

The Socorro UFO: Physical Evidence Points To A Prank (Part 3)

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A review of decades-old documents points to the involvement of pranksters in the famous 1964 Socorro, NM UFO sighting. Overlooked details about the sighting witnessed by police officer Lonnie Zamora suggest a prosaic explanation that involved student trickery. Recently discovered material clues hint at a hidden hoax. Physical evidence (reports of which have been previously missed or ignored) offer damning indications of deception. This evidence has remained unconsidered, until now:

- "Charred cardboard" and particulate was discovered by military officials in the very area of the landed craft.
- "Footprints from teenagers" were found at the site by government investigators immediately after Zamora's encounter.
- Burned brush that was seen at the site was caused by "pyrotechnic ignition" according to experts.
- The "whining frequencies" heard by Zamora may have come from novel, sound-producing pyrotechnics.

Previous articles on the Socorro sighting provided clues to a college caper:

- An archived document revealed that in the 1960s, renowned scientist and NM Tech President Dr. Stirling Colgate wrote to Nobel laureate Dr. Linus Pauling that the Socorro UFO was a prank. He told his friend Pauling (whom I had earlier discovered had conducted secret UFO studies) that the "student who engineered the hoax" had "already left the College."
- In 2009, Dr. Colgate (now at Los Alamos as Scientist Emeritus) emailed this author confirming that the event was a hoax; that in fact one of the involved students is his personal friend. He said of the hoaxer "he and the other students did not want their covers blown." He added that it was all "a no-brainer" and that he would see if the pranksters would now come forward.
- Two eminent NM Tech Professors support Colgate. They attest that they had heard from trusted sources at the College that the incident was a hoax that involved

students. One added that the students did not like Lonnie Zamora at all. Another explained that the school had a world-class explosives facility and that other labs may have provided advanced balloons, inflatable materials and "white coverall" lab suits that were strikingly similar to what Zamora had observed.

- Two former NM Tech students revealed the existence of a deeply secret "techno-geek" hoax society and culture operating at the school since its inception. Highly organized, its sole purpose involved pranking people. In the 1960s this fraternity of pranksters created hoaxes so advanced that they even fooled military. Many of these pranksters had no regard for safety or legality. Some of these staged events involved creating faked flying saucers.

These articles are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Prior investigation by this author has offered up credible testimony, authenticated documentation and strong circumstantial evidence of a planned prank. As this investigation of the Socorro sighting continues, additional evidence has emerged that supports a hoax scenario. This time the evidence is physical:

THE "CHARRED CARDBOARD" CLUE

A former NICAP investigator provided to this author the original, official Air Force report on Socorro, titled: "USAF Investigation Report Socorro, NM" It lists as authors "Investigators Hynek, A.; Quintanilla MJR." These authors are of course famed investigators Dr. J. Allen Hynek and Hector Quintanilla. An attentive reading of this document reveals something that is very telling. In the 17th paragraph (lines 44 and 45) the investigators wrote:

"A closer USAF investigation of the site revealed a fair amount of charred particles mixed with dirt, and some charred cardboard was also found."

This single buried sentence speaks volumes. The "charred cardboard" found at the site by AF investigators is an extremely important detail that does not seem to have ever been brought up by "civilian" UFO investigators who support Socorro as an ET or secret aircraft event. And of course the reason for this is obvious: such mundane material should not be there if it were ET or if it was an experimental vehicle. Instead, this "find" is indicative of something very terrestrial. This is because "charred cardboard" makes complete sense when considering the event as a student-created hoax:

Pyrotechnics could very well account for the found material. Such cardboard tubes or "casings" are used in shell inserts, bottle rockets and fireworks. When ignited, such spent explosives leave a a distinct charred cardboard appearance upon cooling. Burned cardboard and cardboard powder char are left in their wake. Not coincidentally, NM Tech had the most advanced Explosives Lab of any college in the country at the time. One 1960s NM student said that the ease of obtaining "cool pyrotechnics" from the school "was like getting candy from a baby."

Or perhaps the charred cardboard came from the "craft" itself. One NM Tech Professor speculated that the "craft" seen by Lonnie was a large white balloon. In fact, Lonnie's immediate reaction was to characterize it as a balloon. He even radioed to his partner: "It looks like a balloon." The Professor believes that this balloon may have been "over-fitted" with white coated craftboard (or light cardboard) to create the "landing struts" and other features. Such cardboard or craftboard material may well have ignited and charred at the bottom- potentially leaving such cardboard residue as was observed by AF investigators. The College's Atmospheric Sciences department had every manner of inflatable and balloon known- and they had an abundance of lightweight craft materials to create kites, balloon cargo holders, framing- or even landing gear for a "spaceship."

THE SOUNDS AT SOCORRO: A WHINE FROM WHAT?

Investigators concentrate on the sights that Zamora saw- but they do not say much about the sounds that Lonnie said that he heard as the craft was in flight. And what he heard sounds suspiciously like the whines and whistles of advanced pyrotechnics!

Lonnie speaks of 1) high and low frequencies that changed or oscillated 2) thumps 3) whines 4) changes in loudness of the sound; 5) a kind of roar and 6) sudden silence. This "aural accounting" is the sum total of what is known about the sounds that Zamora had reported hearing at the site.

Lonnie is interviewed by AF investigator Dr. Hynek after Zamora's sighting: "He hardly turned around from his police car when he heard a roar- it was not exactly a blast but a very loud roar. It was not like a jet - he knew what a jet sounds like. It started out quickly at low frequency then rose in frequency from loud to very loud. Simultaneously, he saw flame under the object...a kind of orange color at the bottom." From a NICAP recounting of the event we learn that what he heard was in the span of a matter of seconds and that: "The low frequency roar changed to a high frequency whine then to silence." Lonnie says more about what he heard: "I heard two or three loud thumps, like someone possibly opening or shutting a door hard." Zamora says that the thumps were a few seconds apart from one another.

Now look and listen to the videos of pyrotechnic whistles and whistle rockets appearing below. Each of the videos is only a few seconds in length. I purposely provide examples of amateur, homemade pyrotechnics. Professionals can create far more advanced noise features. And NM Tech had one of the most advanced Explosives Labs in the nation. Note the thumps and roars; the changes in high and low frequencies and the "whines." Related videos on Youtube show that pops, thumps and booms can result from both the ignition and explosion of pyrotechnics. Some pyrotechnics (called "fart bombs") use "stops" to produce "staged" ignition, producing two or three muffled booms or pops seconds apart. Were these the sounds heard at Socorro?:

Did you hear low frequency roars, changed frequencies, whines and then silence? That's what Lonnie heard. Did you hear a couple of pops or thumps at any point?

That's what Lonnie heard. Try listening with your eyes closed with the volume up loud. Explore related videos of other kinds of pyrotechnic whistles on Youtube to hear more examples.

A post by a member of the APC (Amateur Pyrotechnics and Chemistry) Forum is highly instructive: "The roars and whines of pyrotechnic whistles have a sound all their own. We can even change them up and make them sound like they are from another world."

Without mentioning a UFO connection, this author contacted Bill Bahr, President of the Pyrotechnics Guild International industry group. I related Zamora's testimony of what he heard, simply saying that these sounds were associated with the observation of a "lift off" of something and brief "flames" seen in an "area of wide expanse." I asked Bahr what he thinks that these sounds might describe. Without missing a beat, Bahr replied that the description sounds "a lot like a pyrotechnic whistle."

The "charred cardboard" evidence found at the site -combined with Lonnie's description of what he said he had heard- supports the idea that some type of pyrotechnics were likely involved in the execution of a hoax. But to cap it off, we also learn (as detailed later in this article) that burned brush and shrub were found at the site, leaving a distinct tell-tale pattern that is known to be caused by pyrotechnic ignition!

But first, let's look at the found footprints:

FOOTPRINTS THAT PROVIDE A TIP-OFF

I have earlier suggested that the "figures" reported by Lonnie near the craft were likely of students in white lab suits that were obtained from the college. Lonnie reported that the figures (which were seen only for seconds, and possibly without glasses) were of a "normal shape." He said that were about the size of "boys or small adults." Lonnie indicated that the figures were wearing "white coveralls." The figure in the middle looks especially like what Lonnie described:

Supporting this idea are overlooked statements made at the time of the event by investigator and White Sands Army Captain Richard T. Holder. Holder was called to inspect and study the UFO landing site by FBI Agent Arthur Byrnes. Immediately after Zamora's sighting, Holder and Byrnes went out to the landing area and closely examined it by flashlight, where Holder stated that he had found footprints. Holder related: "The footprints were similar to the size of the footprints that a bigfooted teenager would make."

Captain Holder described the footprints that he discovered in very down-to-earth terms. He said that they were like what a young person wearing big shoes would make. Taken together, what Lonnie and Holder described sounds very much like short college kids wearing white labwear and big lab safety boots. Nothing about these figures and footprints seemed "alien." Even Lonnie used the phrases "of

normal shape" and "the size of small adults" when describing the figures. Holder said it reminded him of "teenagers."

A Lab Safety Boot would nicely account for the description of the "bigfooted teenager" footprints left at the site that were found and reported by Captain Holder. In fact nothing about the reported figures reported by Zamora -or the footprints that they had left that were discovered by Holder- seemed at all alien. There was nothing about them that suggested anything other than humans. Young humans wearing hefty boots.

THE BURNING BUSH TELLS A TALE

Interestingly, Captain Holder also noted that he had found burned brush at the site that was only affected on one side. He said that it was entirely dissimilar to what one would expect from "an object that blasts off by rocket or jet propulsion." Something else had lit the bushes. Holder described the brush as "flaky" - and mentioned that only one side had scorched. According to experts, explosions from pyrotechnics leave very similar patterns as described by Holder.

Bill Bahr is both the President of the famous Red Dragon brand of fireworks as well as the Executive Director of the Pyrotechnics Guild International, a worldwide industry trade group. He states that the effect on plants as described by Zamora "is classic to pyrotechnics." He agreed, "When certain pyrotechnics are set off in a clearing that is surrounded by brush- the damage to vegetation is flaky. It often just grazes and powders the tips of surrounding plants, or it can carve out larger sections." The resulting damage can range in color from dark black to very light grey or whitish. He says, "This kind of flash damage is typically very localized to the point of just searing one side of a shrub or bush- on the side where the ignition of the pyrotechnic material occurred."

By contrast, he explained (just as Captain Holder had noted) that an outright explosion, or an applied flame or a jet or rocket blast would have thoroughly incinerated any plant material. It would not have left such a flaky, half-sided scorch effect like the brush that was observed at the Socorro site. But pyrotechnics certainly would.

A UNIVERSITY LEFT UNINVESTIGATED

NEW MEXICO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Air Force and other investigators at the time of the Socorro sighting apparently did not even consider or explore the possibility of a hoax perpetuated by engineering students at NM Tech. It does not appear that there is any record of any type anywhere that shows official interviews by these investigators of College administration or students at the Institute. A re-examination of the extant literature on the Socorro UFO -as well as recent inquiries to NM Tech itself- show no indication that any official had ever discussed the matter with the school.

Clearly these investigators were entirely unaware of the College's even-then longstanding history of complex hoaxes and pranks. They did not think about the role that the combination of brilliant but bored college students, an Explosives Lab and a Balloon Atmospheric Lab at the University may have played in devising such a hoax.

High-schoolers were considered...but not college students. Documents show that Harvard Astronomer Donald Menzel at one time suggested that Zamora was the victim of a prank "by high school students who planned the whole thing to get Zamora." Other reports confirm that Hynek talked to townsfolk about the possibility- including a teenager employed at a local gas station who said that no teens were involved to his knowledge.

But no one appears to have gone a step further to investigate the possible involvement of older and wiser students- like NM Tech students. NM Tech was, at the time, "separated" from the town. There was friction between the townies and the Techies. This may account for why investigators ignored the Institute. And perhaps investigators had assumed that such fresh-faced, smart and upstanding, tie-wearing, scientists-in-training would never perpetuate such a hoax...but that high-schoolers might. The fact that the "not-from-town" government officials did not examine the NM Tech connection was a serious omission of investigation. But nearly a half-century later, the investigation continues...

ET has visited Earth. But the Socorro UFO had nothing to do with people from the stars above. It had everything to do with the free-spirited young amongst us. Many things tell us this. The circumstances, means and motive are very telling. Prominent NM Tech administration, professors and students have revealed much. And we now have physical evidence that speaks to us through old documents and reports. The time approaches to put out the flames that light our beloved campfire story. The Sighting at Socorro was not a display of ET nor of man's secret science. Instead it appeared as a flashy fraud that continues to bedazzle us all.