

# The crashed-saucer forgeries

by Joe Nickell and John F. Fischer

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*I am glad of all details, . . . whether they seem to you to be relevant or not.*

—Sherlock Holmes

Whether it was an extraterrestrial craft or an ordinary balloon-carried weather device, it appears to have been swept in by the wave of UFO reports that began on June 24, 1947, with pilot Kenneth Arnold's fortuitous sighting. And now, alleged government documents purport to reveal the "Ultimate Secret": how a crashed saucer and its little humanoid occupants were recovered and hidden away at a secret government installation—all part of something called Operation Majestic-12 (MJ-12), after the top-secret panel of a dozen scientists, military officers, and intelligence officials who allegedly comprised it.

Whatever the object was, it crashed, about the beginning of July, on a ranch near Corona, New Mexico. Although a young public information officer at nearby Roswell Army Air Base issued a press release stating that a "flying disc" had finally been retrieved, he was soon reprimanded and the object subsequently identified as a "Rawin target." (That was a radar target formed of foiled paper fastened to a balsa frame and carried aloft by balloons.) Nevertheless, rumor would soon claim that

some half dozen "humanoid creatures" had been recovered, one possibly alive (Charles Berlitz and William L. Moore's *The Roswell Incident* [1980], p. 2), and that they were hidden away at a government facility: possibly (nonexistent) "Hangar 18" at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, or even CIA headquarters at Langley, Virginia.

The years brought other "crash/retrieval" stories—ranging from outright hoaxes (like that attending Frank Scully's 1950 book *Behind the Flying Saucers*) to the dubious accounts of anonymous informants (like the proliferating tales collected by Leonard Stringfield). There was even a brief revival of the 1897 Aurora, Texas, crashed "airship" story (another hoax, albeit one that has been compounded over the years).

Then, in 1987, came documentary evidence which proved—if the documents were genuine—that the "Roswell incident" was not just an absurd mistake but instead ufology's most crucial case. The purportedly top secret documents did appear under very strange circumstances. They were released by a trio of UFO researchers: William L. Moore and two associates, Stanton T. Friedman and Jaime Shandera. Because of their crucial involvement in this important case, it will be useful to take a brief look at each.

William Leonard Moore, Jr., a self-described political independent who lives in Los Angeles, was born October 31, 1943, in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, son of a steelworker and an archivist/historian. He received an A.B. degree in 1965 and later (1968–72) attended Duquesne University without, however, receiving a further degree. He taught French and Russian in Pennsylvania public schools and English and French in high schools (1966–79) before becoming, according to *Contemporary Authors* (1980), a "full-time writer and lecturer." Moore tried his hand at creative writing with a couple of one-act dramas, and wrote two sensationalistic books which relied heavily on shadowy sources to "expose" alleged government cover-ups: *The Philadelphia Experiment* (1979) and (with Charles Berlitz) *The Roswell Incident* (1980).

The former was panned by the *Washington Post* (March 6, 1979), and investigative writer Paul Begg labeled the "experiment" a hoax, hinting that one source—a photocopied newspaper clipping "received by Berlitz and Moore from an anonymous source"—may have been forged. Of *The Roswell Incident*, Moore later wrote (*IUR*, July/August 1986):

Stan Friedman and I did the bulk of the research for the book.

Berlitz was largely responsible for creating the text and format . . . . If, however, there is any blame to be taken for the disgraceful hodgepodge of fact and fiction to be found in *The Roswell Incident*, then I am willing to accept it.

Since 1984 Moore has operated (with himself as president) something called the Fair-Witness Project, the avowed purpose of which is to investigate allegedly paranormal cases of "high-strange singularity." He has also operated, as a business, "William L. Moore Publications & Research" (his letterhead featuring a caricature of Moore as a paste-up artist). In 1989, in a speech at the MUFON symposium, Moore acknowledged that he was suspected of having forged the MJ-12 documents. Mentioning that a 1983 divorce had left him "with virtually nothing" and that he had experienced bankruptcy thereafter, he defended himself by saying: "Rest assured, if I was trying to perpetrate a hoax, I would have played it for all the cash I could get a long time ago and then taken the money and run . . . ."

Moore also shocked and angered many in the UFO community by alleging he had formerly acted as an unpaid government agent, providing information on several individuals as well as helping to disseminate disinformation (ostensibly as a sort of self-appointed counter-counterintelligence operation). As to his reportedly once having flashed "an official identification card" linking him with a government intelligence agency, Moore claimed, however: "The I.D. card thing stems from nothing more than a practical joke on my part that has simply gotten out of hand."

Stanton T. Friedman, now living in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, was born July 29, 1934, in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and received his B.S. degree in physics in 1955 and his M.S. in 1956 from the University of Chicago. Until 1970 he worked as a nuclear physicist on classified programs for such firms as General Motors and Westinghouse. From 1970–1982 Friedman became a full-time speaker on various "controversial, scientific issues," and he served as research consultant for *The Roswell Incident*—although his name is accorded only an alphabetical position in the end-of-book acknowledgments. (But if Moore was seemingly depriving Friedman of deserved credit, the tables would soon be turned: a writing titled *UFO's: Earth's Cosmic Watergate*, which Moore listed as a work-in-progress with anticipated completion in 1981, ended up as the verbatim title of a publication issued by Friedman that same year.)

Since 1982 Friedman has worked as a consultant to industry on such matters as irradiated food and radon, while continuing as an active ufologist. According to a promotional release, he offers a "dynamic ILLUSTRATED, always UPDATED lecture 'Flying Saucers ARE Real'" which covers such topics as "saucer landings" and "abductions of earthlings by aliens." In 1989, Moore described Friedman as "the scientist of the group," and

defended him on a charge of "gullibility" leveled by the editor of a UFO newsletter. James W. Moseley had written in his popular *Saucer Smear* (May 25, 1989):

Friedman has recently obtained a \$16,000 grant from Bruce Macabee's Fund for UFO Research, to continue his library research on the MJ-12 matter. We would far prefer that this grant had gone to an *unbiased* observer, rather than to someone so highly committed to finding an answer that upholds the authenticity of the documents. Quite frankly, were Friedman to somehow find a "smoking gun" proving the documents are fake, we wonder if he could be trusted to reveal this information to the public & thus reveal his own gullibility of recent years!

Despite Moore's defense of him, Friedman reportedly became extremely angered at the implications in Moore's symposium speech, with as-yet-uncertain results as to the pair's relationship.

Jaime H. Shandera, described in a press release circulated by Friedman as a Los Angeles "producer, director & researcher for 20 years," joined Moore in 1982, after having worked with him and Friedman on a UFO movie in 1980. The Friedman release says he has an "extensive background in news and documentaries." But, according to Moseley, like Moore "He too has largely given up his career. . . . His financial situation is better than Moore's, however, as his wife has a very good job in the TV industry."

Although Shandera was a virtual unknown in so far as ufology is concerned, and had never published any books or papers on the subject, it was to him that the ill-fated MJ-12 papers were sent—anonously. Shandera supposedly received them on December 11, 1984, in the form of a roll of unprocessed 35mm film. (It was reportedly inside a white envelope, inside a brown-paper wrapper, inside another such wrapper sealed with "official-looking brown tape on all seams." The "carefully typed" address label bore no return address.) Shandera promptly contacted Moore and the film was developed, according to Moore's account in a MUFON banquet speech in 1987.

On the film were two documents. The first was a seven-page "BRIEFING DOCUMENT: OPERATION MAJESTIC 12/ PREPARED FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER," dated November 18, 1952. The second was a "MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE," dated September 24, 1947, and bearing the signature of President Truman. Both were designated "TOP SECRET/EYES ONLY." If genuine, they would prove that the United States recovered a crashed saucer near Roswell in 1947, together with "four small human-like beings," and that the government also retrieved another alien vehicle which crashed near the Texas-Mexico border on December 6, 1950; the memo would prove that Truman had authorized "Operation Majestic Twelve" to handle such matters.

Then another MJ-12 document surfaced, reportedly discovered at the National Archives by Moore and Shandera in the summer of 1985. (But the copy they

circulated *two years later* was marked with the release date, “1/12/87.”) If authentic, this document—ostensibly a carbon *copy* of a memo from Robert Cutler (Special Assistant to President Eisenhower) to USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Nathan Twining, dated July 14, 1954—would verify the existence of an MJ-12 group operating at that time.

These were the primary (but not the only) MJ-12 documents under contention when we became involved in the case. Our participation came with the encouragement of *IUR* editor Jerome Clark. Many other individuals and groups were involved in scrutinizing the documents—generally with a view toward debunking or defending them—but ours was to be an independent investigation.

## Questioned documents

We began our investigation by requesting from William Moore and Jaime Shandera photographic prints from the negatives they developed, showing the MJ-12 documents, together with a photocopy of the front and back of the wrapper in which the film was received. Neither man troubled to reply. Stanton Friedman, however, did send us multiple-generation photocopies, stating: “I hereby certify that the enclosed Xerox copies of the Ike briefing document were made by me from prints received . . . in early August and that to the best of my knowledge they are not retouched.”

But Friedman was unwilling to circumvent Shandera or Moore, who, in any event, possessed the negatives; neither was Friedman willing to supply a copy of the package’s postmark which, he said, “we do not wish to reveal at this time.” Jerome Clark intervened at this stage to write Friedman. Clark stated that he had, for many years, known one of us (J.N.) “whose intellectual integrity I have never had reason to question,” and who “has my and CUFOS’ full confidence.” Clark added: “All of us at CUFOS were pleased when he offered his services and I would hate to see this opportunity missed, as will happen, of course, if he has nothing to work with.” Nevertheless, we never received the photographs, leaving us to wonder just what Moore, et al, feared could occur from our having the photos, as opposed to multiple-generation photocopies, to examine.

We had wanted the photographs for several reasons, one of which was to establish the closest possible link with the originals. Even so, without the actual papers there would be no provenance (i.e., history or chain of ownership) for them, and that would represent a serious obstacle to authentication. Although, as one expert, Dr. Roy L. Davids, states, provenance is a less crucial issue than “a thorough examination of the manuscript itself,” in the case of the photographed MJ-12 documents even that was problematical.

The problem is highlighted by the fact that many notorious forgeries have involved some contrivance to mitigate the absence of the alleged originals. For example, in the case of the spurious Beale-treasure papers, the

antique manuscripts had supposedly been destroyed in a fire, and only printed copies remained. (See Joe Nickell’s “Discovered: The Secret of Beale’s Treasure,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, July 1982.) Again, with the bogus “Lincoln conspiracy” documents of the 1970s, the “originals” could not be examined because they were in the custody of certain “Stanton descendants” who wished to remain anonymous, so only “transcripts” were available.

In the case of the filmed MJ-12 papers (the Cutler-Twining memo has its own problems), the fact that the documents were available only on film effectively prevented examination of the paper, ink, and so on. It was obvious that the text and markings could easily have been supplied by old typewriters in conjunction with a cut-and-paste technique using photocopied elements from genuine documents. Indeed, this approach is one readily available to the novice forger. According to an article in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 21 (1976):

It has become apparent that the perpetrators of various crimes, aware of the possibility of their identification through the examinations of handwriting, typewriting, ink, or paper, have resorted to the use of photocopies in an attempt to eliminate or obscure the identifiable features of the original documents.

We had also wanted the photographs to ensure that the copies we had were unaltered from the originals. (When Moore first released the documents, they had been doctored; i.e., portions had been marked out as if they had been censored—but the censorship had been done by Moore. And there are other ways the documents could have been altered; for example, the numerical portion of the date on the Truman memo has anomalous features consistent with alteration at some stage in the document’s existence.) We had also asked for contact prints of the negatives so that (among other reasons) we could account for all frames and help ensure that we had the full evidence as it had been received.

Because the Moore-Shandera-Friedman team had chosen to withhold crucial evidence from us, we had to make a critical decision: whether to abort our investigation, or continue under additionally restrictive circumstances. We chose the latter. But we did advise Friedman that it would be impossible for us to authenticate the documents and that we would instead effectively be limited “to pursuing the alternate hypothesis of forgery.” Friedman had trouble comprehending this, and he seemed committed to defending the documents—trumpeting any credible features and devising rationalizations for any problematical ones. To an extent this is appropriate; in questioned-document cases, however, it is not what is correct that matters nearly so much as what is wrong, since even a novice forger can be expected to get some things right. For instance, the fact that a putative George Washington letter was written on acceptably old paper would matter less than the fact that the text was written in

Palmer-style penmanship; the latter would brand the document a fake. Less glaring anomalies might not be individually telling, but a number of them could represent a pattern highly indicative of forgery.

Once fully underway our investigation included making trips to both the Truman Library (in Independence, Missouri) and the National Archives, consulting old government style manuals, enlisting the aid of a linguistics expert, corresponding with ufologists, and much more—work that extended over a period of two years.

Even at a first reading, we saw what appeared to be a serious problem with the Truman memo. It was a glaring format error, yet one that seemed to have all but gone unrecognized. A hint of the problem comes from Friedman's berating of beleaguered Philip J. Klass, arch UFO skeptic, for repeatedly calling the document a "letter." Friedman stated (*IUR*, September/October 1987):

Klass seems to be guilty here of an intentional misrepresentation of facts by calling the memo a letter. He is able to state that authentic letters begin "My Dear Secretary" and have the full name and address of the intended recipient in the lower left hand corner of the page. And being psychic as he seems to be, he states, "But in the September 24, 1947, letter, the counterfeiter forgot to type Forrestal's name, title and address in the lower left portion of the page and used Dear Secretary Forrestal instead of Truman's typical 'My Dear Secretary.'" This is absurd. Memos—and this was a memo, not a letter—don't have recipients' addresses on them.

Unfortunately for Friedman, neither do memos open with "Dear . . ." That element—known as a *greeting* or *salutation*—is reserved for letters. Yet Klass acquiesced to Friedman's heated criticism and subsequently referred to the document as a "memorandum," while correctly observing that its format differed markedly from that of authentic Truman memoranda of the same period. At the very least—based on our search through countless Truman letters and memoranda as well as from Friedman's research—we can say that the odds are thousands to one against such an incompetent hybrid memo/letter's having emanated from Truman's office.

There were other problems with the Truman "memo" (which ostensibly served as a presidential executive order authorizing Operation MJ-12). Some of these we would discover; some, others would point out. For example, soon after the MJ-12 documents surfaced, Barry Greenwood (editor of *Just Cause*) wrote:

Page 2 of the Briefing Paper refers to the formation of MJ-12 "by special classified executive order of President Truman on 24 September, 1947 . . ." We have checked the Truman Library's listing of executive orders and found that no orders were issued on 9/24. Executive order numbers 9891-9896 were issued respectively on 9/15, two on 9/20, 9/23, 9/30 and 10/2/47, none even closely resembling the MJ-12 subject. There is no gap in the number sequence for these dates so none are missing. Further, the number quoted in Attachment "A" of the Briefing Paper, #092447 . . . is not an executive order number but the date of President

Truman's memo, 9/24/47. Executive orders are not numbered by date but are numbered sequentially, and at the time the numbers were only four digits.

Friedman's rationalization is that the document was only designated an executive order five years later (when it supposedly became an attachment to the Eisenhower briefing document), and that—in any case—(as he put it in an April 6, 1989, letter to Nickell) we "don't have any definition of what was meant by 'special classified executive order'"; he would argue that one has no basis for saying just how it might be numbered.

But the document was undeniably being cited as an executive order (EO) by someone (Rear Adm. R. H. Hillenkoetter, if the briefing document is genuine) who should have known full well what an EO is. Besides, the document seems to function as an EO when it states that "you are hereby authorized to proceed with all due speed and caution upon your undertaking"; yet a genuine EO would necessarily explain what the undertaking *was*, and not just refer to it vaguely as "this matter." Also a genuine EO would necessarily cite the authority under which the President was acting (e.g., a specific citation, such as "By virtue of and pursuant to the authority vested in me by the provisions of . . . [etc.]," or even simply, "By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States . . .") In short, the document's content, like its format, seems incompatible with authenticity.

There are many other problems with this document, but we will mention only one other that we felt was quite significant—one concerning the signature. While it lacked many of the obvious indicators of forgery (insofar as we could determine from our photocopy)—e.g., tremor, retouching, and so on—the document did exhibit a feature that forensic document examiners note can indicate spuriousness, namely what criminologist Paul L. Kirk calls "abnormal positioning of a signature with respect to the body of the writing." As we learned by studying hundreds of genuine documents, President Truman habitually signed his name immediately under the body text, whereas the questioned Truman-Forrestal memo had the signature placed well below the text. (See Figure 1.) In combination, the apparent genuineness of the autograph and the unusual placement suggested to us that the document was a composite or paste-up type forgery made by pasting a genuine signature (such as one clipped from a photocopy) below a typed text, then recopying the whole (possibly a second time after using "white out" to eliminate tell-tale margins of the cutout). That this is precisely how the memo was faked was eventually proven, but before considering that evidence let us take a brief look at the other two MJ-12 documents.

The alleged Eisenhower briefing paper likewise raised many questions. One—the pseudomilitary date format—has been the subject of much debate. Whereas the date on the cover of the document should have been written "18 November 1952," it actually contained an

Known Standards

Questioned

visors in your agency become fully informed of the import of this Order. I am convinced that good personnel management can make a substantial contribution to the efficiency of the government. -----



igations that are properly responsibilities of the States Government. Any arrangement proposed for the ion of this currency should include provisions designed as possible to avoid any windfall to speculators.-----



of the President following appropriate discussions with yourself, Dr. Bush and the Director of Central Intelligence.-----

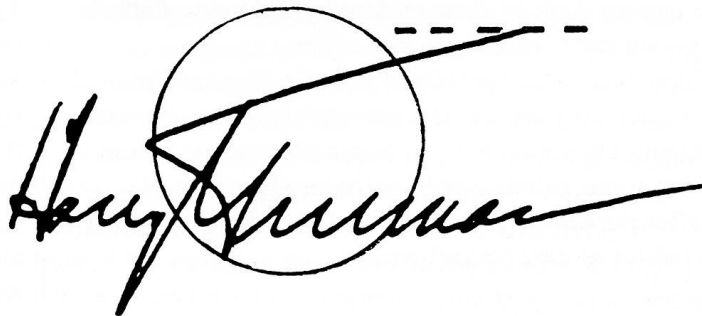


Figure 1. President Truman invariably placed his signature close to the text as shown in the top two examples. With the "T" as a radius, a scribed circle cuts well into the typewriting. But the questioned "MJ-12" example, bottom, fails this test.

anomalous comma: "18 November, 1952." While Friedman has shown that such a feature, although rare, is not unknown in genuine documents of the period, he has fared less well with another date feature: the use of a zero with single-digit dates—e.g., "On 07 July, 1947 . . . ." Friedman has not been able to show the use of the zero in dates of this type. (His citing of examples in which the representation of the date is digital—and the use of the zero therefore positional—is essentially irrelevant.) We find that the two anomalous features—the comma and the zero—when taken together are quite distinctive. Neither we nor Friedman has been able to demonstrate the combination in a genuine U.S. government document of the period, let alone in any document produced by Hillenkoetter. (As we shall see, however, a suspect in the case has used just this distinctive date format.)

Since (unlike the brief Truman-Forrestal and Cutler-Twining memos) the Eisenhower briefing document ran to a few pages, there was a possibility of conducting a linguistics study of the text to see whether it was compatible with genuine writings of its alleged author, Hillenkoetter. Indeed, such a study had previously been commissioned by several UFO organizations, with the result that the MJ-12 document had supposedly been "validated." Yet the analysis seemed flawed and quickly became the subject of controversy. We therefore chose to commission a new study, and MUFON's Robert Bletchman graciously supplied a set of 22 Hillenkoetter exemplars that had been used as standards in the original study.

The new analysis was performed by Jean Pival, a distinguished linguistics expert who has assisted us in previous cases. Prof. Pival pointed out that while she could not say conclusively whether or not the admiral wrote the briefing document, there were certainly "some puzzling deviations from the style of the other manuscripts" (i.e., the exemplars), including certain "syntactical structures found sparingly or not at all in the other materials I examined." She added:

Perhaps more significant is the inclusion of a contradictory mixing of the passive voice (elsewhere employed in relating second-hand information) and the uncharacteristic judgmental statements (found in the twenty-two Hillenkoetter memos and letters only in first-hand reporting). Phrases such as "highly credible military and civilian sources"; "a second object, probably of similar origin"; "the motives and ultimate intentions of these visitors remain completely unknown" probably would have been qualified in the same ways as these more characteristic ones which appear in the same document: "what appear to be a form of writing"; "it is assumed that the propulsion unit was completely destroyed"; and "It was the tentative conclusion of this group . . . ."

Pival concluded that if Hillenkoetter did write the questioned text, "the uncharacteristic judgments could have been added by a second party." On the other hand, she said of the document, "Certainly, it could have been written by someone sophisticated enough to emulate his style."

Turning, finally, to the Cutler-Twining memorandum allegedly discovered in the National Archives, it too raised many controversial points. Although this copy is on thin onionskin paper that could date from the appropriate time period, it apparently fails to match that actually used by Cutler at the time he served on the National Security Council. Worse, the National Archives issued a statement questioning the document's authenticity on numerous grounds, notably that it was located in a record group in which documents are filed by "a Top Secret register number," but that the questioned memo lacked such a number. Moreover, although the (unsigned) copy bears the typed name of Robert Cutler, Cutler was actually away from Washington on the date in question. (Friedman suggests [IUR, May/June 1988] that one of Cutler's two assistants—James Lay and Patrick Coyne—prepared the memo; but the Eisenhower Library counters convincingly: "one would assume that if the memorandum to Twining were genuine, Lay or Coyne would have signed it"—i.e., that it would have borne one of their typed names just as another memo did issued on the same day.) Even Friedman—who stubbornly defends the document against charges of fakery—concedes it may well have been "planted" at the archives (although he thinks it more likely to have been done by an "insider" than by an outside hoaxer).

In the aggregate, the many anomalous and suspicious elements detected in the MJ-12 papers clearly demonstrate the documents are forgeries, but it is always desirable to find conclusive proof. The typewriting might offer such proof, but we felt our multiple-generation photocopies were unsuitable for the expert examination we had planned. (More recently, however, has come an indirect report that the Truman EO was produced on a typewriter dating from after 1947. See Klass' "New Evidence of MJ-12 Hoax," *Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter 1990.)

We saw the Truman signature as a potentially vulnerable link in the forger's chain, since we thought it was a genuine autograph affixed to a bogus document. Now, one does not sign his name precisely the same way twice—a fact well established in the forensic literature (Albert S. Osborn, *Questioned Documents* [1978], pp. 339-62)—and so part of our investigative strategy involved our attempting to find a genuine document with a signature that matched the one in the questioned Truman-Forrestal memo. One of us (J.N.), who did the searching at the Truman Library and the National Archives, was armed with a small card on which was reproduced the target (questioned) signature. This signature was compared with countless signatures, although a trained eye required only a moment or two to eliminate each from consideration. Unfortunately, although our strategy could have yielded conclusive results, we knew that it was a long-shot approach, that we were looking for a particular straw in a very large haystack.

Eventually, after we had all but abandoned our

search one of us (J.N.) met Klass at a conference. We had initially avoided having any contact with him, since we wished to work along independent lines, but he had learned of our investigation and—since we had also shared some information with Friedman—we did briefly discuss the case to the extent of describing our unsuccessful tack. Eventually this would prove fortunate.

In time, Klass found the original—penned on an authentic Truman letter of October 1, 1947, written to Dr. Vannevar Bush—which he sent to us on a confidential basis. (See Figure 2.) To his credit, he did not ask our opinion of the match; he knew (as indeed should anyone with a modicum of visuospatial skills) that he had actually discovered the signature which had been purloined by the MJ-12 forger. All he wanted from us were authoritative forensic references about the uniqueness of individual signatures, which we readily supplied.

As it happens, Klass' discovery had been pre-empted by Friedman, with one difference: Friedman thought the correspondence of one signature to the other was proof of authenticity rather than spuriousness! In his May/June 1988 *IUR* article Friedman said of the questioned Truman EO: "The signature matches that on an October 1947 letter from Truman to [Vannevar] Bush." Of course, at the time, neither we nor Klass had any idea Friedman meant an identical match (even as to a distinctive, anomalous pen stroke at the top of the right-hand vertical stroke of the "H" of "Harry").

After Klass made his discovery, acting on our advice he contacted a forensic document examiner to obtain expert confirmation of his own findings. That expert was aware of another examiner's analysis which reportedly showed the Truman EO had been typed on a post-1947 typewriter. Klass immediately telephoned that examiner and the two compared notes, with the result that Klass sent the examiner the genuine Truman signature for comparison with the questioned one. The examiner had no difficulty (despite the fact that the latter had become slightly stretched by multiple photocopying) in determining that the questioned signature was "a classic signature transplant" (i.e., a genuine signature employed in a photocopy forgery).

MJ-12 proponents, however, were having none of this. The document examiner, Klass reports—having earlier received MJ-12 material from Friedman—felt obliged to advise him of the new, negative findings and tell him "that he should just wash his hands of this." According to Klass, however, "Friedman spoke at a MUFON regional conference near St. Louis and repeated his earlier endorsement of the authenticity of the MJ-12 papers."

Neither was Moore accepting defeat. Citing the slightly larger features of the MJ-12 Truman signature in comparison with the genuine Truman one, Moore grandly discounted Klass' findings. And, in a statement interestingly revealing of his propensity (given his publishing business) to think in terms of paste-up techniques, Moore

remarked (in a September 23, 1989, letter to Klass): "Just as an aside, had I set out to counterfeit a signature using a Xerox, I would have cut a Harry from one signature and a Truman from another, or even tried piecing bits of several signatures together."

Be that as it may, Klass is indeed correct in stating that he has uncovered the "smoking gun" in the MJ-12 forgery case. He is backed by an entire conference-roomful of forensic document examiners, should our own endorsement be thought insufficient. Those who attempt to argue otherwise simply reveal their ineptitude—or worse.

## The forger

Barring either the forger's confession or a full-scale investigation by the FBI or other judicial authority prepared to obtain search warrants, conclusive identification of the MJ-12 author seems remote at this time. But, by sifting through the available evidence and considering such elements as motive, opportunity, *modus operandi*, and so forth, including linguistic and psychological factors, we have attempted to put together a composite profile of the suspect.

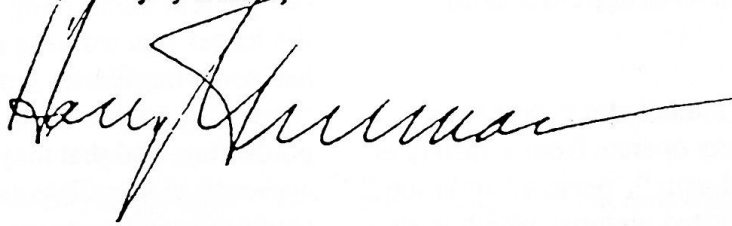
First of all we are convinced the forgeries are not the work of any clandestine government agency—American or otherwise. The documents simply lack the sophistication necessary to warrant such an attribution. Instead they point unfailingly to an individual hoaxer—not only in the typical admixture of cleverness and bungling that have characterized the solitary deceiver throughout history; nor merely because it is the simplest explanation involving the fewest assumptions; but for many additional reasons.

For example, there are tell-tale signs of a UFO partisan at work. The most obvious example is found in the briefing document which lists the late Donald Menzel—the most militant UFO debunker of his day—among the 12 names comprising the "Majestic-12 Group." Here the hoaxer overreached, as most ufologists quickly realized (Friedman notwithstanding; see his "The Secret Life of Donald H. Menzel," *IUR*, January/February 1988). Jerome Clark suggested it was a "bizarre blunder," Klass "an attempt at revenge" against Menzel. Indeed, this posthumous conversion of Menzel from arch skeptic to guardian of the Ultimate Secret is reminiscent of the treatment certain spiritualists have accorded Harry Houdini, the late, great crusader against spiritualist beliefs. More than one trance medium has been unable to resist pretending to conjure up the doubting magician's spirit and having him recant.

Even more specifically, there are unmistakable indicators that the hoax is the work of a crashed-saucer zealot. Not only do the briefing paper's details tally with those of the "Roswell incident" as mythologized in Moore's book, but the MJ-12 papers were clearly fabricated by someone willing to expend a considerable amount of effort in doing so. Forging the documents

# Authentic

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing as 'Harry Truman', written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and matches the one in the 'Questioned' section.

# Questioned

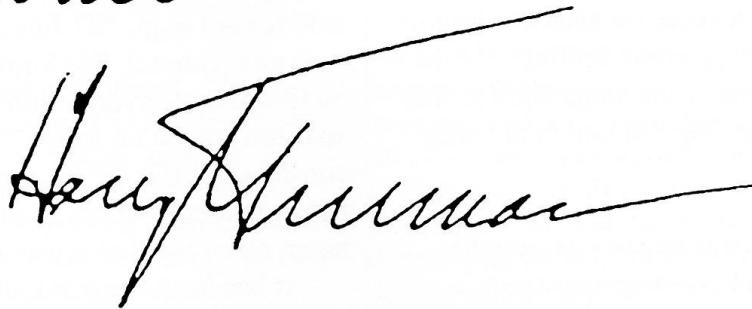
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing as 'Harry Truman', written in dark ink. This signature is slightly stretched and darker than the authentic one, indicating it is a copy.

Figure 2. Truman signature from authentic letter matches one on an "MJ-12" memo (although multiple copying has rendered the latter darker and slightly stretched). Since no two individual signatures are identical, this demonstrates the questioned document is spurious.

would have necessitated research (or access to another's research) in such repositories as the Truman Library, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress (in the Manuscript Division of which the "smoking gun" Truman signature was discovered). Obviously, the forger was someone whose research was on a par with that of Moore, Shandera, and Friedman. Friedman and Moore had, in fact, previously gone through the very files that would soon be revealed as having provided models for the MJ-12 forgeries. (At the same time, the level of research would seem to eliminate one person who has previously been named as a suspect: a former Air Force security agent, reportedly "decertified" for misconduct, named Richard C. Doty. Sources have identified Doty as Moore's cloak-and-dagger "source," the raconteur of incredible tales whom Moore code-named "Falcon." On the TV program *UFO-Coverup?—Live*, telecast October 14, 1988, a disguised "Falcon" stated that Operation MJ-12 was created "in the early fifties"—a glaring "error" that could scarcely be expected from the archival-minded MJ-12 forger.)

The forger's research presupposes an intelligent individual, as does his chosen avocation since, according to an authoritative source, "Forgers approach the personality profiles of confidence men, and the latter have been

shown to have above average intelligence levels," (E. Patrick McGuire, author of *The Forgers* [1969]). Based on the profiles of many forgers, the MJ-12 forger could also be expected to be male, white, and (at the time the documents were created) between the ages of about 27 and 47. He probably comes from a middle-class, possibly "maternally dominated" home (his father perhaps having been employed in some "semi-skilled occupation" and his mother frustrated over her husband's resultingly limited career abilities). Be that as it may, the culprit most likely exhibits an extroversive personality and is highly verbal and socially manipulative. He probably possesses "good organizational capacities." He may also be like others of his ilk who, in McGuire's words, "rebel against all authority figures and often are cynical about general society, institutions, and mores." And he can be expected to have "an exceptional amount of that type of courage which is best described as 'nerve,'" Charles E. O'Hara writes in *Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation* (1973).

As a type of psychopath, the typical forger—and thus almost certainly our suspect—can be expected to show

a remarkable disregard for truth . . . . During the most solemn perjuries he has no difficulty at all in looking anyone tranquilly in the eyes. Although he will lie about any matter, under any circumstances, and often for no



good reason, he may, on the contrary, sometimes own up to his errors (usually when detection is certain) . . . After being caught in shameful and gross falsehoods, after repeatedly violating his most earnest pledges, he finds it easy, when another occasion arises, to speak of his *word of honor*, his *honor as a gentleman*, and he shows surprise and vexation when commitments on such a basis do not immediately settle the issue.

It is well to consider, as manuscript expert Mary Benjamin remarks, that forgers operate from a variety of motives, including "financial gain," "personal ambition," and "that curious form of arrested maturity which leads adults to perpetrate hoaxes" (*Autographs* [1986]). It may be that in the MJ-12 forger's case, all of these are aspects of a larger motivation to silence the skeptics and rejuvenate belief among the crashed-saucer faithful. Writing in *Saucer Smear* (August 4, 1987), Dennis Stillings (of the Archaeus Project) offers an interesting suggestion in this regard (in the context of suggesting "Moore et al," may have concocted the hoax):

These people have been committed to the hardware theory [i.e., the belief that UFOs are real, nuts-and-bolts extraterrestrial craft] so fanatically and for so long that they may have tired of the lack of support for what they see as obvious truth, so to save us from impending doom they have concocted a well-meaning hoax to put us on our guard. . . . This sort of thing has happened before.

Because of his personality and motive, a forger who is a repeat offender (as is indicated in the MJ-12 case) will likely exhibit a characteristic *modus operandi* (or "M.O."), a method of operation that may remain relatively unchanged. That is, the typical offender is prone, one authority says, to "going about his task in the old familiar way, thereby leaving the inevitable indications of his identity, despite the fact that he successfully avoids leaving any other clues." Thus we may hope to discover other instances of the MJ-12 forger's handiwork should there be any. They could be expected to involve forged documents, or their verbal equivalent, in support of a hoax exposé of an alleged government cover-up. A more closely focused look at just the forgery aspect of the M.O. does reveal some additional clues as to the person we may be looking for. Earlier we mentioned verbal skills as an expected trait; the pseudo briefing paper, allegedly written by Rear Adm. Hillenkoetter and rather cleverly imitative of his governmentese, suggests that the author is a writer who can speak through a persona. He is also able to visualize situations imaginatively. Therefore we believe we may be looking for someone who has experience in writing fiction, perhaps using dialogue in stories or plays. (Of course, his may be a previously unrecognized talent; we do not suggest it is of a high order.)

His specific technology may be worthy of comment. It obviously used different typewriters, rubber stamps (or imitation thereof), scissors and/or a paste-up artist's knife, white correction fluid, paper, paper paste or

cement, a mechanical page-numbering device (or means of simulating same), photocopying machine, a 35mm camera, probably a copying stand for the camera, film, envelopes, wrapping tape, and so on. Of course, some or all of these could be bought or rented for the purpose, and our point in mentioning them is not so much to suggest the forger was working in an office, but that he may have had some familiarity with the rudiments of pasting up "copy," as well as using a camera, in association with publishing, and that may have suggested the particular approach to him. (We are aware that virtually anyone could type and paste up such documents and, if necessary, have someone else do the photography.)

Finally, we think the forger left something of a fingerprint on the briefing document. That is the unusual date format (e.g., "07 July, 1947," with the anomalous zero and comma). We know that this incorrect form was produced by the forger himself, who probably had used it so often that he no longer "saw" it but employed it unconsciously. (Or for the same reason that he originally began rendering dates in that way, he may simply have never observed that it was incorrect.)

It has been suggested that this date format points to William Moore, who is known to have employed it during most of the 1980s; then again, it has been suggested that the forger may have been "trying deliberately to frame Moore." As to the latter possibility, we would suggest that anyone who might have done so would have to have had a motive commensurate with the tremendous amount of effort required, and to otherwise fit the profile we have sketched. (We do not feel that Friedman, for example, is a viable suspect.)

Laymen often suggest that no one clever enough to do *A* would be stupid enough (or careless enough) to have done *B*. Actually, anyone who will trouble to study other cases (e.g., that of the "Hitler diaries" or the Mormon "Salamander" letter) will find this is not the exception but the rule. It is fortunately so for those of us who do not wish to be victimized by the smirking purloiners of truth.


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**Crashed discs: fakes and facts**