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Location: [Mothership](#) -> [Ufomind Mailing List](#) -> [1997](#) -> [Jul](#) -> Roswell UFO Was Manmade, Lancaster (PA) Citizen Says

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Roswell UFO Was Manmade, Lancaster (PA) Citizen Says

From: Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk (Stig Agermose)
Date: Mon, 14 Jul 1997 16:51:24 -0800
Subject: Roswell UFO Was Manmade, Lancaster (PA) Citizen Says

City man ties man-made saucer to Roswell crash // Says he saw craft in hangar year before incident

Lancaster New Era Lancaster, PA
Sat, Jul 12 1997

So, an Unidentified Flying Object crashed in Roswell, N.M., 50 years ago.

Not so fast, says Lancaster resident Thomas C. Smith, who offers a guess about the identity of the mysterious aircraft.

While working for a military-plane manufacturer the year before the famous Roswell incident, Smith says, he saw a flying saucer. Not a visitor from another planet, Smith's saucer was a human-engineered, experimental aircraft nestled in a Connecticut hangar.

"My God, what is that?" the 20-year-old Smith wondered. "It was standing there on these stilts."

It reminded Smith of something out of Orson Welles' 1938 radio broadcast "The War of the Worlds," about a Martian invasion of Earth.

Armed with U.S. government security clearance, Smith watched, he says, as the 40-foot-wide elliptical craft hovered 10 feet off the ground and flew away, driven by twin propellers. A pilot lying in a cramped cockpit guided the craft.

Smith, now a retired 72-year-old executive, recalled the experience during the UFO frenzy created by the 50th anniversary of the Roswell episode this month.

Does he have proof that a craft like the one he saw crashed in Roswell during a test flight? No, but he says he believes that theory is more probable than visitors from outer space.

For the uninitiated, Roswell is the site - some people believe - where an alien flying saucer crashed in early July 1947. UFO believers claim the U.S. military recovered pieces of the craft and dead aliens and have kept it secret ever since.

Over the years, the government has tried to quiet such rumors by offering explanations: The crash debris was the remains of a downed weather balloon or classified, high-altitude equipment designed to detect Soviet nuclear-weapons tests. The "alien corpses" were test dummies dropped from high altitudes in an experiment.

While the two sides argue over such points, Smith simply points out that he saw a craft that easily could have been mistaken for a UFO in 1946.

At the time, Smith was a mechanical-engineering graduate just out of Penn State University. He was working for Chance-Vought Aircraft in Stratford, Conn., which was building planes for the U.S. Navy. Smith was testing the high-altitude bonding of a composite material: wood sandwiched between two layers of metal.

He says he was curious about what would be built with the material, and since he had security clearance, a supervisor led him into a guarded hangar. He was shown a new jet the company was developing, but his attention was attracted to the other craft in the hangar, a flying saucer made of the material he had been testing.

"It was very streamlined," Smith recalls. The khaki-colored saucer was a few inches thick at the edges to about two feet thick at the pilot's cockpit, which had a bubble window allowing the pilot to look forward and down at the ground.

"I saw him get in, and he lay down flat," Smith says.

The craft had two propellers and rudders in the back. Smith went back at night to watch test flights. The saucer, he says, would float straight up, then fly off.

"They'd get it off the ground and it would disappear" into the darkness, he says. He says there were reports in the area of unidentified flying objects.

After working for the company for about a year, Smith moved to Lancaster to marry his college sweetheart, Marilyn Globisch.

About the time he left Chance-Vought in 1947, it moved operations to Texas, where it would have better conditions for test flights, Smith says. Thus, Chance-Vought moved to a state next to New Mexico the year of the Roswell crash.

Since Chance-Vought built planes for the Navy, wreckage of one of its experimental units could look foreign to the Air Force, Smith says. That would explain the Air Force's initial confusion and contradictory statements after the 1947 incident, he says.

In Lancaster, Smith worked for Hamilton Watch Co. and Woodstream Corp., where he retired as vice president of marketing. He and Marilyn live at 1420 Quarry Lane and have two children and three grandchildren.

Smith's case is circumstantial, to be sure, but he says he believes the Roswell incident was the crash of an experimental aircraft like the one he saw - nothing more or less.

"I do believe in UFOs though," Smith says, although he's never seen one.

"We're in a galaxy, and I'm an engineer," he says, noting that there are countless stars out there. "There's no reason in the world why they can't have Saturns, Mars and Earths circling around them."

Some of those planets, he says, likely have technologically advanced civilizations capable of traveling to Earth.

So why does he think such aliens can't be responsible for Roswell?

Smith says simply, "I don't think they would ever crash."

[Mothership](#) -> [Ufomind Mailing List](#) -> [1997](#) -> [Jul](#) -> [Here](#)

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