

Burt Rutan Intro for John Alexander's "UFOs: Myths, Conspiracies, and Realities"

First, I want to thank my friend John Alexander for inviting me to submit my thoughts for publication in his excellent book. In general, I never agree to provide comments on any books I have not read, and I have always found it difficult to read any book on UFOs. They all seemed to be written only by those strongly advocating their chosen side of the debate of the big question "Do ETs exist?". These books would be compelling if there were convincing physical evidence to inspect (hardware, bodies, wreckage, etc). However my impression usually is that there is no compelling evidence and the author's credible data could be summarized into a few pages. However, they then seem content to drag the reader through hoards of speculation and rhetoric for no useful purpose. Thus, I have to admit I had not read an entire book on the subject before John provided me with his early draft of "UFOs: Myths, Conspiracies and Realities". John's book is very different; its detailed coverage of both sides of the debate is written without bias or agenda.

Since college graduation in 1965 I have always been involved in research, development and flight-testing of aircraft. The first seven years were spent as a USAF flight test project engineer at Edwards AFB, and the next ten years as a homebuilt-aircraft entrepreneur (RAF). The last 28 years as founder/CEO I built a small aerospace company (Scaled Composites). These efforts brought me in contact with some of the most advanced research in aviation. Even though I have seen a flying object that I could not identify, I have never made it a hobby to study UFOs.

A Skeptic

John has rightly described me as a skeptic. This is a refreshing truth, especially after Wired magazine had reported, "Burt Rutan thinks Extraterrestrial Aliens built the Gaza Pyramids". During a long interview for their magazine on a different subject I included my thoughts from my study of the Egyptian monuments. I mentioned my conclusion that several of the structures had clear evidence of manufacturing technologies well beyond what the mainstream historian's assume existed at the time. This is a fascinating subject indeed, but it has nothing to do with ET aliens. For me, it is far easier to believe that the ancients had developed methods to cast or machine granite

and that these methods were later forgotten, than to believe that starships had visited earth to help humans stack stones.

As a hobby pursuit, I have usually enjoyed researching some kind of mystery to provide a welcome distraction from my day job. I do not claim to have solved any of the mysteries; I merely dig away to get to the point where my own gut says, "Now I know". This is not a proof; its merely just satisfaction in my own mind that further study will be boring, thus forcing me to find another hobby.

My hobbies have included: (1) Energy efficiency; I built solar water heaters in the 70s. I built my custom pyramid home in the 80s that Popular Science called "The Ultimate Energy Efficient House", I drove an EV-1 electric car for seven years as my primary vehicle and I am currently working on a 20-acre PV solar farm. (2) Investigating the JFK assassination; my fascinating search to solve the murder mystery started in 1989 and ended in the mid to late 90s when my gut told me I had probably found the answer. (3) My Egyptian pyramid-manufacturing quest; a 5-year hobby starting in early 1998 when I spent several weeks looking at structural details (with an engineering/manufacturing eye, rather than reading hieroglyphs) from Cairo to Abu Simbel. (4) My recent hobby (2006 to current); a survey of climate data and an assessment of the analysis and presentation methods of those promoting the theory of catastrophic global warming caused by human emissions.

My UFO sighting:

The following is the first-ever publication of my 1972 sighting. It occurred while I was driving northbound on I-135 in Kansas by myself in the dark, pre-dawn hours of May 31st, 1972. I was on my way to direct the first flight test of the BD-5 when off to the right I noticed a brilliant, hovering, cylinder-shaped object with a length about 4 or 5 times its diameter. Assuming it was not moving, it was easy to determine its distance from me by knowing my car's speed and observing the angular rate at which my line of sight rotated from the center windshield to the right side window. I slowed to stop on the side of the road and when I had stopped the object quickly accelerated to the south and disappeared within about two seconds. I estimate that it was about 300 to

400 meters away and its size was about 30 to 50 meters long. It had been hovering at about 10 to 20 meters above the ground.

It did not appear to have a solid surface; it was more like a fuzzy fluff of glowing light with no distinct surface details. During the ~ 15 seconds that it was visible, it changed colors at least twice; green, orange, yellow as I recall. I took note of my car's odometer so I could find the site again. When I returned in daylight I found high-voltage electric transmission lines crossing a small lake near the spot where it had been hovering. I therefore formed an opinion that the "object" might have been some electrical ion phenomena. However, I was intrigued to later read about a sighting of a object with similar appearance in Louisiana. You can go to the approximate location of my "hovering UFO" using Google Earth at Lat 37.9230, Long -97.3243.

My use of a *Men In Black* Neuralizer on the audience at one of my Oshkosh/Air-Venture talks in 1997 led some people to think I am an ET/UFO-believer. Engineering cohort Dan Kreigh, using a toothbrush case and the components of a flash camera, built the device. Yes, it was only a joke; humor is needed when you work in the High Desert. Dan was also the one who painted an alien face on a back window of my Boomerang twin aircraft.

Another reason that people might think I am a 'believer'— some of my personal friends are among the people that are described in John's book:

Ben Rich – The Lockheed Skunk works of the 40s/50s/60s and 70s has always fascinated me with their methods of aircraft research and I have strived to apply some of their lessons-learned to my companies. The Skunk Works was founded on June 17th, 1943, the day I was born. Ben Rich and I became friends after I met him at a Government technical conference. We often discussed advanced aircraft programs but he never even hinted to me about the ET subject.

Lt. Col. Phil Corso – I did attempt to read his "The Day After Roswell" book, but not because of his ET claims. My interest was the fact that in 1964 he was assigned to Warren Commission member Senator Richard Russell Jr. as an investigator into the assassination of JFK. I managed to locate Phil via his son who was employed in the same business as my RAF homebuilt aircraft company. In early 1998 during a family

vacation in Disney World, I took a day off and drove to the Corso home to interview Phil. I managed to find him alone and talked to him for several hours. Phil was a very different person to talk to alone than he was if his family was with him. He seemed sincere and open while alone, but guarded and controlled when his son was present. He seemed surprised and happy that I was interested in his Warren Commission work. He provided some remarkable teasers about the JFK case but said he would “only elaborate during our next meeting, not today”. I pressed him hard and of course had planned to meet him again, but he died soon after my first and only visit. I later asked his son for any documents, any draft or notes he might have written on his “The Day After Dallas” book, but he refused the request. Overall, I believe Phil was a real gentleman. He was fascinating and fun to talk with. However, I did not get a strong feeling that his ET and reverse-engineering claims were credible nor were supported by evidence.

Hal Puthoff, Col. John Alexander and Bob Bigelow – I consider these folks good friends and I have enjoyed my interface with all of them for many years. I am very interested in their work, their passion and their capabilities. However, I would not have met these folks when I did, were it not for an introduction by someone that is an ET/UFO true believer. He approached me with verbal technical proposals for wild, far-out propulsion development products, but I never officially engaged him on those subjects. My incentive to return his calls was solely because my then-current hobby was studying the JFK case. The guy’s reputation included a history of involvement in the JFK presidency before and after JFK’s murder in 1963. I did not learn anything new or compelling from him, however, I do owe him a big thank-you for introducing me to Hal and then to John. I also want to thank John for introducing me to Bob. I am very interested in Hal’s work on energy generation and space propulsion, John’s work on non-lethal weapons and Bob’s impressive work on developing non-government orbital space stations. However, I have never been a NIDS participant and my friendship with these three folks has nothing to do with the ET lore.

Werner von Braun – I met von Braun in 1965 in San Francisco where we both were receiving AIAA awards. I chatted with him at the cocktail hour, but only about his Apollo work. My closest golfing friend started his NASA career by flying von Braun around the country in the 60s. He and his other friends were close to von Braun at the Marshall center in Huntsville, Alabama until he departed for Washington D. C. in 1970.

None of these people ever mentioned to me a hint that von Braun was aware of, or was working any ET issues.

Bottom line:

A reason that I remain an ET skeptic is that, for 45 years I have been in a position to handle sensitive technical information and have not heard of anything related to ET hardware or reverse-engineering projects. I have served two separate 5-year terms on the US Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, including a study group assigned to evaluate research for advanced propulsion systems (at Wright-Patterson AFB, the Air Force Research Laboratory Propulsion Directorate and other locations), but I have never heard anyone mention the kind of stuff that excites the ET/UFO crowd. I only hear those wild claims from people that promote the lore, but never from any Government official or other credible source.

As I found while trying to solve the JFK murder, the 'evidence' used for 'proof' is highly contaminated with incorrect information (intentional or accidental). Any 'evidence' sits along side other 'evidence' that proves the opposite conclusion. Thus, the quality of the evidence is always viewed very different, depending on the bias of the viewer.

Finally, claims that ET spaceships have crashed numerous times since the 1940s without any portions of wreckage ever being available for public scrutiny, and without any released or leaked analysis/photos of wreckage just does not pass a sanity check. Until convincing physical evidence is found, I will remain a skeptic.

Lookin up.... way up,

Burt Rutan