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Story by Leslie Linthicum Photos by Richard Pipes

MIDWAY - In the front of the darkened projection room, video producer Jose Escamilla has pulled a chair close to the TV monitor and is fingering the controls. Escamilla yanks at his Hard Rock Cafe baseball hat and swipes at the sweat trickling down his temples.

Now pay close attention, in case this turns out to be history.

Max Littell, one of the founders of the International UFO Museum, sits nearby in a comfortable, wearing a suit and twisting a candy wrapper in his fingers.

A happy tourist in wrinkled bermudas and a three-day growth of beard stands against a wall, ring, Wow, oh, that's cool."

What holds their attention is a videotape of something resembling a fuzzy pingpong ball bouncing around the screen while, every few seconds, grayish blobs scoot by.

Escamilla is tapping his feet and pulling at his cap. He slows the tape and runs it frame by frame. What looked like a blob now looks like a silver disc. It shoots through the frame in approximately 1/30th of a second.

"Could be birds. Could be a plane," Escamilla says. "But I don't think so. This stuff is hauling way too fast."

Littell nods and wraps the candy wrapper around a finger. The tourist says, "Wow." A museum greeter sounds like she has found religion. "I believe," she says. "I believe."

While skeptics scoff and naysayers point to the possibility of weather balloons, secret military aircraft and all the other debunking standard's, Escamilla believes this footage, shot with his brother's RCA video camera at the family compound in the town of Midway outside Roswell, shows undeniable evidence of unidentified flying objects.

Escamilla slows his tape again, sweats some more and allows himself to believe he holds evidence of another "Roswell Incident."

Forget for a moment that day in July, 1947 when that famous something crashed near Corona and somehow whipped the town of Roswell, some 65 miles away, into national notoriety. Remember, instead, the name Midway, in case this turns out to be history.

The town gets its name because it sits about halfway between Roswell and Dexter. If it were named based on achievement rather than its proximity to its neighbors, it might be called Flat or Dairy. It is vegetable and dairy farming country, a rural stretch in the road where Jose Escamilla was raised and where he decided to return and try to build Ultimate Dinosaur Productions Inc., a film production business, when earthquakes and high living costs drove him from Los Angeles.

On March 5, Escamilla was at his sister Becky's house in Roswell, in the middle of editing a promotional video, when she called from Midway. She and brother Manuel were selling some things at a swap meet on the family property when they looked up and saw objects swarming around in the blue sky.

Escamilla rushed over, turned on the video camera and pointed it at the sky.

He taped for about 17 minutes. Then he analysed tape frame by frame and discovered something like an alien airshow - dozens of saucers, disks and domes zipping past his viewfinder.

The tape has captured the attention of the producers of a television show and of the local gang of UFO aficionados that has grown up in the wake of the 1947 crash.

"There's definitely an object there. There's little things flying around," says John Price, owner and operator of Roswell's UFO Enigma Museum.

"Oh, yes," agrees Littell, "I think he saw something."

But there have been a number of videotapes purporting to show spaceships hovering over Earth. It is too early to tell, they say, whether Escamilla has anything worthy of working up a sweat.

A copy of the tape has been sent to the producers of a Fox Network special called "Sightings," the same company that produced the short-lived series, "Encounters." Escamilla also plans to send a copy to the Mutual UFO Network, Or MUFON, in Seguin, Texas.

The "Sightings" people will clean up the tape frame by frame, enlarge the picture and, Escamilla hopes, reveal the flying objects in much greater detail. The folks at MUFON will analyse the objects and try to identify them. If they can't, they'll label them UFOs.

Even with all that analysis, says Littell you never know If you've got Something authentic or not"

Midway sits about two miles off the runway at the Roswell Industrial Air Centre. Airport manager Dennis Ybarra scans the airport flight log for March 5 and finds a two-engine turboprop and a German Air Force two-engine Challenger were in the air about 2 p.m. when Escamilla began taping. The airport doesn't have radar and the workers in the tower reported seeing nothing unusual during that time.

"I can tell you," Ybarra says, "that we don't schedule UFO flights."

There are a few places in the world where reported sightings of spaceships from other planets are met with such ho-hum. And there is nowhere else in the world with two UFO museums on Main Street.

So it isn't unusual to hear someone telling, not in hushed tones, about seeing UFOs, knowing someone who saw UFOs, or knowing someone who has found little gray alien bodies strewn beside a crashed spaceship.

Becky Escamilla is in the International UFO Museum, leaning against a wall covered with photographs of reported UFOs and information about the alleged cover-up of the 1947 "Roswell Incident"

"I've been seeing them since I was a kid", she says. "Bright lights with others moving around them"

Becky Escamilla, now 30, had her first encounter with what she calls a UFO when she was 8. A bright light shined into her bedroom and she watched it dancing around the sky. About a year ago, she began seeing UFOs much more frequently.

"When they first appeared, they were there every night." she says. "They'd be there three, four, five hours a night for weeks. After awhile it was, like, common."

On March 5, she says, the difference was the number of objects she saw and that they appeared in broad daylight.

"Whoever they were," she says, "they wanted to be seen and they wanted to be captured on tape."

The tape, Escamilla says, is becoming a hot property.

With the Showtime Network movie "Roswell" due out soon, and a General Accounting office inquiry into questions of a government coverup of the "Roswell Incident." it isn't untimely to have things that look like flying saucers on tape,

especially if you are a video producer.

Now comes the time for the direct question: Jose, Becky - is this a hoax? Or are you simply out of your minds?

Listen closely to the answers, in case this turns out to be history.

"If they were going to have doctored it" says Escamilla, "we would have doctored something good."

In fact, Escamilla has handy a promo he did for a local TV station. His Macintosh computer has superimposed neat little flying saucers over the Roswell landscape. It looks nothing like the jumpy blurry Midway footage.

A tape, purporting to capture alien spaceships, he says, "is not going to help my career."

The Escamillas haven't told many people other than those involved in the UFO research about the tape. The whole episode, they say, is a little embarrassing.

Becky has told me many times about this and I thought She Was Wacko," Escamilla says. Until he stood on the dusty side of the road, across from Midway Assembly of God, and saw it for himself, Escamilla says he was no believer.

Now, he says, "there's something up there. I just don't know what it is."

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Photo Caption: Jose Escamllia searches the skies over Midway for a return of the flying objects he captured on videotape March 5.

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