

## **Our abduction (?) story**

Written by John Costella  
Confirmed by Sally Costella

Written up October 21–22, 2023  
At the request of Jones Harris

## **Possibly relevant background**

### *Births and citizenship*

Sally (born 1968) and I (born 1966) are Australian-born citizens. We lived in Melbourne, Australia, until 2013.

### *1992 US visit*

In April–June 1992, during my Ph.D. in subnuclear theoretical physics at the University of Melbourne, Australia, I was a visiting student at the Institute for Nuclear Theory at the University of Washington (WA state, US), followed by a month of visits to physics labs in Canada and the US (TRIUMF; Stanford Linear Accelerator; UCSD; Los Alamos National Laboratory, NM; and CEBAF under construction in Southern Virginia, now the Jefferson Lab).

During the VA stay I drove up to Washington, DC, one afternoon and photographed President Bush leaving the White House by motorcade going to Ford's Theater for an event.

### *2003 US visit*

In early May 2003 Prof. Jim Fetzer flew me to Dallas to see Dealey Plaza in person for two days prior to a conference on the Zapruder Film that he had organized in Duluth, MN.

When I went across from my hotel to the reflecting pool in Dealey Plaza early on the warm, sunny morning of Wednesday, May 7, 2003 (records show that it was 75°F at the time), Dealey Plaza was empty apart from me and two guys wearing full suits who came over and stood about 20 feet from me. They were talking as if they were tourists, one pointing to the sixth-floor window and saying, "So that's where Oswald was?"

Suspecting they were federal agents rather than real tourists, I wandered over to them and said, "No, he was in the first floor lunch room eating his lunch."

The two men looked at me, then promptly walked across to the white stone "pergola" behind where Zapruder was supposed to have been filming. For the next ten minutes or so they were both pacing back and forth in that pergola as they each talked on their cellphone.

I flew up to Duluth, MN, on Friday, May 9, with Jack White. We were stuck in MSP airport for about eight hours due to snow, eventually getting our short flight to Duluth.

We had missed an introductory session, but the main conference occurred on Saturday, May 10, and Sunday, May 11.

On the morning of May 10 I discovered that my electric shaver, which was in my packed luggage, started and then immediately went completely dead. I ended up shaving before my presentation with a blade razor in a small kit I had, and later joked that “I had more blood on my face than appears in the entire Zapruder film.”

I flew back to Melbourne on Sunday, May 11. In Melbourne I discovered that the memory card on the digital camera I had used in Dallas, which was in my packed luggage, was corrupted and unreadable. Fortunately, I had copied all the photos to my laptop, which I always kept with me, and I didn’t lose the photos. (Some were of four “wireless rain sensors” hidden in strange places around Dealey Plaza, some partially blocked from the rain, which didn’t make sense, and which I later speculated were more likely to be wireless microphones. I copped flak for that observation, but within a year they had been removed from Dealey Plaza.)

The presenters at that conference contributed chapters to a book published in November 2003 for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax*. I contributed two chapters.

#### *2004: Jones Harris*

In my chapters of *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax* I had mentioned Jones Harris in passing in connection with historical documents from 1964.

Jones Harris called me by phone some time in 2004, having obtained my number (I believe) from Jim Fetzer.

Jones and I have spoken by phone regularly ever since.

#### *2004 US visit*

Jim Fetzer flew me back to Duluth, MN, in December 2004 to collaborate on an article about the death of Senator Paul Wellstone in MN on October 25, 2002. We visited the site of the crash by trekking through frozen swampland (at –24°F) with the aid of a handheld GPS device.

We wrote an article critical of the NTSB’s investigation of the crash, which was later published. (Jim later wrote a book with a co-author with specific allegations of foul play; our article simply pointed to huge gaps in the NTSB’s final report, leaving the reason for them unstated.)

## *Sons*

My sons Matthew and Jack (born 1998 and 2001) lived with my ex-wife after our separation in 2005 and divorce in 2006 but visited me on weekends and school holidays while I lived in Melbourne.

## *2006: DoD*

From February 2006 to April 2007, I worked as a civilian for the Australian Department of Defence. I did not work on anything controversial, and only required a Secret clearance.

## *Sally*

Sally and I met in July 2008 and were married in May 2009.

## *2011: Meeting Jones*

In March 2011 I was doing some contract work for Thomson Reuters in Times Square, NYC, and visited that office.

During that visit I first met Jones in person.

In June 2011 I again visited NYC, to interview at Google NY. I believe that during that visit I again met up with Jones.

## *2012 US employment*

I started work for Facebook in Menlo Park, CA, in October 2012, on an E-3 visa. They let me work from Australia for most of my first seven months, while Sally's mother battled pancreatic cancer, which she succumbed to in early March 2013.

Sally and I moved to San Francisco at the end of April 2013.

I regularly flew Matthew and Jack from Melbourne to visit us in San Francisco, and, in later trips, to holiday with us around the US. Their first three visits were in September–October 2013, June–July 2014, December 2014 – January 2015.

## *Our first US trips as residents*

In October and November of 2013, Sally and I took our first trips around the US, to Cyril Wecht's JFK 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in Pittsburgh, PA, and to the Lancer JFK 50<sup>th</sup> conference in Dallas, TX.

### *2013 visa change*

At the end of 2013 we had our E-3 and E-3D visas converted to H-1B and H-4 visas at the US consulate in Toronto, Canada. Facebook had done this conversion as part of the “green card” process, which they had started before we left Australia.

In early January 2014 we flew from Toronto to NYC. It was Sally’s first visit to NY. However, due to terrible snow due to the “polar vortex,” I don’t believe we met up with Jones on that visit.

### *2014 Green cards*

In September 2014 we became Permanent Residents of the US (“green card holders”).

### **Late 2015**

On August 4, 2015, we spent most of the day with Jones Harris in New York, visiting different stores and having a meal at the Carlyle. We had flown there after a trip to Cincinnati to visit Sally’s cousin and his family (our only family in the US).

Five days later I received a phone call from a hospital in Melbourne, Australia, telling me that my mother was finally succumbing to her illnesses and wasn’t expected to last long. I flew back immediately and was with her when she died early on August 11. Sally arrived two days later. We stayed in Melbourne for a month.

In November 2015 we again visited New York, dining with Jones Harris at the Carlyle on November 18, then flew to Dallas for the Lancer conference for the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the JFK assassination.

### **The aliens tour**

We had arranged to next fly my sons over to visit us from December 26, 2015, through January 12, 2016.

Unbeknownst to the boys, for that visit we arranged an “aliens tour” for the four of us, from January 2–12, 2016, to Albuquerque, NM; Spaceport America (Virgin Galactic) in Truth or Consequences, NM; Roswell, NM; back to Albuquerque, NM; then to Las Vegas, NV; around “Area 51,” NV; the Hoover Dam, NV–AZ; and then back to Los Angeles, CA, before the boys flew back to Melbourne, Australia. In Albuquerque we would do a “*Better Call Saul / Breaking Bad*” tour, based on a TV series set in Albuquerque that we knew the boys had watched and liked.

### **The Spaceport tour: Part 1**

Our tour of Spaceport America was due to be on January 4, 2016. I booked and paid for it on November 7, 2015.

On Monday, December 28, 2015, I was at work in Meno Park, CA, when I received a cellphone call from a representative of Spaceport America. She said that the main Virgin Galactic visitor center building was going to be closed for repairs the following week, and our January 4 tour would have to be postponed or canceled. She offered other dates, but I told her that we had arranged the whole trip for my sons from Australia around that tour, and we could not change our dates.

Shortly after the call, I publicly tweeted at Richard Branson, the British billionaire who founded Virgin, whose nickname at Virgin was “Doctor Yes” for how often he said “yes” to things, and who was using a “#inspire” hashtag at the time:



Within the hour the Spaceport representative called me back, saying that they had received word that our tour could go ahead after all, simply avoiding the closed visitor center.

Satisfied with its impact, I deleted my tweet at Richard Branson, out of gratefulness to the Virgin staff who had fixed the situation.

### **Picking up the boys from Los Angeles**

Because of a policy change from United Airlines, the boys could not travel “unaccompanied” to San Francisco since there was a change of plane involved. Despite Matthew nearly being an adult, the boys weren’t comfortable changing planes in LA without assistance. I therefore arranged to fly down to LA on Christmas Day, stay overnight at a hotel, and then meet them on December 26 at LAX and fly up with them to San Francisco.

When I arrived at LAX on December 26, I was surprised to see one of the main stars of *Breaking Bad*, RJ Mitte, there near the arrival door. I asked him if I could do a “video selfie” with him for the boys, who would not arrive for some hours. He was gracious to do it, and I still have that 15-second video that I later showed the boys.

### **The Spaceport tour, again**

We flew from San Francisco, CA, to Albuquerque, NM, as planned on Saturday, January 2, 2016.

After we landed in Albuquerque, I received another call from someone at Spaceport America, again saying that our Monday, January 4, tour needed to be canceled. I told them what had happened the previous week when they tried to cancel and said that maybe I needed to re-post my tweet at Richard Branson.

Within the hour they called back and said that, again, they had been told that the tour could go ahead, avoiding the building being repaired.

On Sunday, January 3, we checked out of the Hotel Albuquerque in Old Town and did our *Better Call Saul / Breaking Bad* tour from 11:00 am – 2:30 pm around Albuquerque.

### **Truth or Consequences, NM**

After the *Breaking Bad* tour, we retrieved our bags and drove the roughly two hours down to Truth or Consequences, NM, arriving around 4:30 pm through unusual (for NM) light snow. We checked into our two rooms in the Sierra Grande Lodge, which we had booked on November 7 as the only decent hotel near the Spaceport.

Around 5:30 pm, with the boys settled in their room, Sally and I went down to check out the hotel restaurant, which online reviews said was extremely good. A friendly, bespectacled, gray-haired old man, seemingly the manager, welcomed us there warmly, shaking our hands. “Hi, I’m Ted. Thank you so much for staying here with us. Would you like to come and have a drink at the bar?” We thanked him but declined, saying that we had had a long day sitting down, and were going to have a walk in Truth or Consequences, but that we would be back little later with my sons for our dinner reservation.

We went for our walk through the town. By 6:30 pm it was dark, and we took this selfie with Christmas decorations in the town:



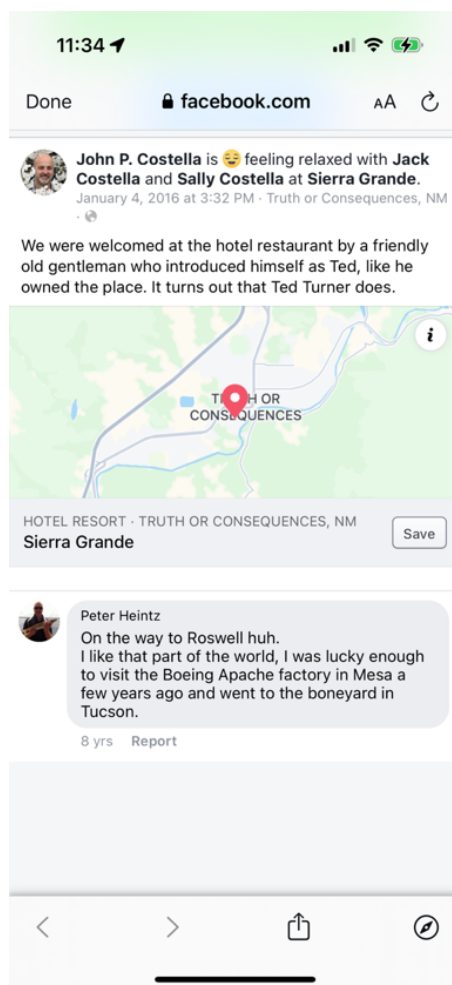
Around 7:30 pm we went down to the restaurant with the boys for dinner. We were sad to see that the friendly old manager was no longer there. While waiting for our meal, which was excellent, I read the story on the back of the menu about how the hotel and restaurant were built by Ted Turner, whose ranch was just down the road, to host VIP guests to the Spaceport.

That night, at about 3:00 am I woke and jumped up in bed, blurting out to Sally, “Did that old manager guy earlier at the restaurant say that his name was Ted?” Sally, upset at being woken up, confirmed that he did, then told me to go back to sleep.

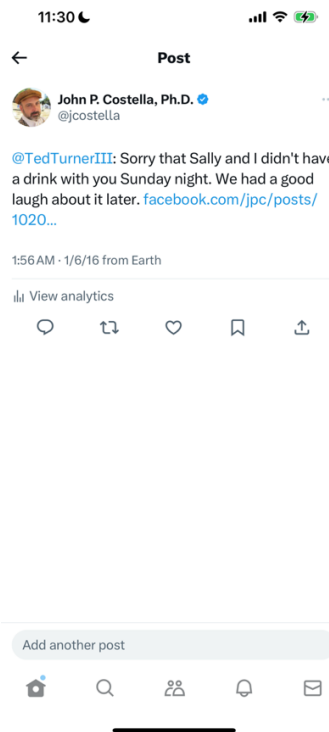
The next morning, Monday, January 4, when we went down for breakfast before our Spaceport tour, I talked to the girl at the front desk. “Hey, I was reading on the restaurant menu last night that Ted Turner built this hotel and restaurant. He didn’t happen to be here last night, did he?”

“Oh yes, he was having drinks at the bar with some friends.”

Kicking ourselves, I posted later that afternoon about it on Facebook:



Two days later I tweeted at Ted Turner, with a link to the Facebook post:



Sadly, Ted never responded.

Still smarting from our missed opportunity, we went on the Spaceport tour. We were told that we had a special tour, just for us, but if we didn't mind, some reporters from WIRED Magazine, and a couple they were interviewing who were involved in space research, were also going to be on the tour. WIRED was writing a story about the Spaceport and taking some supporting photos.

We did the tour. Unexpectedly, we were welcomed by the CEO of Spaceport America herself, with a gaggle of other Spaceport staff in tow, as if we were special VIPs, and given a special tour of the Control Tower, not usually open to the public. And, strangely enough, the repairs at the Virgin Galactic main building were finished quickly enough that we were allowed to go through that building as well, with only a few exhibits not available as they weren't staffed.

WIRED took numerous photos of the four of us lying on the "spaceway" (runway for spacecraft). But the final article that came out the next month didn't use the photos, and we're not shown in any of the photos they did use.

<https://www.wired.com/2016/02/welcome-to-spaceport-america-your-rocket-will-depart-soon-ish/>

But still, their cameraman was good enough to take photos of us with one of our cameras.



Almost to add insult to injury, on the long bus ride back from the spaceport we stopped at the front gate of Ted Turner’s ranch, able to take a couple of photos. But Ted wasn’t there either.

After returning to Truth or Consequences, we got some lunch at the McDonald’s in the town before hitting the road.

### **The drive across New Mexico**

We started the 3½-hour drive to Roswell, NM, just before 2:00 pm. Somewhere on that drive we stopped for gas.

Timestamps on photos and comparison with Google Maps establishes no time anomalies for the following stops:

Around 3:05–3:10 pm at the landmark sign for the Trinity Site (test site for the atomic bomb in 1945) and the road to the White Sands Missile Range.

At 4:01 pm a sign for “Billy the Kid country.”

At 4:38–4:40 pm the Smokey Bear Historical Park in Capitan, NM

Between 4:56 pm and 5:22 pm in Lincoln, NM, for more photos and a short visit to a two-story historic courthouse

Records show that sunset that day was at 5:04 pm. Our last photo in Lincoln was at 5:22 pm, and the photo still looks like daytime. We were about one hour’s drive from Roswell.

The next thing I remember is that it had gotten quite dark outside the car as I was driving. I looked over and realized that Sally was asleep in the passenger seat. I hadn't realized that she had fallen asleep. Looking in the rear-view mirror and then over my shoulder, I saw that both the boys were also asleep in the back seat, which was more surprising: it was strange for teenagers nearly 18 and 15 years of age to fall asleep at that time of the day. But I figured it had been quite a long day, and the mid-winter early sunset and boring drive likely put everyone to sleep.

Alone being awake, I then thought about all the stories of abductions, and how the abductees would talk about missed time, as if their short-term memories had been wiped. Thinking it more likely that something like that would be done by the U.S. Government than aliens, it nevertheless got me pondering: if we *did* get abducted, and knew they were going to wipe our short-term memories, how could we "remember" that something strange had happened?

I thought to myself that if a bright light suddenly came over the car and something paralyzed its electrical systems, we should stop the car, go out into the few bushes near the road, get some twigs or small branches, and scratch our arms with them several times. When we later saw the scratches, we wouldn't remember getting scratched, and would know that something weird had happened to us.

Sally does not remember being asleep on that drive or waking up.

### **Roswell arrival**

We checked in to the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott, 1201 North Main St, Roswell, NM, and were in our rooms just before 7:00 pm on Monday, January 4, 2016.

We then walked down the street with the boys and had dinner at the Cattle Baron, Main St, Roswell.

Sally and I looked around the hotel and its pool (with snow floating in it!) just before 10:00 pm.

At 10:12 pm I took a photo of Sally's side/back to show her a rash that she had. She got these rashes from time to time and had cream at home for them. The photo is misleading, appearing to show her buttocks, but that's an illusion (we know for sure because she has a small tattoo on her lower back). It actually appears to be a photo of her left side, down from her armpit, with the lower part of her left breast resting on the upper part of her left belly, folded because of the unflattering way that she was lying. (This photo was never intended to be seen by anyone else.)



*Neither of us remember me taking that photo. Indeed, I didn't even realize that it existed until yesterday (October 21, 2023).*

*As will soon become clear, neither of us remembered me taking it 24 hours after I took it.*

### **Roswell: the next day**

When we woke early on Tuesday, January 5, 2016, looking out the window told us that it had snowed seriously during the night.

I then received a call from Dennis Balthaser, whom we had booked to give us a tour of the “aliens” sites around Roswell starting at 9:00 am, such as the funeral home and the hangar at the airfield where the bodies were supposed to have been taken. He said that while the main roads had been plowed, the smaller ones weren't, and the couple of inches of snow made the roads too treacherous for his car which didn't have snow tires, so he'd sadly have to cancel our tour and refund our payment. We were sad, but the snow was substantial (for a town not used to it)—we have a photo of the plowed snow near our parked car being piled three feet high—so we were understanding. He emailed Roswell UFO Tours to refund our payment.

After going to some UFO museums and tourist stores in Roswell, we carefully drove around and found the funeral home, and at the airfield we finally found the hangar ourselves.

### **Drive back to Albuquerque**

Returning to the hotel, we checked out and started the drive back to Albuquerque just before 1:00 pm. Nominally that would be a 3½-hour drive, but we were taking a detour to see the Billy the Kid Museum and Fort Sumner, which added just over an hour to the total drive time.

Around 1:00 pm we stopped at where the sign used to be for where the Roswell Incident was reported (the actual sign now missing, but the frame still there), and took some photos.

Around 2:30 pm we stopped at the Billy the Kid Museum, and by 3:00 pm were at the Old Fort Sumner Cemetery.

We checked back into Hotel Albuquerque in Old Town for two nights. We were in the hotel by about 6:00 pm, which tallies with the above with no lost time.

We ate dinner with the boys at the hotel restaurant.

We retired to our rooms. Around 9:45 pm Sally decided to have a shower (she sometimes has one at night instead of the morning).

After getting out of the shower and drying off, she asked if I could look at something on her side/back, because it was stinging after her shower. She said she'd felt something there that morning, but we were too busy to look at it. Now her shower had made it sting.

I looked, and saw a long, thin scratch or cut, like it was made with the end of a sharp knife or scalpel, in two arcs like a stretched-out "w" or lowercase omega letter.

I then told Sally of what I had thought of the night before, about scratching ourselves on our arms if we "got abducted."

Sally had no idea where she could have gotten the scratches.

By now a little alarmed, we decided to take photos so that we could show someone later. Remembering an old Denzel Washington movie, I got out a dollar bill and laid it next to each part of the scratch, taking photos with my phone camera. Because we were going to show these photos to other people, I was careful to hide Sally's breast with the dollar bill. Unfortunately, I didn't take a wider shot giving more context on which part of her body it is:



The right arc. On the right of this photo you can see what I believe is the edge of her back.



The left arc.



Another view of the left arc, trying for a better view but hiding Sally's left breast.

You will notice that **the left part of the scratch is on top of the rash**. You can confirm the rash is identical to the one I took a photo of 24 hours previously, **when there were no scratches**.

This, together with Sally's memory of feeling it in the morning, establishes that the scratches happened between 10:00 pm on the night we arrived in Roswell and when we woke early the following morning. (With the photographic evidence making it 100% guaranteed that it happened in the 24-hour period from 10pm to 10pm.)

Remarkably, **neither of us had any memory of me taking the rash photo 24 hours earlier**. Indeed, when we collected the photos into a (digital) album to tell people about, we never included that earlier one, *and I didn't even realize we had it until yesterday (2023)*.

Shaken, I proceeded to get undressed. Sally was then horrified to see two similar scratches across my upper back. Grabbing the dollar bill and the phone, she took these photos. First, one up below my neck:



(That is my left neck and beard on the upper-left.)

And this, below and to the left of the one above:



(You can see my left armpit hair at upper-left.)



I had no idea that those scratches were there.

Twenty-three minutes later, I got her to take a single photo of my whole upper back:



And finally, 35 minutes after that, we found another scratch on her lower leg:



We don't know why it took us over an hour to find this last scratch.

### **Around Albuquerque**

The next day, January 6, we went to visit Los Alamos, which I hadn't seen since 1992, and visited the nearby Bandelier National Monument.

### **Fly to Nevada**

We checked out on January 7 and flew to Las Vegas, NV, via Denver, CO.

We drove our rental car up to "Area 51" and checked in to two cabins at the Windmill Ridge Lodge for two nights.

### **"Area 51"**

On January 8 we did all the usual tourist "UFO" sites around "Area 51," taking photos at all the normal tourist spots, but never crossing into any restricted area.

We stopped at where the "Area 51 mailbox" was supposed to be, off the Extraterrestrial Highway. There was not much remaining of it, but when I approached where its remains were, I suddenly had a very strong nosebleed.

I had not had a nosebleed for decades, and mainly only when I was a child. We found some napkins in the rental car and I stopped the bleeding.

We don't seem to have any photos of the remains of that mailbox. Maybe the nosebleed was enough commotion to interrupt our tourist tendencies.

### **Checking out of "Area 51"**

On the morning of January 9, we were due to check out and driver down to the Hoover Dam, on the Arizona border, staying at a nearby hotel for one night.

We woke, and I went across to the boys' cabin. I had a key, so I opened it, went in, woke them, and told them to get up, get ready, and pack, and I'd be back soon.

I went back to our cabin, and Sally and I showered, got ready, and packed up.

I went back to the boys' cabin to collect them. When I opened the door, they were fast asleep in their beds.

Naturally, I was livid. I yelled and screamed and swore at them. They jumped up like stunned mullets and started getting their things together. They didn't look sullen or rebellious—the older one Matt was often both—but instead looked scared. I was thrown, especially by Matt's reaction, but still mad as hell. I stormed off.

Soon, they were ready, and we hit the road.

Later that day, Jack said to me, “Dad, you know how you came in and yelled at us this morning—if we'd just gone back to sleep it would've been fair enough for you to be mad, but Matt and I both swear that you never came in to wake us up before that. We're not trying to get out of trouble—it just never happened.”

I was stunned. Jack, who is on the Asperger's spectrum, never lies about anything important, and was not lying then. He was saying they would fully deserve my wrath if they'd gone back to sleep—but he was telling me that they swore that it never happened. When I came in yelling at them, for them it was the first they'd seen me that morning.

That really hit me. For the third time in five days we'd had a bizarre and inexplicable incident. We had been joking all along about our “aliens tour,” but this was unexpected.

### **The rest of the trip**

Was uneventful. We visited the Hoover Dam, staying nearby overnight, and on January 10 drove back to Las Vegas and stayed the night there. On January 11 we flew to LA and stayed in Beverly Hills 90210 (the zip code of the TV show) that night. The boys flew home that day. We stayed in LA until January 14 and then flew back home to San Francisco.

Well, uneventful apart from meeting Wolfgang Puck at his Beverly Hills restaurant Spago, and then sneaking some photos and video of fellow diner Sidney Poitier (who nodded at me as we left, as if we had any good reason to be there). And the Iranian woman who struck up a conversation with us at brunch.

Anyway. What. A. Trip.