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# United Airlines Flight 93 - Witnesses

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Eyewitnesses saw the Boeing 757-200 flying low and then suddenly falling from the sky, resulting in a huge fireball and a 10-by-20-foot crater.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Tom Fritz

"When it decided to drop, it dropped all of a sudden -- like a stone," said Tom Fritz, 63. Fritz was sitting on his porch along Lambertsville Road, about a quarter-mile from the crash site, when he heard a sound that "wasn't quite right" and looked up in the sky. "It was sort of whistling," he said. "It was going so fast that you couldn't even make out what color it was."<sup>[1]</sup>

### Rose Goodwin

Rose Goodwin, a freshman at Shanksville Stony Creek High School, was watching the television news in class when Flight 93 went down. "We felt it. We thought something must have landed on the roof," she said. "It was like, 'Oh my gosh, what was that?' We looked out the window and saw a black cloud.

Everyone started screaming."<sup>[2]</sup>

### Bruce Grine

"It shook the whole station," said Bruce Grine, owner of Grine's Service Center in Shanksville, about 2 1/2 miles from the crash.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Rick King

He 'sat in his modest gray clapboard house watching the disaster coverage on television and talking with his sister on the telephone. "Rick," said his sister, Jody Walsh. "I hear a big plane. . . . I think it's going to crash!" The words seemed implausible to King, the assistant chief of the volunteer fire department. What did Shanksville have to do with any of this? But he dashed to the porch to get a look for himself, and now his sister was more insistent. The plane was nosediving, falling like a stone. "Oh, my God, Rick . . . it's going to crash!" King heard a shattering boom in his right ear, over the phone, and in his left ear, he heard the rumblings from four miles distant, where Flight 93 fell.<sup>[4]</sup>

## **Knoll and Nevin Lambert**

"It was coming right at me, but something happened," Lambert said. "I don't know what happened on the plane. It was going upside down and all at once it made the 45-degree angle and it went right down (where that big tree is)."<sup>[5]</sup>

## **Karl Landis**

Karl Landis, 58, saw the crash from about a half-mile away while driving his pickup. "It came in, rolled slightly to the left and appeared to hit the ground at almost a 90-degree angle," he said. "It seemed like an eternity, but it must have been only a few seconds. It evaporated into a huge fireball that turned into black smoke."<sup>[3]</sup>

## **Anna McBride**

Anita McBride looked out her kitchen window in Lambertsville and watched in horror as United Airlines Flight 93 disappeared over a line of trees.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **Michael Merringer**

Michael R. Merringer was out on a mountain bike ride with his wife, Amy, about two miles away from the crash site. "I heard the engine gun two different times and then I heard a loud bang and the windows of the houses all around rattled," Merringer said. "I looked up and I saw the smoke coming up." The couple rushed home and drove near the scene. "Everything was on fire and there was trees knocked down and there was a big hole in the ground," he said.<sup>[6]</sup>

## **Frank Monaco**

The crash left a V-shaped gouge in a grassy field surrounded by thick woods, just below a hilltop strip mine. The gouge is 8- to 10-feet deep and 15- to 20-feet long, said Capt. Frank Monaco of the Pennsylvania State Police. Investigators believe the plane crashed there and disintegrated, sending debris into thick trees nearby, Monaco said. "There's nothing in the ground you can see," Monaco said of the crash site. "It just looks like tiny pieces of debris."<sup>[7]</sup>

## **Eric Peterson**

Eric Peterson of Lambertsville was working with a friend in his auto shop this morning. They heard a plane and looked up and saw a large aircraft close to the ground. "I actually thought it was going to hit a house here in town," said Peterson. It blew out windows of a nearby farmhouse when it crashed. As it went over started going end over end, Peterson said, and then dropped below a tree line and exploded. Peterson saw a flash and then a mushroom cloud of smoke. The plane went down on a strip mine field. Peterson and his friend rushed to the field and looked for bodies, but couldn't find any. They called out, but heard nothing. There was a crater in the ground that was really burning. There were pieces of fuselage and clothing all over the area, burning, said Peterson. He said he didn't see any debris longer than a couple of feet long.<sup>[8]</sup>

Eric Peterson of Lambertsville looked up when he heard the plane. "It was low enough, I thought you could probably count the rivets," Peterson said. "You could see more of the roof of the plane than you could the belly. It was on its side. There was a great explosion and you could see the flames. It was a massive, massive explosion. Flames and then smoke and then a massive, massive mushroom cloud." Peterson called 9-1-1 and ran to the crash site but found only burning jet parts, pieces of clothing, and seat cushions.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Lee Purbaugh

He was working at the Rollock Inc. scrapyard on a ridge overlooking the point of impact, less than half a mile away. "I heard this real loud noise coming over my head, I looked up and it was Flight 93, barely 50ft above me. It was coming down in a 45 degree and rocking from side to side. Then the nose suddenly dipped and it just crashed into the ground. There was this big fireball and then a huge cloud of smoke."

But did he see another plane? "Yes, there was another plane," Lee said. "I didn't get a good look but it was white and it circled the area about twice and then it flew off over the horizon."<sup>[9]</sup> *[this was a Falcon 20 business jet; it's pilot was asked to check on Flight 93 and get coordinates of the crash site]*

## Viola Saylor

Viola Saylor of Lambertsville was outside talking to her sister. "We didn't hear that plane coming until it was right on top of us," she said. "Then there was a roar." She said the plane appeared to be gliding into the ground. "All at once it just stopped. There was no engine noise, nothing. Someone hollered, 'Oh my God!' and then there was a real loud thud."<sup>[2]</sup>

## Mark Stahl

"There's a crater gouged in the earth, the plane is pretty much disintegrated. There's nothing left but scorched trees," said Mark Stahl, of Somerset, who went to the scene.<sup>[10]</sup>

## John Walsh

John Walsh, 72, saw the immediate aftermath of the crash from his nearby home in Lambertsville. "I looked out my window when I heard the explosion and saw this big orange ball of fire," Walsh said. "When it hit it looked like an atomic bomb went off. It was just terrible." Walsh said he leapt into his truck and drove to within 300 yards of the crash site. "I wanted to see if I could help anybody. But there was just burning parts, that's all. I looked down the hill and saw nothing but a big crater. You could not tell it was an air crash, the debris was so widely scattered."<sup>[3]</sup>

## Joe Wilt

The ensuing firestorm lasted five or 10 minutes and reached several hundred yards into the sky, said Joe Wilt, 63, who also lives a quarter-mile from the crash site. "The first thing I thought it was, was a missile," Wilt said. The impact shattered a window in his basement and knocked down household objects from a shelf.<sup>[1]</sup>

## References

- ↑ [1.0](#) [1.1](#) [1.2](#) Jetliner Was Diverted Toward Washington Before Crash in Pa. The Washington Post September 12, 2001
- ↑ [2.0](#) [2.1](#) [2.2](#) [2.3](#) Pennsylvania crash carries horror into small towns Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio) September 12, 2001
- ↑ [3.0](#) [3.1](#) [3.2](#) Passenger's frantic call preceded jet crash near Pittsburgh USA TODAY September 12, 2001
- ↑ >Maraniss, David (September 16, 2001). "Portrait of a Day That Began in Routine and Ended in Ashes", The Washington Post.
- ↑ "[Memories Of Flight 93 Remain Vivid](#)", KDKA-TV (September 11, 2006).
- ↑ "[Hijacked passenger called 911 on cell phone](#)", CNN (September 11, 2001).

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8. ↑ "...Debris Field Spread Over an Area Size of a Football Field..." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania) September 11, 2001
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10. ↑ "[Hijacked passenger called 911 on cell phone](#)", CNN (September 11, 2001).

## External links

- [Flight 93 crash site left most of the horror to the imagination](#)

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