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**Anthony
Dellaflora**

And

High Strange New Mexico

By Sean Casteel

From the earliest beginnings of the modern UFO era, New Mexico has been a perennial hotspot for crashed discs, repeated craft sightings, rumors of government conspiracy, abductions, and cattle mutilations. Like nowhere else in the United States, New Mexico draws interest from both the UFO occupants and earthbound believers to a degree unmatched by the other 49 states.



After languishing in relative obscurity for ten years, an independently produced UFO documentary has found new life on the Internet and picked up a national distributor.

In an effort to bring many of the varied stories of UFO contact in the Land of Enchantment together into a satisfying whole, journalist Anthony DellaFlora and his partner James Lujan have put together a documentary called *High Strange New Mexico*. The nearly two-hour film features interviews with well-known figures like the late Walter Haut, the Army information officer who helped to bring the Roswell Incident to the attention of the media back in 1947, as well as lesser-known experiencers like abductee Barbara Glasgow, about whom we will learn more later.

The idea for the film was born when DellaFlora was working as an arts and entertainment reporter at *Albuquerque Journal*, the local morning daily newspaper. In the summer of 1995 the paper received a press release promoting the 48th anniversary of the Roswell Incident.

“I ended up doing a little story,” DellaFlora said, “about how the UFO mythology in New Mexico was being used as a tourist thing. I talked to people around the state, and they said, ‘Oh, yeah, we always tell people about the flying saucer stories around here and try to get them to visit.’ I thought that was kind of a funny thing.”

The following year, as plans were being laid for the upcoming 50th Roswell anniversary, DellaFlora wrote a tongue-in-cheek UFO tour guide that featured some of the legendary sites where UFO events had allegedly happened. When the tour

guide received what DellaFlora considered an interesting response, it occurred to him that there might be a book in the subject.

“Because in New Mexico,” he explained, “we’ve got tour guides for everything, from ghost towns to hot springs to pueblos or whatever—there are tour guides for everything like that.”

When DellaFlora discussed his tour book idea with Lujan, Lujan suggested videotaping some interviews that could be used for a trailer promoting the proposed book. The two visited Roswell over Labor Day Weekend in 1996, interviewing people at the UFO museum there as well as stopping off in the small town of Socorro, the location of a famous sighting by a New Mexico policeman back in the 1960s.

“When we got back to Albuquerque,” DellaFlora said, “I said, ‘Let’s hold off on the book right now. I think we’ve got a movie.’ So we basically spent the next year two years traveling and tracking down people all over the state, shooting interviews and putting the movie together.”

Lujan’s role eventual role in the production was to shoot the film—on borrowed video equipment—as well as assisting in directing it,

doing the editing, and composing most of the musical soundtrack. DellaFlora categorically states that it was not the filmmakers' intention to either prove or disprove whether UFOs are genuinely alien spacecraft.

"It became about the people," he said. "I'd seen enough stuff on TV like the Discovery Channel, and

tions about it. We have hours and hours of tape where we asked specific questions about certain incidents. It really became apparent to us as filmmakers that the story was with the people and what they believed in and *why* they believed in it. And to really be as nonjudgmental about it as possible."

The film includes comments

by several PhDs who take the UFO phenomenon quite seriously. "There are some very well-read, intelligent people in the film," DellaFlora said, "who believe in this stuff. We thought, 'Let's just let these people tell their stories.' We wanted to show why

tialed people who are out there doing this and interested in it. Whether they're a skeptic or a believer or somewhere in between, it still has grabbed their interest at some level. I don't know what that portends for the field of ufology in the future, but I think it is slowly changing the perspective of who's involved in this and who thinks it's worthy of serious study."

DellaFlora said that the movie holds up a mirror to its audience. "People all watch the same movie," he said, "and you get a whole range of reactions to it. I think it's partly just a matter of where you're coming from to begin with. What is your belief system about? What are you finding in the movie that reinforces what you believe in or don't believe in?"

One theory offered in the movie as to why New Mexico is such a magnet for UFOs comes from Peter White, PhD, a folklore expert and a dean at the University of New Mexico. White says that the extreme tension between the traditional agrarian society and the high-tech laboratories at places like Los Alamos and Sandia may create a kind of doorway for something that is simultaneously ancient and beyond cutting-edge.

"I think Peter does present an interesting perspective there," DellaFlora said. "I don't know that you're going to find that contrast or clash any place else in this country or any place else in the world. There are just so many different historical and cultural perspectives that collide here in New Mexico. Whether that means UFOs are here or not, I don't know. But as Peter said, I think it creates the petri dish for these kinds of stories."

High Strange New Mexico also includes interviews with a Native American called Rainbow Eagle who calls the UFO occupants love beings, as well as a

this is a fascinating area of inquiry and just let people judge for themselves on the basis of what they saw in the movie.

"We could have interviewed a bunch of loony people," he went on, "and everybody would have had a good laugh and said, 'Yeah, those UFO nuts. Where are the people in white suits? They should be in the mental hospital.' As much as we know about UFOs today, I'm sure there's still a certain segment in society where that's the perception of what goes on in this field.

"What was really astounding was to turn up all these creden-



James Lujan, director

I'd read about Roswell. Everybody was trying to prove everything. I'm pretty open-minded. I went into it thinking that this could have happened, it might not have happened, but I'm willing to look at it. But it seemed to me that people were just hitting dead ends. Nobody ever came up with anything conclusive to prove what happened or didn't happen at Roswell. I thought that if we started out going down that same path again, we could be there for years.

"I just didn't feel like I wanted to get caught up in that," he continued. "Not that we didn't ask ques-

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High Strange New Mexico.*

PhD named Teresa Pijoan, who is interviewed as an expert on local Native American history in the body of the film. She also tells an ancient tribal creation story about beings from the stars, complete with sign language as the closing credits roll. So how much credence does DellaFlora lend to the spiritual interpretation of UFOs in New Mexico?

“I don’t know if it’s God,” he said, “so much as it is maybe a replacement for God. I do think there is something to it. UFOs at this point represent something very powerful to us that we don’t really understand. If that’s not a definition of God, I don’t know what is. As the popularity of organized religion comes and goes, I think people are looking for some sort of higher power or something.

“In certain cases, for some people, UFOs probably fit the bill. There is that mystery and desire to know what these things are, and in some cases there’s fear about it, too. I think it’s just a general longing for people to want to know more about the universe they live in, and if they substitute UFOs for God, well, that’s their choice.

“But here in New Mexico,” DellaFlora continued, “there does seem to be a spiritual component to whatever is here: the culture, the history, the landscape. Maybe that veil is a little bit thinner in New Mexico than it might be in some other places. You have these very ancient cultures that are ingrained here and are very in tune with the land and the sky. It seems to attract a lot spiritually minded people. We’ve got I don’t know how many different sects and religions that have groups here. Probably any religion you can think of—there’s some conclave of them here in northern New Mexico. It’s really remarkable.”

Along with the UFO believers and the religiously devout,

the movie also includes comments from a New Mexico debunker named Dave Thomas. “We couldn’t do this film without somebody like that,” DellaFlora said, “and I enjoyed him again as part of this subculture. I didn’t

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bring him on just to discount what everybody said.

“I guess my first reaction after interviewing him was that for a guy who doesn’t believe in UFOs, he sure is wrapped up in this, isn’t he? He certainly has a lot of interest and time involved in proving other people wrong. Now for

me, in just everyday discourse, if I think somebody’s wrong I might tell him and I might not. I might just walk away and leave it alone. I’m not going to spend a large part of my life trying to disprove something.

“But the fact that Dave was willing to take all this on put him squarely in that same subculture—just on the other end of the spectrum. We’ve had different reactions from people. We’ve got people saying the abductees and all those people are whacko. But then I also got the same number of people saying, ‘Man, those skeptics, those guys were really stretching credibility, you know? They’re trying to explain this UFO phenomenon with some really flimsy stuff.’ ”

The subject of government secrecy is also discussed in *High Strange New Mexico*, and DellaFlora again said it is involved in ways peculiar to the state. “This is a big government-employee state,” he said. “We’ve got Los Alamos, we’ve got Sandia, we’ve got Kirtland Air Force Base, and several Air Force Bases that are still open here. We came from being, back before World War II, a pretty rural state. It was farmers and ranchers and that’s about it. All of a sudden, Los Alamos comes in, and Sandia and Kirtland, so you’ve got this high concentration of highly intelligent scientists and then the whole federal bureaucracy that came with it.

“So that’s what New Mexico is about,” he continued. “In terms of federal money per tax dollar paid in versus what comes back. We’re right at the top every year in getting that money coming in. So again, having government here as a large entity is just par for the course in New Mexico.

“Now in terms of the secrecy, that’s what Los Alamos was built on. People didn’t even know it was

there during World War II. The secrecy was always there from the beginning, and it had to do with the atomic bomb, at first. For years it was rumored that there were atomic bombs stored in the mountains outside Albuquerque.

“Of course, they would never admit it until decades later when they had moved them out of there, and they finally said, ‘Yes, there were nuclear weapons stored in the mountains there.’ So there’s that basis for mistrust of the government and government secrecy going on right here, and that’s always been part of the state’s environment.”

New Mexico also has its share of abduction cases, and the documentary examines some of those as well. “Again, I’m confounded,” DellaFlora said. “I’ve got to say I’m not convinced that aliens are coming down here in UFOs and grabbing people out of their beds. That these people had some kind of really bizarre, extraordinary experience, I don’t doubt in the least.

“They were as sincere as they could be about it. But the interesting thing to me was that somebody pointed out that a lot of these abduction stories start to sound the same after a while. That’s because of the spread through popular culture. So pretty soon you’ve got a paradigm where the beam of light comes down and you’re lifted out of your bed and you’re probed—they all start to sound the same.”

But DellaFlora said that among the abductees he interviewed was a woman named Barbara Glasgow, whom he feels exists outside that familiar mold. “Barbara’s story was interesting,” he said, “because hers apparently happened before Betty and Barney Hill’s, which was considered kind of the landmark case back in the early ’60s. You could say that Barbara was unaffected by the perceptions given by popular culture, and that leads me to believe that something

really bizarre happened. Did she get examined by space aliens? I don’t know, but I know she firmly believes it.



“And she’s as normal as they come,” he continued. “As a journalist, you learn to read people, and you can tell if they’re a little bit squirrely, if they’re not quite all there. I kept looking for that. But the way she talked about it, the self-deprecating humor she used—I think they’re all sympathetic characters in the movie, but you look at Barbara and you say,

‘My God, that’s my grandmother.’ Some of the people who show up at UFO conferences—there’s some weird folks out there, but you look at Barbara and you say, ‘My God, this woman lives next door. This is not a nut case. This is somebody it’s hard to discredit.’ I thought she lent a little gravity to the situation.”

DellaFlora is currently considering producing a sequel to *High Strange New Mexico* that would update events from the first film as well as tackle the subject from a somewhat darker point of view. He would like to examine ideas first brought forth by UFO researcher and author Nick Redfern, who claims to have unearthed an alternate theory for what happened at Roswell.

“Basically, the whole premise is that it had nothing to do with UFOs,” DellaFlora said, “but UFOs were a cover story for these really bizarre human experiments that were going on there involving post-World War II German and Japanese scientists. The Americans were interested in developing a nuclear-powered airplane, and they decided they needed to test the effects of radiation and altitude on human subjects. They sent these human test subjects up in balloons, and they crashed. That’s what crashed, not UFOs. It’s a really intriguing take and it’s a non-extraterrestrial story there.”

There is also a case from the darker side that touched DellaFlora personally. “Five or six years ago,” he said, “there was a guy arrested here named Diazien Hosencofft, which was not his real name. He had led sort of a UFO cult here, and he had enlisted the aid of a woman named Linda Henning, who apparently he was able to convince to kill his wife. It was a huge story here. But the interesting thing was all the UFO stuff that came into the story.”

She was describing how Diazien Hossencofft was a 400-year-old alien who'd been sent to earth to save the planet.

Shortly after the initial story had broken of Hossencofft's wife's disappearance and his subsequent arrest, the police still had no hard evidence to hold against him. At that point, a mysterious woman went to the offices of the *Albuquerque Journal* and asked for DellaFlora. The woman introduced herself as Linda Henning and said she knew DellaFlora's reputation as the filmmaker behind *High Strange New Mexico*. The two spoke for a couple of hours, and DellaFlora would later lament not having his tape recorder running as she told her story.

"She basically gave me a year's worth of *X-Files* episodes," he said. "She was describing how Diazien Hossencofft was a 400-year-old alien who'd been sent to earth to save the planet and he'd conceived an alien superhuman baby that the CIA was trying to snatch. His wife, who was also a space queen, was a CIA plant who was trying to get Hossencofft in trouble. It was two hours of the most amazing stuff I'd ever heard. She got arrested three days later and went to trial, and all of this stuff came out in the trial. I'm still trying to get hold of the transcripts. It was just incredible."

DellaFlora would also like to add a section to his possible sequel on Paul Bennewitz, a scientist who lived near Kirtland Air Force Base and began to feel he was encountering aliens who spoke to him through his computer. As the story goes, Bennewitz had instead stumbled on to high-tech research being conducted at the base. In order to keep the experiments secret, the government played along with Bennewitz's conveniently mistaken belief in UFOs, subjecting him to a disinformation and mind-control onslaught that further cemented his delusions

about alien contact and resulted in a complete nervous breakdown for the hapless scientist.

"So that's definitely part of the sequel we're talking about," DellaFlora said. "I guess this is what unites all these three particular strands of the story. We've got the one side that we did in the first movie, and then there's this whole dark side of people believing in the phenomenon. There is this ugly terrestrial side of this that has nothing to do with aliens except as foils to our own dark deeds here on earth.

"Can it go too far? For instance, Linda Henning. In a certain way, she's very intelligent, but this woman probably murdered someone because she believed this guy was an alien savior. And he's just a dirtball con man, and that's all he ever was. But people believe this stuff, for whatever reason, and *want* to believe it."

Meanwhile, whether or not plans for *High Strange New Mexico II* ever come to fruition, the lighter first movie is available for viewing on the website www.high-strange-nm.com for \$4.95. It can also be purchased at the website in DVD form for \$19.95 plus shipping and handling. As this issue was going to press, DellaFlora was negotiating a deal with a national distributor who may be able to get the film into video outlets like Blockbuster around the country.

DellaFlora left the *Albuquerque Journal* in 2003 after working there for 25 years. He currently owns and operates a production company called Taos Communications Empire and has produced commercials and worked on projects for the local PBS station, KNME. He hopes to someday venture into feature film work as well.

Has his work on *High Strange New Mexico* made a believer out of DellaFlora? It might

be more accurate to say he is an observer of those who do believe. "We can see in *High Strange* how obsessive some people get about it," he said. "People get wrapped up in this stuff, and it goes deeper than just UFOs. There's a need that it fulfills. It's something to do.

"And again, with the Roswell Incident, I think it's a perfect tale for what's going on today with all the lies and deceit we see in government in general. You hate to say it, but the idea that the government used a UFO crash to cover up these horrible experiments on humans is not outside the realm of possibility. We know enough about the bad deeds that our government has done that you can't completely discount this story.

"One of the folklore experts we interviewed said that most stories come to some resolution at some point. You finally get down to the core of the story and what actually happened. But with Roswell, none of those ends ever fit. You have different landing places, different witnesses, but nothing ever coalesces into a single theory that makes sense.

"But with this idea of human experimentation going on, a lot of stuff starts to make a lot more sense than it ever has. Is this is the answer? I don't know, but again, talk about the dark side of humanity. You don't get much worse than that." **UFO**

Visit Sean Casteel's UFO Journalist website at www.seancasteel.com. Casteel is the author of *UFOs, Prophecy and the End of Time, Signs and Symbols of the Second Coming, The Excluded Books of the Bible*, and most recently *Gone Forever In The Blink Of An Eye*, all available online at Casteel's website,