

# Is Rachel an Alien Oasis?

By Craig Silverman

(CUP) If you should ever find yourself in Las Vegas, Nevada, and have grown tired of the lounge shows, casinos, drive-through wedding chapels and neon strips, then take a sun-baked two and a half-hour drive along the recently renamed Extraterrestrial Highway until you come across a little town called Rachel.

But keep your eyes open all the way, because Rachel is one of those rare towns that enjoy a one-to-one ratio when it comes to humans and aliens.

It's also the closest vestige of human life to the U.S. government's top secret Nellis Air Force Base and the famed Area 51, the government's top-secret aircraft test site.

Rising from the tumbleweeds and dust on a barren stretch of Nevada highway, this former mining town has become a hotbed of Alien activity.

It all started in

1989, when Bob Lazar, claiming to be a government physicist, announced he had been hired to work on the extraterrestrial spacecraft the U.S. government was keeping at a site near Area 51.

Now this town of no more than 100 receives a constant flow of tourists from all over the world. And laughing all the way to the bank are Joe and Pat Travis. They own the only local bar and hotel in the town. A stop at the Travis' A'Le'Inn (pronounced A-Lee-In) is a must for anyone.

Talk in the watering hole ranges from conspiracy theories to sightings to what is going on in the heavily guarded Area 51.

Pat Travis, Joe's wife, has an intimate relationship with one alien in particular. His name is Archibald, and he follows her everywhere she goes. But no matter how hard you squint, you won't see him:

Archibald is invisible.

"Archibald is a being that travels with me. I named him for my true love, who planned to call his first born Archibald," Travis says in a calm, cautious tone. She also explains how beings regularly visit her establishment.

Her husband, Joe, hasn't had a sighting of his own, but has many theories as to what is transpiring over in Area 51. Just back from feeding his pigs, Joe takes the phone from his busy wife and shares his thoughts.

"There is one theory that holds the aliens are trading technology for minerals with the government," says the gruff-voiced former carpenter.

Travis is confident that the intergalactic exchange will remain friendly. "I can't imagine why they would attack us. They have the technology to destroy us, but haven't done it so far."

The Travis' establishment features a variety of souvenir items including "Alien On Board" bumper stickers and yellow and black "Alien Crossing" road signs. The bar's most

popular drink is the Beam Me Up, Scotty and they are selling Alien Burgers like hot cakes.

But while the increased traffic is pleasing people like the Travis', it has a large majority of the town upset.

Among the alien dissenters is Glenn Campbell. He lives in Upper Rachel, while the Travis' live in Lower Rachel.

"Those of us in Upper Rachel look down upon those in Lower Rachel," says the 35-year-old computer programmer. Campbell used to live in one of the trailers the Travis' rent out. Then one summer night in 1993, Joe Travis kicked him out.

Campbell explains it like this: "I was awakened by someone pounding on the door of my camper. It was Joe, very drunk. I jumped out of bed, knowing the score immediately. Joe is a man with a lot of guns and was probably carrying one."

Campbell grabbed his clothes, moved to Upper Rachel and founded the Area 51 Research Center. Campbell is sceptical about the number of

sightings in the area, since most have to do with strange lights in the sky.

"There are constantly war games going on at the base, so planes are dropping flares to evade radar. It's a spectacular sight — like a curved string of pearls in the sky."

Campbell does, however, believe there is a possibility that the government is involved with aliens in Area 51.

Back in the A'Le'Inn, Pat Travis takes the phone back from her husband and begins listing off the souvenir items available. She interrupts herself to yell at someone in the Inn: "Don't let them out!" she calls. Then, returning to her friendly tone, she explains that the dogs almost got out, and they would eat the chickens.

"Then my husband would have to shoot them, because they are not supposed to do that," says Travis. "Well now I guess you know just what's going on here."

But the truth is that nobody really knows what's going on in Rachel.

## Changes to research fees - in middle of project

(CUP) — An engineering professor says his work researching alternative energy sources is in limbo because Memorial University changed the rules halfway through his project by imposing a new technical assistance fee.

Anand Sharan began working on an electric car and various solar-powered home appliances in 1994, after receiving a four-year \$72,000 grant from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

But last year Memorial

began charging shop fees for every hour of work researchers required from its technical service division shops. The university charges a \$5 hourly rate that, Sharan says, can turn into a lot of money over the course of a research project.

Technical services can include anything from glassblowing to metal work and Sharan says the new fee is stopping him from finishing his project. And because the shop fees didn't exist when Sharan applied for his grant, they weren't included in the budget proposal.

"Halfway through the project they changed the rules," Sharan said. "I have a fixed budget and the commitment has to be there from the university. There were no shop fees when I applied for the grant."

Sharan received notices from the university last year saying he owed money for shop fees. Then, Sharan said, Memorial took \$4,000 from his research grant to cover these costs.

Now Sharan says the university is demanding more

money and that he received a memo instructing the director of technical services to stop work on Sharan's work orders until an agreement is reached regarding payment.

He said he doesn't understand why the university is resorting to stopping his work. Sharan filed a grievance with the Memorial's faculty association and says his work should be allowed to continue until a ruling is made.

But Peter Morris of University Relations says Sharan is free to continue with his

work, as long as he is willing to pay the fees.

Morris said the \$5 fee is a modest one and the university often charges outside organizations as much as \$80 an hour for the same services.

The shop fees were introduced in response to deep government cutbacks and were unavoidable Morris said. Sharan admits the university has a right to charge for the type of service he needs, but says the university should follow through on its commitments to his projects.