

completely new, unpublished essay (the only one in the book), "No Aliens, No Abductions; Just Regressive Hypnosis, Waking Dreams, and Anthropomorphism," by Robert Baker, CSICOP Fellow and professor emeritus of psychology.² This details the way in which sleep paralysis and waking dreams often lead to strange experiences which can be interpreted as otherworldly visitations. When the initial experience is combined with misuse of hypnosis to "recover" the memories, the actual events of the situation can be completely distorted, being replaced instead by confabulations of quite a dramatic nature. Baker states that at least four contemporary legends directly relate to the misuse of regressive hypnosis—UFO abductions, false memories of childhood abuse, the myth of Satanic ritual abuse, and the myth of widespread multiple-personality disorder.

Other essays describe the argument that many "UFO abductees" exhibit signs consistent with a fantasy-prone personality. Here I was a little bit less comfortable. Although it is clear that some of us humans have less of a grasp on reality than others, I also believe some skeptics may be overly quick to thrust this label upon anyone who might claim an experience that cannot be easily explained. This could easily become a pretext to dismiss things that should be looked into more deeply, including other psychological or sensory anomalies. Personally, I believe skeptics should be quite cautious about labeling their opponents as suffering from personality disorders, for several ethical, public relations, legal, and methodological reasons; besides if we don't, we might dismiss something interesting out of hand while simultaneously alienating the general public. (If we are quick to label believers as "fantasy prone," they, inevitably, will begin labeling us, with some justification, as suffering from an "obsessive compulsive need to overcompensate for our repressed fantasy-prone tendencies.")

Of course, I expect my reactions are

typical of many readers of this volume. Most will love some essays, while simultaneously wishing they had the chance to post a letter to the editor about others. (But that's what critical thinking is all about.) Sadly most of the original illustrations are not reproduced.

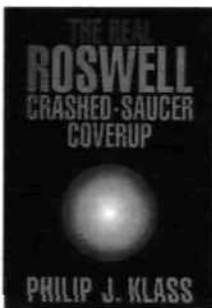
Nevertheless, these are minor criticisms. All in all, this work is a fine, one-volume collection of some of the best articles ever collected in the SKEPTICAL INQUIRER. It should make a welcome addition to many skeptics' personal libraries. Better yet, this book would be a valuable addition to almost any good school, college, or public library, and skeptics shouldn't hesitate to recommend that such institutions acquire it.

Notes

1. Some day, I wish that science educators would use scientific principles to explain "para-

normal mysteries." I have received much of my science education from my interest skeptical books and publications about the paranormal.

2. As much as I respect Robert Baker, let me state that I disagree with his statement that anthropomorphic aliens are quite unlikely, and therefore an obvious human creation. Essentially he states that since many people argue that alien life is probably unbelievably alien, aliens should not resemble us. For another viewpoint, see "Design for Life" and the related writings of CSICOP fellow, engineer, and science fiction author L. Sprague DeCamp. DeCamp has argued that since our form obviously works reasonably well and efficiently it might be repeated elsewhere, although not exactly, of course, by an intelligent tool-using species which evolved from a four-limbed predecessor. DeCamp states that convergent evolution is quite possible and proven to exist on Earth. For example, in the air, bats, birds, and pterodactyls all evolved into roughly similar forms without necessarily sharing a common ancestry. In the water, dolphins, ichthyosaurs, and fish all did the same thing. For the record, this does not mean that I believe in the existence of visiting "Greys," however. Why should I, when persons such as Baker have done such a fine job of explaining the phenomena involved without requiring the unprecedented presence of extraterrestrial visitors?



Demolishing the Roswell 'Alien' Myth

DAVID E. THOMAS

The Real Roswell Crashed Saucer Coverup. By Philip J. Klass. Prometheus Books, New York, 1997. ISBN 1-57392-164-5. 240 pp. Hardcover, \$24.95.

The question isn't "Did an alien spaceship crash at Roswell in 1947?" The question is, why do many prominent UFO authors persist in claiming the Roswell Incident is still UFOdom's best case? In case there were still doubts, Phil Klass's new book should help settle them. His case against the Roswell "alien" myth is devastating.

Klass's previous books include *UFOs: The Public Deceived* and *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game*, both published by Prometheus books. He has spent over thirty years investigating famous UFO incidents, hoping to find credible, scientific evidence of extraterrestrial visitors. He currently publishes the *Skeptics UFO Newsletter (SUN)*, and is a Fellow of CSICOP and chair of its UFO Subcommittee. Klass, in short,

is well qualified to separate the truths from the myths about the alleged Roswell crashed saucer. Through impartial research and meticulous documentation, Phil Klass has written the definitive book on the Roswell myth.

Klass starts off with contemporary accounts from 1947—cold, hard facts that are not subject to the whims of memory. He details the UFO "craze" that swept the country in the summer of 1947, the Army Air Force announcement of the capture of a "flying disk," and the explanation of the find as weather balloons and radar targets.

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Nowadays, UFO promoters maintain that the announcement of the "flying disk" came from high up the command—Col. Blanchard himself. (And, of course, top brass wouldn't have been fooled by a "balloon.") But original reports indicate that the "disk" claim came from *the intelligence office at the Roswell Army Air Force base*—namely, one man, Major Jesse A. Marcel.

After its correct identification as weather equipment, the Roswell event drew no attention for decades. Klass details how both leading UFO groups (NICAP and APRO) did not even mention Roswell in their lists of "most important UFO cases" submitted for the Condon Report in 1966.

Details of Marcel's earliest Roswell interviews, in February 1978, are provided by Klass. Marcel did not save any news clippings from this "historic" encounter; he couldn't even remember what year the incident took place.

Klass describes, and demolishes, the accounts of the long string of witnesses who waited decades before coming forward to claim their 15 minutes of fame: Grady Barnett, Glenn Dennis, Walter Haut, Gerald Anderson, Jim Ragsdale, Frank Kaufmann, Frankie Rowe, Col. Thomas Dubose, and more. Page 105 lists the wildly different estimates of the numbers of alien bodies (three living; three dead; four dead/one living; three dead; one living; and, one dead). The search for mortician Glenn Dennis's "missing nurse" (Naomi Marie Selff) is detailed, along with strong evidence that *she never existed*. Witness Anderson's diary copying and phone-record tampering severely damage his credibility.

Klass takes on all of the major pro-Roswell authors as well: Stanton Friedman, William Moore, Kevin Randle, Donald Schmitt, and others. He clearly documents how Friedman, Randle, and Schmitt all have changed the day rancher Brazel brought the debris into Roswell from Monday, July 7 (the actual day), to Sunday, July 6. They did so because that's the only way they could reconcile events with witness

Dubose's testimony that the famous photographs of the debris in General Ramey's office were taken at least two days after the debris was supposedly flown from Roswell to Fort Worth. (In actuality, the pictures were taken the *same afternoon as the flight*). Original reports, and Brazel's comments that he came to Roswell to sell wool, clearly show that he did not go into town on the last day of a (then) rare three-day weekend. Klass also describes how author Donald Schmitt was caught faking his credentials.

The book also turns to UFO researcher Robert Todd's discovery of the connection of the debris to New York University experiments performed in support of secret project Mogul, and the further evidence for this explanation developed by physicist/balloonist Charles B. Moore, UFO author Karl Pflock, and by the United States Air Force. The General Accounting Office report was portrayed by New Mexico Congressman Steve Schiff as leaving unanswered questions regarding some missing message traffic. But, Klass points out that the bottom-line conclusion of the GAO report was completely missed by most of the media: there is not one shred of evidence in the archives of the federal government that lends any credence to the supposed alien crash at Roswell (or any other locale). He also relates how once pro-Roswell pilot Kent Jeffrey came to agree that the Roswell Incident was due entirely to misidentification of weather equipment.

A major theme of the book is the continuing coverup of the truth about Roswell—not by the government, but by producers and authors of television shows, movies, and books. Klass tells how he has repeatedly tried to get TV producers to show formerly secret documents that prove the US did not have any physical evidence of alien visitors, even after Roswell. And Klass tells how, time and again, the truth has ended up on the cutting-room floor.

Klass concludes the book by discussing his work at *Aviation Week and*

Space Technology. *Aviation Week* has revealed so many sensitive aerospace secrets that many government employees disparagingly refer to it as "Aviation Leak." Yet, this fiercely independent magazine has never uncovered even a trace of a sinister coverup of alien visitation.

This book is a very valuable addition to the shelf of anyone with an interest in Roswell, or in the UFO movement in general. It does seem to hop around from topic to topic at times, and there is some unnecessary duplication. For example, a story from the Fort Worth *Morning-Star Telegram* appears on pages 17 and 18, but again (in its entirety) on pages 85 and 86. The same goes for the McCoy briefing (page 175, and repeated on page 208). But the biggest flaw of the book is the material that's missing, such as Klass' resounding debunking of the supposed "Majestic 12" forgeries. (Klass's MJ-12 exposés are nevertheless available in book form, reprinted in the 1997 *SI* anthology *The UFO Invasion*.)

When I give talks about Roswell, I always show how Klass found that President Truman's alleged signature on an MJ-12 letter was really just photocopied from a different, legitimate letter (see SKEPTICAL INQUIRER, Vol. 14, No.2, Winter 1990). As transparencies of both signatures are overlaid, the audience always gasps in surprise as the different signatures blend into a single trace. Incredibly, Stanton Friedman still maintains the validity of MJ-12. When I confronted him on a radio show last year, he said Klass's methods were shown false in his new book *Top Secret/Majic*. And what is Friedman's new attack on the signature analysis? "The signatures are clearly not identical." Simply outrageous!

Similarly, there was no mention of the supposed alien autopsy, or the *Penthouse* "photograph" of the alien's body. I'm hoping that someday, some of these gaps will be filled, and that we'll be treated to a second edition of this excellent book. But even with its minor omissions, this book destroys the "Roswell" mythos once and for all. □