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Sgt. Frederick Benthall

Army photographer who said he photographed Roswell aliens

Sgt. Frederick Benthall testified that he was an Army Air Force photographer, then 26 years old, flown into Roswell from Anacostia Naval Air Station, Washington D.C., possibly on July 7. The following morning he was taken out to a crash site about an hour and a half north of town. There he photographed several alien bodies enclosed in a field tent and saw crash debris being hauled away in trucks. He first publicly appeared in the 1994 book *Crash at Corona* by Stanton Friedman and Don Berliner. However, then he was only identified as "F.B." In the 2007 book *Witness to Roswell* by Tom Carey and Donald Schmitt, his name is given in full.

Benthall's story may have some corroboration from a Roswell MP named Ed Sain, who said he was taken out to the crash site north of town in an ambulance and guarded the bodies in the tent before they were transported to the base. Deadly force was authorized to keep people out. Sain also mentioned fellow MP Cpl. Raymond Van Why being with him. Van Why was dead, but his widow Leola confirmed that her husband told her in 1954 about guarding the crashed spaceship site.

One witness who mentioned photographers associated with Roswell was retired [Brigadier General Arthur Exon \(testimony\)](#), Wright-Patterson AFB commanding officer, who said Roswell was the crash of a craft from space and that he had been informed about the bodies by people who were involved. He also knew some of the photographers who had been involved, but unfortunately didn't provide any names.

An interesting recent development to Benthall's story concerns his statement that [he was told he might run into General Curtis LeMay at Roswell](#). In 2007 (as [reported by journalist Billy Cox in the Sarasota Florida Herald-Tribune 5/29/07](#)), veteran USAF pilot Ben Games told a UFO group that he had flown [Lt. Gen. Laurence C. Craigie](#) to Roswell from Wright Field. At the time, Craigie was chief of the Research and Engineering Division at Headquarters Army Air Force. Games said Craigie had been sent to investigate the crash on the orders of Gen. LeMay. Craigie was there for a few hours before returning. If true, then LeMay dispatched Craigie in his stead. On July 7, acting AAF Chief of Staff [Hoyt Vandenberg's](#) log and calendar show that he was being briefed on the flying saucer situation by LeMay, and on the morning of July 8 was briefed just before a suddenly called meeting of the Joint Research and Development Board at the Pentagon, of which Craigie was a member. The JRDB, in turn, has been [linked by Canadian documents to a supersecret UFO study group](#) heading up the investigation into the saucers.

Two versions of Benthall's story are given below. The first extensively quoting him from *Crash at Corona*, followed by the more paraphrased version from *Witness to Roswell*, said to be based on his affidavit, that he filled out in 1993. According to the *Crash at Corona* account, Benthall was first interviewed by Stanton Friedman in November 1990 following "months of negotiation."

[Crash at Corona \(1994\)](#)

F.B was an Army Air Forces photographer stationed at Anacostia Naval Air Station, Washington, D.C., when he and fellow photographer A. K. [Cpl. Al Kirkpatrick] were hustled aboard an army B-25 bomber and flown to Roswell

Army Air Field sometime during the second week of July 1947. He told Friedman:

"One morning they came in and they said, "Pack our bags and we'll have the camera there, ready for you." We didn't know where we was goin'. [His 4x5 Speed Graphic press camera was on the plane, and after a few ours' flight, they arrived at Roswell.] We got in a staff car with some of the gear they had brought along with us in trucks, and we headed out...about an hour and a half...we was headin' north.

"We got there and there was a helluva lot of people out there, in a closed tent. You couldn't hardly see anything inside the tent. They said, 'Set your camera up to take a picture fifteen feet away.' A. K. [Kirkpatrick] got in a truck and headed out to where they was pickin' up pieces [debris field]. All kinds of brass runnin' around. And they was tellin' us what to do: Shoot this, shoot that! There was an officer in charge. He met us out there and he'd go into the tent...stand there right besides us and [say], 'OK, take this picture!'

"There were four bodies I could see when the flash went off, but you was almost blind because it was a beautiful day...sunny. You'd go in this tent, which was awful dark. That's all I was takin': bodies. These bodies was under a canvas, and they'd open it up and you'd take a picture, flip out your flashbulb, put another one in [take another picture] and give him the film holder (each holder held two sheets of four-by-five inch cut film) and then you went to the next spot.

"I guess there was ten to twelve officers, and when I got ready to go in, they'd all come out. The tent was about 20 by 30 foot. The bodies looked like they was lyin' on a tarp. One guy did all the instructions. He'd take a flashlight and he'd come down there: 'See this flashlight!' Yes, sir! 'You're in focus with it?' Yes, sir! 'Take a picture of this.' He'd take the flashlight away. We just moved around in a circle, takin' pictures. Seemed to me [the bodies] were all just about identical. Dark complected. I remember they was thin, and it looked like they had too big of a head. I took thirty shots...I think I had about fifteen [film] holders. It smelled funny in there.

"A.K. came back in a truck that was loaded down with debris. A lot of pieces stick' out that wasn't there when they too off. We got debriefed on the way back to the airport [Roswell Army Air Field]. About four the next morning, they woke us, they took us to the mess hall, we ate, we got back on the B-25 and headed back. When we got back to Anacostia we got debriefed some more, by a lieutenant commander." [It was made clear to both F.B. and his friend A. K. that whatever they thought they saw in New Mexico, they hadn't seen.]

Witness to Roswell (2007)

...26-year old Sgt. Frederick Benthall was serving in the Army Air Forces as a photographic specialist at the Anacostia Naval Air Station in Washington, D.C. In 1946 he had helped set up the photographic equipment for Operation Crossroads [two Bikini A-bomb tests] in the Pacific...

...after reporting to work one morning in early July of 1947 with a friend, Cpl. Al Kirkpatrick, they were told to pack their bags for a flight to Roswell, N. M. They flew in a B-25...bomber, leaving around 10 a.m., and made one stop along the way, during which they were told not to leave the plane. **On the flight, the two men studied the dossiers of persons who might be expected to be at their destination. These individuals included J. Robert Oppenheimer of Los Alamos ("Father of the Atomic Bomb") and Gen. Curtis LeMay... future head of the Strategic Air Command.** [LeMay was also a future USAF Chief of Staff. In July 1947, LeMay was heading Army Air Force research and development at the Pentagon and [advising acting AAF Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg on July 7 & July 8](#) on the ongoing flying saucer situation, according to Vandenberg's logs.]

The plane landed in Roswell around 5 p.m.The following morning, Benthall and Kirkpatrick were picked up by a covered military truck and headed north of town. During the trip, both men changed into rubberized suits that were very hot, but apparently offered some kind of protection--protection against what they did not know.

When they arrived at the site, Benthall saw several tents that had been set up near a small bluff, and what appeared to be a refrigerator truck. He also witnessed covered trucks leaving the site that were obviously carrying wreckage of some sort. He could see thin strips of wreckage sticking out the backs of the trucks as they departed. Other empty trucks continued to arrive at the site. Benthall witnessed a lot of enlisted men going back and forth in various directions, as well as two majors whose names he did not know,

...Kirkpatrick was ordered into one of the empty trucks that headed out to another location (the Brazel debris field site), while Benthall was taken to a nearby tent and told to stand by. An officer then came out of the tent and told Benthall, "Get your camera ready!" Then the officer looked into the tent and made a loud comment that someone was coming in, whereupon a number of officers then exited the rear of the tent. Once inside, the officer told Benthall to stand back, and then pulled back a tarp that was on the floor of the tent, revealing several little bodies lying on a rubber sheet. Benthall and the officer slowly but purposefully moved around in a circle with Benthall taking pictures of the bodies lying in death beneath them.

"The [the bodies] were all just about identical, with dark complexions, thin and with large heads. ...There was a strange smell inside the tent that smelled something like formaldehyde."

Benthall was shooting his pictures with a standard-issue Speed Graphic camera that had a holder, each with two shots. Although it was daylight outside, it was dark inside the closed, rubber-lined tent. Because it was so dark inside the tent, the flash bulbs gave off a blinding light when a picture was snapped. After taking each set of two pictures, Benthall would give the holder to the officer. This procedure was repeated many times as the two men circled the bodies.

The entire session lasted about two hours, after which Benthall was told to leave. About that time, Kirkpatrick returned from the other site in a truck that Benthall could see was loaded down with wreckage. Benthall and Kirkpatrick were dismissed from the site and returned to the base in Roswell. They were debriefed on the ride back to the base and told not to talk to anyone.

"My camera case, cameras, and all of the film had been confiscated before we left the site. [Back at the base] The men were awakened around 4 a.m. the

next morning... After breakfast, they boarded the B-25 and headed back to Washington. When they got back to Anacostia, they were again debriefed, this time by a Marine officer--lieutenant colonel--by the name of Bibbey, who asked them if they knew what they had photographed. Benthal and Kirkpatrick both responded, "Yes, Sir." to which Lt. Col. Bibbey instructed them that they did not know what they had photographed. Then [he] asked them the question again.

Recalling the episode in 1993, Benthal observed, "Not long after that, I was assigned to Antarctica to take pictures of pieces of equipment to study the effects of cold."

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CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(PUBLIC DOMAIN) - 1 September 1994 — Army photographer Sgt. Frederick Benthal states he was flown into Roswell and taken to a crash site in early July 1947, and ordered to take photos of the crash and bodies. Most of his time was spent in a dark tent taking photos of the bodies, with dark complexions, thin with large heads.

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