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### *Flying Saucer Saga Is Among Attractions On U.S. TV Show*

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NBC's 'Unsolved Mysteries'  
Hopes People Love to See  
Eerier Enigmas of Life

By DAVID J. JEFFERSON

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

ROSWELL, N.M. — Most people hereabout have forgotten this banner headline from the Roswell Daily Record of July 8, 1947: "RAAF Captures Flying Saucer on Ranch in Roswell Region."

But a group of local men with fresh crew cuts has agreed to help the NBC television network's "Unsolved Mysteries" program jog a few memories. On a blistering day in this desert town, they dress up as members of the Roswell Army Air Force and stand around an abandoned hangar in exchange for \$50, a free lunch and the chance to be a part of history as only TV can tell it.

#### Orange Victims

A dry-ice fog hangs thick inside the hangar, enshrouding a cluster of actors who, posing as military police, guard the saucer wreckage. At the building's far end, two men in white lab coats unload four stretchers from an army ambulance. The victims, clad in silver jumpsuits, are a sight: Their flesh is orange. Their oversize heads are bald and shaped like eggplants. Their long, bony hands have only four digits.

The story "has to be true," says Carol Renee Modrall, who runs the Granny's Opera House theater at nearby Carlsbad Caverns and who was hired by the show's producers to assist with everything from costuming to catering. "If you think about it, we had several atomic blasts around that time. If I were an alien, I'd want to come here and see what was going on."

The TV network is hoping that more segments like this will exert a similar pull



*Two Stars of 'Unsolved Mysteries'*

on earthlings. In the show's first full season last year, "Unsolved Mysteries" captured 16th place in the prime-time ratings with its special brand of "docutainment" — re-enactments of puzzling crimes and other unexplained events, all somberly narrated by actor Robert Stack.

Although the show did air segments on Bigfoot — a humanlike creature reported to live in the mountains of the northwest of North America — and on people who have revived after dying, more typical was the story of Rose Hoffman, a San Jose, California, mother. She went undercover as a biker seeking information about her teen-age son, missing since his abduction by motorcycle roughnecks in 1977.

"These are stories that could happen to my family or your family," says Rick Ludwin, NBC's vice president of specials and variety programs.

In Europe, "Unsolved Mysteries" began airing this season in France and French-speaking Switzerland, and it soon will be broadcast in Spain and Sweden. Negotiations are under way to bring the show to Britain, Italy and West Germany. It also is seen in Bophuthatswana and South Africa.

In the Far East, "Unsolved Mysteries" is already showing in Taiwan and will begin airing in the Philippines and Malaysia this fall. The show also is seen by viewers in New Zealand and Australia.

Critics have attacked "Unsolved Mysteries" and other "reality" programs, such as Fox Broadcasting Co.'s "America's Most Wanted," arguing that they exploit victims and their families. Questions also have been raised about the legal implications of some re-enactments.

#### 'High-Profile' Pieces

In part because of such concerns, "Unsolved Mysteries" has decided to give added attention this season to the wiggler stories. Mr. Ludwin says NBC has asked the executive producers of "Unsolved Mysteries," John Cosgrove and Terry Dunn

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# TV Show Features a Flying Saucer Saga

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Meurer, for more "high-profile" pieces like the one about Roswell, which premiered last night in the U.S.

"It's taken TV a long time to realize that a lot of people read tabloid newspapers in the U.S.," says David Gritten, television critic for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner.

The segments are filmed where the original events occurred, using either local actors or the actual people involved. Since the show doesn't pay subjects to appear in re-enactments of their own stories, the latter approach saves money. It also heightens believability, Mr. Cosgrove and Ms. Meurer contend.

Consider the case of the blinking statue. For a future show, "Unsolved Mysteries" asked some 300 parishioners of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, to help re-create a much-publicized event: Earlier this year, they had seen a life-size figure of Jesus on a crucifix blink its eyes during the church's Good Friday service.

As the segment was being filmed, a state trooper appearing in the re-enactment began shouting that the eyes were moving. It was no act. "The entire congregation started having this full-on religious experience in front of us," recalls David Rajter, who produced the segment. "They were praying. They were crying. They were falling on the floor."

A videotape of the crucifix doesn't show any eye movement, Mr. Rajter says, and a Church inquiry concluded that no miracle occurred either time. Still, the trooper, Christopher Joseph Marion, stands by his story. "With God as my judge, these eyes were opening in front of me," he says.

For his part, the Rev. Ronald P. Lengwin, a spokesman for the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, worries that the show's pilgrimage to the parish will stir up unwanted interest in the crucifix again. "I can't believe this story won't go away," he says. "The story got a life of its own because of the media."

NBC maintains that the sleuthing done on "Unsolved Mysteries" is a public service. Each week, operators at a telemarketing center in Los Angeles field several thousand calls from viewers who claim to know something about the incidents dramatized. Of the 128 "solvable" cases featured so far, the network says, 34 have been explained. And of the 43 fugitives profiled, 29 have been apprehended.

Among them was Geraldine Elizabeth Carmichael, a Los Angeles resident who disappeared in 1980 after being convicted of bilking investors out of \$3 million with a scheme to build a gas-saving car. A viewer recognized Ms. Carmichael - who in fact is a man undergoing treatments pending a sex-change operation - as a flower vendor in Texas.

Obviously, leads about such things as Bigfoot are even more elusive than clues to a kidnapping or killing. But viewers feel compelled to offer their advice nonetheless. "Some of the calls are just hilarious," says

Greg Churpek, a college student who works as an "Unsolved Mysteries" operator. Recently, Mr. Churpek had to listen patiently as a self-professed psychic rambled on about his knowledge of "intimate phenomena" and his telepathic ability to find missing persons.

As for what drives people to participate in the show, the desire for an answer is usually foremost. And with real crimes, the process is often cathartic. "They break down, and they thank you later," says Dan Gomez, who directed a segment about a former California policeman named Doyle Wheeler. Mr. Wheeler supervised a wrenching re-enactment of an attack last year at his home in Spokane, Washington, during which he says two men broke in, tied him up, beat and tortured him, and then shot him and left him for dead.

"Talk about group therapy," Mr. Gomez adds. "This is sharing emotions with 20 million people."

With the more bizarre stories, the possibility of swaying a wider audience is also a big draw. Mr. Marion, the state trooper, says he chose to participate in the episode about the statue because he believes the day of judgment is near. "That's why God picked me for this," he explains. "He's trying to warn us that these are the end times."

Walter G. Haut, public-relations officer at the Roswell Army Air Force base at the time of the UFO incident, says he went on the show because he thinks it's time Americans know the truth. "I could see covering this up in 1947," he concedes. "You would have had panic. . . . But the population in the U.S. is intelligent enough to

handle this now." (When the wreckage was found, Mr. Haut wrote a press release informing the local media that a flying saucer was in their midst, but it was superseded by a second official announcement saying that a weather balloon had crashed.)

Mr. Haut says he hopes his interview with "Unsolved Mysteries" will prod the government to come clean about the alien encounter. His only concern, he adds, is that the editing process could make him and the others "appear like a bunch of absolute idiots."

Sappho Henderson says she doesn't care much whether viewers believe her story about how her late husband, Capt. Oliver Wendell Henderson, flew the saucer wreckage in an air force plane to another base in Dayton, Ohio. "When 'Unsolved Mysteries' first contacted me, I hadn't thought I'd participate," says Mrs. Henderson, who now lives in West Hills, California. "But then I thought, Why not? It's been all this time. Even though there may be doubters, I'm too old to worry about that."

Of course, skeptics abound, even here in Roswell. Ruth May, a city administrative assistant who moved here in 1948, laughs when asked about television's interest in the alien landing. "It rears its head every so often," she says of the story.

But who's to rule out strange doings here after learning that "Unsolved Mysteries" couldn't film in the hangar it wanted because the Central Intelligence Agency was using it that day? "Funny, they wouldn't tell us what they were doing," jokes cameraman Bob Wise. "But we suspect it has something to do with aliens."

The old Fortean dilemma, do you help and encourage such programmes to open people's minds and ask some awkward questions or are you more concerned with inevitable compromises, evasions and fictionalization certain to occur which may damage your case? A special point is the filmed re-creation of such cases how long before pirated tapes turn up as "proof" of either the original case or a later similar one? Let's face it, life's not easy on the loony fringe!

Regards  
David Case

## Banesto: Your