



# NMSR Reports

The Newsletter of the  
New Mexicans for Science and Reason

NMSR Reports, David E. Thomas, Editor, 801 Fitch Ave., Socorro, NM 87801 © 2018

**AUGUST MEETING:**  
**NEW MEXICANS FOR SCIENCE  
 AND REASON will hear**  
**Benjamin Radford**  
**on “The Blue Whale Game”**  
**7:00 PM August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**==>CNM MAIN CAMPUS,**  
**Student Resource Center<==**  
**==>Room 204<==**  
**Bring a friend!**

## FUTURE MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

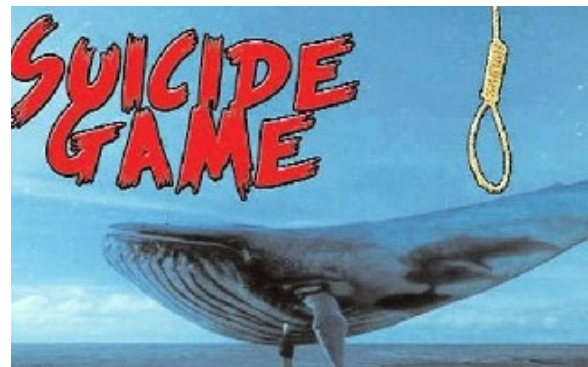
### August 8th, 2018 NMSR Meeting:

Skeptical Inquirer managing editor **Benjamin Radford** will discuss **“The Blue Whale Game: Moral Panic or Public Threat?”**



In 2016 scary warnings circulated on social media asking parents, teachers, and police to beware of a hidden threat to children: a sinister online “game” that can lead to death. Many panicky social media posts plead for parents to take action against the “Blue Whale” suicide game believed to be a hidden online social media group whose goal is encouraging children to kill themselves. One warning from the British government explained that “members have to do different tasks for 50 days. They include self-harming, watching horror movies and waking

up at unusual hours, but these gradually get more extreme. But on the 50th day, the controlling manipulators behind the game reportedly instruct the youngsters to commit suicide.”



The Blue Whale Game has many hallmarks of a classic moral panic, including “Stranger Danger” fears, concerns over new technology, and references to an evil conspiracy. While most of the reports of teen suicides were from Russia, Benjamin Radford investigated news reports of the first two alleged victims of the Blue Whale game in the United States: a fifteen-year-old boy in San Antonio, Texas and a sixteen-year-old girl in Atlanta, Georgia.

Join us at 7:00 PM August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, CNM MAIN CAMPUS, Student Resource Center, Room 204.

### September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 NMSR Meeting: Larry Crumpler, with News from Mars

Our Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> speaker will be scientist Larry Crumpler of the NM Museum of Natural History and Science. Larry will talk about the accomplishments of the rovers he helped to deploy, and also what’s ahead for humans regarding the Red Planet.

### October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 NMSR Meeting: Allen Robnett, on "Astronomy: A Humanist Perspective"

## New Mexicans for Science & Reason (NMSR)

NMSR is a non-profit group with the goals of promoting science, the scientific method, rational thinking, and critical examination of dubious or extraordinary claims. NMSR meets at 7 PM on the second Wednesday of each month, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at CNM's Student Resource Center, room 204 (@ Richard Barr Boardroom). NMSR Reports is its official newsletter.

### NMSR officers:

**Dave Thomas, President**

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**John Covan, Vice-President**

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**Marilyn Savitt-Kring, Science Mom**

Membership: \$25/year (hardcopy newsletter), or \$15/year (downloadable PDF), make your check payable to NMSR, send to treasurer (Debbie Thomas).

### NMSR Advisors:

- **Mark Boslough**,  
Physicist (Impacts, Climate Change,  
Global Warming). Sandia National Labs.
- **Kendrick Frazier**  
Editor, Skeptical Inquirer
- **John Geissman**  
Professor of Paleomagnetism, UNM
- **Alan Hale**  
Southwest Institute for Space Research
- **Randy Thornhill**  
Professor of Biology, UNM

Cyber-Cypher Clue: W = Q, Z = D.

Bonus Puzzle Clue: Think outside the ring.

### WANTED: READER ARTICLES & COMMENTARY

Got something to share with NMSR members? Send it in! ATTN: Dave Thomas, Editor, NMSR Reports.

**REMEMBER**, our next NMSR meeting is at 7 PM on **WEDS., AUGUST 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018**, at Student Resource Center, room 204 at CNM!

## PUZZLE TIME!

[Please send solutions to Dave Thomas at: [nmsrdave@swcp.com](mailto:nmsrdave@swcp.com), or at 801 Fitch Ave., Socorro NM 87801.]

### Cyber-Cypher: AUGUST PUZZLE

(Submitted by Dave Thomas)

The following letters are a simple substitution cypher. If R stands for L, R will stand for L everywhere. Your Cyber-Cypher Clue: Clue? Oh, well - if you must, see p. 2.

" N I J C E K A J O T X L C N J D O B V  
K T V J H E V J M L C B C P D B M J M L M  
B V U B P M N I J M B K J X T O J W E B V  
Y T V E K J M , T O B V U B P M  
F O T F T O N L T C B V N T N I J  
Y T V E K J M . " - B K J Z J T  
B Y T D B Z O T

### SUPER SECRET WORD!

However you prefer to do the cypher itself (above or below), simply duplicate those actions on the alphabetized row of cypher letters below. You'll build an answer key, and you'll also reveal - the Super Secret Word!

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

### JULY CYPHER SOLUTION

"I AM CONVINCED THAT IT WILL NOT BE LONG BEFORE THE WHOLE WORLD ACKNOWLEDGES THE RESULTS OF MY WORK." - GENETICIST GREGOR MENDEL

Esteemed July Code Crackers: Mike Arms\*, Austin Moede\*, George Egert\* and Terry Lauritsen\*.

\*Secret Word: "WISHFUL MONK BY TRADE"

## SOCORRO STUMPER

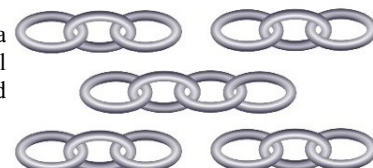
### Need more Secret Word Cryptograms?

New puzzles every week at  
[www.nmsr.org/SocorroStumper.htm](http://www.nmsr.org/SocorroStumper.htm)

### August Bonus: "Lord of the Rings"

Submitted by Dave Thomas

Samwise wants to make a friendship bracelet for Frodo, but all he has are five separate pieces of gold chain, as shown here.



Gandalf has offered to cast a spell allowing one ring to be opened, and then closed, after an interval of just ten seconds. However, the wizard insists on the condition that Samwise asks him to use that spell the *absolute minimum* number of times.

**The August Bonus:** How many spells must Gandalf invoke to complete the bracelet? (i.e., how many rings must he work on?)

**The July Bonus: “Powered Ascent”**

*Submitted by Dave Thomas*



A bored convention-goer decided to deduce how many steps were found from the bottom to the top of the up escalator in the lobby. She found that by simply standing on the same step, she would ascend to the top in 35 seconds. When she walked up the moving escalator at her normal pace, however, the ascent only took 15 seconds, with a total of 23 steps climbed.

**The July Bonus:** If the power was switched off, and the escalator became mere stairs, how many steps is it to the top? And how long would it take our

subject to make the ascent?

**ANSWER:** Just over 40 steps; just over 26 seconds.

**Congrats:** Earl Dombroski (NM), Paul Braterman (UK), Allen Robnett (NM), Gene Aronson (NM), and Mike Arms (NM)! *(Based on an actual Convention Center.)*

## UFO CORNER



*by Dave Thomas*

### Introducing a possible explanation of the mysterious Socorro Incident of 1964

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1964, Socorro city policeman Lonnie Zamora saw a shiny object shaped like an “O” in the desert. He said he saw two people beside the object he described as a “car.” As he was trying to get closer, a loud explosion startled Zamora, who said the object flew up for several feet, then took off rapidly to the South. Later, odd indentations and burned flora were found at the scene.

Some UFO buffs consider Socorro to be one of the best flying saucer cases of all time. It’s got a very reputable witness, physical evidence, corroborating witnesses, and was even investigated by J. Allen Hynek himself.

The NMSR website’s Socorro UFO page has an

article citing the evidence that Zamora may have seen a NASA lunar exploration test vehicle; White Sands Missile Range was testing the Surveyor craft on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1964. In recent years, the idea that the whole thing was an elaborate prank by students from New Mexico Tech has gained in popularity.

I received this fascinating letter from fellow NMT alumnus Kevin Ashley. Kevin thinks the tale he has to relate can explain the whole mystery. Do you agree? Read on...

**Subject: Socorro Saucer explained**

**Date: Sun, 31 Dec 2017 17:17:41 -0800**

**From: Kevin J Ashley**

**To: 'Dave Thomas, NMSR'**

Dave,

I think we may have been at New Mexico Tech at the same time. I attended there from 1973 through 1979 taking my BS and MS in Mining Engineering.

In any case, I just came cross your NMSR website when I was looking for information on the Socorro Saucer. I hadn’t thought about it in years but now that I am semi-retired I have more time on my hands and have been cleaning out my desk of files on various subjects.

In short, I know the answer to the Socorro Saucer Siting because I talked to one of the people who was on the other side of the arroyo that morning when Officer Zamora showed up. His name is Bruno R\_\_\_ and he was a mining engineering student at Tech in the early 1960’s.

While I was at Tech, the El Defensor-Chieftain made up a poster from the articles on the Socorro Saucer siting of which I bought a copy. I took it with me to my first job which was at Fluor Mining & Metals in San Mateo, CA in 1980-81. One day at lunch I was regaling my coworkers with the tale of the Socorro Saucer based on the information in the poster. As I finished the story I noticed one of the other mining engineers who worked there leaning against the door and laughing. When I asked him what he was laughing at he said, “It was me.”

He then told his story about the incident. He said that he and another mining student were bored and looking for something to do that day. They got their hands on some dynamite (possibly from the dynamite shack mentioned in Officer Zamora’s account) and decided to have some fun setting it off under an old overturned metal barrel. The first time they did this the barrel went flying into the air which they found very amusing so they did it a couple more times. (It was probably the third explosion that attracted the attention of Officer Zamora.) Delighted with the result of the barrel being thrown in the air again, they set about putting together one more explosion. As they were bending down getting everything set they were apparently seen from across the arroyo by Officer Zamora. The two of them, who were wearing white coveralls, were seized with a sudden need to get the hell out of there because being



*Dave Thomas visiting the landing site.*

caught doing a stupid stunt like this with dynamite would get them both expelled. (Officer Zamora notes in his statement that one of the persons looked at him and seemed very concerned.) Evidently the fuse had already been lit when Bruno and his friend legged it for their vehicle to get away. Office Zamora started toward the site when the explosion went off and as he dived for cover he lost his glasses. What he saw the couple of times he glanced up was the oil drum being projected upwards with flame coming out from the bottom. Bruno and his friend kept a low profile throughout the entire affair after that and I may have been the first person he told this story to. This was in 1980, sixteen years after the affair. (I believe Dr. Workman was President of NMT in 1964 and his reputation 10 years later was still that he was a zero tolerance kind of guy.)



Reading over the account by Officer Zamora his original description seems to fit well with Bruno's account. It is the "filling in" of details where the mystery arises. For instance, when people went back and found four burn spots, these became a configuration of thrusters from a vehicle, not the scorched remnants of multiple dynamite explosions. Also important is that

this was not a hoax. Bruno and his friend were not trying to fool anyone. This is just a case of an observer trying to explain something that they have not seen before.

Over the years I have told people this story as an example of how a very straightforward event can get blown way out of proportion. I even sent it off to "Unsolved Mysteries" thinking that they would be interested, but I never heard anything back from them. I guess I should have realized that the show was called "Unsolved Mysteries", not "Solved Mysteries".

In any case I figure that now that Lonnie Zamora is gone someone should get this all on the record before Bruno kicks the bucket too. I haven't talked with Bruno since the 1980's so I don't know if he would be willing to come forward, but an organization like yours might be able to coax him out for the good of science. I have found Bruno's LinkedIn page and it appears he lives in Felton, CA. I will leave it in your hands.

**Kevin J. Ashley**  
Redwood City, CA

NMSR thanks Kevin Ashley for a fascinating explanation. Read more at [www.nmsr.org/socorro.htm](http://www.nmsr.org/socorro.htm).

DUES - check the date on your mailing label. If it's time for you to renew, or to make a contribution, please make your check payable to NMSR, and send it to Debbie Thomas, NMSR Treasurer, 3205 Alcazar NE, Albuquerque., NM 87110  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Membership \$25 per annum (hard copy newsletter), or \$15 per annum (online newsletter).

**The NMSR e-mail list is fun! It's an e-mail list with news announcements of interest to NMSR members, discussions about news of the times, and more. To join, send a request to [nmsrdave@swcp.com](mailto:nmsrdave@swcp.com).**

Thanks to: John Covan, Eddy Jacobs, Debbie Thomas, and all our Puzzlers!


**IN THIS ISSUE:**  
Future Meetings  
Announced  
New Puzzles!

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