

## Chapter 22

### TROUBLED TIMES

The year following the incident was a challenging and difficult time for Betty, Vickie and Colby. At times they felt like they would not survive. To make matters worse, their continuing poor state of health made it difficult for them to pursue their quest for information about the UFO and the military helicopters that chased it.

In between their bouts with nausea, vomiting, open sores, and pain, they contacted governmental agencies, politicians, and medical help groups. In every case they openly offered their medical records and their personal testimony. Some of the agencies treated them with respect and led them to believe they would be helped in some way; a promise that never materialized. People in other agencies were just plain rude, at times leaving them in tears after their calls. It was very much like the way victims of Agent Orange and the Gulf War Syndrome were treated.

When all else failed, we carried their plight to the media. It was our hope that the media contact would help to force the government agencies to act more responsibly by actually looking into their case and that it also might convince some of the special forces personnel in the helicopters to come forward with information that would be helpful. As will be documented in later chapters we were somewhat successful in opening a dialogue with a few of the governmental

agencies, but not with the helicopter flight crews.

I was in contact with Betty and Vickie weekly, if not more often, throughout the year. Since the volume of my recorded investigative notes for 1981 is sufficient to fill a book, I have extracted only some of the conditions and activities following the initial investigation that show how the situation completely disrupted their lives.

During the year Betty and Vickie were bombarded by inquiries from newspapers, tabloids, radio and television. MUFON, APRO, and CUFOs, which were the leading U.S. UFO investigative organizations at that time, all sought information for their respective journals. Late in the year, Betty and Vickie did finally consent to a television interview with "That's Incredible;" and their plight became known to thousands of television viewers.

Since Betty was too ill to function without assistance, her mother, Pauline Collins, came to Houston to care for her after Betty left the hospital the second time. Mrs. Collins said it was easy to see that Betty was not going to have a speedy recovery. Therefore, on March 23rd she took Betty back to her home in Birmingham, Alabama where it would be easier to care for her.

When she left Houston, Betty was feeling poorly. Her eyes were badly irritated, and she was suffering with headaches, lethargy, and weakness. Her hair had grown very little, so she still had large bald spots on her scalp. And blisters like those originally covering her face were now appearing on her arms, legs and back.

The doctors in Birmingham started what would be many years of care and treatment. During the next period of hospitalization they determined that Betty's skin tissue was breaking down. After verifying that the condition was not caused by fungus or allergy, the experts concluded it was due to radiation exposure.

During that same month, Vickie and Colby were equally troubled. Vickie was still sick and her burned areas were covered with sores. Her hair was also slow to regrow and her eyes were badly irritated. The headaches continued unabated. Her doctor was

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unable to give her any relief.

Colby's eyes were still very irritated. He had stomach cramps as the diarrhea continued. And he still had skin eruptions. Because of his condition, he had no appetite and he suffered from weight loss. Worst of all, however, he suffered from continual, horrible nightmares.

During the month of April, Vickie made weekly visits to a local clinic because she was feeling sick and dizzy, like she was about to faint. She seemed to be getting weaker and weaker. Historically, she always had low blood pressure. The first week her blood pressure was 160/87. The second week it was 142/84. The third week it was 120/80 and it leveled off at 110/80, still very high as compared with her past records.

Colby's condition continued much as it was during March, except a large water blister grew on the side of his face and after a few days it broke, flowing a clear liquid. Vickie said it looked really bad. And his nightmares continued.

Betty's condition did not improve. To make matters worse, she began having nightmares.

It was during this period that Betty and Vickie each wrote to their Congressmen and Senators. Congressman Charles Wilson didn't reply until July and then all he did was recommend that they contact Ufologist Frank Stranges. Soon after, Senators Bentsen and Tower sent letters telling them to go to Bergstrom Air Force Base at Austin, Texas for help.

Throughout this period, Betty and Vickie were continually reminded about their exposure to radiation by the large black line across their fingernails and the holes through several of their nails in the middle of the black line. By the month of May, their nails had grown sufficiently that they could begin to clip off this unsightly reminder of their encounter.

Nothing changed much during May and June. Betty continued to feel bad and suffer with the blisters. Vickie's eyes were so bad

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by this time that her glasses were useless. Colby still has the stomach problems and the nightmares. At the end of May, Betty joined Vickie at a hospital in Houston to have the sores examined, mapped and photographed. Nothing ever came of the hospital work-up.

During the third week of May, Vickie received a call from a person claiming to be from the FBI. He told her they would be sending two agents out to talk to her. Since it seemed unusual for the FBI to send agents to investigate a UFO incident, I called the Houston FBI office where I spoke to Agent McGee. Ms. McGee had no record of agents being sent to see Vickie. She said it was "possible" that they would send an agent on this type of case, but it "was not probable." Ms. McGee told me to have Vickie call the FBI at 224-1511, a number available 24-hours a day, if anyone claiming to represent them came to her home. She also said to get their full identification, including names, numbers, where their I.D. cards were issued, telephone number, auto type and license number. She said "to take no chances." The agents never arrived. Whether it was because I called the FBI office and questioned the visit or because the call was bogus, we will never know.

Betty's house in Dayton had been closed up since she went to her mother's house in March. She was shocked to find out it had been robbed. Strangely, the robbers opened all of her closets, drawers, and storage boxes and "ravaged" everything. Nothing of value was stolen. The only things missing were personal items, papers and records.

Colby began having dental problems by mid-1981. This is unusual because he never had a problem before. In July he developed three cavities and many more in the latter half of the year.

Vickie underwent regressive hypnosis on July 11th. She was terrified as she relived the event. In the weeks following the hypnosis session Vickie was upset and ill. Instead of helping, the session seemed to make her worse. She said: "I'll never relive that

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terror again.”

On July 19th, Vickie heard about three other women that were also burned by a UFO on December 29, 1980. She called me in an excited state, believing that she had found additional witnesses to the event. We tried to locate the women by contacting the area hospitals, but to no avail. The hospitals said they couldn't reveal information about patients. When that didn't work, we contacted the area police and sheriff offices. Office personnel all stated that no women had made a police report. This was not surprising, because they also had no report of the Cash-Landrums incident. No one had called the police that night either.

Betty, Vickie and Colby, obedient to their government leaders, did follow the instructions received from Senators Tower and Bensen. They drove to Bergstrom Air Force Base on August 17th and told their story to the Air Force lawyers. Unfortunately, after giving their testimony for the record, they received no assistance from the Air Force. It was a disappointing day. Their feelings of trust and patriotism had been shattered because their government had let them down.

August 20th was a bad day for Vickie. She said she had no vision in the left eye. It was like she had a patch over it. It was badly swollen. This was a shock to Vickie because her left eye had been the best up to this point in time. By August 23 she had regained some very diminished vision in the left eye. Her eye doctor referred her to another specialist on August 25th. He said she now sees out of a very narrow cone. He surmised she might have optic nerve damage. At that point, her eye doctor felt that he could do no more for her and gave her a referral to the Ocular Diagnostic Clinic at the University of Houston. When she went to the University of Houston on September 8th, they told her that the back of her eye was fine, but her eye had damage around its edges.

By the end of August Colby was wearing glasses during the day. He was still suffering with stomach aches and had periodic

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bouts with loose bowels. He was still suffering from a weight loss condition. His size 6 slim jeans that fit loosely in May now fell off his hips. He couldn't keep them up. The good news was that the small bald spot where the hair loss had occurred was now filling in nicely. Strangely, however, he had grown some unusual clumps of hair on his back and arms during the summer. The clumps ranged in size from one-half to three-quarters of an inch in diameter. On August 29th Vickie caught him trying to shave the clumps of hair to get rid of them.

Vickie said Colby was having trouble eating. When he did eat he got stomach aches and had bowel problems. Even when given a wide choice of foods, he still would not eat. He started the day by eating only a part of a bowl of cereal. Prior to the UFO event he liked coke and hamburgers. Afterwards he wouldn't touch either one. He did drink a lot of water. He seemed to have an unquenchable thirst. Betty and Vickie also had the problem of thirstiness.

Vickie was dealing with another kind of hair problem. After her hair loss, the hair that grew back was of a different color and texture. It was very coarse. This was bothersome while it was short; but when it grew longer, it was easier for her to manage than before the hair loss. In the end she liked the new hair better.

Betty made several trips to the hospital during 1981 and spent some time in cardiac care in September. When her mother called to tell me that Betty was in the hospital on September 30th, she was crying because she was so worried about Betty. I called Dr. Wittaker that same night and he told me Betty did not have a heart attack. She had a cold, some angina, and was spitting up. He said he would release her from the cardiac unit the next day.

One of Betty's most dangerous sessions started on October 5th. She had experienced a long period of weight loss and was down to 103 pounds. Then she developed a chest congestion, cramps, diarrhea, and chest pains. The large blisters were again breaking out

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on her body. Dr. Wittaker was concerned and ordered an extensive battery of tests including a lot of blood work. When I spoke with Betty, she said: "It might feel better to be dead." I reminded her that she needed to continue the fight for justice and that I would help her in every way possible.

Betty contacted me after she was finally released from the hospital again because she was concerned about some of the things she was told while in the hospital. Dr. Wittaker called in some other specialists because Betty was not responding to antibiotics. They were interested in her description of the original event and the possibility that she had been subjected to radiation exposure. They said something was blocking the antibiotics from curing the infection and it had them all stumped.

Blood work done on Betty, Vickie, and Colby in November showed they were all still off nominal in red and white blood cell count.

On the 28th of November, Betty went back to the hospital believing she was having a heart attack and was admitted to intensive care. They noted her condition to be "serious." She had swollen legs, a lot of skin eruptions, and low blood pressure. Tests showed she was not having a heart attack. Instead, she was suffering from an inflammation of the heart sac, referred to as pericarditis. It was at this point that Betty's doctor was quoted as saying her condition was "secondary to radiation exposure."

Betty's doctors were excellent care-givers. They successfully helped her to survive her many life-threatening medical events. And unlike the problems Betty had in getting copies of her original hospital test results, these doctors openly shared the records of her treatment with her. These records are intact and available if Betty needs them in the future.

The problems experienced by Betty, Vickie and Colby were nicely stated by Colby in his own words when he submitted an entry into the Children's Creative Writing Contest, sponsored by

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McDonalds and the Houston Chronicle. This is what he said:

### THE NIGHTMARE THAT WON'T END

The nightmare began on a Monday night on Dec. 29, 1980. My grandma and my aunt Betty and me went to New Caney, Texas and on our way back it began to happen. There was a bright object in the sky as we went down the dark road. It grew closer and bigger and brighter. It was diamond shaped and fire was coming out of it as it hung above the treetops. We had to stop. I tried running away but had to get back in the car. I turned red from the heat, did it ever burn. We had blisters. Aunt Betty was the worst. We all was so sick. We lost all our hair too. The newspaper tried to help us find out what it was but we got none. It's hard to smile. Sometimes when I remember I sometimes wake up crying in my pillow. There was helicopters that night with big blades. Maybe some day I can find out what it was and the nightmare will end. This is a true story. I was there.

The End

None of the investigators or media people knew Colby was entering this contest. While he didn't win the trip to Washington, D. C., this seven year old did win our hearts, so we all renewed our efforts to help him end his nightmare.

government representatives, lawyers, doctors, the general public and even some charlatans who tried to take advantage of her.

Several people have questioned how Betty could get along since she wasn't working. Some even started rumors that the U. S. Government was paying her expenses, which of course was not true. The answer is that Betty was able to get along because of her family and friends. Her wonderful mother Pauline Collins spent her last years caring for Betty. But it was Betty's strong will and sheer determination to seek justice that kept her going during all of the bad times.

Betty has never worked a single day since the encounter because of poor health. Initially, she was fighting the effects of the radiation burns. During that period her initial health state was well established. Later, when she developed nodules and skin cancers, it was already documented that she had been cancer-free prior to the incident. And it 1983 when she developed breast cancer and underwent a mastectomy, a review of her mammogram from January 1981 showed she had no indication of breast cancer at that time. In the years that followed she developed bone marrow problems, bone brittleness, and joint problems. Intermixed with all of this, she had continual bouts with radiation dermatitis and inflammation of the heart sac. The visual evidence of her injuries was documented by photographs and her many hospital stays, including a number of times in intensive care, was documented by her medical records.

Several of Betty's doctors went on record saying it was their professional medical opinion that she had been exposed to radiation. These are doctors who assess patients after radiation treatments and they are familiar with the changes in the texture of the skin when it is irradiated. They all said Betty's skin was typical of that kind of exposure. In fact, they disapproved the use of radiation for treatment of Betty's cancer because they didn't believe she could stand any more exposure. After the mastectomy they had a difficult

time finding enough undamaged skin for grafting. And the grafts they did were slow in healing.

In particular, Betty credits Dr. Bryan A. McClelland with keeping her alive and making her as comfortable as possible. In a letter documenting Betty's condition, Dr. McClelland said: "She has clear evidence of post radiation dermatitis with chronic changes in her right hand..." And "Ms. Cash's radiation exposure could not possibly have been casual. There are no sources of radiation available to the public of the intensity required to cause her injuries." Betty continues to suffer, but she is a fighter. On January 9, 1997, she suffered another heart attack and survived.

#### VICKIE LANDRUM

I am equally proud to have known Vickie Landrum. Her quiet determination and her ability to suffer without complaining is inspiring to everyone who comes in contact with her.

The burns, sores, hair loss, eye damage, and partial paralysis of the face were a constant reminder of the encounter. With these visible medical conditions she could no longer work in the food service industry to supplement the family income. At times she was too ill to care for her husband's needs and this was especially upsetting to her when he became ill. No doubt, however, her biggest concern was Colby. She worried daily about what was going to happen to him because of the radiation exposure. Right after the incident, doctors told her to keep a close eye on Colby's health because he could develop radiation sickness at any time, even as much as ten years later. And during the times when she was so ill that she was afraid she wouldn't survive, she worried about what would happen to Colby if something happened to her. Colby was her pride and joy. Perhaps that is what kept her going.

Vickie's strong faith in God was always like a shining light. During the encounter she calmed Colby by telling him that Jesus would take care of them. Throughout all of the bad times after the

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event she called on God for strength.

Initially Vickie treated her and Colby's skin condition with Johnson's Baby Oil. While it gave a little relief, of course, it was not a curing agent. So Vickie shopped around and finally found an Avon Company skin care product that gave them some relief. It was fairly expensive and in the amounts they needed during the months after the encounter, it was beyond her budget. We contacted Avon on Vickie's behalf and they supplied her with two cases of the product, free of charge. Avon requested nothing in return for their kindness.

After surviving all of the pain and worry, Vickie was again devastated by the loss of her loving husband Earnest in 1996.

### COLBY LANDRUM

Everyone involved tried hard to protect Colby from exploitation. The trauma he experienced during the encounter was enough to cause him problems for several years to come. He didn't need additional problems.

We consulted with Vickie on how to proceed every time Colby faced a new problem. Before the incident, Colby was an out-going and active lad. He fished, played T-ball and participated in other sports like a boy several years older than his age of seven. After the incident, he was sick, scared and had bad nightmares. For the year after the encounter he lost weight, had trouble with stomach pains and diarrhea. He experienced an abrupt increase in tooth decay and his eyesight was impaired. When school started the following September, he wore jeans that were one size smaller than he had the previous school year.

Colby was always a good student, but after the encounter, he began having trouble with the subject just before the recess period. This meant he would have to forfeit his recess in order to improve his grades. This didn't make sense to Vickie so she investigated why it was happening. As it turned out, Colby was afraid to go

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outside for fear the helicopters or the UFO would return. As soon as the teacher understood the problem and allowed him to be "safe," Colby's classwork improved again.

In helping Colby to understand what types of spacecraft NASA was building, I had Vickie bring him to the Johnson Space Center. At the time my office was in Mission Operations Directorate Building number 4, the same building where the astronauts had their offices. When Vickie and Colby arrived, I met them at the door to the building. At that point I found that Vickie had parked in a reserved parking spot and so I asked her to move the car to another parking lot so she wouldn't receive a citation. She left Colby with me standing outside of the building. We were talking about what he might like to see -- the astronaut trainers, Gemini Spacecraft, Apollo Spacecraft, and the Skylab -- when a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter came in from Galveston Bay and headed straight at us enroute to Ellington Field. Colby changed from a happy, excited boy to a very frightened one. He started trying to dash for a bush or other cover and I had to hold on to him and calm him. His great fear of the helicopter was so upsetting that I will never forget it. After the helicopter was gone, we had a great day looking at real space stuff.

The reaction of other children was tough on Colby. At times he was teased and mocked for seeing a UFO and for being afraid. This was very hard for him to deal with. The peer pressure brought on by other children is very harsh. Just telling Colby to ignore it did not work. He became very depressed and Vickie worried that something might happen to him. It was about that time that the Houston CBS-TV affiliate decided to do a news series on the incident. We were all hesitant to participate because other news people had come in, got their story, and left without helping in any way. Since we were still trying to reach some of the helicopter pilots to solicit their help, we hesitantly agreed to participate. This series turned out differently. The news person involved was Mitch Duncan, a very popular TV figure. Not only was he a good

reporter, he had a background in law. His series on the case was outstanding. It was fair and truthful, with no hype. Mitch was so impressed by the interviews that he offered to take Colby along with his own family to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. After that, Colby was a star. He had been with Mitch Duncan and none of the other children mocked him again. We all said: "God bless Mitch Duncan."

I am happy to report that the worries of the doctors were not realized. Colby did survive the sores, nodules, weird body hair growth, weight loss, stomach pains, and did not develop leukemia. In May 1992, Kathy and I had the pleasure of attending his graduation from the High School in Dayton. He went on to a trade school and now has a good job and is very happy. Vickie is very proud of him. Now he worries about her like she worried about him in those dark days.

#### THE CAR

Betty said her 1980 Oldsmobile Cutlass was a joy to drive. She cared for it like a baby, keeping it washed and polished. However, it was never the same after the encounter. The plastic-covered padded dashboard still carries the imprint of Vickie's fingers where she had leaned forward propping herself so she could look up at the huge object above the car. The plastic had been hot and it molded to the shape of her fingers. When we looked at it later, Vickie's fingers did fit the imprint exactly.

After the event, Betty had a lot of trouble with the electrical system. The paint on the exterior dulled rapidly in spots and the windshield shattered when a movie light shined on it. The damage made it look like it had been hit in several places with a ball bat.

Perhaps the most mysterious problem was with the steering wheel. In 1987, when one of Betty's relatives was driving Betty back and forth for medical treatments and errands, she said the steering wheel was causing a skin eruption on her hands. When

they checked, they found the steering wheel was starting to crack and fall apart. Then within weeks, all of the non-metallic parts of the steering wheel separated and fell to the floor of the car, leaving only the reinforcing wire in place. When the Oldsmobile company people replaced the steering wheel, they said they had never experienced a failure like this. They had no explanation for it and had nothing in their files to compare it with.

#### THE HELICOPTERS

The Government's handling of the helicopter issue was one of "smoke and mirrors." They were evasive, obstructionistic and at times they lied; but they got by with it. However, it is my hope that one day the Government documentation will be released admitting to its participation in the encounter.

Some people questioned how helicopters could be seen at night, so that became an important part of our investigation. I didn't blindly accept the statements by Betty, Vickie, and another half dozen or so witnesses when they said they could clearly see helicopters in the night sky. I went out and duplicated their observations on 26 other nights. The main difference, of course, was that the UFO was not present and lighting the sky as it did on December 29, 1980. The weather on those 26 occasions ranged from hot and clear, to cold, damp, windy, and chilly. I found that the heavy moisture content of the Houston air reacts like little crystals that catch the light from the city, the moon, and from cars and reflect it in an airglow manner that leaves the sky very light on a lot of nights. A deep, dark night sky in the Houston area is unusual.

As an example of what I was able to observe, I watched CH-47 flights over my own back yard at 6:19 p.m., 6:41 p.m., and 7:19 p.m. on December 28, 1982. It was night, but the helicopters were clearly visible. I made another observation of a CH-47 at 7:05 p.m. on December 30, 1982. At that time I was able to photograph the