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## UFO whistleblower's nephew maintains family tradition of belief in aliens

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ROBERT MORRIS Senior Staff Writer | The Courier

HOUMA – Those must have been aliens in that spaceship that crashed, said the shirtless old man with the quick smile. Jesse said he saw them.

Hayes Marcel's admittedly fantastic tale has slightly more credibility than that of the average local UFO loon. His uncle, Lt. Col. Jesse Marcel, was among the group of American military intelligence officers who reported they recovered wreckage from a crashed flying saucer in Roswell, N.M., only to immediately recant that story and say it was a weather balloon.

"Nobody ever thought about flying saucers before Jesse came out about the crash in Roswell," said Hayes Marcel. "He spilled the beans, that's what he done."

Sixty years later, despite decades of official disavowals of alien visitations, people are still seeing strange lights in the sky – everywhere from Chicago to Chauvin.

### UNCLE JESSE

Jesse Marcel's family is from south Louisiana, and after his retirement he returned, living in Bayou Blue and repairing tube-set televisions. In the mid-1970s, however, shortly before his 1977 death, Marcel began speaking out about the Roswell incident, saying his superiors had ordered him to lie about the wreckage, covering up the existence of aliens.

"Of course he couldn't say nothing about it," said Hayes Marcel, actually Jesse's nephew through a cousin. "They'd kick him out of the military, and he'd lose his pension."

Although Hayes Marcel said he did not know Jesse "all that well," he was familiar with Jesse's account through an uncle, Nelson Marcel. Uncle Nelson, now deceased, discussed the Roswell event extensively with Jesse, and told Hayes about a piece of unbreakable alien metal from the wreckage that Jesse had kept for himself.

In the last years of his life, after his public allegation that the wreckage was actually alien, Jesse made frequent TV appearances. Hayes Marcel remembers him as a "little short fellow" with a strong, "flat" Cajun accent and said friends would often call when they saw Jesse on TV.

"You can tell from the way he's talking that he's from this part of the country," Marcel said.

Since Jesse's announcement, many members of his family ardently hoped officials would confirm the truth of his account.

"I hope it does before I check out," Marcel said. "All my relatives were too, before they died. The government knows a lot it's not letting out."

### SIGHTINGS

Hayes Marcel said he believes that he, too, has seen a UFO. The 1997 sighting he shares occurred over the skies of Houma, shortly after he returned from the 50-year anniversary celebration of the Roswell crash, he said. In an October night sky, toward the direction of La. 311, Hayes Marcel said he saw an orange glow pulsate, then descend below the tree line.

He followed it in his truck, he said, but found no evidence of a landing.

"It wasn't a helicopter or anything," Marcel said. "It was weird."

Likewise, Marcel believes he may have been abducted in 1990. One evening, he left his west-Houma house about 8 p.m. bound for a store on the east side, he said.

He drove into the Houma Tunnel, then suddenly woke up on Grand Caillou Road, parked on the shoulder with his engine off, he said. He headed home, and his wife asked where he had been.

"'I don't know,' I said. She said, 'Uh-oh. They got you,'" Marcel said. "Two hours I was gone. If I'd blacked out, I'd have wrecked. ... They say when you get abducted, they blank out your mind."

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It would be wrong, however, to paint the 77-year-old Marcel as the stereotypical UFO fanatic. Amid a standard south Louisiana-style collection of family photos and plates painted with wildlife scenes, the only extraterrestrial paraphernalia in his living room is a strand of Mardi Gras beads adorned with alien-head medallions.

He may be more concerned about visitations from earthly menaces than UFOs, judging from the scanner squawking in the hall. It's tuned to local police

frequencies, not NASA.

Hayes Marcel is simply a believer, based on the word of a trusted kinsman. He never even worried about the subject of aliens or spaceships before Jesse began telling his extraordinary tale, he said.

Marcel, however, is hardly the only local with a UFO interest, based on reports at the National UFO Reporting Center. These reports were filed in 2006:

- In Larose, a red ball of light was reported hovering over Lake Salvador at 10 a.m., Feb. 15, 2006.

"At this time we saw a red ball of light move slowly from west to east and come to a stop and hover over the lake for approximately 20 minutes. The craft then moved upward into the cloud deck and disappeared," the report's author states, noting that the object's movement was silent. "I hold a private pilot's license, and I spent some time in the military, and I have never seen anything like this before."

- A more extensive account comes from Berwick, early in the morning of April 15, 2006. "I immediately sat up in my bed, and the first thing I recalled was a giant pure gun-metal black triangle ship leaving at a slow speed to the north," the report begins.

Unusually thirsty and exhausted despite the full night's sleep, the writer heads into the kitchen for a sip of orange juice but finds the house in disarray – household objects were out of place and dry grass was all over the kitchen floor.

"There are too many things not right all over the house that seems to me I was outside during the night and something happened that I can't totally recall," the author writes. "All that is in my memory is the huge triangle that I saw, and it disappeared in the clouds."

- From Chauvin comes the simplest and most recent local report, dated Nov. 27, 2006:

"I was taking some pictures of the sunset as two fishing boats passed down the canal. The photos were taken seconds apart and the object only appears in one," the author writes. "It was there and gone."

The UFO reporting center does not list report authors on its Web site, but, at The Courier's request, center Director Peter Davenport attempted to contact the authors of each of those three reports for this article. None responded.

At this late date, more than a year after the sightings, it would be nearly impossible to substantiate them, Davenport said. Further, he was skeptical that any of three local accounts would have turned out to be alien in origin, even had they been investigated immediately after they occurred.

"Almost certainly it does not show a genuine UFO. Out of 1,000 photos sent to us, maybe one is a genuine UFO," Davenport said of the Chauvin photo, which he said he would have subjected to further scrutiny if it had appeared to have potential. "People take a photo, then months later they see a little tiny black smudge on it and say, 'Oh my God, it could be a UFO.'"

Collecting the records, however, provides a database for further research into the UFO phenomenon, Davenport said. Buried somewhere in the stack of bogus, untraceable reports is the truly unexplained event, he said.

"I want to make it available to anybody who might be interested," Davenport said. "My hope is that the American people will wake up to the fact that we appear to be visited by things we call UFOs."

## AROUND THE WORLD

The UFO reporting center has recorded upwards of 3,000 sightings this year, and those few recorded around southeast Louisiana last year are essentially routine. In other locations, far more dramatic sightings of strange aerial phenomena have been reported.

At Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, pilots and other airport employees say they saw a disc-like object hover in the sky for a few minutes on Nov. 7. It blasted upward with such force that it left a hole in the cloud cover, witnesses said.

The story raised particular interest in journalism circles, as the reporter who covered it was a Pulitzer Prize winning transportation reporter for the Chicago Tribune. His concern, he said, was not aliens, but that well-respected pilots felt federal-aviation officials failed to listen to their complaints that something – whatever it was – could have been creating unsafe conditions at the airport.

Other mass sightings have been reported recently. A British Airlines pilot and passengers reported a mile-wide UFO outside their plane as they flew over the Channel Islands in June of this year, and five UFOs were seen by nearly 100 people in July at Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Nothing has ever proven that aliens exist, much less visit earth or abduct its citizens. Is their existence hidden by a massive, multi-governmental conspiracy, or are they just utterly nonexistent?

"A lot of people say it's a bunch of hogwash," Marcel said. "This is true. Jesse wouldn't lie about it."

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