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# He probes ultimate UFO secret

## Len Stringfield's quest: to reveal crashed discs

By Larry W. Bryant  
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How long can he — must he — go on this way ... in his singular and single-minded quest for the facts surrounding what lately has been called "The Ultimate Secret" about unidentified flying objects — crash-landed UFOs — with the official retrieval of artifacts and crew?

No doubt Len Stringfield asks himself that question daily. And no doubt the answer is just as elusive as the "hard evidence" he's been seeking for several years now. Evidence that points to a systematic, 35-year-old campaign by government officials to (1) acquire UFO hardware/crew from crash-landing sites and (2) to keep that material under the tightest secrecy ever engineered by military security specialists. Evidence that, despite the secrecy, now is leaking out bit by bit to form a most intriguing three-dimensional picture.

The first dimension is that of the UFO enigma itself. Long neglected as a serious subject for coverage by orthodox news media, this dimension has a "Catch 22": without some hard evidence on which to pursue a solid story, there's no story to bother with; the best way to launch a solid story is to go after the hidden evidence. So the status quo over the past three decades has been characterized by rampant conjecture among researchers, outright fakery by some purported UFO percipients, and fun-and-frolic by a few pulp-paper opportunists posing as serious journalists.

### Politics of UFOlogy

The second dimension is the "poli-

tics of UFOlogy" — as epitomized by the Federal government's continued policy and practices of UFO news management. Lately, this dimension has received attention from certain news media exposed to the recent freedom-of-information litigation involving hundreds of UFO-related documents in the possession of several government agencies. Some of the now-released documentation from FBI files alludes to crashed-disc reports originating from Air Force sources. But the Air Force, as the executive agency charged with down-playing the seriousness of UFO encounters, steadfastly dis-misses the numerous crashed-saucer accounts as nothing more than warmed-over "rumors."

The third — and here the most pertinent — dimension is that of "crypto-UFOlogist" Stringfield himself. Now a retired publicist for a chemical company in Cincinnati, Ohio, he's reached the point in his brand of investigative reporting of becoming a legend in his own time — an institution of form and substance that has won him international acclaim.

How did he get to that point? Simply with an adulthood of arduous, part-time UFO research dating back to the '50s. His 1957 book *In Saucer Post 3-0 Blue* chronicles his experience as a private UFO researcher in the days when to admit that avocation was to open oneself to raw ridicule from all quarters. In between rearing a family and tending to his business career, Stringfield published a UFO newsletter and produced another book, *Situation Red: The UFO Siege* (Doubleday, 1977.)

### Reader response launches probe

It was the readers' feedback from

this second book that led him to concentrate his investigative effort on what he calls "The UFO Crash/Retrieval Syndrome" (which, incidentally, is the title of a monograph he published in 1980).

Stringfield's approach is to serve as a one-man clearinghouse for all data voluntarily divulged (in confidence, for the most part) by persons whose reasons for coming forward range from a guilty conscience in being part of the official coverup to death-bed declarations of clarification-for-the-record.

So far, by his count, he has garnered from some 20 first-hand sources (and from at least that many intermediate sources privy to inside information) a fascinating patchwork of testimony covering several cases of alleged retrieval operations.

Among the first-hand sources is a physician who says he performed an

autopsy on an alien body retrieved from a crashed saucer in the early '50s. The stuff of hoax or of wishful-thinking dementia, you say? As more sources come forward, and as more confirmatory evidence is added to the "smoking gun" in Stringfield's investigation, such easy answers have a harder time surviving.

The breakthrough could come any day, he says. But he's worried that all the publicity about his preliminary findings and interpretations might have caused a change-of-heart among some of his sources and potential sources. The time is ripe, he says, for a secure public forum to invite key principals in the retrievals and subsequent coverup to bare their facts for all to see and digest. All it would take to reveal the Ultimate Secret is one solidly verifiable case, he added.

### Search for the breakthrough

That case might be the one in July 1947 called *The Roswell Incident* (as recounted in a book under that title by UFO investigator William L. Moore — Grosset & Dunlap, 1980). It concerns a crash-landed object in Roswell, N.M., that the Army air force craftily passed off to a gullible press corps as nothing more than a weather balloon.

Then there's the alleged crash-landing of a disc just across the Texas-Mexico border back in 1950. The key witness at the retrieval site, who now is

a retired Army lieutenant colonel, might now tell all if guaranteed freedom from reprisal. According to one researcher familiar with the case, the event sparked the issuance of a Defense Department "immediate high alert" on Dec. 8, 1950.

Of course, Stringfield is not without his critics — both within and outside the UFO-research community. Some have scored his methodology as being doomed from the start — because, so long as his principal sources insist on anonymity, there's no way to cross-examine them and, in effect, put them (and their reputations) on trial. The burden of proof is on the witness in any

UFO case, as the Air Force delights in reminding us.

Other critics point to Stringfield's being a ready target for dupery. To this, he responds by saying that eventually the evidence will speak for itself. Meantime, he's pressing on with some seed money furnished by the Washington, D.C.-based Fund for UFO Research, Inc., to defray long-distance telephone expenses in following-up new leads.

How long Stringfield will be able to pursue his quest for the retrieved saucers and pickled UFO-nauts is anyone's guess. His is the brand of investigative reporting that is relatively thankless and immensely frustrating. But it's also the brand that only a seasoned professional dare undertake.