

Lazar As A Fictional Character

Article By Glenn Campbell

Published in *MUFON UFO Journal*, February 1994

I have been living for over a year now in the tiny settlement of Rachel, Nevada, in the shadow of the unacknowledged Air Force base at "Area 51" and twenty miles down the pike from the mysterious Black Mailbox. This area is supposed to be the hottest UFO hot spot this side of Gulf Breeze, but I confess that I ain't seen nothin'.

That's not to say there's nothing alien out there along Highway 375. You may have read in the August 1993 *MUFON UFO Journal* of an alien abduction reported in this vicinity--at Milepost 26 to be precise. I have also spoken to countless visitors just back from the desert who report nighttime lights in the sky they feel certain are alien craft. I do not dismiss all of these sightings; I just haven't seen or experienced any of these things myself. When I go out into the desert at night, I see a lot of spectacular aerial displays, but nothing yet I haven't eventually explained. I see meteors, flares, aircraft lights and many manifestations of the bombing runs and war games that take place almost nightly in the surrounding Nellis Air Force Range.

Part of the problem may be that I have a "bad attitude"--wanting data not just anecdotes. Perhaps the aliens can sense my skeptical nature, equate me with Phil Klass and refuse to put on any kind of show for someone who isn't prepared to trust them totally. Many people who come here expecting to see UFOs do seem to see them, while those who don't expect them, like aviation enthusiasts looking for human-built Stealth and hypersonic aircraft, seem to miss the UFOs altogether--even when they are only one hill away from the saucer seekers.

I do not expect to see alien craft here myself because whatever UFOs are, they are certainly a subtle phenomenon. I would not expect to see them on a "timetable basis," as some talk-show ufologists have loudly claimed, or to see them much at all near such a widely publicized location as the Black Mailbox. If the government or aliens weren't smart enough to take the obvious precaution of not performing as published, then I would not expect UFOs to have remained so elusive for all these years.

The Stories

Most of the current interest in Area 51 by UFO watchers stems from Bob Lazar's tale about working with alien craft at nearby Papoose Dry Lake in 1988 and 1989. There were nine flying saucers, he says, housed in camouflaged hangers built into a hillside near the lake bed. Lazar says he saw no aliens, only what appeared to be alien craft that the government had somehow "obtained." He won't speculate about the aliens and their motives, but he can describe the propulsion system of their craft in detail based on what he claims was hands-on experience.

His is the sort of story I could believe because it is subtle, detailed and restrained, involves only a very limited government conspiracy and does not digress into any kind of speculation. It's the sort of story that appeals to engineers, computer programmers and other techie types: heavy on plausible technical details and free of the emotional overtones that complicate many other UFO tales. Aliens don't visit Lazar at his bedside; they enter the story only by implication and through briefing documents Lazar says he read. The beings described are the kind of extraterrestrials I can get along with: low-key and reclusive, having physical, dissectable bodies and pursuing their own private agenda with little more than clinical interest in individual humans.

Lazar has never recommended the Black Mailbox--a rancher's mailbox along State Route 375--as a place to look for alien craft, but he and his companions do claim to have seen them nearby in 1989. Whether this is still the best place to set up watch is a matter of debate even among believers, but since this valley is the closest a civilian can get to Papoose Lake, this is where the pilgrims come. While the Lazar story is subtle enough to torture the brain, I am less comfortable with the countless stories of sightings, abductions and psychic experiences reported here by visiting "ufo-tourists" after Lazar went public. Some of these stories could indeed be true, but in my view most of the publicized UFO claims for

this area have a cartoon silliness to them. They assume either a vast, all-inclusive alien-government conspiracy or that the aliens and bureaucrats lack any brains at all.

People come here expecting the flying saucers to conform to their own schedule and expectations. According to conventional wisdom, Wednesday nights are the time to see alien craft and at 4:50 am Thursday morning you are sure to see the oft-photographed "Old Faithful." I see only the landing lights of a Boeing 737 then--a scheduled crew flight to Groom Lake--but, again, maybe that's because my bad attitude is influencing events. Some watchers report a flying saucer which turns into a 737 just before landing, which I guess is a reasonable compromise.

I see the desert skies here as a kind of Rorschach ink blot test, presenting a nightly sequence of ambiguous events that each visitor impresses his own feelings upon. Bright white orbs that I interpret as aircraft landing lights or distant car high beams others may see as pulsing, jumping disks that couldn't possibly be earthly craft. To see the orbs come closer and eventually pass--as a car--just a few feet away does not diminish the alien aura for some people. Did you see it turn into a Chevy? One talk-show ufologist, in all seriousness, has taken film footage that I interpret as landing lights and blown up the blinding orb to enormous proportions so it occupies the whole screen. He displays for audiences the changing images frame by frame with a running dialog about what each form means. In one, we see a face, in the next, a continent, and in the third--my God, it's Mickey Mouse!

Visitors coming here in search of flying saucers have a tendency to "personalize" whatever they experience here. Many flatter themselves by thinking that invisible aliens and government spies are monitoring their every move and that any unusual event in the sky or on the ground is a show put on especially for that viewer's benefit. If you thought you saw something out of the corner of your eye but when you turned to look it was gone, then the saucer pilots must have sensed your glance and shot away in the nick of time. The area is especially fertile ground for conspiracy buffs, who see a pattern of sinister, high level intent in even the most innocuous happening. Every flat tire, passing security patrol or shooting star "could not possibly be coincidence" and is lovingly knitted into the Great Conspiracy.

Some people come here believing they are in direct psychic or spiritual contact with the aliens--or indeed are aliens themselves. The extraterrestrials are either hailed as ambassadors of love or cursed as instruments of the Devil. Many people expect the aliens to solve their personal problems for them--to carry them away from their earthly mess, perhaps, or to finally reveal to them the meaning of life. Some come in search of religious inspiration: The sight of "Old Faithful" fills them with hope and reassurance, and I see nothing wrong with that. I cannot disprove these claims, but they do not appear to have any basis in Lazar's story. Personally, I find it more plausible that the aliens and government are pursuing their own narrow agenda on their own schedule and don't really give a damn about the people below.

The trouble with this flying saucer hot spot, and probably every other claimed UFO venue, is that the original story is soon overwhelmed with noise. Once the frenzy of fantastic claims starts, then it feeds on itself, and the original spark that set it off is almost forgotten.

The Big Question

What everyone wants to know is, Is Lazar telling the truth? Did he work on alien craft at Papoose Lake, or is his story a well-crafted hoax? Whichever side you choose to defend, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence to support your case.

On one side is the impressive coherence and integrity of the story itself. Anyone can lie or fantasize about working at a secret UFO facility, but to tell the story repeatedly with so much internally consistent detail is no easy feat. Telling the truth is easy--you just recall what happened--while maintaining a lie of such complexity would seem to require infinite gigabytes and megahertz of internal processing capacity to avoid tripping yourself up. Lazar is alive and well and clearly uninterested in cooperating with UFO researchers, but on the rare occasions when he takes questions, he always seems to come up with the right answers. Whether you ask him about gravity propulsion systems or the environment in which he worked at "Area S-4," the answer he gives now is consistent with everything else he ever said in the past and seems to make perfect, down-to-earth sense to anyone who thinks it over. His story is restrained, logically consistent and full of the rich and unexpected nuances that normally only reality can provide.

One the other side, Lazar's background and credentials, or pointed lack thereof, provide fertile ground for doubt. His claims of having earned degrees at MIT and Cal-Tech are dubious to say the least. Sure, a sinister government agency could pull a former student's records from the Registrar's Office, but could they remove every record from every on- and off-campus agency, knock off every professor the student took classes with or intimidate into silence every classmate he once knew? Get real. At a conference in May, Lazar willingly provided the names of two of his professors--one at MIT and one at Cal-Tech--with the same apparent sincerity as his description of anti-matter reactors. Didn't check out. Prof. Hohsfield or his ghost never haunted MIT, while Prof. Duxler was never at Cal-Tech, only at the junior college where Lazar did once take classes.

Lazar's bankruptcy proceedings prior to his alleged employment and later criminal charges against him relating to an illegal brothel do not lend him instant credibility, but to a disciplined observer they do not necessarily disprove his claims either. Lazar is, by all accounts, an eccentric and creative guy, and people like this who do not fit any social mold do tend to get themselves in embarrassing messes. Questions about "character" do not change the facts of what did or did not happen at Area S-4 and do not provide a "smoking gun" to prove or disprove the saucer claims. No human witness is morally perfect or immune to scandal, and an argument could be made the most idiosyncratic people--and thus the most scandal-prone--are just the sort who would have the courage to challenge a threatening authority and make a story like this public.

Also creating doubt is Lazar's long association with ufologist John Lear, who was telling colorful UFOs-at-the-Test-Site stories long before meeting Lazar. By the most accounts, the two met each other by coincidence a few months before Lazar's alleged S-4 employment. Lazar reportedly thought Lear was Loony Tunes back then but changed his mind about a least some of Lear's claims when he encountered the craft himself. The prior meeting raises the suggestion that Lazar's own UFOs-at-the-Test-Site story was a hoax generated initially for Lear's benefit that evolved from there into a media event.

On the other hand, life is full of "unbelievable" coincidences that turn out to be more plausible on closer inspection. A disciplined observer cannot discount the possibility that their meeting was indeed by chance and that Lear played a role not in molding Lazar's story but in bringing him into the public eye. Of the many workers living in Las Vegas who would have known about alien craft at the Test Site, only Lazar had a friend who would believe him, want to know more and press him to go public with his story. According to Lazar, it was his "field trips" with Lear and companions to the Black Mailbox area that got him in trouble with his employers and eventually forced him, by a complex but understandable sequence of events, to make his public disclosures.

The speculation can go on and on. Theories about Lazar seem as numerous as the theorists and seem to reveal more about the person doing the talking than about Lazar himself. Some say his story is half true and half false, while others contend that Lazar has been brainwashed by the evil world government into THINKING he worked on alien craft. There is a theory for every UFO subculture; each seems as good as any another, and all seem to tire with time.

Does It Matter?

In my view, the Lazar question is like the riddle that Captain Kirk would pose to the evil robot to make the robot overload its memory banks and self-destruct. You can debate this one for hours and not get anywhere. I say, give it a rest. Most people seem obsessed with absolutes: They want to know right away whether a story is true or false. If they think it's true, they are willing to listen. If they think it's a lie, they'll dump it fast no matter what other insights it may offer. Most people want to see things as black or white; they can't tolerate gray. Like the robot, they'd rather burn out their circuits and blow smoke.

I say, just relax and enjoy the story. Maybe Lazar is a fraud, and maybe his tale is no more real than Alice in Wonderland, but that doesn't mean we can't learn something from him. Some of history's greatest role models never existed. Sherlock Holmes didn't live at 221B Baker Street; Steed and Peel never solved a real Avengers case, and Mssrs. Spock and Data did not and will not ever roam the galaxy, but these and other fictional characters can sometimes teach us lessons we can apply to our own real lives.

Like Holmes, Spock, Data, Steed and Peel, the Bob Lazar that is conveyed in interviews is a character of great

intellectual discipline. He'll tell you the facts of what he directly observed but will not speculate about what they mean. He always draws a clear distinction about what he has personally experienced or deduced by his own logical processes and what he knows only from secondhand sources and cannot confirm. He seems comfortable with the "gray" of not knowing and readily admits the limits of his knowledge. Even with his own direct evidence, he continues to express skepticism about most UFO reports.

"It seems as if even knowing that we possess alien technology hasn't made you a believer." said one questioner at a UFO conference.

"That's probably true," Lazar replied.

If Lazar's story is fiction, it's great fiction, filled with a richness of plausible details and complex philosophical dilemmas that you can't find in most popular novels these days. The briefing papers Lazar says he read indicate that the aliens have interacted with the human race for millennia, intervening in our genetic development and nudging us into a form of their choosing. It could be fiction, but it is a lot more tangible fiction about our origins than most religions seem to offer.

Humans are referred to as "containers" in those briefing papers. Containers of what? The soul? Consciousness? Dwelling on these concepts a while reminds us how little we really know about ourselves. Sure, our bodies could have evolved from the primordial muck by wholly natural processes, but where did our consciousness come from? What are we made of, really, and if those aliens poured some special liquid into our otherwise empty containers, where did THAT substance come from? These are overload-the-memory-banks questions that we will probably never satisfactorily answer even if the aliens reveal themselves, but they are still interesting to mull.

Government Secrets

The Lazar story is far superior to most science fiction in creating a world that could be true. There is probably no better place on earth to put a secret saucer base, be it real or fictional, than at Papoose Dry Lake in Nevada's vast military restricted area. There is already at least one unacknowledged secret base next door, at Groom Dry Lake, and all the mechanisms of secrecy have long been in place here to keep virtually anything under wraps. The Cold War, and especially the arms buildup of the Reagan Administration, have left behind an imposing internal security apparatus reminiscent of the KGB and fully capable of keeping workers muzzled. Employment within the Restricted Zone is so compartmentalized and the funding pathways so convoluted that even our most privileged government leaders may not know everything that is going on here.

Even if no "secret saucer base" ever existed in the Restricted Zone, just the fact that something this important COULD be effectively hidden here is disturbing in itself. This country is supposed to be a democracy with strict controls on the power of government; yet here in Nevada we still have our own Berlin Wall with a mysterious totalitarian regime hidden inside. Some level of secrecy will always be important to national security, but limitations on power are also a keystone of our freedom, and with the fall of the Soviets, the balance needs to change. When any government agency has reached a level of isolation where it can do what it wants without any accountability to its constituents, there is grave danger for democracy. History has shown that such power is inevitably abused, supporting more the jobs, egos and self-destructive crusades of the people who wield it than the needs of the nation.

For decades, the military could hide virtually anything behind the Soviet threat. In the shadow of billion-dollar Star Wars projects, a small unauthorized research program like what Lazar describes could easily find funding and a secure niche in which to operate. Since the end of the Cold War, the justification for much of our military secrecy has become increasingly flimsy. Apart from the Saddams and disintegrating republics that cannot possibly match our technology, who does the military expect to fight--France?

For all the absurdity of the status quo, it is unrealistic to expect the government to change on its own. While the existence of a base at Papoose Lake remains unproven, the big Groom Lake facility has been widely reported in the popular press. The latest reports call this the home of a new high-speed spy plane dubbed Aurora. As of this writing, you can even view the base yourself from public land near Rachel. (The Air Force has applied to seize this land so the

opportunity may not last for long.)

Soviet satellite photos of the Groom facility are freely available on the open market, and 1994 is expected to mark the implementation of the Open Skies Treaty in which many of our former Communist will be permitted to overfly Groom and Papoose Lakes with sophisticated reconnaissance aircraft. As America's most popular and best publicized secret base, Groom Lake's continued official nonexistence seems a classic exercise in the use of secrecy to suppress not foreign spies but domestic political opponents. The military loves secrecy, even over its most mundane tasks, because it helps to neutralize critical oversight and disable Congressional opposition.

If the Lazar story, be it fact or fiction, attracts attention to this place, then it is doing a service for our country. Increased public attention and anti-secrecy activism may also be the only way we will ever find the truth of that story. If you shake the secrecy tree, then whatever is up there--flying saucers, Auroras or simply Cold War waste and mismanagement--will eventually fall out. You may or may not believe that the U.S. Government is keeping secrets about UFOs, but the fact that they could keep such secrets should be disturbing to everyone.

Glenn Campbell is author of the "Area 51 Viewer's Guide." He can be contacted at: HCR Box 38, Rachel, NV 89001.

Note: Above is the submitted version of the article. The version actually published was edited slightly for space.

Html by [Psychospy](#), 2/27/95.