

UFOS; Sightings in Salmon-Challis area

SALMON — The truth is out there, according to two longtime Salmon residents who say that unexplained lights have periodically flashed across the sky over the vast and remote Salmon-Challis National Forest.

UFO lore has hovered on Salmon's horizon for decades, with the majority of sightings occurring in the unpopulated backcountry.

Chester Rackham, 79, who manned half a dozen fire lookouts in the Salmon-Challis for more than three decades, recalls seeing what he described as "fuzzy blue lights." He never received a plausible explanation.

During the 10 years beginning in 1975 that he stood watch at Long Tom Lookout, some 35 miles northwest of Salmon, Rackham sometimes spotted the lights flying from the night sky into the forest.

"I didn't know what they were," said Rackham.

"I saw things from different lookouts over the years but I never paid much attention. Up at Long Tom, I could see these bluish lights, but they weren't very clear."

The vast majority of UFO sightings—tens of thousands around the world over the past 40 years—can be accounted for by natural phenomena, such as meteor showers, according to the Center for UFO Studies in Chicago.

Ted Roe, head of the nonprofit National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena in Vallejo, Calif., said only 1 percent of the thousands of UFO sightings each year are of real interest, because they provide traces rather than merely anecdotal evidence.

But that statistic doesn't put a damper on the faithful.

Eva Miles, who lived adjacent to the forest about 12 miles south of Salmon from the early '70s to the early '90s, said she routinely saw bright lights traveling at warp speed across the sky.

"I was alone by the river out there and it wasn't heavily populated at that time," said Miles, 89. "I can't exactly say it was a UFO, but I saw bright lights that moved and traveled about the sky."

"I had a beautiful view of the sky from my deck, and no big trees to block my view. On a clear night, I would sit out on the deck and would sometimes see them. They would usually cross from one side of the sky to the other in a complete track. They moved rather rapidly, from one side of the horizon to the other."

Miles, who has since moved into town, said she considered the bright, white lights evidence of "the wonderful, mysterious things that happen on this Earth."

Both white and blue lights feature prominently in tales collected by UFO-ologists, according to literature from the Center for UFO Studies.

The same literature uses the term "nocturnal lights" to describe "small spots of light that move in strange patterns across the night sky," adding that these are the most commonly reported type of UFO.

Roe of The National Aviation Reporting Center said blue lights have been featured in sightings since at least 1944, when a blue ball of fire reportedly chased aircraft over Munich.

But for every believer, there is a skeptic. Veteran backcountry guide Bill Guth, with Flying Resort Ranches in Salmon, said he has spent countless nights in the

forest without encountering anything odd.

"I haven't heard or seen anything in the backcountry that I couldn't explain," he said.

The U.S. Forest Service's Kenny Rodgers, who can claim decades of experience in the mountainous terrain surrounding Salmon, said people tend to believe that unfamiliar sights and sounds in the wilderness are otherworldly when, in fact, they are likely from down-to-Earth sources.

In remote areas, small noises become objects of curiosity or even fear among the uninitiated, said Rodgers, adding, "It might be a mouse or a grouse; it could be a bear."

"You might see something in the sky and not know what it is, so you call it a UFO."

Still, a rational explanation cannot explain the timeless reportings of mysterious cosmic phenomena.

Robert McCarl, professor of anthropology at Boise State University, said two themes in mythology surface in the tales of UFOs in the Salmon-Challis.

"What you find is that the forest, particularly a forest contiguous to travel routes, which is true for the Salmon forest, is an area of anxiety and concern," he said.

"You have people being lost there and animals that may attack you. Thus the forest becomes a locus for mysterious and unsettling events."

In contemporary times, people were reporting UFOs long before ET was trying to phone home and Fox Mulder wanted to believe.

Roe, for one, believes that science eventually will solve the debate about UFOs.

In the meantime, he said, people who buy into the phenomenon will continue to be subject to ridicule, and their stories will continue to be seen as weird.

That doesn't faze Rackham, the retired Salmon-Challis lookout.

"I've heard different stories off and on," he said.

"I never got a very good idea of what it was I was seeing. I'd just look and then go about my business."

GASTON GAZETTE, Gastonia, NC - Nov. 30, 2003 CR: G. Fawcett

Explore UFOs as author talks at library Dec. 7



CAROL REINHARDT
At the Library

Anationally-recognized UFO investigator, researcher and author will talk about his experiences with unidentified flying objects at 3 p.m. Dec. 7 at the Gaston County Public Library, 1555 E. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia.

"UFO Personal Encounters," a free public author event for adults and older students, features UFO expert George Fawcett in a discussion of his 60 years of experiences in investigating sightings and reports of unidentified flying objects throughout the southeastern United States and around the world.

The Dec. 7 event is presented by the Gaston County Public Library in partnership with the Friends of the Gaston County Public Library as part of its organizations' efforts to bring special events focusing on topics of popular interest to local audiences.

A North Carolina native and graduate of Lynch College, Fawcett has been fascinated by UFO phenomenon since he was a teenager following the 1947 Roswell, New Mexico in-

cident. Then, in 1951, as a college junior, Fawcett sighted an object "shaped sort of like a tire or half a ball, blazing orange against a dark blue sky, about 30 feet in diameter... The thing zigzagged, then settled down in a straight course and moved off toward the west."

Unfortunately for his credibility, Fawcett was alone at the time, with no witnesses to the sighting.

Fawcett, a big man on campus — three-letter sportsman, head of the intramural program, a member of numerous campus organizations, and a fixture on the school newspaper — tried to convince his fellow students that he had actually seen a UFO, which resulted in the expected ribbing.

The sighting, however, moved his life in an unexpected direction.

Since that time, Fawcett has

read more than 1,000 books on the subject — many of which ended up in his own private collection — spoken before more than 600 groups, written more than 100 research articles for popular and professional publications, and investigated nearly 2,000 UFO sightings, most of them in the Carolinas, with a few in Virginia.

He has also served as a consultant to study groups and scientific boards of inquiry, as a film consultant for several productions on UFOs, and as a guest on dozens of radio and TV programs on extraterrestrial sightings across the country. He has also been instrumental in establishing UFO organizations and publications throughout the southeastern United States.

During his investigations of UFO phenomenon, Fawcett collected thousands of audio-visual slides, posters, drawings, magazines and journals, and other UFO-related materials in addition to a large library of UFO publications. Recently he donated most of his collection to the UFO Research Center and museum at Roswell, New

Mexico — a location at which he has addressed audiences on several occasions.

A former newspaper journalist, sports-center director, and textile industry employee, Fawcett has dedicated a large part of his life to researching UFOs.

Does Fawcett personally believe that UFOs exist?

He has been quoted in the "UFO Journal" as believing that "UFOs are real... UFOs are not natural phenomenon... UFOs are not conventional objects... UFOs are unconventional objects with a high degree of technology..."

After nearly 60 years of chasing UFOs, Fawcett is convinced they do exist.

Following Fawcett's presentation on his research and experiences, copies of the author's publications will be available for personal purchase and author autograph.

For more information about "UFO: Personal Encounters" with George Fawcett, call (704) 868-2164 during regular library hours.

Carol Reinhardt is program coordinator for The Gaston County Public Library.

MOUNTAIN MAIL, Socorro, NM - Oct. 30, 2003

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Aliens Among Us?

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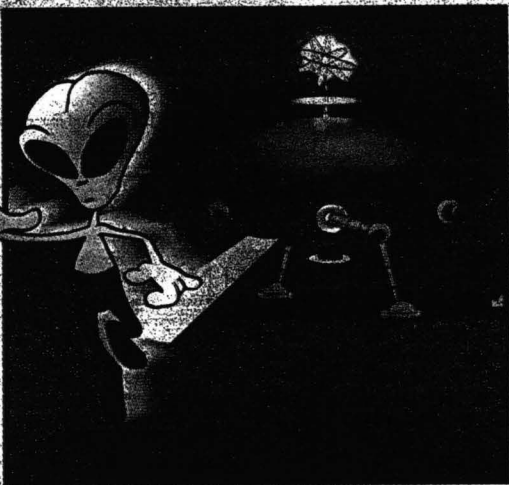
Just before dawn on July 16, 1945, scientists detonated the world's first atomic bomb at the Trinity Site, some 20 miles southeast of San Antonio, N.M. Three weeks later, on August 6 and 9, the United States brought World War II to a dramatic end by using the bomb to destroy the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On August 6, the world first learned that the Trinity event, which had frightened San Antonioans witless, was not "an ammunition magazine containing high explosives and pyrotechnics" as the military had reported. It was an atomic bomb, "death, the destroyer of worlds," in the words of project physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer.

It was in this crucible of suspicion and disinterest bred by familiarity that a small contingent of the U.S. Army passed almost unnoticed through San Antonio in mid-to-late August 1945 on a secret assignment.

Little or nothing has been printed about the mission, shrouded in the "hush-hush" atmosphere of the time. But the military detail apparently came from White Sands Proving Grounds to the east where the bomb was exploded. It was a recovery operation destined for the mesquite and greasewood desert west of Old U.S. 85, at what is now Milepost 139, the San Antonio exit of Interstate 25.

Over the course of several days, soldiers in Army fatigues



loaded the shattered remains of a flying apparatus onto a huge flatbed truck and hauled it away.

That such an operation took place between about Aug. 20 and Aug. 25, 1945, there is no doubt, insist two former San Antonioans, Remigio Baca and Jose Padilla, eyewitnesses to the event.

Padilla, then age 9, and Baca, then 7, secretly watched much of the soldiers' recovery work from a nearby ridge. Their keen interest stemmed from being the first to reach the crash site.

What they saw was a long, wide gash in the earth, with a manufactured object lying cockeyed and partially buried at the end of it, surrounded by a large field of debris. They believed, then, and believe today, that the object was occupied by distinctly non-human life forms which were

alive and moving about on their arrival minutes after the crash.

They reported their findings to Jose's father, Faustino Padilla, on whose ranch the craft had crashed. Shortly thereafter, Faustino received a military visitor asking for permission to remove it.

During their school years, Jose and Remigio, best friends, would sometimes whisper about the events of that August, which occurred before any of the other mysterious UFO incidents in New Mexico, but they didn't talk to others about it on the advice of their parents and a state policeman friend.

The significance of what they saw, however, grew in their eyes over time as tales of UFOs and flying saucers multiplied across the country, especially in a band

(continued on page 5)

across central New Mexico.

Among the most prominent was Socorro police officer Lonnie Zamora's April 24, 1964, on-duty report of a "manned" UFO just south of Socorro, less than 10 miles north of the heretofore unnoticed 1945 Padilla Ranch crash.

Jose and Remigio were long gone from the area by the time UFOs and flying saucers became news, and although both kept up with Socorro County events, they lost contact and never discussed the emerging phenomenon with each other.

Reme moved to Tacoma, Wash., while still in high school and Jose to Rowland Heights, Calif. Then, two years ago, after more than four decades apart, they met by chance on the Internet while tracking their ancestry. It was then their interest in the most intriguing event of their childhood was rekindled.

During one of the conversations, Remigio and Jose decided to tell their story to veteran news reporter Ben Moffett, a classmate at San Antonio Grade School who they knew shared their understanding of the culture and ambience of San Antonio in the 1940s and 50s, and who was familiar with the terrain, place names and people. This is their story as told to Moffett.

By Ben Moffett
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SAN ANTONIO — The pungent but pleasing aroma of greasewood was in the air as Jose Padilla, age 9, and friend, Remegio Baca, 7, set out on horseback one August morning in 1945 to find a cow that had wandered off to calf.

The scent of the greasewood, more often called creosote bush today, caught their attention as they moved away from this tiny settlement on their horses, Bolé and Dusty. The creosote scent is evident only during moist weather, and its presence on the wind meant rain somewhere nearby.

So as they worked the draws on the Padilla Ranch, they were mindful of flash flooding which might occur in Walnut Creek, or side arroyos, if there were a major thunderstorm upstream. Gully-washers are not uncommon in late summer in the northern stretches of the Chihuahuan Desert of central New Mexico, especially along the foothills of the Magdalena Mountains looming to the west.

Despite minor perils associated with being away from adults, it was a routine outing for Jose and Reme. It was not odd to see youngsters roam far afield doing chores during the war years.

"I could ride before I could walk," said Jose in a recent interview. "We were expected to do our share of the work. Hunting down a cow for my dad wasn't a bad job, even in the August heat."

At length, they moved into terrain that seemed too rough for the horses hooves, and Jose decided to tether them, minus bridles, allowing them to graze. He had spotted a mesquite thicket, a likely place for a wayward cow to give birth, and they set off across a field of jagged rocks and cholla cactus to take a look. As they mowed along, grumbling about the thorns, the building thunderheads decided to let go. They took refuge under a ledge above the floodplain, protected somewhat from the lightning strikes that suddenly peppered the area.

The storm quickly passed and as they again moved out, another brilliant light, accompanied by a crunching sound shook the ground around them. It was not at all like thunder. Another experiment at White Sands? No, it seemed too close.

"We thought it came from the next canyon, adjacent to Walnut Creek, and as we moved in that direction, we hear a cow in a clump of mesquites," Reme said. Sure enough, it was the Padilla cow, licking a white face calf.

A quick check revealed the calf to be healthy and nursing, and the boys decided to reward themselves with a small lunch Jose had sacked, a tortilla each, washed down

with a few swigs from a canteen, and an apple.

As they munched, Jose noticed smoke coming from a draw adjacent to Walnut Creek, a main tributary from the mountains to the Rio Grande.

Ignoring their task at hand, the two boys headed toward it, and what they saw as they topped a rise "stopped us dead in our tracks," Reme remembers. "There was a gouge in the earth as long as a football field, and a circular object at the end of it." It was "barely visible," he said, through a field of smoke. "It was the color of the old pot my mother was always trying to shine up, a dull metallic color."

They moved closer and found the heat from the wreckage and burning greasewood to be intense. "You could feel it through the soles of your shoes," Reme said. "It was still humid from the rain, stifling, and it was hard to get close."

They retreated briefly to talk things over, cool off, sip from the canteen and collect their nerve, worried there might be casualties in the wreckage.

Then they headed back toward the site. That's when things really got eerie. Waiting for the heat to diminish, they began examining the remnants at the periphery of a huge litter field. Reme picked up a piece of thin, shiny material that he says reminded him of "the tin foil in the old olive green Phillip Morris cigarette packs."

"It was folded up and lodged underneath a rock, apparently pinned there during the collision," said Reme. "When I freed it, it unfolded all by itself. I refolded it, and it spread itself out again." Reme put it in his pocket.

Finally they were able to work their way to within yards of the wreckage, fearing the worst and not quite ready for it.

"I had my hand over my face, peeking through my fingers," Reme recalled. "Jose, being older, seemed to be able to handle it better."

As they approached they saw ... thought they saw ... yes, definitely DID see ... movement in the main part of the craft.

"Strange looking creatures were moving around inside," said Reme. "They looked under stress. They moved fast, as if they were able to will themselves from one position to another in an instant. They were shadowy and expressionless, but definitely living beings."

Reme wanted no part of whoever, whatever was inside.

"Jose wasn't afraid of much, but I told him we should get out of there. I remember we felt concern for the creatures. They seemed like us — children, not dangerous. But we were scared and exhausted. Besides it was getting late."

The boys backtracked, ignoring the cow and calf. It was a little after dusk when they climbed on their horses, and dark when they reached the Padilla home.

Faustino Padilla asked about the cow, and got a quick report.

"And we found something else," Jose said, and the story poured out, quickly and almost incoherently. "It's kind of hard to explain, but it was long and round, and there was a big gouge in the dirt and there were these hombrecitos (little guys)."

Their tale unfolded as Jose's father listened patiently.

"They were running back and forth, looking desperate. They were like children. They didn't have hair," Jose said.

"We'll check it out in a day or two," Faustino said, unalarmed and apparently not worried in the least about survivors or medical emergencies. "It must be something the military lost and we shouldn't disturb it. Leave your horse here, Reme, and Jose and I will drive you home, since it's so late."

Two days later at about noon, state policeman Eddie Apodaca, a family friend who had been summoned by Faustino, arrived at the Padilla home. Jose and Reme directed Apodaca and Jose's dad toward the crash site in two vehicles, a pick-up and a state police car. When they could drive no further, they parked and hiked to the hillside where the boys had initially spotted the wreckage.

As they topped the ridge, they noted the cow and calf had moved on, probably headed for home pasture, then they walked the short distance to the overlook. For a second time, Jose and Reme are dumbfounded.

The wreckage was nowhere to be seen. "What could have happened to it?" Reme asked.

"Somebody must have taken it," Jose responded defensively.

Apodaca and Faustino stared intently but unaccusingly at Jose and Reme, trying to understand. They headed down the canyon nonetheless, and suddenly, "as if by magic," in Reme's words, the object reappeared.

"From the top of the hill, it blended into the surroundings," Reme explained recently. "The sun was at a different angle, and the object had dirt and debris over it," which he speculated may have been put there by someone after the crash.

Apodaca and Faustino led the way to the craft, then climbed inside while Jose and Reme were ordered to stay a short distance away. "I can't see the hombrecitos," Reme offered.

"No," replied Jose. "But look at these marks on the ground, like when you drag a rake over it."

"The huge field of litter had been cleaned up," Reme recalled. "Who did it, and when, I have no idea. Was it the military? Using a helicopter? Or the occupants?"

The main body of the craft, however, remained in place with odd pieces dangling everywhere.

Now it was time for the adults to lecture Reme and Jose, Reme remembered.

"Listen carefully. Don't tell anyone about this," Reme quoted Faustino as saying. "Reme, your dad just started working for the government. He doesn't need to know anything about it. It might cause him trouble."

Faustino also worked for the government at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and the ranch itself was on leased federal land. Faustino was a patriotic man and honest to a fault in his dealing with the federal government, according to Jose.

"The government calls them weather balloons," the state policeman chipped in. "I'm here to help Faustino work out the recovery with the government. They'll want this thing back."

"But this isn't like the weather balloons we've seen before," said Reme. "They were little, almost like a kite."

"You're right, Reme. Este es un monstruo, que no Eddie?" Faustino said.

"Yeah, it's big for sure," the state policeman acknowledged.

"And the hombrecitos?" Reme persisted.

"Maybe you just thought you saw them," said Faustino. "Or maybe somebody took them, or they just took off."

Then they headed home. The cow and calf also grazed their way back in a day or two.

Next week: The story continues with the military's removal of the wreckage, while Jose and Reme, equipped with binoculars, spy on their every move, including the soldiers slipping off to the Owl Bar for a little diversion.

Jose and Reme also look back at the incident from the perspective of time. Was the object that required a flatbed truck and an "L" extension a weather balloon, or an alien craft from space or from another dimension?

The two men, now in their mid-to late-60s still have a piece of the craft and know where other parts were buried by the military.

Reme also speculates about how the 1945 incident fits in with the many sightings that were later reported in a ban across central New Mexico and elsewhere, giving rise to a UFO and "flying saucer" phenomenon that is still debated today.

Where Are They Now?

Remigio 'Reme' Baca

Remigio Baca of Gig Harbor, Wash., was born in San Antonio in October 1938 to Evarista Serna and Alejandro Baca.

He attended San Antonio Grade School and Socorro High until he transferred to Stadium High in Tacoma, Wash., in his freshman year.

Reme served in the U.S. Marines for six years during the Vietnam War, worked as a tax compliance officer for the Washington

Department of Revenue, and was involved in Washington politics. A meeting with Vernon Jordan, national chairman of the Urban League, encouraged him to get into politics, which he did with enthusiasm.

Reme was instrumental in the election of the famous scientist and Nixon administration politician Dxy Ray Lee to the governorship of Washington as a Democrat, and served on Ray's executive staff.

In that role, he helped get qualified Latinos in administrative positions in government. When Ray was defeated, Reme became an insurance agent in Tacoma, moved to California for awhile as an independent insurance broker in Oxnard, Santa Paula and Santa Barbara, and retired in Gig Harbor, a suburb of Tacoma.

He has been married for years to Virginia Tonan, a classical pianist and teacher.

He has been back to San Antonio many times, and has relatives in Socorro County.



Reme Baca as a youth in San Antonio



Reme Baca today

Jose Padilla

Jose Padilla was born in San Antonio in November 1936 to Faustino and Maria Padilla, attended first San Antonio Grade School and then San Antonio Grade School when

San Antonio's school burned down. He also attended the Luis Lopez Grade School for a time. He made first communion with Reme Baca at the San Antonio Church.

While at Socorro High he left to join the National Guard at age 13, when very young children were allowed to sign up because of the World War II death toll in the New Mexico Guard. After leaving San Antonio, Jose continued guard duty in Van Nuys, Calif., Air National Guard, and when the unit was activated, spent time in Korea.

He married his wife, Olga, and served with the California Highway Patrol for 32 years as a safety inspector. The Padillas have three boys, including a son, Sam, who lives in Contreras, near La Joya, and he has numerous relatives in Socorro and vicinity.



Jose Padilla

Witnesses Still Wonder About Crash Operation

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The second of a two-part series on a flying object that crashed just west of San Antonio, N.M., in August, 1945.

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In mid August 1945, before the term "flying saucer" was coined, Remigio Baca, age 7, and Jose Padilla, 9, were first on the scene of the crash of a strange object on the Padilla Ranch west of San Antonio.

Both Remigio, or "Reme" as his friends called him, and Jose, believe they saw "shadowy, child-like creatures" in the demolished, oblong, circular craft when they arrived at the scene, well before anyone else.

The U.S. Army told the public nothing about it, and told the Padilla family it was a "weather balloon," according to Reme and Jose, now in their mid-60s. And the two men insist the Army went to great lengths to keep the operation under wraps, even concocting a cover story to mask their mission on the ranch.

The recovery operation actually started two days after Reme, Jose, Jose's father, Faustino, and state police Eddie Apodaca, a family friend, visited the site on August 18. It was then that a Latino sergeant named Avila arrived at the Padilla home in San Antonio, a tiny southern extension of San Antonio.

After some small talk, Sgt. Avila got down to business. According to Reme's and Jose's recollection, and what they learned subsequently from Faustino, the conversation went something like this:

"As you may know, there's a weather balloon down on your property," Avila said. "We need to install a metal gate and grade a road to the site to recover it. We'll have to tear down a part of the fence adjoining the cattle guard."

"Why can't you just go through the gate like everybody else?" asked Faustino.

"Well, the problem is that your cattle guard is about 10 feet wide, and our tractor trailer can't begin to get through there," said the sergeant. "We'll compensate you, of course."

The sergeant also asked for a key to the gate until the military

San Antonio Natives Used Strange Metal On Ranch

could install its own. He also wanted help with security.

"Can you make sure nobody goes to the site unless they are authorized and don't tell anyone why we're here."

"What should I tell them?" Faustino asked.

"You can tell them the equipment is here because the government needs to work a manganese mine west of here," the sergeant said.

"That was to justify the presence of road-building equipment," said Reme in a recent interview. "It wasn't until decades later, on the Internet, that I learned the Army told a lot of fibs along about that time. I found another manganese mine story was used to cover a UFO incident on the west side of the Magdalenas near Datil in 1947, about the time of the Roswell UFO incident."

"I know for sure that the cover story was at least the second piece of misinformation they gave out in a month," noted Reme, a former Marine, chuckling and referencing the acknowledged false press release used to cover the Trinity atom bomb explosion as the first.

It wasn't long after the sergeant's departure that the Army was on the scene with road building equipment. Long before the road was graded, however, soldiers were at the site, carrying scraps of the mangled airship to smaller vehicles that were able to immediately get close to the scene.

Although they were warned by their father to stay away from the area, Jose, sometimes with Reme, and sharing a pair of binoculars, watched from hiding as the military graded a road and soldiers prepared for the flatbed's arrival. Jose actually made off with a piece, which is still in his possession.

"The work detail wasn't too efficient," said Reme, who noted from his experience in the Marines that military parts had numbers and were carefully catalogued.

"The soldiers threw some of the pieces down a crevice, so they wouldn't have to carry them," he said. "Then they would kick dirt and rocks and brush over them to cover them up."

According to Jose, four soldiers were stationed at the wreckage at all times, with shift changes every 12 hours.

"One stayed at a tent as a guard and listened to the radio. I could hear the music. They'd work

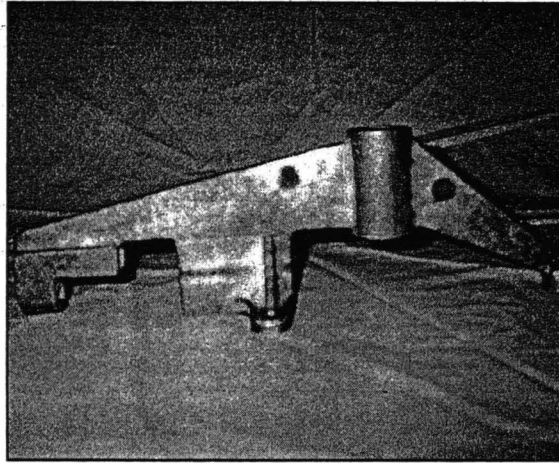
for an hour and then lock the gate, climb in their pick-ups and go to the Owl Café, where they'd look for girls. I know because one of my (female) cousins who was there told me."

Once the flatbed was in place, the soldiers used wrenches to hoist the intact portion of the wreckage in place.

"They had to build an L-shaped frame and tilt it to get it to fit into the tractor-trailer, because it

They were nothing but silky material, aluminum and wood, nothing like what we found in that arroyo in 1945."

"Those weather balloons were not much more than big box kites," Reme said. "They sure couldn't gouge a hole in the ground. Remember, in 1945, despite the bomb, we weren't all that sophisticated. The Trinity Site bomb, Fat Man, was transported on a railroad car to the site. Radar was



Courtesy Photo

This piece of metal -- which has not yet been tested in a laboratory -- was kept from the 1945 crash of an unidentified object near San Antonio.

bulged out over one side," Jose said. "They finally cut a hole in the fence at the gate that was 26 feet long to get it out."

Off it went, shrouded under tarps, through San Antonio and presumably to Stallion Site on what is today White Sands Missile Range, where, according to Reme, it still may be today.

Was this clandestine operation undertaken to recover a weather balloon? Or, as Jose and Reme contend, was it something far more mysterious?

"I think the term 'weather balloon' was a euphemism, a catch-all for anything and everything that the government couldn't explain," Reme said.

Reme and Jose knew about legitimate weather balloons.

"My father and I found about seven of them before and after the 1945 crash," Jose remembers. "We always gathered them up and gave them back to the military.

primitive or non-existent in some places. Maybe the military knew what they had, maybe they didn't, maybe they couldn't say."

Reme and Jose are convinced, and they say Faustino soon joined them in their belief, that the object on the ranch was no mere weather balloon, but an object of mystery. Faustino, however, had no interest in challenging the status quo, nor did state policeman Apodaca, whatever his beliefs were.

And why would a mere sergeant be sent to negotiate with Faustino Padilla on a mission that involved something more than a routine weather balloon flight. "He wore sergeant stripes," Reme said. "That doesn't necessarily mean he was a sergeant. And he was Latino. He could communicate with the locals."

Finally, why would the military allow such cavalier treatment of the wreckage, if it were a foreign or alien craft with scientific value?

"I don't know if they knew what they had," Reme said. "It was a

fairly crude craft with no parts numbers on it, and the piece we have, we were told is not remarkably machined even for 1945. But there's nothing that says aliens have to travel in remarkable spaceships.

"Given what we know about distances in the universe, space travel seems far-fetched, I'll grant you. Perhaps they got here by some method we can't fathom and they manufactured a crude object here to get around in this atmosphere. We hear about other dimensions, and parallel universes.

"I don't know much about those things. But I do know what I saw, which was some unlikely looking 'hombrecitos' at the crash site. I know that later other people in the area reported similar things. And I know the government was interested in keeping it quiet."

Reme has studied the UFO phenomenon in his spare time over the years, especially as it pertained to New Mexico.

"The military opened the door at Roswell, and then they closed it," he said, referring to a July 1947 report by the Roswell Air Force Base information office about the crash and recovery of a "flying disc" that they reported had been bouncing around the sky. Then the base retreated by reporting it was merely a "radar tracking balloon" that had been recovered.

Details of the Roswell event can be found in a 19-page Freedom of Information Act request by the late New Mexico Congressman Steve Schiff and released by the General Accounting Office July 28, 1995. It can be found on the Internet at www.conspire.com/ds/gao2.html.

The Roswell crash, which along with the sighting of a UFO south of Socorro by city policeman Lonnie Zamora in 1964 are the two most famous of a string of UFO reports over central New Mexico.

From 1946 through 1949, 25 UFO sightings that "may have contained extra-terrestrial life" were reported worldwide by the Center for the Study of Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, and seven of those were in New Mexico, including one near Magdalena (1946), Socorro (1947), Roswell (actually near Corona - July 4, 1947), Plains of San Agustin (Catron County - July 5, 1947), Aztec (1948), White Sands (1949) and Roswell again (1949). Another was in the pattern, too, on the

"tin foil in a cigarette pack," is gone. "I used it to stop a leak in a brass pipe under a windmill at our house in San Antonio in the early 50s," he said. "I used it to fill the stripped threads on two pieces of pipe."

Reme said he regrets using it now, but it was handy.

"I kept in for years in an old Prince Albert (tobacco) can in the pump house, and it was the nearest thing available." Reme said the foil stopped the leak in the pipe for years. The windmill is now gone and the property is no longer owned by the family. Finally, Jose and Reme were asked why they decided to tell the tale today, after nearly 60 years.

"It's something you can never get out of your head," said Reme. "When we saw it, we had never heard the term UFO, and 'flying saucers' didn't become a part of the language until June of 1947 when a pilot named Kenneth Arnold reported nine objects in a formation in the area of Mount Rainier.

"We didn't invent this phenomenon," said Reme. "We experienced it. Others have apparently had similar experiences. I believe Jose and I have an obligation to add our story to the mix."

Hopi Reservation of Arizona in 1947.

"There was a pattern of sightings and incidents in a band across New Mexico. Socorro and San Antonio are right at the center," notes Reme. "Our 1945 sighting just adds to that base of information. It's intriguing to say the least. If you were an eyewitness it becomes even more intriguing."

Reme and Jose are excited enough to tell their story after more than 55 years, even knowing the problems that plagued Lonnie Zamora after his spotting a UFO near Socorro. The two men would like to see an excavation of the crevice where a few odds and ends from their "alien craft" were tossed. The crevice was recently covered up by a bulldozer doing flood control work, he said.

And they'd like to have the part they have from the wreckage examined more closely. They are not eager to surrender it to anyone, however.

"I've heard from others that if you give it up to the government, you stand a good chance of not getting it back," he said.

A second piece, which Reme likened to the