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Subject: J. Bond Johnson

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Once again I find myself having to defend my reporting of the events that took place outside of Roswell, New Mexico in 1947. Once again, I'm being accused of misquoting a source now that the source has changed his story significantly, with the obvious intent of moving himself from obscurity into the spotlight. And, once again, I have the audio tape back-up to show that my quotes were not wrong, but that the source has made the mistakes as he has altered his story so that he can become more important to the Roswell case.

I first learned about J. Bond Johnson in 1989 as I began to actively investigate the Roswell UFO crash case. Photographs of material claimed to be debris from the crash site had been taken in the office of Brigadier General Roger M. Ramey on July 8, 1947. It was clear from the captions that the photographs were in the possession of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram because they had been taken by one of their photographers. I called them only to learn that many of their photographs had been donated to the Special Collections being housed at the University of Texas at Arlington library.

So I called there and spoke to Betsy Hudon who was in charge of that collection. I told her what I wanted and she told me that they had four photographs taken of Roger Ramey with a rawin target device on July 8. I asked for copies, and they were sent. I probably should note here, for clarification, that the labeling at the library said they had four pictures of Ramey but in reality two of them were of Major Jesse A. Marcel, Sr.

While talking to her, she mentioned that another fellow had recently called about those same pictures and said that he was the man who had taken them. If that was true, here was a witness who had been in General Ramey's office at the critical time on July 8. He might be able to provide some valuable insight into those events that transpired in there. Here was a man to whom I had to speak.

But Hudon didn't think it was right to give me his name. I asked her if she would forward a letter to him, from me, and that way he could contact me, if he wanted. She said that would be fine. I wrote the letter, sent it, and she forward it on to, at that point, the unidentified photographer.

Within days I heard from J. Bond Johnson. He wanted to talk about the events in Ramey's office. I called him back on February 27, 1989 and we spoke for about forty minutes. I recorded the conversation so that a record of it exists. A record that Johnson now denies, by the way.

This was the first big break in my Roswell investigation. A few days before, I had interviewed Bill Brazel in Carizozo, New Mexico, and he had confirmed his handling of the strange metallic debris, his father's discovery of the field of metallic debris, and the suggestions by military officials that neither Brazel nor his son talk of what they had seen. But Brazel had spoken to others, telling them much the same thing that he told me. Johnson was a new witness, one who had not been identified by others and who had not been interviewed by others. Here was the first, critical discovery.

Looking at the transcripts of that interview now, I see where my enthusiasm has overwhelmed me. Listening to the tapes, I can hear where I should have spent more time listening and a little less time talking about the case. From

some of my comments I can see where the criticism that I was coaching the witness might originate. Well, not really, but then, a sharing of information before I have fully questioned the witness is not the best interrogation technique. I should have been quiet.

For example, Johnson said, "I took the picture of General Ramey and the wreckage. General Ramey was the commander of the Twentieth Air Force at that time. Or maybe not the Twentieth, maybe the Fifteenth."

I said that I thought it was the Eighth Air Force, but Johnson said, "I think that's not right." Of course it was right, but it could be suggested that I was coaching the witness when all I was doing was correcting a minor, factual error that means nothing in the overall picture.

After that, Johnson said, in a fairly disjointed way, "The Star-Telegram. The interesting things that you get into, that you may know about... oh, those pictures have been used on a couple of TV shows. One was Star Trek. No, Star... In Search Of which Leonard Nimoy was the host of. And I was sitting watching the TV and it popped up and showed this picture and oh, there's my picture. That kind of thing..."

Johnson then brought Marcel into the story, saying that Alan Lansbury, the producer of In Search Of had hosted a party to which Johnson was invited. He said, "This major was going to be there, the one from Roswell."

I asked, naturally, "Marcel?" Again it might be seen as coaching the witness, though Johnson already knew the name. He just couldn't think of it at that moment.

"Is he the one that got the..."

I interrupted to say, "He was the one that went out and picked up the material."

"From the rancher, yes. He heard about it in a bar and the guy says, 'Oh, I got one of those out at the place.'"

I said, again, filling in detail, "Wait a minute. The problem is that Mac Brazel found the thing on his ranch and he contacted the folks at Roswell. There was a subsequent story. His son, Bill Brazel came down to take care of the ranch because his dad was being held at Roswell and undergoing tests or something like that. Bill Brazel picked up some of the material. He found some scrape of it and he was in the bar talking about it and the Air Force came out the next day and picked it up. The fellow who came out was a fellow named Armstrong."

"That wasn't the major there?"

"No."

"The major was the intelligence officer or something like that."

I said, "Okay. Marcel was the intelligence officer. He was the one who went back to the ranch and picked it all up. So you met Major Marcel."

"Marcel, yes. He has a son. I saw the son interviewed on TV recently."

"Yeah," I said. "That is exactly right. I was hoping that you have found Armstrong by mistake."

"The son said interesting things. That the father came home and told us about the bodies and so forth. And then said that we can't talk about it or don't tell anybody and so forth."

This confused me because to this point in my investigation, I hadn't heard anything about Marcel and bodies. I asked, "Marcel mentioned bodies?"

"No, the son."

My question was, quite naturally, "Marcel says that his father mentioned bodies."

Johnson replied, "Came home and told us about it."

But the truth is, Jesse Marcel, Jr. has claimed all along that his father

never mentioned bodies at all. In fact, this has become one of the stumbling points of the Roswell case. If there had been a crash, the intelligence officer should have been brought in to all aspects of it. That would mean he knew about the bodies, yet he never mentioned a word about them, contrary to what Johnson believed.

Having finished with that, Johnson finally said, "My interesting part of this, having taken the picture and now going back and looking at the picture because I didn't have a copy of it [meaning, I suppose that he didn't have an original print but did have the photograph as it had appeared in the newspaper in 1947]... is that I don't know whether the Air Force was pulling a hoax or not. It looks like a kite..."

We discuss the sequence of events, and how Johnson ended up in Ramey's office. Johnson then said, "Right. That was a hoax, I think. That's when they called and what I saw. I think I was duped." Note that I haven't said a thing about this aspect of the case. Johnson himself had come to the conclusion that he had been duped.

I agreed with his assessment. I said, "Yes. You and all the rest of the reporters were duped."

"That we saw... that they came up with this weather balloon thing as an added... that's my feeling. I never saw the real stuff [emphasis added]." Again this was a spontaneous comment by Johnson. I was trying to figure out how everything had happened and Johnson was throwing in comments about it with no help or coaching from me.

He continued, "Then they came out with that story almost simultaneously that the weather balloon thing..."

At this point in my investigation, having just started, I made a basic assumption. I was aware of a quote attributed to Marcel (by William Moore in *The Roswell Incident*) that suggested that if he was in the photograph, it showed the real debris, but if it was anyone else, then it was not the real thing. Since Marcel had talked of reporters being present, and since Colonel Thomas DuBose, Ramey's chief of staff in 1947, had mentioned three or four reporters present, and, since Johnson was saying that there had been no other reporters in Ramey's office when he was there, I concluded that Ramey had met with the press twice. Johnson noted that he did not attend a press conference, but had just met Ramey in his office to take his photographs.

Johnson said that he took two pictures. One of Ramey, and one of Ramey and DuBose. He didn't know who had taken the pictures of Marcel and seemed to be surprised that there were pictures of him in the file at the University of Texas. It was clear from all the pictures that Marcel was near the same debris that Johnson had photographed with Ramey and DuBose. In other words, and contrary to the suggestions by William Moore, there were no photographs of the real debris with Marcel in them, only the weather balloon spread out on the floor in General Ramey's office.

Johnson told me, "I took two pictures and then they said, but that time they said, 'Oh, we've found out what it is and you know, it's a weather balloon and so forth.' No big deal. I didn't press it. I accepted that. I was rather naive. I accepted that."

After we discussed the mechanics of transmitting stories over the AP wire, I said, "You went back to..." Johnson interrupted to say, "The Star-Telegram and gave them the wet prints of the thing. They wanted them right out. I went in and developed them and gave them wet prints. And I wrote..."

Here is an example of where it would have been better to listen. Johnson said, "I wrote..." The implication is that he wrote the story that he now denies he wrote. In another interview, and even later in this first one, he would

confirm this. He said, "Seven nine [July 9] is my story on the front page that was earlier in the day. That's when they debunked it."

And in a later interview, commenting on the article in the newspaper, he said, "Okay, this is the article I wrote that was on the front page on seven nine." And later still, he said, "I went ahead and got the facts and came back and there wasn't any other reporter who wrote it for the Star Telegram. I wrote it that night."

So what we see is that Johnson was told that the debris on Ramey's floor was a weather balloon and that he wrote an article about it. That article appeared in the July 9 edition of the Star-Telegram. These are two of the things that he claimed I got wrong and that I refuse to change. Of course, I do have the quotes on tape.

About a month later, I talked to Johnson again. I had had the chance to digest the materials that had flooded in and had a better feeling for what the situation was in Fort Worth in July 1947. I had been able to eliminate some of the material that was obviously in error. To get a better picture, I asked, Johnson, simply, "Could you just sort of tell me what you did... What transpired when your editor gave you the assignment to go out to the base." The story he told was essentially the same as it had been during our first conversation. He told me how the assignment had been made, and how he had gotten out to the base. Then he said, "I posed General Ramey with this debris piled in the middle of his rather large and plush office. It seemed incongruous to have this smelly garbage piled up on the floor..."

Next Johnson made the statement that he claims he never made and that I have somehow misquoted, even when the quotes are on tape. He said, "I posed General Ramey with this debris. At that time I was briefed on the idea that it was not a flying disk as first reported but in fact was a weather balloon that had crashed."

There is it, from Johnson himself, once again. Ramey told him, there in the office, that it was nothing more than a weather balloon. He suggests that the context of the quote is such that I have somehow asked a question that he didn't understand. But the quote comes about in a long narration as Johnson is telling me what happened. I hadn't asked a question.

There are other facts that Johnson has challenged about my stories, some of which are ridiculous. He now seems to feel that he must discredit me because his own stories have put him into conflict with himself. I am somehow responsible for the earlier quotes that he doesn't believe reflect reality. Or rather, don't reflect reality as he now misremembers it.

Johnson, for example, claims today that I called him cold. That I did not provide him with any copies of photos or other materials to refresh his memory. That, because of this, he was confused when he spoke to me. Of course, had I given him the materials he suggests that I should have, that would be coaching the witness.

But the point is irrelevant. I found Johnson because I was attempting to locate copies of the pictures that were taken in General Ramey's office. I found Johnson because he had done the same thing and had already received those pictures. And, in our very first interview, he was talking about the article that appeared in the Star-Telegram that he said, at that time, he had written. In other words, he already had copies of everything that I could have sent him, had I been inclined to do so. He already had the material to refresh his memory.

And, I couldn't have called him cold as he claims because I didn't know who he was. Betsy Hudon sent my letter on to him to allow him to initiate the contact, which he did. Without a first call from him to me, there would have

been no contact. When he did call, he was already well aware of the subject. He now says, in direct conflict with what he said a number of times in different interviews, that he insisted there was no balloon in General Ramey's office when we talked. He claims that I insisted there was, arguing with him. His own photographs, however, prove him wrong because the balloon is visible in the photographs.

He now claims that he didn't write the article that appeared in the newspaper the next day, but only after claiming to me, on tape that he did. The problem he has with it today is what it says. If General Ramey didn't know what the debris was, it would have been reflected in the article. It is not.

The last paragraph of the article is the deadly one. It said, "After his first look, Ramey declared all it was was a weather balloon. The weather officer verified his view." This is, of course, in direct conflict with what Johnson claims today, but more importantly, if he wrote the story, it verifies my version of the first interviews.

Johnson has also claimed that he had tried, without success, to get me to correct some of the inaccurate quotations I have attributed to him. But the problem is not me. I did talk to him about this after he changed his story. I read his quotes to him from my transcripts. He denied that he would say anything like that because it wasn't true. He couldn't remember what he had said, just that it couldn't be true.

I sent him a tape so he could hear what he said. I sent him a tape so that he would understand that he would say those sorts of things because he had said those sorts of things. He provided no answer to me except to suggest that if had said some of the things he had spoken in error when we talked.

The truth is I wrote letters to him on February 14, 1991, February 16, 1991 and August 4, 1991, asking him specific questions about his allegations. On the fourteenth, for example, I wrote, "In reviewing my tapes, I learned a couple of other things that are at odds with what you are now saying. On the tape, you said, '...See, I went there not as a reporter but there was not anybody else there. I went ahead and got the facts and came back and there wasn't any other reporter who wrote it for the Star-Telegram on that night. I wrote that that night.'" Those are his words, not mine.

I also noted in that letter, "You might well ask how we know which article you wrote. On the tape you say, 'Okay, this is the article that I wrote that was on the front page on seven nine (July 9, 1947) and says, 'Discovery Near Roswell Identified As Weather Balloon by FWAAF Officer,' and it's quite a long article.'" That is the article that ends with the quote that Ramey identified it immediately.

On the sixteenth, I sent him copies of the tapes. I pointed out that Johnson would now be able to hear himself say the things that I had quoted him as saying. Johnson now claims that he listened to the tapes but could never hear himself saying the things that I claimed he said. But the tapes do verify what I have claimed.

The August 4 letter pointed out that I had sent him the material proving I was right. I had suggested that I was sorry if the events as they were being played out embarrassed him, but it was a situation that I hadn't created. And as I have noted I heard nothing from him in response to my letters.

In other words, I called the man, I wrote the man, and I supplied copies of the various materials he asked me to supply, and he didn't write back.

Instead, he suggests that he had tried to get me to correct the statements without ever proving that my statements were in error. He believes them to be in error and apparently does not believe himself because he has heard himself make the statements I said he made.

Johnson claims that he has been quoted by other investigators as saying that I put words in his mouth. I challenge him to come up with a quote that is not reflected in the tapes. I have put no words in his mouth, but quoted his own words to him. He just doesn't like the sound of them now as he tries to convince people that he was the Roswell photographer.

What we have here is a man who claims to have never written speculative articles about Roswell. Who claims he has nothing to sell to a public eager to buy almost anything Roswell related. Yet he bills himself as the Roswell Photographer as he attempts to pull the spotlight in his direction. He is, in reality, the Fort Worth photographer who took several pictures of a weather balloon in General Ramey's office.

The sad thing here is that if he had left well enough alone, if he had just told his tale consistently through the years, he would have something valuable to contribute to the Roswell case. It would be valuable to hear about his interaction with General Ramey, even if, during that interaction, he learned that the material was a balloon. But for Johnson, that isn't good enough. Now, he must claim that I misquoted him so that he can boost his importance. Unfortunately for him, the tapes exist. Even sadder, he has copies of them but he apparently won't listen to what he has to say.

Some of the important quotes:

Johnson alleged that he had never suggested that it was a weather balloon or that he learned that in General Ramey's office. But here is what he said:  
Johnson (February 27, 1989): So they came up with this weather balloon thing as an added... that's my feeling and that I never saw the real stuff. So that would be my feeling now... Then they came out with that story almost simultaneously afterwards... the weather balloon thing.

Johnson (February 27, 1989): That's all that I think was there. I took the two pictures and then they said, by that time they said, "Oh we've figured it out now what it is... it's a weather balloon and so forth and no big deal so I didn't press it. I accepted it. I was rather naive and accepted it.

Johnson now claims that I called him cold, but the truth is, he knew about me and what I was researching. Listen carefully, as I explain it to him, and he says that it was what he had been told as well:

Randle and Johnson (February 27, 1989: KDR: Interesting you should ask because some other guy had called to ask about those and he said he was the photographer. I said, "Oh, I need his name." She said, "Well I really don't feel right about giving it to you.

JB: Yeah, that's what she told me.

KDR: I said, "Call I send you a letter and you can mail it to him and that way if he wants to contact me, it's his option." She said that she would be happy to do that. So, I've been waiting to hear from you and get that list from her. This was in January that I was doing this.

Johnson claims that he didn't write a story about the events, but here is what he said about that:

Johnson (February 27, 1989): Seven nine [July 9] is my story on the front page that was in earlier that day. That's when they debunked it. [He then reads from his story].

And again, so there can be no confusion, here is what Johnson said about the

timing of the announcement that they had a weather balloon:

Johnson (March 24, 1989): It seemed incongruous to have this smelly garbage piled up on the floor... spread out on the floor of this rather plush, big office that was probably, oh, 16 by 20. I posed General Ramey with this debris. At that time I was briefed on the idea that it was not a flying disk as first reported but in fact was a weather balloon that had crashed.

In case it wasn't clear that he wrote the story, that his wording was vague, here is what he said about it later:

Johnson (March 24, 1989): Do you have the articles from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram dated seven nine [July 9].

KDR: No, I have nothing from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

JB: This is the article that I wrote. It was on the front page on seven nine and it says "Disc-covery Near Roswell Identified As Weather Balloon by FWAAF Officer." And it's quite a long article and that was my story...

And where did Johnson get the facts for the article? He tells us.

Johnson (March 24, 1989): It's entirely possible that I was briefed by the PIO. Probably was. Because those facts track with my story.