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Search... for keyword(s)

in Page Titles

Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1997](#) -> [Aug](#) -> 'The Day Before Roswell'

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'The Day Before Roswell'

From: James Easton <pulsar@compuserve.com>
Date: Thu, 7 Aug 1997 21:36:05 -0400
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Subject: 'The Day Before Roswell'

Increasingly over recent years, the foundation of the Roswell story has perhaps been buried beneath the various purported truths which have been attached to it.

Is there in fact significant evidence that an alien craft crashed in the New Mexico desert, or, is the explanation a Project Mogul balloon train, as evidenced in the US Air Force's July 1994 report, which affirmed the original findings of researcher Robert Todd.

The answer might still be found if we strip away the myths and the deceit, for the story which gave birth to an epic tale, is a simple one.

The source of the excitement was some anomalous debris which rancher Mac Brazel found on the Foster ranch, south-east of Corona, New Mexico.

The exact date of the discovery is uncertain, however, it was sometime between the middle of June and early July, 1947.

Initially, it seems that Brazel didn't consider the debris to be of much consequence. According to his son, Bill Brazel, "At first he didn't recognise the importance of it and it was only after a day or so of thinking on it that he decided he had better go back and take a closer look". [1]

It was the following evening whilst in Corona, as Bill Brazel recalls, when "during a discussion with my uncle, Hollis Wilson and someone that he knew from Alamogordo, that he first heard about the flying saucer reports that were sweeping this area at that time". [2]

As they thought Mac Brazel may have found one of those "flying saucers", he was encouraged to tell the authorities.

The following day, Brazel travelled to Roswell with an unknown quantity of the debris.

"I believe his original intention was to go to Roswell and buy a new Jeep pick-up truck, he certainly wouldn't have made the trip just on account of the stuff he had found", claimed Bill Brazel. [3]

"Some of the news reports have it that he went to Roswell to sell wool".

"I know he didn't go there to sell wool, it was about trading his pickup that he went".

In the story carried by the Roswell Daily Record on 9 July, 1947, it's reported that Brazel described the debris he found as "tinfoil, paper, tape, and sticks" and confirmed "at least one paper fin had been glued onto some of the tinfoil".

Furthermore, "Considerable scotch tape and some tape with flowers printed upon it had been used in the construction. No string or wire were to be found, but there were some eyelets in the paper to indicate that some sort of attachment may have been used".

Brazel's descriptions correspond with the recollection of Bessie Brazel Schreiber, Brazel's daughter, who claims she was shown by her father, "sticks, like kite sticks, attached to some of the pieces [of foil-like material] with a whitish tape" and "tape [which] was about two or three inches wide and had flower-like designs on it". [4]

"There was what appeared to be pieces of heavily waxed paper and a sort of aluminium-like foil", she added. [5]

Loretta Proctor, Brazel's neighbour, confirmed that Mac, "said there was more stuff there, like a tape that had some sort of figures on it". [6] "There was also something he described as tape which had printing on it. The colour of the printing was a kind of purple", she recalled. [7]

We seem to have consistent evidence, at the outset, that the debris was of flimsy construction and consisted of sticks, paper, foil and tape with purple printing on it.

As Bessie Schreiber noted, "the debris looked like pieces of a large balloon which had burst". [8]

Referring to the "pieces of heavily waxed paper and a sort of aluminium-like foil", Bessie Schreiber also remembered that "some of these pieces had something like numbers and lettering on them". [9]

"It looked like numbers mostly, at least I assumed them to be numbers. They were written out like you would write numbers in columns to do an addition problem. But they didn't look like the numbers we use at all. What gave me the idea they were numbers, I guess, was the way they were all ranged out in columns". [10]

Karl Pflock has been one of the foremost researchers of the "Roswell" case and I recently asked for his observations on a likely explanation for this writing.

Karl was able to offer more than an opinion, he replied that Professor Charles Moore, who was assigned to the Mogul project, had confirmed it was common practice to use the balloon materials as a "notepad" for calculations.

It's not overlooked that Bessie Schreiber comments, "they didn't look like the numbers we use at all" and we can only speculate why she may have thought so. However, she was young at the time and perhaps these were equations, shorthand, illegible writing, or simply writing which had been subjected to the elements and became smudged.

Another witness, Walt Whitmore Jnr, claimed to have seen the debris Brazel brought into town. Seemingly adding weight to Moore's explanation, he confirmed, "Some of this material had a sort of writing on it which looked like numbers which had been either added or multiplied". [11]

July 7th 1947. The day before Roswell was to become a legend.

The Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express carried the front page banner headline:

"Is the World Getting Woozier Or Are People Really Seeing Things?"

Accompanying the headlines were several news articles on "flying discs" and "flying saucers". The front page photograph featured Father Joseph Brasky, from Grafton, Wisconsin, who described how a "strange disc" dropped out of the sky and hit the lightning rod on top of his

church.

The photograph showed Father Brasky holding the miniature "flying disc", which subsequently turned out to be a circular saw.

Another leading front page article reports how Los Angeles pilot Vernon Baird knocked down a "flying Yo Yo", the fifteen feet diameter "clam-shaped airplane" coming apart in his P-38's prop wash. Baird apparently describes the aerial encounter first hand.

The story was carried in several newspapers, but there was no such incident. "Three or four of us were sitting around the hanger gassing, and we just made it up. Somebody must have heard it and spread the word", Baird later explained.

"I'm flabbergasted that anyone believed it".

Following Kenneth Arnold's June 24th report of nine unidentified objects in formation, the American media and public were captivated by the "flying disc" stories. A genuine mystery that enthralled and entertained a nation.

Nobody knew what they were, where they came from, or what they really looked like and few are likely to have appreciated that "saucer" shaped objects were not in fact what Kenneth Arnold claimed to have witnessed, Arnold merely noting that the objects "flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water".

The media was awash with all manner of "flying saucer", ergo "flying disc", stories and it was against this background that Major Jesse A. Marcel was convinced that Mac Brazel had found one.

Marcel, the Roswell Army Air Field intelligence officer, recalled, "We heard about it on 7 July when we got a call from the county sheriff's office at Roswell." [12]

It sounded important as the sheriff reportedly told him Brazel believed "something had exploded" over the ranch and there was "a lot of debris scattered around". [13]

Discussing the matter with his commanding officer, Colonel Blanchard, Marcel states they determined that "a downed aircraft of some unusual sort might be involved". [14]

Despite having travelled to the debris field, it proved to be impossible for Major Marcel to be sure what the debris was, or where it had originated.

There was no indication of the object's original size or shape, no recognisable structures such as walls or floors, no furniture, no evidence of a propulsion system or electronics, no identification markings and no dead bodies or injured crew members.

Nonetheless, he was apparently satisfied that the fragile material must be from one of the "flying discs" and of the opinion this equated with a craft from another world.

Consequently, it might have been presumed that Marcel would rush his debris collection back to headquarters for analysis and this would expedite any necessary countermeasures to be effected.

Who knew what these wooden, paper, foil and rubber flying discs were capable of, or what strange or hostile creatures might be responsible for them.

Instead, he took it home to show his family.

In 1994, I saw the transcript of a little known interview with Major Marcel's son, Dr Jesse Marcel. I thought it was particularly insightful and obtained permission to publish the dialogue.

Reflecting on events from June 1947, Dr Marcel elucidates:

"In 1947, that's when the term flying saucer first became popular.

So, they brought the debris in, and, as our house happened to be between where they were coming from and the airbase, so my dad swung by the house to show my mother and myself what this looked like, and he said 'this is a flying saucer, at least portions of it'".

"This was about one or two o'clock in the morning".

"I had never heard of a flying saucer before, I didn't know what it was, but he said this is a flying saucer and well, what is that?, and he said something that came from other places other than the earth here. No, it wasn't built by any civilization that we have here".

Having only just returned with the debris, it was obviously impossible for any such determination to be made and all other probabilities investigated and excluded.

It could have been wreckage from a project based in one of the military and scientific installations in the New Mexico area, or indeed anywhere else in the United States. It might have been of foreign origin, perhaps a reconnaissance mission, or something more sinister.

However, it seems that Major Marcel was so excited by the prospect of finding a "flying disc" that he believed he had done just that.

As making a detour home would have delayed an analysis of his intelligence data and compromised the security of it, presumably Major Marcel perceived the "flying disc" to be more of a benign cosmic wonder than any imaginable threat.

"The many rumors regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday when the intelligence officer was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc through the co-operation of one of the local ranchers", read the press release, which was to form the basis of the news headlines.

However, not evident from the release is that it wasn't a "disc" shaped object which had been recovered at all. It was debris which contained foil, paper, sticks, rubber, white tape and purple tape with printing.

That was the basis for the "reality" of the flying disk.

There's no suggestion in the press release that the "disc" was of unearthly origin and it may not have been perceived to be, although Marcel seemingly thought that was the explanation.

It's not known to what extent Blanchard may have been persuaded by his intelligence officer's beliefs, however, the impact of the announcement does seem to have been significantly underestimated.

Much of this may be explained by the fact that the press release was inaccurate and misleading.

It continued, "The flying object landed on a ranch near Roswell sometime last week. Not having phone facilities, the rancher stored the disc until such time as he was able to contact the sheriff's office. Action was immediately taken and the disc was picked up at the rancher's home. It was inspected at the RAAF and subsequently loaned to higher headquarters".

Not only did the statement confirm a reality founded wholly on conjecture, there was no disc-shaped object which had landed on anyone's ranch. Neither did Brazel store the "disc" until he could inform the sheriff.

As the July 9th issue of the Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express, confirmed, "He said he didn't think much about it until he went into Corona, N.M., last Saturday and heard the flying disc reports".

Conversely, there was no suggestion that the "object" was not from earth, no confirmation that the unidentified debris wasn't possibly of US manufacture, no reason for a heightened state of alert, no leave cancelled, no panic, in short, nothing more than an excited and unintentionally deceptive news release.

The press release had been issued by 1st Lieutenant Walter Haut, the Army Air Field's Public Information Officer [PIO]. Although Haut claims that Colonel Blanchard dictated the press statement, this has never been confirmed and an alternative explanation could be that Haut was responsible for its content and release.

Major Marcel claimed that when he finally arrived back at base with the debris, "we discovered that the story we had found a flying disc had leaked out ahead of us. We had a PIO on the base who had taken it upon himself to call the AP [Associated Press] on this thing". [15]

He added, "It was the public information officer, Haut I believe his name was, who called the AP and later wrote the press release. I heard he wasn't authorized to do this and I believe he was severely reprimanded for it, I think all the way from Washington". [16]

Whoever was responsible, the story attracted considerable attention and in a comment attributed to Haut, it's claimed that Blanchard "hit the ceiling" when he learned of the international interest. [17]

It's a reaction which seems to make little sense if Blanchard had initiated the press release, unless he had somehow misjudged the situation.

The development of the Roswell mythology can be viewed as a series of misjudgments; Major Marcel's apparent assumption that he knew enough about every project in existence to rule out any explanation other than a "flying disc", the enthusiastic detour which jeopardised his mission, the failure of the press statement to grasp what had actually taken place and compounding all that went before, the release of that statement.

When General Ramey took control of the situation and informed the press that the debris was simply weather balloon wreckage, that was sufficient to end the transient June 1947 episode.

At least for the next 30 years.

On 20 February, 1978, researcher Stanton Friedman was lecturing in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, when a casual remark from the director of a local TV station led to the case being re-opened.

Friedman was informed that the director was acquainted with a Dr Marcel, who had handled wreckage from a "flying saucer" crash.

Thus resurrected, the case investigation grew to encompass numerous new claimed witnesses and depositions.

Amongst these, there were two key testimonies which become synonymous with various propositions that the debris was from an alien spacecraft, whose occupants had also been found.

As noted, Dr Marcel was shown some of the wreckage by his late father. The revived story having gathered momentum and attention, on a number of occasions, Dr Marcel described metallic "I-beams" with symbols, recalled as part of that wreckage.

"There were I-beam fragments that had writing on the inside of them", he claimed. [18]

As for the symbols:

"I thought at first it looked like hieroglyphics, but it wasn't. Hieroglyphics have animal forms birds, and cats, and things, but this wasn't hieroglyphics. It resembled it. Geometric forms and figures, solid forms, but not any kind of recognizable numbers or letters or anything like that. More like squares, triangles, circular ellipsoids, put together in various combinations to form different types of occurrences. I do recall very strongly it was a metallic, purplish color".

"And the hieroglyphics were embossed on that. So they stood out from

that". [19]

Yet, in the 1995 UK Channel 4 "Incident at Roswell" documentary, he seemed to have changed his mind.

The program featured the infamous "alien autopsy" video, which includes some brief film of debris supposedly from the crash site and which shows I-beams with embossed symbols.

Asked for his comments on similarities with what he recalled, Dr Marcel claimed the embossed symbols in the video footage were different because, "the ones I saw were not raised above the level of the beam".

Apparently, a complete contradiction.

Dennis Murphy, an acquaintance in the US, spoke to Miller Johnson, who designed a "replica" I-beam with Dr Marcel.

Dennis confirmed, "I asked Miller Johnson if Jesse Marcel Jr. knew whether or not the symbols were embossed into the I-beam. He stated that Jesse was not sure if they were or not".

Dr Marcel is also unsure of the exact shapes of the symbols. He acknowledges that there is only one symbol, resembling a truncated triangle with a circle on top, which he can recall with any confidence.

Whilst Dr Marcel believed the members "sure didn't look like balsa wood, unless it was sprayed with aluminium paint or something like that", [20] his father recalled that they did not look metallic, but "something like balsa wood". [21]

And although Marcel Jnr originally claimed the symbols were "actually an embossed part of the metal itself", [22] his father stated, "they looked like they were painted on". [23]

Another witness to the debris, Charles Schmid, described "some material that looked like wood" and which "had some writing that looked like flowers on just one side". He added, "it had pink petals, centered like a flower". [24]

Dr Marcel has also described the I-beam symbols as "pink and purple", or "a violet-purple type color". His father concurs; "those symbols were pink-purple, lavender was actually what it was". [25]

As we know, Loretta Proctor confirmed that Mac Brazel told her, "there was more stuff there, like a tape that had some sort of figures on it...there was also something he described as tape which had printing on it...the colour of the printing was a kind of purple".

And Brazel's daughter, Bessie Schreiber, told of how "some of the metal-foil pieces had a sort of tape stuck to them, and when these were held to the light they showed what looked like pastel flowers or designs".

As the existence of the tape with purplish symbols isn't disputed, it seems there is good reason to suspect that this tape was also the source of the purplish symbols found on some parts of the debris.

Significant corroboration for this is given in Kent Jeffrey's recent article "Roswell - Anatomy of a Myth". [26]

He states:

"In the last few months, as part of my effort to reconstruct what happened at Roswell, I have had a number of conversations with Irving Newton, the weather officer at Fort Worth Army Air Field who was called in by General Ramey to identify the unusual debris".

[...]

"In one of my conversations with Newton, quite by chance, a new and important revelation came to light. He was describing the color of the symbols on one of the balsa sticks and mentioned how it was faint and had somewhat of a mottled appearance because of "the way that the dye

had bled through onto the surface of the stick." This was a very important piece of information. The symbols that Newton saw on the debris in Ramey's office were on the surface of the stick, not on tape! The tape had apparently peeled away, probably because of several weeks' exposure to sunlight while it lay out in the desert. This serendipitous revelation immediately cleared up one of the biggest questions in my mind about the Roswell case -- how could Jesse Marcel, Sr., or Jesse Marcel, Jr., for that matter, not have recognized flower patterns on tape? The answer is now crystal clear. The symbols they saw were not on tape. What they saw were images of the original symbols from the dye that had bled through before the tape had peeled away. Jesse, Jr.'s testimony about the symbols definitely not being on tape was absolutely correct".

When Dr Marcel first gave his testimony in February of 1978, he made no mention of any symbols on the I-beams.

Subsequently bringing this to light, in April of 1979, he wrote to Friedman's associate, William Moore, advising, "I omitted one startling description of the wreckage for fear it might have been the fanciful imagination of a twelve-year-old".

"Imprinted along the edge of some of the beam remnants there were hieroglyphic-type characters". [27]

There seems compelling evidence, the source of the mysterious "hieroglyphics" was that same pinkish-purple tape with flowers.

In the US Air Force report, Colonel Trakowski, who was the TOP SECRET control officer for Project Mogul, confirmed the distinctive pinkish-purple tape with flower and heart designs was used at that time, in the construction of balloon radar targets.

In the case of bodies having been found at one of several, theoretical other crash sites, key testimonies have again proved to be untrustworthy. Gerald Anderson was an alleged eye-witness to a crashed vehicle with bodies and his well publicised claims were subsequently accepted to be of dubious authenticity.

Frank Kaufmann, alias Steve Mackenzie, alias Joseph Osborn, is the latest avowed crash-site witness who is also regarded by many to be equally unreliable.

Of greater significance is the realisation that the testimony of former Roswell mortician, Glenn Dennis, is no longer credible.

Dennis claimed to have been the close friend and confidant of an army nurse who participated in the autopsies of small, four-fingered, creatures.

This story became a foundation of the Roswell case and its possible extraterrestrial basis.

Originally, Dennis claimed the nurse was called "Naomi Self" and later "Naomi Selff".

When it became clear from the historical records that there was no evidence for any such nurse having served at the airbase, Dennis responded that he had given the wrong name. He offered no explanation or further names for the army nurse.

Kevin Randle, a seasoned investigator of the Roswell case, recently acknowledged:

"Dennis also said that she had a brother named William (Billy) and I have a listing of more than 250. We could weed some of them out because he had a little biographical information on them. None of them checked out either.

Of course, this was all wasted effort because Glenn has now changed the last name of the nurse, after insisting that it was her real name and to please not tell anyone what it was. When a witness makes such a major change in his story, after being confronted with facts, it does not bode well for the story or the witness".

A letter dated 6 January, 1997 from Karl Pflock to Dennis was also made public and Pflock, a close friend of Dennis's, confirmed his reluctant conclusions:

"There is no record (military or civilian) of and no one interviewed remembers anyone named anything like Naomi Selff or of a crash in which several nurses were killed. There is no record or reliable recollection of any abrupt transfer of any member of the base-hospital nursing staff or of any mysterious activity at the hospital--including an order for regular staff not to report for duty--in early July '47; this includes the recollections of the man who commanded the hospital at the time.

The simple truth is, no matter how efficient and far-reaching a group of cover-up conspirators might be, there is absolutely no way they could possibly have eliminated all record and recollection of "Naomi".

She simply didn't exist, Glenn".

When Glenn Dennis's pivotal testimony collapsed, it took much of the Roswell mystique with it.

If further evidence were needed that claims of a crashed alien craft had no basis in fact, it came by way of a number of documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

Time after time, the documents confirm that at the highest levels of the military, government and scientific community, there was a genuine uncertainty and concern about the nature of some "flying disc" reports, but there was consequently no knowledge of any "disc" ever having been found.

These documents, from the era succeeding the Roswell press coverage, prove that if such a crash had occurred, it was apparently unknown to:

Chief of Staff, USAF
Director of Intelligence, USAF
Chief of Intelligence, Air Materiel Command, USAF
Chief of the Air Estimates Branch, USAF
The Air Force Scientific Advisory Board

An incredulous scenario and one which serves only to further place the Roswell story in its true perspective.

In July of 1947, the Roswell landscape looked different. "Flying discs" had captured the American public's imagination and anything which seemed to be an anomalous flying object was almost by default a "disc".

Our concept of a "flying saucer" as a large, saucer-shaped, metallic craft was not universal 50 years ago, when "flying discs" were perceived to be simply objects of unknown origin, not necessarily large and not necessarily metallic, as clearly evident from the newspaper reports of that time.

If we accept the Project Mogul explanation as infinitely more likely and supported by the evidence, there is no reason why anyone who was open-minded to the possibilities should feel contrite.

So the Army Air Force hadn't actually recovered our popular conception of a flying saucer at all...but that's what was suggested by the press release. And when the issue is confused by a dramatic testimony from such an ostensibly credible witness as Glenn Dennis, it seemed there was a solid foundation to place the further evidence in context.

Crash sites galore, wreckage with alien writing, alien bodies recovered and possibly even survivors, autopsies witnessed, a grandiose and cynical cover-up which spanned decades...

But it was clearly a specious foundation. All of it.

This perception of the Roswell story will be doubtless be an anathema to the Roswell fundamentalists.

But it isn't for them, it's for those who are interested in any objective rationalisation of the truth, even, to paraphrase Kent Jeffrey, if it does mean there is no Santa Claus.

Certainly not in this instance, anyway.

James.
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Appendix:

- [1] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 80.
- [2] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 81.
- [3] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 81.
- [4] Affidavit, 22/9/93: Karl Pflock.
- [5] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 90.
- [6] "UFO Crash at Roswell", Randle and Schmitt.
- [7] Affidavit, 5/5/91: Karl Pflock.
- [8] Affidavit, 22/9/93: "Report of Air Force Research Regarding the 'Roswell Incident'".
- [9] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 90.
- [10] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 91.
- [11] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 93.
- [12] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 64.
- [13] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 65.
- [14] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 65.
- [15] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 69.
- [16] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 71.
- [17] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 76.
- [18] Interview given by Dr Jesse Marcel, June 1994.
- [19] Interview given by Dr Jesse Marcel, June 1994.
- [20] Interview broadcast by KPFA radio, Berkeley, 15/11/94.
- [21] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 67.
- [22] "Unsolved Mysteries" documentary.
- [23] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 68.
- [24] Video, "UFOs: A Need to Know".
- [25] "Crash at Corona", Friedman and Berliner, p 100.
- [26] MUFON Journal, June 1997.
- [27] "The Roswell Incident", by Berlitz and Moore, p 74.

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