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Debunking Roswell debunkers by Stanton Friedman

Shortly after finishing my MUFON 2003 paper "Critiquing the Roswell Critics" for the Conference Proceedings, I was alerted to two more widely distributed Roswell debunking articles in major publications. Each had the word ROSWELL on the covers in large print, the better to sell the magazines. Often I am told that the Roswell International UFO Museum and Research Center and people like me are only in the Roswell business to make money. We don't count research costs, of course, or the fact that admission to the museum is free. But it is OK for magazines to hype Roswell to sell magazines. The 1997 issue of Time Magazine with a goofy looking female on the cover (like no alien anybody had ever reported) and ROSWELL in big type, was their largest selling issue that year until Princess Di died. They were not giving away copies.

Popular Mechanics (June 2003) writer Jim Wilson has done other UFO stories, so I would have expected better from him in his article "Roswell Declassified." He makes much of eleven boxes of material (also noted in a very misleading History Channel TV Program) which supposedly are all the official files about Roswell, and which had been declassified for the USAF.

This is nonsense. These are the boxes of miscellaneous stuff collected by the USAF for its first volume of the Big Roswell (debunking) Report "Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert." The Air Force supplied the fiction, as I have noted in detail elsewhere (such as "The Roswell Incident, USAF and N.Y. Times," 1994 ,27P., \$4. UFORI, POB 958, Houlton, ME 04730-0958).

Nothing was declassified for the USAF about Roswell! The volume was a strong effort to pre-empt the GAO Roswell report which came out later. The MOGUL balloon explanation was here propounded while ignoring the evidence clearly indicating that was a phoney story. The materials don't match, the dates don't match. Almost all of the relevant testimony about the debris field is ignored.

But Wilson bought it hook, line and sinker, even making a big deal about the pristine radar reflector and using a picture of it as included in the article and presented at the Archives. Many people would wrongly think this was what was seen in Gen. Ramey's office!!

The second Air Force Volume, "Case Closed," came up with the crash test dummies explanation for the bodies reported in connection with Roswell, even though none were dropped near either the Plains of San Agustin or Foster Ranch crash sites and none were dropped prior to 1953 or at least 6 years after Roswell.

Wilson seems to be impressed by the 11 boxes, even though they have stamped on them "Roswell Reports Source Files." His primary focus, besides these supposedly

relevant files and the pristine radar reflector (somehow not having the toy-company tape with flower symbols that the USAF say explains the I-beams described by Dr. Jesse Marcel Jr. with strange symbols-not flowers) is on two other details:

A. He says the Base Morning Reports for the 1947 July 4th weekend say nothing about the crash retrieval. So what? Maj. Jesse Marcel and CIC officer Sheridan W. Cavitt didn't return to the base until late on Monday, July 7. There is no indication the morning reports were highly classified or even would have contained highly classified information. They seem to deal with changes in personnel assignments.

B. Wilson claims that Frank Kaufmann, whose nefarious activities I discussed in a recent column, "had been tied to the story from the very beginning." The fact is that his name shows up nowhere until 1991! My first discussion with Jesse Marcel was in 1978, the first book, "The Roswell Incident," was published in 1980.

Bill Moore and I did six MUFON papers about Roswell by 1986. I instigated the heavily watched Unsolved Mysteries Roswell Program in 1989. It brought forth a number of new witnesses. But still no Kaubmann. Kaufmann added nothing but confusion and disinformation to the story. Karl T. Pflock had debunked him over a decade ago, and there are negative mentions of him in several places, including in the 2nd edition of Don Berliner's and my Crash at Corona in 1997.

In other words, the fact that Kaufmann's testimony has been shown to be spurious tells us nothing whatsoever about the legitimacy of the Roswell story. Wilson makes it sound as though this puts the nail in the Roswell coffin!

"A Roswell Requiem" in SKEPTIC (Vol. 10, No. 1, 2003) magazine is much worse

than Wilson's article, starting with a cover that is a splendid example of the practice of debunkery (Dr. David Jacobs' turn of phrase).

There is a quite large disc-shaped shiny craft tilted at an angle and stuck in the ground with a flock of sheep in front and a bunch of military vehicles in the background. There is a sub-title, "How a modest military adventure in 1947 was turned into a great whopper of a UFO tale in 1978." A far more accurate sub-title would have been "How a Major UFO event of 1947 was turned into a whopper of a tale in 2003."

The tale teller is B.D. "Duke" Gildenberg, a military meteorologist heavily involved in balloon research projects for 30 years. He seems to have done almost no real homework with regard to Roswell, and picked up on every false claim. I especially resent his referring to my documentary movie "UFOs ARE Real" as a tabloid! It includes 4 PhDs, 2 Lt. Colonels, a nuclear physicist, an astronaut, etc.

He totally ignores the original testimony from Maj. Marcel; his son; the rancher's son and neighbors; Walter Haut, the base PIO who issued the press release; retired Gen. T.J. DuBose (Chief of Staff for Gen. Roger Ramey, head of the 8th Air Force in Fort Worth, TX, and Col. Blanchard's boss); the sheriff's family; and many others.

He seems not to understand that the debris field covered a huge area and consisted of small pieces, not a huge intact saucer. The latter would have been appropriate for the Plains of San Augustin Crash retrieval event, but there were no sheep out there, and that crash isn't even mentioned in the article.

Duke seems very angry that his claim and that of Dr. C. B. Moore that it was just a Mogul balloon, given when Don Berliner and I met the two of them in NM,

wasn't blindly accepted, even though it was clear they knew nothing about the crash, other than what was printed in the Roswell Daily Record July 9, totally ignoring the stories in newspapers from Chicago west of the previous day.

He mentions the first book, The Roswell Incident, but gives a publication date of 1988 rather than 1980, so he can tabloidize the story by having the story in the National Enquirer long before that. He talks about a balloon launched on July 7, 1947, that just might have been responsible for the story, even though Marcel and Cavitt went out to the Brazel ranch on July 6.

He fails to mention that The Roswell Incident shows a drawing of that very balloon package, and includes a comment by Dr. Moore that he knew of no balloon being investigated at that time that could cover such a large area.

Duke buys into CIC Officer Sheridan Cavitt's totally false and very belated claim that he never met rancher Brazel, and that the balloon only covered an area 20' square and would easily fit in one vehicle.

Even the cover-up story in the July 9 Roswell Daily Record says the wreckage covered an area 200 yards in diameter. If there had only been that small item, Brazel would have brought it into town with him and there would certainly have been no need for Marcel and Cavitt to have followed the rancher out in a long and tedious drive, some of it cross country, and to spend overnight. They could not have found the ranch without following Brazel out, so Cavitt had to have met Brazel.

Neither Duke nor Wilson deals with the peculiar properties of the real wreckage, such as memory foil that could be bent on itself many times, could not be torn, and would unfold on its own. The I-beams, which were as light as balsa wood and could not be cut, broken or burned, certainly aren't what the radar reflector

frames were made out of. Neither mentions that Marcel stressed that there was nothing conventional to be found, and that the debris field covered an area many hundreds of yards long and a few hundred feet wide.

Neither notes that the original articles across the country on July 8 all said the wreckage was found last week rather than the Air Force's new story for Brazel on July 9 claiming June 14 was the date.

Duke includes all kinds of misinformation and totally irrelevant information about unrelated events that happened much later. He shows the crash test dummies without mentioning that, according to Col. Madsen, who ran the program, they were 6' tall and weighed 175 pounds. He doesn't explain the morphing down to little guys. Lapses of the mind and memory supposedly accounted for people confusing the date of 1947 with 1953 and later!!

There is a great deal of misrepresentation. I can't really explain Duke's purpose in presenting so much nonsense. He didn't talk to anybody directly connected to the event. He didn't read the relevant literature; he couldn't get most of his facts straight. He probably is receiving a government pension, as was Cavitt and several of the others who have spoken out negatively about Roswell (don't forget that supposedly only pro-UFO people have a financial stake in Roswell).

Having met Dr. Michael Shermer, publisher and editor-in-chief of SKEPTIC, and heard some of the silly things he has said on TV about UFOs, I am certainly not surprised at his publishing this piece of fantasy. Michael, after all, is the one who said (on the History Channel, no less) that he will believe in UFOs when someone gives him an alien body to examine!!

I suspect he accepts the fact that there are lots of nuclear weapons around, even if nobody can provide him one. If he doesn't think the government would lie

about very highly classified events in New Mexico in July, 1947, (remember none of the Mogul Balloon technology was classified, only its purpose), I suggest he read the newspapers after the first nuclear explosion at Trinity site on White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico on July 16, 1945.

A news story was required because many people saw it even from 100 miles away, and there were many calls to authorities, even though it was quite early in the morning. The press story said that a large ammunition dump had blown up, but fortunately nobody was injured. This was indeed a whopper; just as was the tale that a radar reflector weather balloon combination was found on the Brazel ranch, perhaps accompanied by large crash test dummies not dropped until years later in other locations according to the USAF's map of the drop sites.

A good example of Duke's anti-Roswell zeal is this statement: "After 55 years of commercial exploitation, the mythology has reached frenzied heights." Later, on the same page, he states, "...for more than 30 years no one anywhere cared about the incident at Roswell." Nobody cared, but there was commercial exploitation during those 30 years??? As Shakespeare said: "Methinks he doth protest too much." He isn't skeptically doing research, he is preaching propaganda.