

## The UFOs Arrive

<http://www.ufomind.com/area51/place/rachel/history/#RTFTtoC18>

Whether or not you believe in UFOs, one thing is certain: The UFO watchers are real and are sighted here with great frequency. Most of them go directly to the Little A'Le'Inn where they buy souvenirs and listen to Joe Travis talk about the New World Order. The wave of UFO buffs took the town by surprise beginning in late 1989, and "ufotourists" have come here in growing numbers ever since.

In November 1989, a Las Vegas resident, Bob Lazar, claimed on a Las Vegas television station<sup>[40]</sup> that he had worked with alien spacecraft at Papoose Lake, in the Nellis Range about 35 miles south of Rachel. He said that he saw nine flying saucers in a hanger built into a hillside, and that he had worked as a scientist to "reverse engineer" the propulsion system of one of these craft.<sup>[41]</sup>

Part of his story was that in March and April of 1989, he brought some of his friends to the Tikaboo Valley, 25 miles before Rachel on Highway 375, to watch the saucers being tested in the sky on Wednesday nights. As soon as his claims were publicized, it seemed that *everyone* was coming to the Tikaboo Valley to look for UFOs on Wednesday nights. The sacred site among UFO watchers was the "Black Mailbox," which is rancher Steve Medlin's mailbox and the only landmark along the lonely stretch of highway in the Tikaboo Valley. Some who ventured further down the highway came upon the Rachel Bar and Grill.

Rachel is no closer to the Tikaboo Valley than Alamo, which is a lot bigger and more accessible, but only the Rachel Bar & Grill took hold with the UFO watchers. It may have been the impressive isolation and open terrain that made Rachel attractive to UFO watchers, or it may have been Pat & Joe Travis' eagerness to please. When the wave was just starting, Pat & Joe told an aviation journalist<sup>[42]</sup> that they did not really believe the UFO stories but that it was good for business. Later, however, as the business rolled in, the Travis's began to embrace UFOs wholeheartedly, and they now seem to endorse all UFO claims without exception.

If walk into the bar and ask for the last time UFOs were sighted, the answer always seems to be, "Just the other night." The sighting is usually reported by a tourist; Rachel residents themselves never seem to see them. Pat Travis has only two first-hand UFO stories. In one, a ball of light came through the door while Pat and Joe were sitting alone at the bar shortly after they had bought it. Joe and Pat recognized it as an alien presence and offered it a can of beer. In the other story, the bar is protected by an alien named "Archibald," who only Pat can feel and hear and who saved her life on the highway once by warning her to slow down when a cow was on the road ahead.<sup>[43]</sup> Joe Travis says the UFO mystery

## RACHEL

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Rachel has been dubbed the nation's "UFO capital" for the many sightings reported on Highway 375 near here. Most residents profess no experience with UFOs, but many visitors are convinced that the U.S. government is testing alien spacecraft just beyond the mountains that overlook this tiny desert town.

Rachel is the closest settlement to "Area 51," the super-secret government facility where many high-tech aircraft have been tested. The U-2 spy plane, SR-71 Blackbird and F-117A stealth fighter were flown from this secret base, which is located on restricted military land at Groom dry lake about 25 miles south of Rachel. "You can't get there from here," the locals say when visitors ask about Area 51, and no one seems to know for sure what is being tested there now.

Some say flying saucers are the reason for all the secrecy. In 1988, a scientist named Bob Lazar came forward on Las Vegas TV to say that he had worked with extraterrestrial spacecraft at a secret underground facility near Area 51. He also claimed that he and his friends had watched the saucers perform from Highway 375 near Rachel. Soon, scores of city folk were parked along this remote highway trying to glimpse the alleged alien craft. Since Area 51 itself was off-limits, visitors came to Rachel for supplies and advice, and residents were surprised to find their town become the center of worldwide attention.

Visitors in search of dramatic lights in the sky are almost never disappointed because Highway 375 is also the scene of many air combat exercises. Military jets often engage in mock dogfights overhead, and Rachel gets enough sonic booms to make any weekday seem like the Fourth of July. Flares dropped by jets can make convincing "UFOs," as do satellites and meteors in the crystal clear desert skies. Rachel residents themselves are divided about the UFO claims, but all agree that the many visiting journalists and TV crews have certainly put this town on the map.

Rachel was founded not for UFOs but for mining, which is all but gone now. Farming and ranching employ some of the 100 residents, and others work for the local bar or gas station. The town is composed mostly of mobile homes surrounded by a huge desert valley. It is place that some visitors would regard as "the middle of nowhere," but Rachel residents call it the center of the universe.