anomalist Books, 2007. This book contains a series of absolutely certain, yet diametrically opposed, opinion pieces stemming from a small conference in 2000.) Notwithstanding, in his foreword to *Captured!*, Bruce Maccabee seems to conclude that the controversy is now over. He states that "with the publication of this book the skeptics' wiggle room has shrunk to zero." I am not convinced the book will do much to end the debate. The history of the abduction phenomenon suggests that every "explanation" fuels yet another challenge, and the debating points appear to be endless. Nearly 50 years later, Betty and Barney's "UFO experience" continues to perplex, vex, and remain relevant. I recommend *Captured!* to all who want to re-familiarize themselves with the case, verify their understanding of it, or whose appreciation of anomaly would be enriched by learning about it.

STUART APPELLE

*Dean, School of Letters and Sciences
State University of New York, College at Brockport
sappelle@brockport.edu*

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