



Dreamland: Travels Inside the Secret World of Roswell and Area 51

Phil Patton

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There is a place in the Nevada desert the size of Belgium that doesn't officially exist. It is the airbase where test flights of our top-secret experimental military aircraft are conducted and --not coincidentally--where the conspiracy theorists insist the Pentagon is hiding UFOs and aliens. This is Dreamland--or Area 51. For Phil Patton, the idea of writing a travel account of a place he couldn't actually visit was irresistible. What he found was a world where Chick Yeager and the secret planes of the Cold War converged with the Nevada Test Site and alien landings at Roswell.

A think tank for aviation engineering, Dreamland can be seen from a summit outside the base's perimeter, a hundred miles north of Las Vegas. On Freedom Ridge, groups of airplane buffs gather with their camouflage outfits and binoculars. These are the Stealth chasers, the Skunkers, guys with code names like Agent X and Zero, hoping for a glimpse of the rumored raylike shapes of planes like Black Manta and "the mother ship." The most mysterious craft is Aurora, the successor to the legendary U-2, said to run on methane and fly as fast as Mach 6. Scanning the same horizon, the UFO buffs are looking for the hovering lights and doughnut-shaped contrails of alien aircraft. Are they looking at something sinister and mysterious? Imagined? Or more terrestrial than they think? Dreamland shows how much we need mystery in the information age, and how the cultures of nuclear power and airpower merge with the folklores of extraterrestrials and earthly conspiracies.

Patton found people who found themselves in the mysteries of the place. John Lear, the son of aviation pioneer Bill Lear--who gave his name to the jet--served as a pilot for the CIA's Air America, but back home, he became fascinated by UFOs and eventually believed in it all: the underground bases, the alien-human hybrids, the secret treaties. But was he a true believer, or part of a disinformation campaign? Bob Lazar seems to know when the saucers will come, and has made three clear sightings at night along Dreamland's perimeter, but is his story real, or a vision of what's possible?

Dreamland is an exploration of America's most secret place: the base for our experimental airplanes, the fount of UFO rumors, an offshoot of the Nevada Test Site. How this "blackspot" came to exist--its history, its creators, its spies and counterspies--is Phil Patton's tale. He tunnels into the subcultures of the conspiracy buffs, the true believers, and the aeronautic geniuses, creating a novelistic tour de force destined to make us all rethink our convictions about American know-how--and alien inventiveness.

Dreamland: Travels Inside the Secret World of Roswell and Area 51 Details

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From Reader Review Dreamland: Travels Inside the Secret World of Roswell and Area 51 for online ebook

Leslie says

I'd hoped to read about flying saucers and aliens from outer space, but, alas and alack, all I got was a thoroughly-researched history of Area 51, the development site for top-secret military aircraft. Much of what the author presented as speculative in 1998, when the book was published, can now be verified at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Ohio, and in photos and videos released by the military.

He writes wittingly, as seen in this quote from the book: "In 1986 Testor released a model of the F-19 Stealth fighter. The model set off a small storm in Washington. How could a model company know what America's most closely guarded secret looked like, when our Congressmen themselves did not know ? " All in all, I highly recommend this book.

Stephen says

"What would happen if the U.S. government opened its doors to us and let us see all that was going on? Depending on what is there, we'd either be vindicated or disappointed, but we would also rapidly lose interest. What would we focus our attentions on? Where would we go next?....the greatest thing about Area 51 is its mystery, otherwise nobody would care."

Dear readers, I have a confession. In middle school, I was way into alien conspiracy theories, specifically the Roswell Incident. I didn't believe anything had happened, but it was fun to pretend that it did. My bedroom walls were littered with three things: tiger photographs, glow-in-the-dark star stickers, and posters of green bobble-head aliens, sometimes dressed as hippies offering peace signs. So, when I ran into Dreamland while looking for a similarly titled book on rural drug epidemics (Dreamland: the True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic), I had to try it out. Right?

It took me a few check-outs to actually read the book, because it's an odd kind of investigatory tourism that begins with the paranormal, shifts to completely sober and extensive discussion of military test aviation, and then swings back to more severe paranormal material towards the end. The author plays the part of reporter-tourist searching for the truth, presenting himself as neither credulous nor particularly skeptical. Like Herodotus, he simply reports what he is told, though there's an obvious personal interests in what 'Area 51' truly is.

Dreamland is not solely about 'the' Area 51, the conspiracy codename for Groom Lake, Nevada, where experimental jets are/were tested. 'Dreamland' as a place covers much of the southwest; it is not merely 'The Ranch' of Nevada, guarded by private paramilitary 'camo dudes', but the headspace world in which the subjects of this book live -- and while some of them believe devoutly in alien visitation and even in-progress takeover, others believe the alien talk is mere coverup for more ominous projects. One interviewee opined that the alien hype is being created by the military which will use a faux-alien invasion to effect a coup. The last quarter of the book is a bizarre mix of conspiracy theories, Christian and Islamic prophecies merging with alien obsession and political intrigue: fear of a 'New World Order', so intense in Endtimes believers of the 1990s, is very strong here. My personal favorite, in part because it's the sort of thing I would do if I were in charge of a secret government project, is that Area 51 is cover, used to distract the public; the real base is

in Tonopah. (Of course, if I were in charge of the secret government project, I would put it underground and then stick a shopping complex on top of it.)

Although the first and final fifths of *Dreamland* are very odd reading, fraught with true-believer syndrome ("Yes, the flying saucer we saw was a B2. But they're just letting us see it so we won't freak out about the real flying saucers!"), there's actually an enormous amount of information on military test aviation throughout the late 20th century, including on projects that were scrapped but which are now declassified. Many of the aircraft mentioned bear little resemblance to conventional aircraft, at least to a public expecting to see something that looks like a commercial transport or fighters. The proposed A-12 Avenger is downright alien. *Dreamland* features a chapter on the development of unmanned spy vehicles from spy planes like the U2, and speculates that soon these UAVs may be armed. (He was right: three years later after publication, a Predator drone blew up the outside of a Taliban building, wrecking cars and sending the actual target running away instead of crossing the Styx.)

If you're interested in experimental aviation, this actually has a few chapters of note. The actual subject of the book may distract from the fascinating bits inside, though, and considering the context of the source I'm not sure how seriously I'd take the information on CIA spy planes and the like.

CAPANNA DURMONT says

Ho registrato un libro su BookCrossing.com!
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/11530625>

Jeff Jellets says

“You didn’t see that,” the officer said.

I’m not really sure what to make of this one.

Phil Patton’s *Dreamland* is kind of a rambling travelogue that slips past the military checkpoints of the remote Nevada desert, heading toward the elusive Area 51 and the base’s dodgy history of secret military aircraft, UFOs, and government conspiracy. Hiking up to Freedom Ridge, the high point that allows a glimpse down into the restricted airfield, Patton rubs shoulders with Interceptors and Youfers -- airplane buffs and alien enthusiasts respectively – crafting a book that is a pastiche of aviation history, extraterrestrial investigation, pop culture, and odd characters.

Unfortunately, it’s also a book that’s really hard to follow. Patton packs in plenty of interesting nuggets, but the book never really grabs it’s through line, ending up a murky jumble as it jumps from the real to the speculative, from character to character, from time period to place, hopscotching like a jack-rabbit. The disorganization made my forehead wrinkle, puzzling past obscure military code names and half-truths – and maybe that’s Patton’s intent – to give the reader just a taste of the heady brew of information, misinformation, and disinformation that surrounds *Dreamland* – but this book just kind of lost me.

Usually, I'm a sucker for that mix of 'real-world' history meets 'weird-world' history, but this is one where I had to fight to get to the last page.

Steve says

Thomas Pynchon sez:

"A mind-opening tale of trespass and revelation, of road adventures, technothriller hardware, saucer folks and aerospace outlaws -- as well as a daring account of the haunting of our history through the Cold War and beyond by what we have seen, and often wish we had not seen, in the hazardous dreamscape of the American sky."

Phil Breidenbach says

Full of the usual stories about Area 51. It did have some interesting histories of planes built w/o the public's knowledge. I don't think I'd recommend this to anyone...

Jason Collins says

Dreamland is a fun read, thanks to Phil Patton's entertaining writing style and his dogged willingness to uncover the mysteries surrounding Area 51. It's also an important book in the sense that we finally have a credible investigation into the complex and elusive world of Area 51 - a world that Patton coins as "Dreamland." However, don't be fooled into believing that Dreamland supports any of the conspiracy theorist claims. In fact, much of Patton's findings do more to debunk them.

Patton's admirable efforts to gather as much empirical data on far-reaching claims of the existence of UFOs inside Area 51 often and invariably lead him into very murky water. However, seeing this through the eyes of a journalist, you get the sense that the "youfers" and the higher-profile witnesses of UFOs are just plain full of baloney. Never once during Patton's campaign to find the hidden truth is the author surprised, amazed or taken aback by any tangible evidence or revelations.

Though it's no fault of Patton's, the lack of any shred of stirring evidence of the existence of UFOs in Dreamland makes this book just a tad anticlimactic. In this vein, I disagree with some other reviews of this book. For example, the back cover says, "Reviewers have applauded Dreamland as brilliant, fascinating, weird, wonderful, sometimes spooky, curiously epic, frequently humorous, and always entertaining." In fact, Patton's closing statement - the final sentence of the book, seems to contradict this notion: "...This seemed appropriate, but as with so much in Dreamland, it proved impossible to determine conclusively." (Patton pg 299). There's not much in Patton's findings that would leave a reader spooked or fascinated. I would temper the back cover comments down to "brilliant, interesting and entertaining."

The most famous figure that Patton investigates is an engineer/physicist named Bob Lazar. It's no surprise that Patton finds Lazar's job titles and credentials to be questionable. Lazar claims that he actually worked on

flying saucers hidden near Groom Lake. While Patton collects interesting stories through former contacts of Lazar, he finds no evidence or accounts to corroborate or support Lazar's outlandish tales. Patton discovers that Lazar was eventually arrested in 1990 for pandering - around the time that Lazar tried to open a brothel in Los Alamos. Do most physicists have time for these types of endeavors?

Patton's assiduous and unrelenting study of Area 51, military aircraft, "youfers", UFO folklore and UFO history is full, thorough and colorful. It's likely that Patton would make a study on any topic readable and interesting. And perhaps as an unintended consequence, this book will educate the average reader on the history of military aircraft. Patton's in-depth inquiry left me skeptical about the existence of UFOs and it has given me a critical attitude toward the conspiracy buffs. The amount of conjecture is disproportionately large compared to the flakes of evidence that anyone can provide when it comes to the existence of flying saucers in Area 51.

I should add that Patton also deserves credit for putting himself at risk on several occasions when he tries to get himself as close as possible to key sites in Dreamland. He is often chased away or threatened by military security.

Dreamland is an enjoyable read. But be forewarned: It won't convert you to a conspiracy buff. Rather, it may turn you into a skeptic.

Nick says

I find it difficult to describe this book. It is a sort of ramble through the world of classified military bases and military research into aircraft, with side trips through Roswell and the various UFO-investigators. Not anything like the sober historical journalism of "Area 51" by Annie Jacobsen, but chock full of fascinating character sketches and anecdotes.

Liz says

More informative on Black Aircraft than on UFOs and crazy paranormal stuffs. Very well written and very interesting, but I did stop reading about halfway through.

Erwin says

"The story of Area 51 and the Nevada Test Site are fascinating enough without embellishment and relying on bar stories. If you want a good Area 51 book get Dreamland by Phil Patton. It is based on facts and when speculation is made, he clearly states that. "

For all you who give this 5 stars for who knows why please do some of your own research. You can easily find better information on the Nevada Test Site, the nuclear rocket program, Project 57, etc than you will get from this book. If you want a history of Area 51, get Dreamland, if you want spy plane stories, get "By Any Means Necessary" by Burrows, for nuclear rocket stuff get Dewar's "To The End Of The Solar System".

Chip says

To learn that by treaty the Russians are allowed to overfly Area 51 unencumbered while the taxpayers who paid for it are threatened with deadly force for approaching the gate is outrageous. Add to that the inherit laziness of a system where everything is classified and nothing is secret, and you've got a big mess to clean up.

I want to know what the Russians know. I'd be willing to bet they'd sell the info if the price is right... wonder what that figure would be?

Is it treason to purchase US Top Secret info from a foreign country? Or only to sell it to a foreign country? I'd better get a lawyer to look into this first.

I thought the book well-researched (as well as can be, anyway) and reasonably thought out.

Atle says

Verdens land og folk: Spania (in Norwegian)

Time-Life Books Editorial Staff

Good on Spanish history

Susan Ferguson says

I started this book thinking only it would be about UFOs, but it is so very much more. In fact, before I got very far I started over reading it out loud to David on our trips to Batesville, Searcy, etc. where ever we had errands and business. He also enjoyed it.

Dreamland is the name of the airstrip at Area 51 - Restricted Air Space and about the people who hang out at the perimeter with big cameras and binoculars to see what yhe can - the youfers, interceptors, stealthies, etc. The big names are PsychoSpy, Interceptor and other colorful characters. A main hangout is the A "Le" Inn. The author goes pretty thoroughly into the beginnings of the ufo hunters, the people seeking proof of secret weapons, the Skunk Works, etc. Karl Jung makes it in with his theories of ufos. Quite an amazing and interesting retelling of the history and speculations and stories woven around this base. Much better and more interesting than I expected when I started.

Steve says

This is a fun, fun book that is as much about experimental aircraft as is it about UFO lore and camp-followers.

Vince Ciaramella says

My favorite book on this subject matter. It's pretty much a one-stop-shop for all your Area 51 needs.
