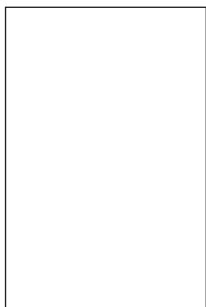


# Aztec Saucer Crash Story Rises from the Dead?

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*The Aztec Incident.* By Scott Ramsey, Suzanne Ramsey, Frank Thayer, and Frank Warren. Foreword by Stanton Friedman. Aztec.48 Productions, Mooresville, North Carolina, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-9850046-0-6. 221 pp. \$24.95.

The famous Roswell Saucer Crash claim was born—and died—in the span of about a twenty-four-hour newspaper cycle in July of 1947. The story was dead and forgotten for about thirty years, even among those few who believed in saucer crashes, until Charles Berlitz and William Moore’s book *The Roswell Incident* brought it back to life. Since then, the Roswell story has reached critical mass, and thus will never again be forgotten or ignored, no matter what the facts have revealed about the case.

A second saucer crash is supposed to have occurred in New Mexico at Aztec in 1948. The source of that story was the 1950 book *Behind the Flying Saucers* by *Variety* columnist Frank Scully. That claim had a somewhat longer run, lasting until 1952 when San Francisco journalist J.P. Cahn convinced the editor of *True* magazine that the Scully saucer crash story was either the greatest event—or the greatest hoax—of modern times. The editor agreed; the result was a long investigation culminating in two lengthy and devastating articles in *True*. Cahn proved that Scully’s sources, Silas Newton and Leo Gebauer, were conmen who swindled people by claiming to have devices for finding oil and minerals in the ground.

In fact, so successful was Cahn’s demolition of the Newton/Gebauer story that claims of “saucer crashes” were ignored until at least the mid-1970s. In 1987, UFO researcher William Stein-

man published *UFO Crash at Aztec*, which tried to legitimize that claim. Steinman’s book got very little respect—even Stanton Friedman didn’t buy it (for which Friedman apologizes, blaming his earlier rejection of the book on absurd statements made by Steinman’s coauthor, the late Wendelle Stevens). In 1998, the first annual UFO Conference was held to benefit the Aztec Public Library. The last conference was held in 2011; there wasn’t enough interest to continue in 2012. The Aztec crash seemed to be a hoax, and that was the end of the story.

“Not so fast!” say Scott and Suzanne Ramsey. Having spent over \$500,000 of their own money over a period of twenty-five years, traveling to twenty-seven states and collecting over 55,000 documents, the Ramseys claim in their book *The Aztec Incident* that there are first- and (mostly) second-hand witnesses to the crash retrieval operation, and that the honest and successful oilman Silas Newton was pretty much framed by J.P. Cahn, who wanted to discredit the crash story and especially discredit Frank Scully.

“Eight months after Roswell,” on March 25, 1948, some oil workers went out to battle a supposed brush fire near a company site but instead discovered that “a very large metallic lens-shaped craft sat silently atop the mesa.” They found that there were at least two dead bodies inside the craft—beings that were small but otherwise entirely human. Soon a mili-

tary helicopter hovered overhead, and soldiers arrived. Eventually there were up to two hundred persons involved in the recovery of the craft, an effort that lasted two weeks. However, no word of the project reached the local press or community leaders, probably because, as one man explained, “we were threatened with our lives if we ever spoke out about this.”

One of the government scientists who supposedly studied the crashed saucer was a mysterious “Doctor Gee” (obviously Gebauer despite his and others’ denial), who let his friend, oilman Silas Newton, in on the secret as they were driving around trying out a magnetic device for detecting “microwaves” supposedly emitted by oil in the ground. Doctor Gee claimed to be a “master of magnetic energy” and to have worked on a device called a magnetron that “knocked out as many as seventeen Japanese submarines in one day.” The saucers, according to Newton, probably originated on Venus and used magnetic propulsion to travel along “Magnetic Lines of Force which originate in the sun and revolve around their planets and their moons, keeping the universe in magnetic balance.” The Ramseys don’t seem to realize that these statements are pseudoscientific gibberish.

For some reason, the magnetic prospectors drove directly to Frank Scully’s house in Hollywood (Newton also lived in Hollywood and had been in contact with Scully), where they regaled him with tales about saucers, including the one that crashed in Aztec.

Newton, according to the Ramseys, has gotten a bum rap from Cahn. His apparently “questionable” business deals were “nothing new, as the oil business always has a high level of risk. . . . Newton’s investors were, in the main, all quite happy, as court records show.” (Of course, conmen like Newton typically use money from new investors to pay off earlier investors who threaten to complain to the law.) When Scully refused Cahn’s fervent offer to buy the whole story for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, say *The Aztec Incident’s* authors, Cahn set out to destroy the Aztec crash story—and Newton, Gebauer, and Scully along with it. The

authors claim that the accusations Cahn made to the FBI “resulted in the malicious prosecution of Newton and his friend Leo Gebauer—a prosecution based in envy and a relentless vendetta.”

The FBI, however, takes a different view. Official government records at <http://vault.fbi.gov/silas-newton> contain “the FBI’s investigations into Newton’s fraudulent activities between 1951 and 1970.” According to the FBI, “Silas Newton (1887–1972) was a wealthy oil producer and con-man who claimed that he had a gadget that could detect minerals and oil.” Newton’s first arrest was as far back as 1931, with many more arrests following. In 1970, Newton pleaded guilty in Los Angeles to illegal securities sales (but was allowed to withdraw that plea after making restitution to the investor) and was also under investigation for an alleged mining fraud in New Mexico two years before his death at age eighty-five. And the authors state that “the FBI is still withholding over 211 pages concerning Silas Newton.” Would you buy a used saucer from that man? (By comparison, J.P. Cahn has never been in trouble with the law as far as I am aware.)

In Frank Scully’s “Private and Confidential Memo on J.P. Cahn,” dated June 15, 1952, and forwarded to the attorney for Newton, some inflammatory accusations were made. Scully claimed that Cahn was “trying out blackmail on me, for size . . . he even confessed that he had gone in for some larceny to strengthen his case. . . . He proved himself a louse in the blouse of journalism, a dangerous man.”

However, this memo was almost certainly dictated by Scully under the direction of his attorney. Thus it must be read not as “here is what happened” but instead “here is what we’ll say in court, if the matter lands there.” It cannot be taken as unbiased fact. The next time you are in a courtroom, note that while witnesses are placed under oath, the attorneys never are, and thus are under no real obligation to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

I knew Cahn during the 1980s and 90s. I agree that he had a brash and self-

promoting personality, and I can well imagine the verbal battles between the caged combatants Cahn and Frank and Alice Scully as they made the slow drive from Los Angeles to Palomar Mountain to see discredited UFO photographer George Adamski. (The Scullys were Adamski supporters). Cahn wanted Scully to admit that he had been duped and to write an article admitting it. He told Scully: “The fact is, Frank, the information you accepted and passed on to your readers in good faith is not what you were led to believe it was. Gebauer is not one of the nation’s ‘top scientists.’” Cahn was urging Scully to protect his reputation and admit he had been hoaxed. But in *Behind the Flying Saucers* we find Scully surprisingly unconcerned about his reputation: “It is generally believed that to be any party to a hoax spells ruin, once the hoax is exposed. Nothing is further from the facts.” Scully remarks that he formerly wrote for the sensationalist *New York Sun*, which expired with great “notoriety” about which he seems rather proud. Read all of *Behind the Flying Saucers* (available as a free e-book at [scribd.com](http://scribd.com)) and you will realize the obvious: Scully was a true believer in flying saucers, as well as a dedicated follower of Charles Fort, and probably no evidence to the contrary would ever have changed his mind.

Was Cahn motivated by “envy and a relentless vendetta?” I absolutely do not think so. I always suspected that old Jape (as he was called) was fond of Scully and went too easy on him. Cahn *always* emphasized that Scully was not himself a hoaxer but had been hoaxed. My webpage <http://debunker.com/Scully.html> contains a lot of in-depth information on the Scully controversy, including what is probably the only recording of J.P. Cahn discussing his investigations. The Ramseys have misrepresented Cahn’s feelings about Scully. Cahn told the Bay Area Skeptics that “Frank [Scully] turned out to be an absolutely super guy. . . . And he was outraged, absolutely outraged, that I would question this” crashed saucer story. An honest man telling a hard-to-believe tale expects to be met with incredulity, but

a scoundrel is outraged at encountering reasonable doubt.

Whether or not you agree with the authors’ interpretations and conclusions, you have to admire their zeal for investigation. This is one of the best-documented UFO books I have ever seen. There are documents from the FBI archives, Air Force archive documents, news clippings, and most important, the documents from the Frank Scully Collection at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming (that no researcher previously realized existed!). They even found a transcript of the interview of Denver radio ad salesman George Koehler, an associate of Newton, by two Air Force Office of Special Investigations men, a recording that Scully boasts of having erased to thwart those he calls the “Pentagonians.” In 1950, the Air Force was clearly still concerned that flying saucers might represent something real and wanted to find out the truth.

Regardless of what flaws might or might not have existed in the characters of Newton, Gebauer, Cahn, and Scully, many problems remain: there is no physical or documentary evidence of any extraordinary object landing near Aztec in 1948; the “scientific” theories expounded by Newton and Gebauer are pseudoscientific claptrap (no real scientists were the source of this information, thus Gebauer is lying about working as a top government scientist); and Newton’s claim to operate an electronic device he would carry around the desert to locate oil and minerals was likewise fraudulent because such devices do not exist. Anyone who wants to rehabilitate the claims of a saucer crash at Aztec needs to explain why we should believe obvious liars like Newton and Gebauer before worrying about who squabbled with whom over publication rights. ■

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