

Peter Jennings and UFOs: Spinning and Deceiving

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Within the UFO community, this was the most anticipated media event in a long time, perhaps since the 50th anniversary of Roswell in 1997. Cable networks, such as the History Channel and SciFi Channel, have been getting into the mix with documentaries on the subject for some time, but the major networks have been silent for years. And whenever there was an occasional treatment of the subject, it was always to debunk.

So when it appeared that ABC was attempting to do something "serious" about the subject, a few people asked me what I thought would happen. Especially since I have [written previously](#) that I absolutely did not believe that a major network would be able to handle this subject in a forthright manner.

To such readers, I predicted that ABC would not completely debunk UFOs, but it would also not endorse them. I said under no circumstances would there be any hint of credence given to a conspiratorial angle, that I would be shocked if any mention was made of deep black military technology, or of claims that we are now in possession of alien technology and bodies.

As far as the UFO topic goes, that's where the action is, at least for those of us who are interested in the structure of power of *this* world.

These predictions turned out to be true. No surprise, and I imagine there were others who predicted the same thing. Although I have to say I was surprised by the number of pre-Special commentators who seemed to think that this event could trigger some form of immanent disclosure.

I support the goal of UFO disclosure. Indeed, I consider it to be a critical goal of UFO research. But we must realize that if or when disclosure ever comes, it will be on someone's terms. That is, the terms of covert players that have a specific agenda. Under such a situation, UFO researchers must be

vigilant in determining how much information is being given out, and how much of it is true.

We may ask, why would ABC do a UFO special at all? For ratings? This in fact is what [many media people](#) cynically seem to be implying. In fact, it appears that the special helped ABC a little in that regard, but not a lot.

Could it be out of a sense of sheer intellectual and public responsibility?

Okay, now that we're done laughing, let's move on...

It is ludicrous to think that ABC's leadership just decided to "do" a special like this. When dealing with the powerful media which George Orwell today would certainly describe as our Ministry of Truth one must assume there is a political (and in this case national security) goal. This is, after all, a critical national security topic. Major media is in bed with our national security apparatus. This ain't your great-grandpa's U.S. of A., sonny. It's become more like the old Soviet Union. Indeed, we have to watch ABC in the same way that the people who used to be called "Sovietologists" analyzed official Soviet public statements. "What does so-and-so *really* mean by that? What is the significance of this person's presence or absence at an official function?" As Tass was to the Soviet elite the primary mouthpiece and propaganda instrument so are the major networks of today, including ABC, to America's power elite.

Thus, we might ask, was ABC attempting to "prepare the public?" Or, instead, some form of spin control?

Looks like spin control to me.

The program essentially worked by building up something of a legitimate-looking case, a kind of "bringing out the best evidence" (which was not the best evidence), then puncturing the case with the help of spokespersons for the scientific community. I say spokespersons because many of these people weren't scientists. Thus, you set up a straw man and then knock him down.

For about the first hour, the show provided a decidedly "pro-UFO" crescendo. We saw Art Bell and his wife discuss their UFO sighting, we saw some Phoenix lights video, clips of CUFOS Director Mark Rodighier, and (in my opinion) a very good handling of the Illinois "Cop" sighting of 2000. The space given to skeptics for most of that first hour was limited,

although peppered in various places so you didn't forget about them.

The next segment provided some history, of a sort. For anyone who knows this material, this was extremely basic and low level. But more seasoned UFO researchers and readers must remember that most viewers of this special are at the Kindergarten-or-less level of knowledge. If the typical researcher is at a level nine or ten, then most people are at a zero or one. So if the ABC special gets even to the level of three ... well, you get the idea.

I understand that you have to walk before you can run, and it's not realistic to expect ABC to condense a topic with the complexity of the UFO phenomenon into a mere two hours without a lot of material ending up on the cutting floor. But what we had was sheer spin.

Mr. Jennings repeats the U.S. government position (a lie) that it is not in the business of investigating UFOs. Well, that essentially removes the military from this discussion.

But why, one may ask, during the days of Project Blue Book, when the Air Force did have a public investigation of UFOs, did they dishonestly debunk so many reports? ABC certainly showed that Blue Book was dishonest, that it was never a legitimate investigative effort. Here was an opportunity for honest journalism to attack some significant issues.

Instead, we "learn" that the orders to debunk UFO reports were in order to remove the threat of clogged communication channels caused by a hysterical public. Nothing to do with the objects themselves.

While the recounting of the 1968 Minot AFB UFO encounter was well done, the opportunity for asking some serious questions was ignored. Such as, what could that object have been? Or, what is the likelihood that this incident had repercussions within the military-intelligence community hierarchy that were beyond Blue Book?

That was essentially the first hour. The balloon was expanding, albeit in a conventional and sanitized manner. Still, for much of America, I would bet that even this was pretty strong stuff.

So, it was time to let some air out.

Thus we get the SETI people. We get to hear about Jill Tarter's UFO sighting, which was actually the moon.

(Seemingly implying that all UFO sightings are conventional objects). We get Frank Drake and Seth Shostak. Why?

Then we come to Roswell. Roswell is important because it has become, in the public mind especially, the cornerstone of the "conspiracy" argument. In reality, an overwhelming argument for a UFO government conspiracy can be very easily made without reference to Roswell, but never mind. You kill the one and you at least disable the other for the time being.

Jennings immediately and ceaselessly used the word "myth" to describe the Roswell crash of 1947. ABC pulled out all the stops, even to the extent of seriously maligning the most persistent Roswell researcher of all, Stanton Friedman. This was cheap and underhanded. Friedman was given almost no air time whatsoever, and was portrayed as a cheap "promoter" of the Roswell myth, like a modern day P. T. Barnum. This is absurd. Without recourse to anything but the official Air Force propaganda, Roswell was decreed by ABC to be an article of faith, with no credible witnesses, and possessing "not a shred of evidence." Roswell may or may not have been everything Friedman or other proponents have maintained, but the Air Force study ♦ itself a deeply flawed undertaking ♦ was accepted without reservation.

With a half hour to go, the Special came to abductions. I was expecting to see Dr. Michael Persinger on this segment, discussing tectonic stress theory and the sense of "presence." Fortunately, I was wrong. But in fact the replacement crew was just as bad. Thus, after a sympathetic treatment of Budd Hopkins, we get Harvard psychologists and ... yes, sleep disorder paralysis. What was galling about this part was the absence of the late John Mack, the *other* Harvard professor. Before Mack was killed last summer (some believe suspiciously) by a motorist on a lonely road late at night while in Britain, he had been interviewed for this special. Why was he left off? Inexcusable.

Abduction researchers will tell you, by the way, that despite the sleep paralysis argument, there is physicality to this experience, in the form of odd and unexplainable body marks (scoops, triangular-patterned dot formations, etc.) While this is not proof of abductions per se, these marks are real and common among abductees. A truly dispassionate documentary would have dealt with this.

Finally, we reach the problems of space travel. Yes, the "distance" argument. "The aliens can♦ get here from there." What was surprising was that ABC was so 19th century about all this. The speed of light barrier? C♦mon. Fortunately, the

inclusion of physicist Michio Kaku threw some cold water on this idea.

Essentially, the program came down to he said vs. she said. Wheels spinning while the vehicle moved nowhere.

What was notably absent were the political connections. No mention of Area 51 or S-4. No mention of black world technology. No mention of the many rumors of alien technology and bodies. No inclusion of Apollo 14 astronaut, Dr. Edgar Mitchell. For some time now, Dr. Mitchell has been saying publicly that elite sources have told him about alien bodies and technology being studied at deep levels. When a moon-walking astronaut makes such a statement, that is news worthy.

Ultimately, by focusing on this topic as purely a matter of science, and not of public policy or politics, the ABC special defanged a topic that is potentially explosive. For secrecy about UFOs is potentially the most destabilizing secret of all.

There were other subtle things going on with this special. The depictions of Peter Davenport and Art Bell were especially interesting. Both men were shot with lighting that accentuated their aloneness and provided an aura of eccentricity about both of them ♦ out there in the middle of nowhere, so to speak.

And what was going on with those commercials? Infomercials that sold products for losers ♦ LoserWare? ♦ such as people who can ♦t flip an egg, or need help organizing their teacups. These are the types of infomercials you expect to see on late night cable stations, but ... Prime Time ABC? The message is clear: people who watch UFO specials are morons.

Spin, spin, and more spin.

I do confess to wonder, however, why now? ABC could have left this issue alone. By broaching it at all, even in this tightly controlled manner, there is the possibility that more people will become interested to know more. There were segments, after all, that would attract the attention of an intelligent skeptic. The military encounters, the police encounters.

The door may have opened just a crack, and it ♦s always possible that events will take an unexpected turn. The Special did not debunk UFOs, after all. At the end of it, as I see it, anyway, the phenomenon was still standing.

I ♦m not sure how this will play out. My feeling is that it won ♦t go any further, but I could be wrong. It is just possible

that masses (that ♦s us) may surprise the mighty. As a wise person said, "all revolutions are impossible ♦ until they happen. Then they ♦re inevitable."