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Things That Go BANG! in The Night

A teenage girl named Jane Baker indirectly led to my getting interested in UFOs. In 1975, Jane was a high school student who lived with her parents and three brothers in a small two-story house on a farm in northern Wisconsin.

Every night in those days, Jane would carry her two cats, Scamp and Babe, out to the garage, where they'd spend the night. As she was taking them out on the evening of March 13, the sky lit up and she heard a strange whining noise.

Off to her left, about four hundred feet away, she saw a round, brightly lit object in the middle of a narrow road that ran past the house. It had red and greenish-blue lights that were blinking.

It scared her. She threw the cats into the garage, slammed the door and ran back into the house. "Dad! Dad!" she screamed. "Come quick! There's something out there!"

It was about nine at night and her mom and dad were sitting on the sofa, examining packages of seeds they were going to plant in the spring. Her father quickly stepped out onto the cold porch in his stocking feet and stopped abruptly as he saw what she was screaming about.

"I didn't want to believe what I was seeing," Phil Baker said later. "There was this circular object about twelve feet across with red and bluish-green lights around the outside and in the center was an opening like a door with a real brilliant light coming from inside.

"I felt I could've looked inside if I'd been closer, but I couldn't see any details. It made a high whiny, sing-songy noise. I never heard a sound like that before."

He hurried back inside to get some shoes on. His wife had come to the doorway by then, and she stood watching the object.

BANG! BANG!

By now, two of Jane's brothers were outside, also staring at the object. Her third brother was upstairs, so wrapped up in a basketball game on the radio that he stayed there throughout the incident, aware only of a commotion outside.

When Jane next looked at whatever it was, she exclaimed: "It's changed now! It's different!"

When she'd first seen it, there had been no opening on the side of the object. Now there was a door of some kind.

Everyone stood watching the eerie spectacle for several minutes, uncertain what to do. Suddenly, a pounding noise came from inside the object.

"It was like BANG! BANG-BANG! BANG! and so on, like somebody was hammering on a piece of metal or repairing something," Phil Baker said. "Some bangs were louder than others, like a heavy hit and then a light tap. There was no pattern to it.

"I didn't know what to expect. I told my wife I ought to go see what it was. Maybe a small plane had crashed or a snowmobiler was in trouble and somebody needed help. But she said to stay away from it."

He went back inside, followed by the others, and phoned George Ree, Ashland County's under sheriff, who lived several miles away.

"No sooner was I on the phone when there was a loud explosion from the object and it simply vanished," Baker said. He was anything but calm at the time.

"Baker was very upset," Ree told me later. "He's a pretty reliable, dependable person and I have no reason to disbelieve him, but he was quite excited. I had to tell him, 'Take it easy, cool down and just tell me what it is.'"

FAMILY 'QUITE EXCITED'

When Ree finally learned what had happened, he drove to the Baker home, located on a small hill beside the dirt road, which ended half a mile beyond the house. No one else lived on the road at that time and the nearest neighbor was half a mile away in another direction.

"When I got there, those people were quite excited," Ree said. "They were a frightened family. The mother wouldn't even come outside."

Ree examined the spot in the road where the Bakers had seen the object but could find no sign that anything had been there. He questioned the family a little more, then reported in by radio to the sheriff's dispatcher in Ashland, and went home.

A few minutes later, Ree was back on duty again. The dispatcher phoned and said more UFOs had been sighted. Between



ten and midnight, Ree and six deputies from Ashland County and

neighboring Iron County saw four unidentified objects flying around in the sky.

Peter Drolson, then a twenty-four-year-old Ashland County deputy, got the closest look at one. He had just parked his patrol car at the end of a road overlooking Lake Superior and had stepped out.

"Everybody was seeing UFOs that night except me," Drolson told me. "When I finally did see one, it was far away and I lost sight of it. I didn't think much about it and I was looking out over the lake when suddenly the ground got real bright around me and I could hear something. I was talking on the radio to the sheriff at the time.



"Everything got so bright I could've read a newspaper. I could see my shadow on the ground. I was leaning against my car with the microphone in my hand and whatever it was came from the west behind me going east across the road. All I could see was this bright glow maybe a couple of blocks behind me at treetop level or a little higher.

'WHOOSH' SILENCES RADIO

"I turned to my left to get a better look and my microphone cord became taut. So I turned to the right real quick to look over my right shoulder. By then it had already gone over the trees on the other side of the road and was gone.

"It sounded like a big gust of wind coming through the woods. I was talking on the radio the whole time but they heard only part of my transmission. They heard me talking, then a 'whoosh' and then me talking again."

All this was heard not only in the Sheriff's Office but on the radios of several police cars as well.

"I heard the 'whoosh' and the radio went blank," Under Sheriff Ree said. He had been standing beside his patrol car near the Ashland-Iron county line, talking to several deputies as they watched the UFOs flit through the skies.

"We saw one object come from the south going in a northerly direction," Ree said. "This was the second one, and it was a little lower than the first. We watched these

two for maybe a half hour.

"Then a third one came from the north going south, and that was the lowest one of all. We could see different colored lights on it. That one stayed in the air for approximately ten or fifteen minutes, just moving, sort of doing a jig, going up and down, making a big 'U' and going up and down again.

"We had two more cars on U.S. 2 in the northern part of Ashland County and I was transmitting to the deputies in that location. Two deputies were watching from a fire tower on Birch Hill and another, Drolson, was northwest of them on Lake Superior when one of these objects we were watching took off at a very high rate of speed.

"I radioed to Drolson and told him, 'It's going your way,' and all of a sudden he said, 'I see it coming-' and his radio went blank.

"Later, around midnight, we decided to head back home when we saw the fourth object moving across the sky."

NO BASE BUT...

This was the first UFO case I had ever investigated. At the time the sightings occurred, I had just switched from the rewrite desk at the National Enquirer to reporting. The news tip had come to us from a freelance writer who said one of her sources was a UFO investigator in Superior named Eugene Lundholm.

I phoned him at the University of Wisconsin in Superior, where he was a librarian and lecturer in psychology. He'd been investigating cases for several national UFO organizations for years and was the best source for UFO information in the area.

Gene had looked into the landing case fairly thoroughly and said he believed it was a valid one. He told me about the family and several of the police officers who had seen UFOs the same night.

So I phoned Phil Baker, whose family had seen the UFO sitting on the road near their farmhouse. He was very reluctant to talk. He and his family had had all the publicity they wanted. However, he was polite and courteous, which was a fatal mistake. I was polite and courteous too, and we continued to talk.

After about ten minutes, he began to confirm some of the things I'd learned and before long he told me everything about the sighting. He was nice about it, and it was a friendly conversation.

Eventually, I talked with everyone in the family. Several days later I flew to Superior to look further into the case and check on rumors that UFOs might have been using the bottom of St. Louis Bay, which separates Superior and Duluth, as an underwater base of some kind.

The Bakers lived near the small town of Mellen, about eighty miles east of Superior. I never did meet any of them in person, even though I went to Mellen twice during the week I was in the Superior area. Each time I phoned, no one was home and they were away the two days I stopped by their house.

However, I did get to speak to Under Sheriff George Ree and half a dozen deputies who had seen strange things in the sky the night the Bakers had seen the UFO.

I also checked with aviation authorities and found there'd been no aircraft flights in the area at the time, and finally decided the landing seemed to be a pretty solid case. But I never found any evidence of a UFO base, although quite a few people said they'd seen UFOs flying down the St. Louis River from the bay. That was in May 1975 and I spent a week in that area and talked to many other people who had seen UFOs.

What did the Baker family see that night? Nobody knows. I couldn't explain it.

For all I know, someone was inside that thing, whacking away with a hammer on their light-year meter or something. And once their "repairs" were made, they took off in such a hurry that they created a sonic boom, which could explain the explosion that the family heard.

But it was the case that introduced me to the world of UFOs, and by the end of my week in the Superior-Duluth area I was hooked on the phenomenon. Life hasn't been the same since.

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