

Is Roswell legacy green menace?

ROSWELL, N.M. (AP) Sixty years after big-headed, toothpick-limbed green aliens allegedly crashed in the New Mexico desert — leaving little but paranoia in their wake Roswell embraces the extraterrestrial.

To a point.

A McDonald's mimics a UFO. A wall at Wal-Mart displays a large rendering of a green spaceman. Arby's restaurant is hospitable: "Aliens Welcome," reads the big sign out front.

The city draws thousands of enthusiasts to its annual UFO festival, which runs this weekend.

But when it comes to support for space oddities, there may be limits.

Gene Frazier and Thomas Armstrong have a dream: Earth Station Roswell, a \$67 million resort and conference center for UFO enthusiasts featuring a 1,000-seat concert center, an exhibit hall, fine-dining restaurant, cafe, deli, lounge, a 400-seat theater and lecture hall, an RV shop, lagoon-style swimming pool and a massive underground parking garage.

The anchor would be the "Mothership," a 75-foot-tall, 300-room hotel resembling a flying saucer.

There already had been those, like Julie Shuster, director of the International UFO Museum and Research Center, who questioned whether UFO exploitation had gone too far.

"Greed and ego are rampant among the UFO field and among everybody who is trying to capitalize on it," she says, shaking her head.

Now the resort proposal and another by city officials to build a UFO-themed amusement park, complete with an indoor roller coaster that would take passengers on a simulated alien abduction, have fueled some talk: How much should Roswell exploit its little green men?

"Anytime you talk UFOs, aliens or the paranormal, you're going to get a divided room," says city planner Zach Montgomery.

Shuster grew up in Roswell. Folks never talked about the UFO affair.

Shuster's father, Walter Haut, played a part in all that. As the public information lieutenant at Roswell Army Air Base, he was ordered by a colonel to issue the July 8, 1947, press release disclosing the recovery of "a flying disk" at a ranch near Roswell.

The next day, higher-ranking officers said the debris came from a weather balloon that crashed; authorities displayed some bits and pieces.

More than 30 years passed, and the incident was generally forgotten, but then, an Army officer who took part in the recovery of the debris

came forward to assert that it had been from an alien spacecraft and that the government had engaged in a cover-up.

Eventually, the Air Force disclosed it had been part of Project Mogul, a top-secret effort to monitor Soviet-era nuclear testing.

But that story never satisfied believers who advanced tales of alien bodies recovered in the desert.

The Roswell Incident was born and with it, a fascination that spread from supermarket tabloids to the popular imagination.

But the local UFO boom really began in 1992, when Haut and Glenn Dennis a local mortician who claimed a nurse on the base had told him of autopsies performed on aliens taken from the wreckage founded the UFO museum.

Each month, the museum greets visitors from all 50 states and 35 countries 2.5 million since its founding. According to one analysis, it generates \$35 million in indirect spending each year for the city of 50,000 residents.

The point, Shuster says, is not to prove that an alien spacecraft really crashed, but simply to present information from both sides of the debate and let visitors make up their own minds.

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