

## Interview with an Alien



Danny Wallace may be as annoying as a Big brother contestant, but at least he gets the UFO subject on our TV screens. For a show titled *Interview With An Alien*, this hour-long production was peculiarly bereft of the promised ET chit-chat.

What the show *did* do, though, is take us through some excellent UFO stories, complete with compelling witness testimony and some excellently-made reconstructions.

Using captions and titles utilising Star Trek fonts, it could be argued that the producers are subliminally suggesting that UFOs are the stuff of science fiction, but let's give them the benefit of the doubt as we explore the evidence presented.



Danny Wallace tells us that over 80 million Americans believe that UFOs are extra-terrestrial craft. Our first port of call is Pahrump, Nevada, home of the Art Bell Show, which broadcasts on Coast To Coast AM radio to millions of listeners every night. Art Bell and his wife tell us of his own sighting of a giant triangle that glided over them one night.

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997, the UFO community was set alight by the Phoenix Lights. We hear from several eyewitnesses, including a policeman, who claim that what they saw were not aircraft flares, as the official explanation informs us. Of course, we have an astronomer who declares that what was seen that night could not possibly have been an alien spacecraft.



We are then presented with an incredible sighting from Lebanon, Missouri, in which six people, five of which are police officers, observed a huge, triangular craft moving across the sky. We hear actual police radio conversations and watch an impressive reconstruction. At first, the police thought that the initial report, from a truck driver, was a joke, until they saw it for themselves.

The actual officers appeared on camera to describe what they saw.



It's this kind of report that is extremely difficult for sceptics to dismiss and the producers of this show didn't even try. We are told of the event and the programme moves on.

Wallace stands on the Greenwich Meridian and tells us about the famous Kenneth Arnold sighting of 1947, which brought us the term, 'flying saucers', even though what he saw was described as crescent-shaped in appearance and only moved 'like a saucer skipping across a pond'.



This early wave of UFO sightings brought about intense interest from the military, culminating in special projects charged with the task of finding out what people were seeing.

We are reminded of the 1948 Eastern Airlines sighting, in which the pilots and one passenger reported seeing a 100-foot long object with windows travelling at about 700 mph. Such reports from respectable witnesses are also difficult to dismiss.

We are then told of UFO sightings by other pilots, both civilian and military. All of these men are reputable and none of them can explain what they saw. The reports caused such a stir that the US Air Force was forced to admit that they thought that the Earth was being visited by extra-terrestrial spacecraft.



Unfortunately, General Hoyt Vandenberg disagreed and accused the pilots of being 'oddballs'. The sightings continued, however, and 1952 became the year in which the largest amount of reports ever were collected. We had the famous Washington Flap, which forced the CIA to set up the Robertson Panel, which concluded that UFOs should be stripped of their mystery. This was to be done by marginalising the phenomenon and subjecting it to ridicule to such an extent that people would no longer take reports seriously.

Fortunately this tactic did not work for a minute and reports continued to flood in. The public was still fascinated by the concept of aliens and Hollywood went on to cash in on this buzz by producing classic movies such as *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *The War of the Worlds*, *Earth Vs. The Flying Saucers* and *This Island Earth*.



Such interest forced the USAF to set up Project Blue Book to investigate the continuing sightings of unidentified flying objects. Essentially a public relations exercise, Blue Book ran until 1969 and its goal was to debunk UFO reports by any means necessary. One of their top investigators was Dr. J Allen Hynek, an astronomer from Ohio University.

We are reminded of Blue Book case# 12548, in which a UFO was sighted on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1968 at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota. Airmen on the ground saw a brightly-

lit object hovering above the ground. A B52 was flying in the area and was diverted to investigate. The crew clearly saw a structured craft and they appear on camera to describe their experiences. The co-pilot, an Air Force captain, is certain that what he saw was an alien spacecraft. The navigator picked it up on his radar scope and we are shown photographs of the actual blip as it paced the aircraft.

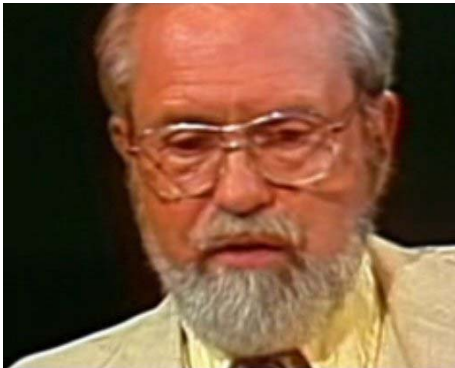


When it vanished from the scope, they turned the aircraft in an attempt to locate the UFO visually. They saw it hovering close to the ground. It was described as at least 200-feet in diameter, hundreds of feet long, glowing yellow, with a metallic cylinder that was attached.



The crew of the B52 and sixteen ground witnesses attested that they saw a UFO that night. Blue Book came to the astonishing conclusion that what they actually saw were nothing more than stars!

When the Air Force closed down Project Blue Book in 1969, after the Condon Committee decided that UFOs were of no scientific significance, Dr. Hynek was bemused by their findings. He had become a firm believer that there was something to the UFO enigma that warranted continued study.



Next up is the most famous UFO incident in history – the Roswell crash. We are told of the debris collected by Major Jesse Marcel of the Roswell Army Air Field and how it was decided that it was a crashed flying saucer. Then the story was changed and the world was told that it was nothing more than a downed weather balloon. Marcel, however, was adamant that what he saw and handled was *not* debris from any balloon.



Wallace, however, seems convinced by the official explanation that what was recovered was from a top secret project, codenamed Mogul. He clearly insinuates that the UFO aspects to the case were part of a huge money-making scam, from books to videos to the townspeople of Roswell themselves cashing in on their city's new-found fame.



The final segment of the show is devoted to alien abductions. It is obvious that Wallace and the producers have no real interest in this phenomenon and that they think that anybody who says that they have been abducted is suffering from hypnogogic dreams or are victims of unscrupulous hypnotherapists.



We hear from Bud Hopkins and several abductees, all of whom are absolutely certain that something

out-of-this-world happened to them, in many cases with terrifying results.

Academics such as Susan Clancy pour scorn on Hopkins' hypnosis methods and tell us that abduction 'memories' are nothing more than dreams. They try to dismiss them by saying the experiences are akin to the old tales of incubi and succubi, but our modern minds interpret the imagery as alien in origin.

Of course, the sceptics conveniently forget about abductees that are taken from cars or elsewhere when they are wide awake!

Finally, we talk to astronomers about the possibilities of life 'out there' and that most scientists think that there is definitely intelligent life somewhere else in our galaxy. Frank Drake and Seth Shostak discuss their SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) projects. Drake tells us about a signal he picked up that turned out to be an aeroplane. The famous 'Wow!' signal doesn't even get a look-in.

Wallace ends on the positive note that while scientists and believers may be diametrically opposed in their interpretations of UFOs, they both share the overwhelming desire that one day actual, open contact with aliens will be made.

While *Interview With An Alien* (why the heck did they call it that??) improved greatly on Wallace's previous excursion into the UFO field in his *Conspiracies* series, you still got the impression that he thought it was all a load of nonsense.

Something to laugh at. Something that doesn't deserve serious attention. He glosses over the hard-to-explain reports, not even trying to provide an alternative theory, but grabs into the stuff he can easily dismiss and ridicule, such as Roswell and alien abductions.

However, like I said earlier, he gets UFOs onto the TV screens of the nation and he presents them in an entertaining, high quality format, so I really shouldn't grumble – much.

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