

The Groom Lake Desert Rat

"The Naked Truth from Open Sources."

Area 51/Nellis Range/TTR/NTS/S-4?/Weird Stuff/Desert Lore

An on-line newsletter.

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Direct from the "UFO Capital," Rachel, Nevada.

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End Of An Era

The Freedom Ridge and White Sides viewpoints have finally been closed by the Air Force, ending the opportunity for tourists to view the "nonexistent" Groom facility from the comfort of their four wheel drives. Now, anyone who wants to see the secret base is going to have to work at it. Tikaboo Peak and other distant mountain viewpoints remain open, but because a rigorous hike is required they are likely to attract far fewer visitors.

Restricted area signs and orange marker posts appeared along the new border on April 10, the same day that the public land order authorizing the withdrawal was published in the Federal Register (60 FR 18030). We had hoped to hold an "End of the World Party" on Freedom Ridge before it was closed, but we didn't have sufficient warning and, frankly, we were growing a bit weary of "could be closed any day now" events. The saga of Freedom Ridge had run its course, and its final closure was appropriately timed to shift the story to a higher level.

White Sides Mountain appears on maps and was known to UFO watchers since shortly after the Lazar story broke, but Freedom Ridge was more subtle on the landscape and was discovered only shortly before the withdrawal process began. Glenn Campbell stumbled across the viewpoint on June 30, 1993, while hiking along the border south of Groom Lake Road. He says he had little interest in the base itself, only in the fact that this site made the view accessible to everyone. "I looked at this ridge and saw families and grandmothers coming here," says Campbell. "It was an easy hike, and there was the potential for a road all the way to the top. This made a great difference for publicizing the base."

As the first known visitor to the hill, Campbell chose its name. "It was common knowledge at the time that a land seizure was coming, and I knew that the name was important to help define the battle. I tried putting a lot of different words together, and Freedom Ridge is the one that stuck. We would fight to the death to save it! The real victory for me was when I heard the Cammo Dudes call it Freedom Ridge on the radio."

What was lost by the public? Objectively not much--only two relatively small parcels of land that few people had ever heard of until the military decided to take them. The hills were closely monitored by the Cammo Dudes, and whenever a visitor was spotted, word was radioed back to the base that "Watchdog is in effect," presumably suppressing secret operations. It was like the light inside the refrigerator but the other way around: Whenever you were on the hill, nothing secret seemed to be going on at the base below.

The significance of Freedom Ridge was mostly political. The withdrawal became a symbol of the old Cold War way of

doing things. The Air Force ignored the public, answered no questions and hid behind the tired "National Security" label. Whichever side you may be on, the withdrawal cannot be called a triumph of Air Force public relations. The land application itself became a "hook" that made Area 51 a legitimate news story, reinforcing the claim of hazardous waste abuses which happened to hit the press at about the same time. The suit by workers exposed to toxic fumes was certainly a more important story, but it was difficult to report in the popular media. Freedom Ridge, on the other hand, was made for TV. Where once there were only a handful of UFO buffs and the fringe publications that follow them, suddenly the big time media was turning up in droves.

Noisy public hearings were held, and citizens flocked to the viewpoints for a "last glimpse" of the forbidden. News crews were detained and video tapes seized by a sinister security force and its local stooges who could have all been provided by Central Casting. The withdrawal process gave birth to a unified and broadly-based public movement to expose the base that would probably have never existed had the Air Force not attempted such a poorly explained and devious appearing action. "For the public safety and the safe and secure operation of activities" was the vague explanation that will tag this action in the history books. In this paranoid age when more people than ever suspect they will be screwed by the government, the bumbling brass played into those fears precisely. "This issue is the withdrawal of freedom, not just Freedom Ridge, but freedom," intoned one conspiracy proponent at the Las Vegas hearing [DR#4], and many previously disinterested citizens came to feel that they were being cheated out of something that was their natural right.

The withdrawal helped breath life into Psychospay, the Area 51 Research Center and the Groom Lake Desert Rat. It provided an energy source upon which these entities could feed and grow, like the parasitic alien creature in a bad sci-fi movie. In a minor engagement like the Battle for Freedom Ridge, it is not the outcome that is important but the process. The journey from application to the final closure may have been unstoppable, but some high-quality publicity and a legitimate policy debate was generated in the interim--all of it fueled by the apparent evasiveness of the Air Force. Had the applicant stated the real purpose of the withdrawal--to keep eyes off Groom Lake--and maybe given some journalists a tour of the base cafeteria, there would have been not nearly so much hoopla. The American public is still patriotic enough that it will usually support national defense when offered at least a plausible explanation, but the absurd nonexistence of the Groom base, mitigated only by vague AF press releases about possible "facilities" in that vicinity, made the taxpayer feel he was being ripped off and gave rise to endless perceived conspiracies.

"It is all part of the plan," the conspiracy buffs insist. The Air Force deliberately botched the Freedom Ridge withdrawal to draw attention to Groom Lake when nothing secret was really going on there. The flying saucers, Aurora aircraft and hideous medical experiments have all been moved to other states while Campbell and his government handlers create a diversion here in Nevada. The flaw in this theory is that when one secret base gets a lot of publicity, all the others receive some limelight, too. When one facility becomes as romanticized as Area 51 has, military and UFO enthusiasts in all fifty states start looking for secret bases of their own, and they have less inclination to keep quiet about what they find now that the national enemy is no longer clear.

The closure of Freedom Ridge may discourage casual tourists but it won't defuse the hard-core fanatics who are rapidly hacking away at the secrets of the "Test Site." On Freedom Ridge, the military could at least keep track of where the watchers were. Now, the amateur spies have been forced to spread out; they could be on any of a dozen difficult-to-monitor peaks overlooking the Restricted Zone. The Groom base itself may no longer be easy to see, but there are probably other sites and activities in the Test Site that the government does not want observed. Nothing that flies in the air is secure anymore, and the blanket respect that most people used to have for government secrets is fading fast.

What Went Wrong

In its handling of the Freedom Ridge withdrawal the Air Force has failed Public Relations 101, and the costs in the long run could be significant. In the post-Cold War world, defense has to compete with other government services for limited funds, and keeping in good terms with the public is becoming an essential skill. As a natural result of its rigid, top-down culture, the military is generally ill-prepared to handle this challenge. A soldier's job is to follow orders. If you work for the public relations "directoriate" in a military organization, your function is to read statements prepared by your superiors. The superiors, in turn, take their orders from the generals, who are usually better skilled at moving hardware around than attending to the subtleties of image.

The military is not a democratic organization, so managing the components of democracy like the media is not its strong point. Career soldiers seem to be of two minds: They praise free speech, liberty, individual rights and all those other buzzwords of democracy, claiming that these principles are what they are fighting to defend. Yet, they have also chosen, as individuals, to live in a closed environment that is not free at all, and they expect the rest of society to support this totalitarian structure without question. The career soldier sees no need to respond to questions about military expenditures or policy on the grounds that it might give away our position to the enemy. He tends to see the world in black and white: His organization is right and its opponents are wrong, and there is no need for negotiation or explanation in between.

Democracy is a mystery to most soldiers, and frankly it is also confusing to us here in the Research Center. We, too, carry the banner of truth, justice and the American Way, but we are using it against the military in this case, trying to make it more accountable. We argue that the military's secret operations would be more efficient and ultimately more effective for defense if stronger democratic controls were in place. We quote this gospel so often that sometimes we forget what democracy really means in practice. Democracy is free citizens voting in fair elections for the candidate who has the best hairdo. Democracy is the O.J. Simpson trial overruling all other news coverage. Democracy is millions of absolute morons each having exactly the same vote as the tiny minority with half a brain and the skills to make an intelligent decision. The more you think about democracy, the more frightening it seems and the more you wonder if the soldier might be right.

As we ponder the loss of our Freedom Ridge--how the land was taken essentially by fiat with only an illusion of democratic input--it is useful to return to the underlying issue. What is democracy, and what good is it?

It is a curious form of social organization. Politicians make speeches and promise the people anything they want. The people then go to the polls and vote for the candidate with the best media management. The winners, in turn, make critical decisions for our society or, more often than not, make no real decisions at all. Society continues to spiral down whatever road to Hell it is already traveling.

We are fortunate, at least, that the majority doesn't get to vote on every national and local decision. Most people make decisions based on superficial emotional cues. Here in Nevada for example, the word "nuclear" has already polarized the electorate in regards to the Yucca Mountain waste storage project [[DR#24](#)]. Ask Nevadans whether they want a HAZARDOUS NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE FACILITY within their state, and they would certainly vote against it. Yet, the pile-up of nuclear waste, like the problems of drugs, crime and the national deficit, will not go away on its own; somewhere along the line an unpopular decision has to be made.

That is why we hire our leaders for extended terms, elect them on a general platform then let them use their best judgment on specific issues until the next election. The trouble is, politicians worried about reelection still don't like to make unpopular decisions. Although they are not as fickle as the general public on minor issues, they are loathe to go out on a limb on the most contested and memorable ones. To avoid offending the voters, politicians tend to fill the air with rhetoric while putting off as long as possible any controversial action that might raise the ire of a vocal portion of their electorate. Thus, elected leaders rarely make strong, preemptive management decisions; they accomplish only feeble, reactive ones, usually too little, too late to solve our most pressing social problems.

If you thought democratic processes control our society, you are wrong. Our elected leaders don't direct the course of our history any more than the figurehead does on the bow of a ship. If you ask who really controls our society, the conspiracy buffs will tell you it is the secret New World Order, Trilateral Commission or Council on Foreign Relations. Behind all of our world leaders is a sinister association of Rockefellers and Masons who have ensnared the executives of every major corporation, newspaper and TV network in their web of enforced alliances. If any significant event takes place, like the JFK assassination, the AIDS epidemic or Larry King coming to Rachel, it must have had the direct approval of the secret "Committee."

The alternative explanation is even more frightening: Maybe there is NO ONE controlling our society. Maybe shit just happens. The real course of history could be pushed along by random winds that no one on earth has a handle on. For example, technology is not a democratic process. If someone invents a useful new device, like the light bulb, telephone or World Wide Web, it can spread throughout society almost overnight, and its effects upon our life on earth, both good and bad, can be far more profound than any act ever promulgated by Congress. At best, Congress will only react to the

new idea after its effects are already obvious, but by then the process is usually unstoppable.

In a strict hierarchical organization, as under communism, dictatorships or our own honorable military, a measure of real control can be exercised. The leader says jump, and the whole organization does it simultaneously. Democracy, in contrast, offers little more than the illusion of control. It is a form of chaos. Much lip service is paid to the wisdom of the people, but as we learned in the last Lincoln County elections [DR#18], the people are rarely wise and usually do not see anything beyond the buzzwords of an issue. Their election of representatives every couple of years is often cited as the cornerstone of the healthy functioning of our society. In fact, who the citizens elect has very little bearing on where our society goes. Politicians of any party are only responding to events that have already happened. Their hands are usually tied by the superficiality of politics, so one elected leader is pretty much as effective as any other.

What makes democracy work--better than most dictatorships at least--is that it protects and encourages chaos. Democracy renders its leaders mostly ineffective, freeing society to actually be ruled by a marketplace of ideas. In any dictatorship, at least among humans, the powers of control which were granted initially to get the job done inevitably become used instead to suppress the political opponents of the leadership. Smart individuals with useful new inventions that might change the structure of the organization are usually firmly discouraged. In a real-life democracy, the leaders do not have that kind of power. Our "free press" assures that no personal flaw will go unnoticed, and the fickleness of the electorate guarantees a regular turnover of leaders so that no single person or party gains too much control. Chaos prevails, and the society follows by default its own irrational myths and the compelling ideas of a few unelected inventors.

It would be a pleasure to work in an organization where the leaders are chosen based only on their proven ability and not for politics, slavishness or who they are connected to. In real organizations, especially large ones with low turnover like our boys in blue, this ideal is rarely achieved. Promotions are awarded to those who follow orders and don't rock the boat, who would stand proudly with the ship as it is sinking. This is a problem in any mature organization: Selection by superiors tends to promote those employees who support the status quo. People with true leadership ability, who would make preemptive and potentially unpopular decisions instead of responding to crises only after they occur, tend to clash with management early on and are weeded out. The Peter Principal says that in any organization, an employee tends to rise to the level of his incompetence, and the organization grows stale as a result. Democracy deals with this problem by regularly disrupting organizations and enforcing chaos, which eventually gives unelected power to those with ability and allows good ideas to emerge.

Due to its lack of uncontrolled entrepreneurs, a highly disciplined and hierarchical organization usually has difficulty changing with the times. The military, the saying goes, is always fighting the last war, not the next one. It responds to conflicts only after they become intractable, and it can never escape from its own straight-line methods. In the case of the Freedom Ridge withdrawal, a path was plotted from "A" to "B" long before the withdrawal was applied for. The special assault forces of the Air Force Real Estate Directorate marched toward the goal through thick and thin, past bullets and land mines, with unwavering loyalty and disciplined precision for however long it took to capture "B" and plant the flag. Trouble is, by the time the goal was achieved, the war had changed. "B" was already irrelevant and not worth the enormous cost of securing it.

From *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 12, 1995 (courtesy of creepie@ix.netcom.com)...

CARRADINE FILM SIZES UP "AREA" by Kirk Honeycutt

A Japanese-financed, independent film will fictionally examine a real-life mystery that now exists in the Nevada desert. *Area 51*, written by Mike Gray -- Oscar nominated for co-writing a similar muckraking feature, *The China Syndrome* -- and directed by actor Robert Carradine, is slated to start production in June in Rachel, Nev.

The science-fiction thriller will focus on a government facility in Nevada known to UFO groupies as Area 51 or Groom Lake. Until recently, the Air Force denied the very existence of the site.

Thanks to considerable media attention, hundreds of people in recent weeks have converged on the

perimeter of the site, located 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas on Nellis Air Force Base. There, they are convinced, the Air Force is reproducing a captured flying saucer.

Last weekend, CNN aired a story on the mysterious Area 51.

International Mondo Entertainment, a subsidiary of Mondo Corp., a major real estate and development company headquartered in Tokyo, will finance and Naofumi Okamoto, president of Apricot Entertainment, will produce the film.

Okamoto said the film's budget will be somewhere between \$5 million and \$8 million "depending on the special effects."

The story concerns a female TV news producer trying to get to the bottom of the mysterious site.

Carradine, who makes his feature directing debut with this film, describes *Area 51* as a "detective story with a documentary sense of reality."

Okamoto said he and Carradine mutually came up with the idea for the film after seeing a half-hour documentary on Fox and reading stories about the site in several publications, including the *The New York Times* and *Popular Science*.

Newsweek then reported in its Feb. 20 issue that five former and current government employees and the widow of a sixth have filed a lawsuit charging they were exposed to burning toxic wastes at the secret Air Force facility.

The widow, Helen Frost, has charged that poisonous fumes from plastics and chemicals thrown into open pits and doused with jet fuel contributed to her husband's death in 1989.

However, the workers' attorney has been stymied by the government's refusal to reveal the name of so-called "operating location" on the base. Without an officially recognized name, the suit cannot proceed.

What is known about the site is that it has been used as a testing ground for the U-2 spy plane and the F-117A Stealth.

Okamoto, who has headed Apricot Entertainment since its inception in 1989, said the company previously produced a film called *Illusion*, which starred Emma Samms, Heather Locklear and Carradine.

The investment by International Mondo marks the company's first foray in the movie business, Okamoto said. International Mondo's Fuminori Hayashid will serve as the film's executive producer.

Writing a female TV producer into the script solves the most awkward problem of any Area 51 movie: How to insert the requisite babe-ola into a male-dominated environment. Writer Mike Gray took a hint from the Desert Rat [#10] in that the babe is the smart producer, while the on-air reporter is your typical blow dried meat puppet.

We also understand that a Campbell-like character may appear in the film, giving advice to the male lead (Carradine) on how he might penetrate the secret base to rescue the heroine. This quirky desert character, the actor for whom has not yet been selected, lives in a mobile home in a nowhere town not unlike Rachel. No word yet as to whether he is feuding with the proprietors of the local bar.

[Nothing has happened on movie as of mid-July.]

The third of our free monthly hikes will be to Tikaboo Peak, which still offers a legal but very distant view of the Groom Lake base. The tentative meeting time is 9:00 am on Saturday, May 13, 1995, at Milepoint LN 32.2 on US-93, about 86 miles north of Las Vegas. Those who wish to attend should confirm the meeting time a couple days ahead by calling the Research Center (702-729-2648) or consulting alt.conspiracy.area51.

After meeting at the highway, we will drive inland on a good dirt road (suitable for any vehicle if you don't mind a lot of bumps) about 25 miles to Badger Spring. From there we will make the rigorous 1-1/2 hour hike to the summit. You need to be in good shape to attempt this hike. Those who get regular exercise should have no difficulty, but the hike is not recommended for couch potatoes, smokers or those carrying excess poundage. The elevation will be about 7000 feet climbing to 8000. The terrain is pleasantly forested, and the summit offers an impressive 360-degree view of southern Nevada.

If bad weather comes, it will probably take the form of fierce winds, which would limit our stay at the top. Otherwise, we will lounge around and pray to our chosen deities at the summit, where there is a small religious shrine dedicated to "Our Lady of the Black Budget." If you choose, you may bring a votive candle, some incense and any religious figurines you are willing to part with. (Attention all Catholics!)

Hikers need to be prepared for extremes in temperature: Bring both shorts in case it is hot and long pants, a warm jacket and hat in case it is windy. Sturdy hiking shoes are important, and you need to bring at least 2 quarts of liquid for the hike. You also need to bring enough food for however long you wish to stay. Telescopes are essential for viewing the base, but there should be enough of them among the group that not everyone needs to bring one.

To reach the meeting point from Las Vegas, go north on I-15 (Salt Lake City direction) for about 20 miles to the US-93 exit, then go north on US-93 for 66.8 miles to milepoint LN 32.2. (Mileposts are marked every mile by small white signs on the side of the road.) The meeting point is an unmarked dirt road between the Lower and Upper Pahrangat Lakes in the Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge. This location is about 0.3 mile past the well-marked entrance to the refuge headquarters. If you arrive later, we will leave instructions at the meeting point for how to find us, but there is no guarantee you will catch up.

The lady-killer Agent X has announced his tentative plans to attend this hike, as have tmahood@netcom.com, Campbell and another member of the original "Interceptors" featured in the March 1994 Popular Science. Although the Cammo Dudes are invited to attend like everyone else in the world, none are expected since this is far outside their usual territory. The hike will be entirely on public land many miles from the military border.

CAMPING: Although this is intended as a day trip that can easily be done from Las Vegas, some people may wish to camp here on Friday or Saturday night. You need to be prepared for nighttime temperatures in the 40s. There is a free and scenic campground (no services) along the shore of Upper Pahrangat Lake (a lake with water!) about a half mile north of the meeting point on US- 93. The Tikaboo trailhead near Badger Spring also makes a good camping spot, but unless you have the Area 51 Viewer's Guide, you may want to save this location for Saturday night when you know where it is. This is probably where we will build a campfire on Saturday night and tell scary stories. Oscar Mayer wieners, as well as buns and--but of course--Grey Poupon, will be provided free of charge, although supplies may be limited [[DR#21](#)]. On Sunday we may mount another expedition or work project, to be decided on Saturday.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS. The meeting point is 55 miles from Rachel, so a visit there may be difficult. There are two motels in Alamo (both at 702-725-3371) about 5 miles north of the meeting point. Free swimming is available at the BLM (unfenced) portion of Ash Springs (bath-water temperature, about 13 miles north of the meeting point across from R-Place gas station). If you are coming from Southern California, the casino hotels at Stateline are a reasonable place to stay. Rooms on Friday and Saturday nights are about \$32 (including two free tickets on the world's highest roller coaster), but reservations are important (800-367-7383).

As usual, you are responsible for your own safety on this hike, and the organizers accept no liability for any loss or injury.

THREE AREA 51 KITTENS were born underneath the Research Center around April 1. The father was one of those love-'em-and-leave-'em types who remains unidentified at present. One kitten resembles her mother, but the other two are a smoky gray, which is very strange since there are no gray tomcats in Rachel. (Are you thinking what we are?) We have named one of our grays "Jarod 3."

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