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Marcel's Previously Unknown Last Words On Roswell

From: Stig Agermose <stig.agermose@get2net.dk>
Date: Fri, 01 Oct 1999 01:56:11
Fwd Date: Fri, 01 Oct 1999 03:55:07 -0400
Subject: Marcel's Previously Unknown Last Words On Roswell

Source: 'space.com'

http://www.space.com/area51/marcel_990930.html

Stig

Marcel's Last Words on Roswell Crash

By Robert Scott Martin
Staff Writer

Sep 30 1999 12:21:09 ET

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[Images:
Jesse Marcel, late in his life. Click to enlarge.

Marcel unfurls a sheet of unidentified debris in 1947 (credit:
Fort Worth Star-Telegram). Click to enlarge.]

According to a previously unknown 1981 interview, Jesse Marcel, the Roswell Air Force Base intelligence officer who transformed UFO history when he recovered pieces of an unidentified object in the desert, maintained to the end of his life that the object was no weather balloon.

Linda Corley, who interviewed Marcel five years before his death, closed the 1999 National UFO Conference with a largely impressionistic portrait of the man's last years in Houma, LA, where she still lives.

Corley contacted Marcel after a college professor told her class to interview "an interesting person." The resulting four-hour conversation between Marcel, his wife, Viaud, and Corley took place around the Marcells' kitchen table on May 5, 1981, and was recorded on an inexpensive student cassette player.

One of the most significant details to emerge from the discussion, believed to be Marcel's last in-depth public statement on the Roswell affair, was the fact that Marcel firmly denied having seen alien corpses in the wreckage.

"Had there been bodies of aliens in the debris, I would have picked them up and brought them in," Corley quoted him as

saying.

The absence of corpses flies in the face of orthodox Roswell crash mythology. Stanton Friedman, author of Top Secret/MAJIC, Crash at Corona and other UFO exposes, has previously stated that other sources told him that both debris and bodies were recovered from the crash site, and the possible existence of alien passengers in the crashed object has been one of the main factors fuelling the Roswell industry.

Theoretically, of course, Marcel could simply have been unaware of any alien bodies, which may have been taken away before he toured the wreckage. However, this is unlikely. Why would a super-secret effort to recover any bodies before Marcel arrived on the scene leave the strange wreckage behind? Why not take everything?

Not a balloon

Even in the absence of aliens, Marcel remained convinced that the wreckage was not, as the Air Force has since maintained, part of a downed top-secret balloon.

"The material was unusual," Corley said he told her. " It couldn't have been a balloon. It was porous, it couldn't hold air."

To the best of Marcel's knowledge, the military kept all of the strange metallic fabric that predominated the debris, along with the structural elements that looked like wood but didn't burn.

He had little patience for either the original explanation that the "flying disk" recovered from Roswell was part of a weather balloon, or the official story of a highly classified Mogul spy balloon that emerged later.

The infamous photograph of Brigadier General Roger Ramey displaying the wreckage was unquestionably a fake, he said, staged later "strictly for the press."

"Publicity is not what I want"

Significantly, Marcel does not come across in the Corley interview as a man making up an outlandish story to get attention and possibly money as well, as skeptics have claimed.

"Publicity is not what I want," she quotes him as saying. "I feel like I'm a nobody and I'm going to stay a nobody ... talk about these things and they get a net after you."

Nor was he a "true believer" interested in spreading his story to win public support for the UFO cause.

"I became disinterested" with UFOs, he said. "There's something wrong with me -- I'm still curious, but I'm not reading."

Patriotism, silence and their rewards

Marcel described himself as a young man to Corley as being extremely ambitious, "like ten cats on a hot tin roof," a characterization borne out by more than 8 years of active military duty.

Still, he left the army at a relatively young age in 1950, whereupon he learned he had received a "stealth promotion" to the rank of lieutenant colonel in December, 1948. The file explaining the promotion had been misplaced, he told Corley.

Corley now says Marcel felt unable to tell her everything he knew about certain subjects, quoting him as saying, "I left the service, but remain loyal to the country and a vow I took to keep my mouth shut."

That very vow may explain why he called her a few weeks after the interview in a "frantic" mood to tell her that everything he

had said had been a lie. He insisted that she not release the information to the press, and so she kept the interview out of the public eye for more than a decade, not even turning it in as part of her school assignment.

"My heart really went out to him because he sounded so scared," she said.

Even Memorex fades

Instead, she kept the tapes on the shelf, unplayed but preserved as a testament to the possibly "unique information" they held. By the time Stanton Friedman heard of the interview and asked Corley to release the tapes, they had already decayed and were of dubious use to him.

"It seemed I had waited too long," she said. Instead, the faded recordings forced her to transcribe the interview herself, she said, using her likewise transitory memories to fill in the gaps. She also made use of a new cassette player that "cleaned" the tapes during playback.

Although Friedman returned two of the three tapes to her in 1995 and the third in 1996, Corley held back on releasing the material until Mrs. Marcel's recent death, she said.

Working with the tapes evidently stirred a profound wave of nostalgia in Corley, as she waxed rhapsodic about the feeling of listening to the innocent and enthusiastic voice of her girlhood after all the years. She framed the afternoon with the Marcells as an almost holy moment, an event somehow set outside time by her own proximity to the golden age of flying saucers and the catastrophic interruption of Roswell.

Corley named the trees in the Marcells' backyard, showed slides of the suburban house and the elderly couple slouched over their kitchen table. The event has so ingrained itself in her emotional makeup that she has spent apparently vast amounts of time and energy doodling the "pink and purple" marks -- often called an example of some alien alphabet in the literature -- in various patterns and color schemes.

Earnestness or artifice?

If Corley can exude such apparent yearning and personal attachment to a hoax, then her hoax is one of extraordinary complexity. Her somewhat formal public speaking style and outsider's willingness to retrace details that are common knowledge in the Roswell field may be the marks of an authentic novice thrust by circumstance into the eye of UFOlogy, or they may be only an artful mask designed to draw attention away from an interview that never took place.

What motivation could she (or, in theory, Friedman) have in going to such extreme lengths to sugar-coat a hoax?

Her prepared speech -- of a dozen NUFOC speakers, she is the only one I remember reading from pre-written sheets -- wandered down blind alleys of recollection with all the apparent earnestness of the college psychology paper that it was once meant to be. Would a brilliant deception of the kind required to fake such earnestness even stoop to such a pose?

Complicating the issue is Corley's newfound desire to publish a book -- presumably to at least a small material gain -- containing her transcripts of the tapes, which are of course sadly no longer readily useable by independent researchers.

The book will reportedly focus on Marcel's patriotism and his recollections of his own golden youth at the dawn of the saucer age, but the question of why she would make the material available for wide release now after letting the tapes fade for so long remains to be adequately answered. Until that answer emerges (or more independent parties evaluate the tapes), her story must sadly remain at least a little suspect.

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