Female announcer: From West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

Music. Squeaking noise.

Ray Hicks: I’m Ray Hicks. I’m a Professor of Forest Ecology at West Virginia University and I was sitting in my office one day and the telephone rang and the person on the other end said; ‘you’re probably going to think this is strange. But I am calling from Hollywood, California and I am a filmmaker and I am doing a documentary film for the Sci Fi Channel and we need a forester to help with I guess the site evaluation.’ And I didn’t know what I was going to do or what was I going to get into but I just simply said, well sure I’ll do it.

TV Announcer: Sci Fi blows the lid off one of the most incredible UFO cover ups in American history. Bryant Gumbel hosts an all new Sci Fi Channel investigation, The New Roswell.

Steven Kite: I’m James Steven Kite and I’m a professor of Geology and Geography at WVU. I was called, I believe it was in April, and had some misgivings. You know the Sci Fi Channel, I’m supposed to be a scientist and science and fiction are not necessarily things that go together. But I had the discussion with my colleagues and reassurances from the producers that they wanted real science done.

Music.

SK: What happened was something was observed over Ontario, Michigan, Ohio and western Pennsylvania on the ninth of December 1965. Observations were somewhere around between 4 and 5 o’clock.

RH: Witnesses who said that there were a number of military people there, so called “men in black” were there. And the military people cordoned off the area, wouldn’t let anyone in. They picked up whatever the object was, loaded it on a truck and took it away. And that’s according to some of the people in Kecksburg. Other people in Kecksburg claimed that none of that happened and in fact nothing hit the ground.

SK: I think one of the things that stuck with me is that this problem really stemmed from the way the government reacted to this event. Their explanation of a meteorite falling on that surface is the first hypothesis that we could rule out. If it was meteorite, particularly the size of this object that was taken out of the woods; if it was a Volkswagen size meteorite there would have been massive devastation. We’re talking about; this would have been a singular event in the history of Pennsylvania maybe the whole United States. Multiple, I mean possibly thousands of fatalities; that didn’t happen. That was the story the government gave at the time and because that had no creditability everything else lacks creditability.

RH: It’s probably not an obvious thing to most people but the forest has a story to tell. In fact the trees have a lot of attributes, a lot of things that you can recognize and if you know what you’re looking for, and that is what a forester I think is trained to do, you can see these things.

SK: One of the intriguing things of what to look for. How do you. What does debris from an alien vehicle look like? I had no clue. I would hope that I would be able to tell it from something natural. I certainly think it would be able to; you’re not going to find clay and rock. You know, you’re not going to find earthy materials on an extra-terrestrial vehicle or a Soviet or a Department of Defense satellite. So I think it would have been able to identify debris if we had found some. We pretty much relied on tried and true archeological survey methods of shovel test pits. And of course, being I am a geomorphologist I was very much in tuned to disturbances on the landscape; land forms that didn’t look natural, places where soil had been disturbed. You have a normal sequence of top soil, sub soil and we were looking for places where there was sub soil at the surface against some digging going on. So what we did is pretty conventional and turned up some interesting things but nothing unequivocal related to any events in 1965. The real exciting find there was actually Doctor Ray Hicks’ discovery of a tree that was impacted by something along a path that had been described a path of incoming object and it turned out that tree showed a definite change in ring width in 1965.

Squeaking noise, music.

RH: What I did primarily was to examine some of the trees that were in the quote path where the object supposedly came down. There were some photographs that they had supplied me and those photographs showed trees that were supposed to have been knocked over or the tops knocked out as a result of the object coming through the woods. I went to the area where somebody told me that the trajectory was and took those pictures and lo and behold I was able to match actually the picture with the actual trees that were there today. I then found a tree in that path area that looked like the top had been broken out at some point because it had resprouted. Took my increment bore, took a core from that tree and lo and behold the tree had slowed down dramatically in growth as a result of its top being knocked out, probably. And I counted the number of rings from the present back to that point and believe it or not it was the 1965 which was the year the object supposedly fell.

I did also take a core from another tree that was right next to it that did not have its top knocked out and it didn’t show that pattern of growth so obviously something happened to that tree in 1965 or thereabout that changed its growth pattern and whether or not the object that fell did that or did not do it I wouldn’t be able to tell you.

SK: One of things that strikes you right off the bat about this particular investigation that it is testing an outrageous hypothesis; but if you look where science advances, it advances not by solving the problems that we know the answer to already. I mean it really makes fundamental advances by testing outrageous hypothesis.

RH: Mentally I was thinking that, you know, I might have to sort of innovate a little bit and I didn’t quite know how I might have to do that.

SK: I think there certainly is a whole field of science that actually was developed fairly sophisticated up through the 60s and then basically disappeared and didn’t get transferred into the public domain, into the universities in part because of “stigmas” maybe associated with doing investigations on unidentified flying objects. But also because this was also all very secret and so the information of what they did and the project and the project they working didn’t really disseminate out.

RH: Something did happen. Now, you know, I’m not going to speculate on what it was.

Music.