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**NOTICE:** The page below has been permanently FROZEN as of January 2000. Due to resource limitations, this section of our website is no longer maintained, so some links may not work and some information may be out of date. We have retained this page for archive reference only, and we cannot vouch for its accuracy. Broken links will not be repaired, and minor errors will not be corrected. You are responsible for independently verifying any information you may find here. [More Info](#)

**For more recent information about Area 51, see the new [Area 51 Research Center](#) maintained by Don Emory.**

## Popular Mechanics' Blunder Recreated

From: **Damien Thorn** <damien@comsec.net>  
Date: Tue, 22 Jul 1997 19:10:46 -0800

Several weeks ago I mentioned in a post to the list that we were planning a quick photo mission to public land near Area 51 in order to conclusively document the error made by Jim Wilson, the Science and Technology editor of Popular Mechanics, for another magazine. Campbell's educated guess and directions were right on!

We arrived in the area last Thursday afternoon, launching my third visit to the border in a nine-month period and causing me to briefly reflect upon my growing obsession with the unjustified secrecy which surrounds the nameless "installation." Long drives are nice, in that they provide ample time for deep thought without the usual daily interruptions at work.

Since I hadn't previously explored all of the roads in the area, depicted on the map in Campbell's "Area 51 Viewer's Guide," my partner and I initially "pulled a Wilson" and turned south from Groom Lake Road onto a dirt track that is about a mile east of South Tikaboo Road, our intended target. Once we were about twelve miles down this trail, it was apparent that we were not where we wanted to be, so we headed back and eventually connected with South Tikaboo.

We headed down South Tikaboo and just over seven miles later came to a gate. Not just any gate, but the now-famous "cattle gate, the sort you can buy at Kmart," according to Jim Wilson. Although I had foolishly left my copy of the June issue of Popular Mechanics back at the office, my partner and I were determined to shoot a parody photo, if for no other reason than to mock the man's arrogant stupidity. Although I stood in a different place than Wilson did, you can see our version at <http://www.groomlake.com/area51/images/wilson-parody.JPG> (the scan is poor, and will be replaced by a better version on Tuesday afternoon).

For anyone who is interested, a fuller view of the gate is at <http://www.groomlake.com/area51/images/wrong-gate.JPG> and decent images of the signs flanking this gate are available at <http://www.groomlake.com/area51/images/keepout.JPG> and <http://www.groomlake.com/area51/images/usaf-warning.JPG>

Some people might wonder if this really is the gate where Wilson wound up. It's easy to see how he would get here, simply by going straight down Mailbox Road, crossing over Groom Lake Road and winding up on South Tikaboo Road. Oops. Upon examining the locks, I wasn't so sure either. One of the

locks was different than as described by Wilson. It was new and shiny (our photo of the locks is at <http://www.groomlake.com/area51/images/gate-padlock.JPG>).

It wasn't until we were about to get back into the vehicle when I spotted something on the ground that completely convinced me that we were walking in the footsteps of Jim Wilson and that this really was the right (er, wrong) gate. There in the brush near the edge of the road was the only piece of litter in sight. And it happened to be a discarded Kodak film box. Not just any film box, but a box that had once contained a 36-exposure roll of Ektachrome "Elite 100" slide film.

Magazines love transparencies when it comes to submitting photos for publication, and although they prefer the large format variety, a 35mm transparency (i.e. a slide) will do if the image isn't going to be a full-page color reproduction. With few people shooting slides anymore, and even fewer people visiting this gate to nothing, coupled with the sun fade on only one side of this box, we figured it must have been dropped when Wilson loaded his camera, balanced it on his rental car and started taking pictures. If this is what happened, Wilson not only has no sense of direction, but is a litter-bug as well <g>!

(Photo of the film box is at <http://www.groomlake.com/area51/images/wilson-litter.JPG>).

I'll apologise in advance for the fact that these links are direct to the images in question rather than being neatly laid out for you. Our groomlake.com domain is new, and under construction as a place to put all the photos and information about places like Area 51, radar facilities and the abandoned missile silos I've been visiting and documenting as best I can. I make a few bucks selling articles and pictures to smaller magazines, but I wanted a place to put all of it, every last photo and FOIA request, response and appeal. So - the site is under development rather than being launched prematurely, and that is why the links in this post are the way they are.

Damien Thorn  
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Note the new address: damien@comsec.net  
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Why is it that when you're driving and looking for an address, you turn down the volume on the radio?

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PO Box 30303, Las Vegas, NV 89173 Glenn Campbell, Webmaster & Moderator

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