Organizing the Argument

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As I see the process of assessing Betty's notebook, it looks something like this:
- Seek anachronisms in the related pages
- Reconstruct transmission
- Assess content

Therefore I want to look ahead to the issue of content assessment. What follows is an attempt to clarify the assessment process by getting criteria and definitions "on the table." It is unlikely that everyone can agree on criteria, or agree on the relative importance of specific criteria. However, if a discussion begins without some framework confusion seems likely.

Already some postings have identified possible "categories" to characterize the notebook contents, and I think I saw:

Authentic	**From AE and FN**
Hoax	**Transmitted hoax by noncommercial radio**
Drama	**Radio play, transmitted by commercial radio station**
Fabrication	**Entire incident made up by Betty**

A fabrication is early discounted but included for completeness.

The following matrix is created to identify some of those characteristics and compare the categories based on those characteristics. Note that in some categories a characteristic may have a broad range of values, therefore it may not be a particularly good determinant of that category. Poorly-characterized categories may also be indicators of poorly defined categories, which require division into finer and more descriptive categories. Of course, the "Authentic" category will have more variability in its characteristics than the "Drama" category. On the other hand this type of analysis may identify some characteristics as critical indicators.

(This is an updated version of John's original suggestion.)

What Betty Heard	Authentic	Hoax	Drama	Fabrication
Heard in St. Pete	(pending)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Duration 1 hr. 45 min.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
No music	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
No commercials	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
No story line	Yes	No	No	No
Sporadic reception	Yes	Yes (Possible)	Yes (Possible)	Yes
Variable clarity	Yes	Yes (Possible)	Yes (Possible)	Yes
Multiple voices	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Action and emotion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attempted statement of location	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Specific situation details	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specific situation details correct for Lockheed 10	Yes	No	No	No
"Occult" situation details	Yes	No	No	No
Specific personal details	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Little known correct personal details	Yes	No	No	No
"Occult" personal details	Yes	No	No	No
		5 No	9 No	5 No

"Occult" does not refer to magic; it is only a compact notation for information that does not appear to make sense.

I expect that everyone who reads that matrix will disagree with one or more of my characterization-values. That is part of the beauty of this formalism because the discussion can then find a focus. If we can't get something like consensus of what these categories will be like, it is unlikely that we can share conclusions that result. This type of discussion has already started, with the discussion that some sort of location should have been available for broadcast and therefore real transmissions should have that characteristic.

Another advantage is that it lets us identify the logic we are intuitively using. For example, one might say that the apparent lack of a coherent story line is an indication that this is an Authentic transmission because the alternatives are likely to have a story line.

Also, intuitively, almost everyone seems keen to spot the "occult" details that would strongly indicate authenticity because few outside the participants would know them.

Finally, it may show places where categories are "degenerate," not distinguished. For exam-

ple, this set of characteristics does not seem to strongly distinguish an Authentic transmission from a Hoax. The solution is to find more definitive characteristics or admit that the cases cannot be distinguished.

In conclusion, I have attempted to organize the logic some of the credibility asessment posted so far. I see two features:

1. Some people have intuitively focused on characteristics that would support a conclusion of Authentic if found. It is probably not wishful thinking. If it finds the pony, they get the first ride.

2. It is not clear from the discussion so far that we can strongly distinguish between a Hoax and an Authentic transmission based on internal content. Of course post-loss hoaxes were recorded so this is not a new problem.