

The 9/11 Truth Movement: The Top Conspiracy Theory, a Decade Later

By Dave Thomas in the *Skeptical Inquirer* Volume 35.4, July/August 2011

http://www.csicop.org/si/show/the_9_11_truth_movement_the_top_conspiracy_theory_a_decade_later

We are familiar with Dave Thomas and his one-sided skepticism. He uses the term "conspiracy theory" as a pejorative — despite believing and staunchly defending the *official* conspiracy theory. This indicates that he does not know what the legal term "conspiracy" means. Thomas uses straw man arguments. As we know, a straw man argument exaggerates and misrepresents an opponent's argument to make it easier to attack.

— **Claim #1: "The Twin Towers collapsed at free-fall accelerations through the path of greatest resistance."**

— **AE911Truth does not make this claim. David Chandler measured the fall of the North Tower for the four seconds that it can be seen and it fell at about 64% of free fall acceleration. Thomas admits that AE911Truth says *nearly* free-fall acceleration.**

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— ". . . intense fires (started by jet fuel and fed by office contents and high winds) . . ."

— False. There were no high winds. Just a breeze.

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— ". . . eventually caused floor trusses to sag, pulling the perimeter walls inward until they finally snapped."

— Steel does not "snap" like twigs. The exterior columns were sections of three columns wide and three stories tall, staggered like bricks so that the splices of adjoining sections were on different floors. The splices could snap, but the other two sections would just bend, not snap.

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— "At this instant, the entire upper section of each tower fell the height of one floor, . . ."

— For the upper portion to "fall" the height of one floor, all the remaining core columns and all the *undamaged* columns on the east and west sides, including all four corners, would have to more than bend and "snap" at the same time — they would have to instantly disappear before bending at all.

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— ". . . initiating an inevitable, progressive, and utterly catastrophic collapse of each of the structures."

— That's what NIST claims, but "inevitable" is a baseless assumption. Furthermore, the collapse did not start on the 95th floor, where *some* of the exterior columns bowed inward a maximum 55 inches.

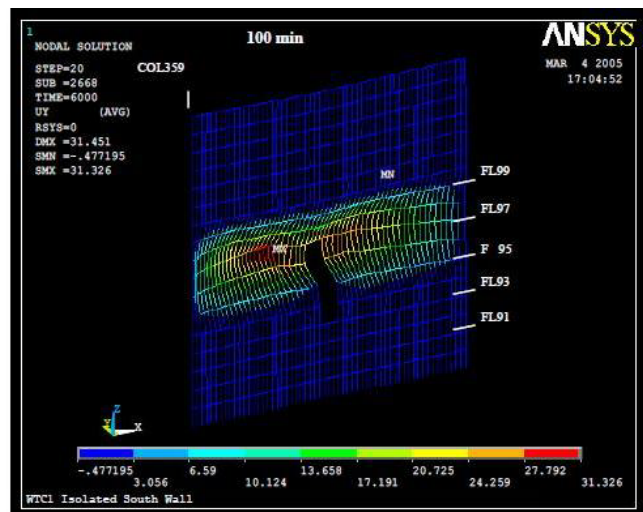


Figure 7-32. Inward displacement of the WTC 1 south wall at 100 min of the Case B temperatures with floor disconnections and 6 kip pull-in forces over five floors.

Rather, the collapse began on the 98th floor, above where the plane hit, so there was no dislodging of fireproofing. (See NIST's NCSTAR 1-6, p. 163 [PDF p. 245].)

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— "Truthers then insist that free fall acceleration indicates a complete lack of resistance, proving that the structures were demolished with explosives."

— This is true in the case of WTC 7, which *did* fall at free fall acceleration for about 81 feet in some 2.25 seconds.

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— "How *could* the buildings fall so quickly? It's been explained very well in the technical literature by Northwestern's Zdenek Bazant, PhD."

— Zdeněk Bažant published his theory two days after 9/11/01, without any data whatsoever. Why the rush to judgment? He has since updated his theory several times.

There are many problems with his theory, but the most glaring is the requirement that the upper portion fall at free-fall acceleration for that first story. That would require explosives to remove all the supporting structure. Bending steel columns requires energy, which precludes free fall. So his theory is actually a confirmation of controlled demolition.

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— ". . . over 420 billion joules of energy, or the equivalent of 100 tons of TNT per tower."

— Others have refuted Thomas's assumptions of the mass and the total potential energy.

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— "Truthers often compare such expulsions of air and debris, visible several floors below the collapse fronts, to 'squibs,' explosive devices often used in demolitions. However, they are readily explained by pressure changes as the towers, acting like a gigantic bicycle pump being compressed, collapsed."

— The squibs are sometimes 30 floors below the "collapse." Falling debris is chaotic and not airtight. That is, it's not like a piston in a cylinder. It is not solid, so it will allow air to pass through it rather than build up pressure below. There was no possibility of air pressure buildup 30 floors below. The bicycle pump analogy is an absurd and impossible comparison. Furthermore, there was a lot of solid matter in the squibs; air pressure cannot account for that.



— "The Twin Towers used a 'tube within a tube' architectural design."

— False. The core area was a grid of 47 columns all tied together with girders.

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— "When the towers began to collapse, large parts of the inner cores (called 'the Spires' in 9/11 Truth circles) were actually left standing, briefly, before they, too, toppled over."

— False. They did not "topple over." They fell straight down, which means that something *removed* the bottom portion.

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— "Between the outer perimeter and the inner core, the weight of the upper sections plowed through one floor after another, breaking the floor connection brackets and support columns, pulverizing concrete decks, and gaining momentum and mass with each additional floor failure."

— Other qualified engineers and physicists have argued that there was not enough kinetic energy to pulverize the concrete to a fine powder and do all the other damage.

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— **Claim #2: "Nano-thermite and military-grade explosives were found in dust from the towers. Tons of melted steel were found in tower debris."**

— **Claim #2 is incorrect. Nano-thermite, a military-grade explosive, was found in dust from the towers.**

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— ". . . (the characteristic "boom-boom-boom-boom" sounds and the flashes of high explosives) were completely absent in Manhattan on the morning of September 11, 2001."

— False. There were over 100 first responders and dozens of other witnesses who heard explosions and saw flashes of light.

Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ4dVo5QgYg>

Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUXGhLrDqb0>

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— "Richard Gage insists that high explosives *must* have been used to bring down the Twin Towers, as they say this is the only process that can possibly explain the 'ejection of debris hundreds of feet from the towers.' However, they simultaneously insist that thermite or a derivative (thermate, nanothermite, etc.) was used *instead*, so as to topple the towers *quietly*."

— This is a straw man argument. AE911Truth says that a combination of nano-thermite, thermate, *and* explosives were probably used.

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— "Thermite is simply not practical for carrying out a controlled demolition."

— Uninformed and wrong. Here is a patent issued in 1994 for a nano-thermite demolition device: "A plasma arc can be employed to demolish a concrete structure at a high efficiency, while preventing a secondary problem due to noise, flying dust and chips, and the like, . . . directing the plasma arc at the surface of the concrete structure, and controlling the rate of supply of the thermite powder": <http://www.google.com/patents/US5532449>

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— ". . . unfortunately, with no chain of custody for the dust."

— False. Harrit et al. *did* establish a legal chain of custody.

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— "However, the presence of rust and aluminum does not prove the use of thermite, because iron oxide and aluminum are found in *many* common items that existed in the towers."

— Another straw man. It wasn't *just* the presence of iron oxide and aluminum; it was nano particles of these elements of uniform size, intimately mixed and formed into red/gray chips. This could not possibly happen during the collapse, as Thomas suggests. In fact, the idea is so preposterous that anyone suggesting that this could happen loses all credibility.

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— ". . . the supposed thermitic material showed results at about 450 degrees C *below* the temperature at which normal thermite reacts."

— That's because it wasn't regular thermite. It was nano-thermite, mixed with organic material. When the red/gray chips ignited at about 450 degrees C, they produced iron spheres, which proves that there was a thermite reaction.

Read http://www2.ae911truth.org/downloads/Full_Thermite_paper.pdf.

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— ". . . the scan of the red side of the 'thermitic material' of Harrit/Jones is a dead-on match to material Jones himself identified as 'WTC Steel Primer Paint' in his Hard Evidence Down Under Tour in November of 2009."

Source: <http://www.internationalskeptics.com/forums/showpost.php?p=6959549>

— The video is no longer available, so it cannot be evaluated. From the nano-thermite paper: "Red/gray chips were soaked in methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) for 55 hours with frequent agitation and subsequently dried in air over several days. The chips showed significant swelling of the red layer, but with no apparent dissolution. In marked contrast, paint chips softened and partly dissolved when similarly soaked in MEK."

In other words, they were different.

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— "Suggesting that the samples show partially reacted thermite is preposterous."
— They didn't simply "suggest." They showed pictures of the spheres that they had analyzed and found to be iron.

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— ". . . the editor-in-chief of the *Bentham Journal* that featured Jones's article, Marie-Paule Pileni, resigned in protest."

— The reference Thomas makes above is to this:

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— "The editor of the *Open Chemical Physics Journal*, Professor Marie Paule Pileni, said that the article is '**not about physical chemistry or chemical physics**' and that '**the topic is outside her expertise.**'"

— Both of the above statements are false. A thermitic reaction involves chemistry and physics. Marie-Paule Pileni is a chemistry professor with a **specialty in nanomaterials** at the renowned Université Pierre et Marie Curie in France.

See <http://screwloosechange.blogspot.com/2009/04/bentham-editor-resigns-over-steven.html>.

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— "Thermitic demolition should have created copious pools of melted steel at Ground Zero, but nothing remotely like this was ever found."

— False. Numerous structural engineers, clean-up specialists, firefighters, and others describe seeing [molten steel](#).

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— "Truthers say iron microspheres found in the rubble indicate thermite; since hot fires and spot-welding do produce very tiny spheres of iron, though, these 'microspheres' are not unexpected."

— These are alternatives that "skeptics" cite, but they could not produce the amount of iron spheres found in the dust (5.87% by weight). The RJ Lee group studied the dust from the WTC and determined that "iron melted during the WTC event, producing spherical metallic particles." That requires 2,800°F, a thousand degrees above what jet fuel or office fires can attain. They also determined that lead vaporized during the collapse (3,182°F).

See http://911encyclopedia.com/wiki/index.php/RJ_Lee_World_Trade_Center_Dust_Study

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— "Pictures of cranes holding red-hot materials in the rubble are said to show molten steel. Had this been the case, however, the crane rigs would have immediately seized up."

— Not so. Heavy equipment is not delicate. Here is a photo of a crab-claw picking up some semi-solid molten metal dripping from the bottom:



Mark Loizeaux, founder of Controlled Demolition Inc., said, "There are both video tape and still photos of the molten steel being "dipped" out by the buckets of excavators."

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— "No reports of 'molten steel' in the tower basements have ever been credibly verified."

— That's an excuse to ignore all the credible reports by structural engineers, demolition experts, clean-up specialists, firefighters, and others. It's extremely unlikely that they're all wrong.

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— "... sulfur, released from burned drywall, corroded the steel as it stewed in the pile for weeks."

— This is another absurd, baseless assumption, with no precedent or science to back it up. The sulfur in drywall is locked up in a chemical bond that is not broken in a fire. Drywall is used for fireproofing, but it could not be if the sulfur were released in a fire and thus adding to the intensity of a fire.

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— **Claim #3: "Tower 7, which wasn't hit by a plane, collapsed neatly into its own footprint."**

— "In particular, Truthers point to a brief period of freefall (2.25 seconds) that was confirmed by NIST in its WTC 7 final report (Sunder 2008; NIST 2010) as proving that the building was purposely imploded. However, WTC 7, too, fails to prove 9/11 was an 'inside job'"

— Note that Thomas does not dispute that 2.25 seconds of free fall proves that WTC was a controlled demolition. He just skips over that little detail and says that it doesn't prove 9/11 was an "inside job."

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— "What is often conveniently left out of the story are actual reports from NYFD firefighters at the scene, which describe huge, raging, unfought fires on many floors at once."

— Using the photos and videos, NIST confirms that they were *not* huge raging fires; they were normal office fires.

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— ". . . and visible deformations and creaking. . ."

— The supposed "bulge" in the southwest corner — where Floor 10 to Floor 13 was apparently missing due to debris damage — even if it *did* exist, had nothing to do with the "collapse" that started at the other end of the building.



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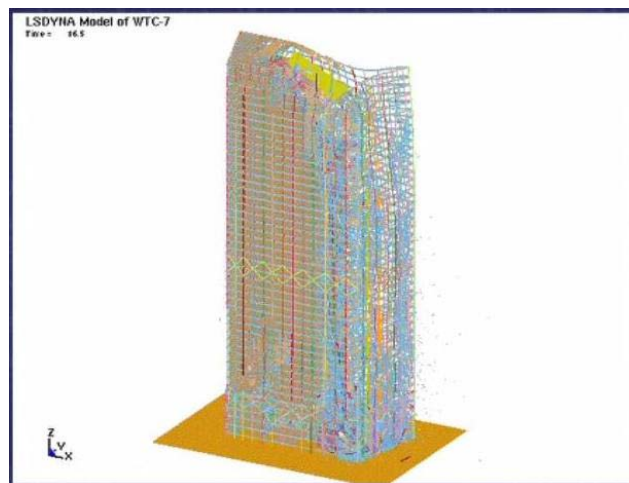
— "NIST determined that this column was crucial to the building and could even be considered a design flaw. Its failure would have collapsed the building even without the other structural damage from WTC 1's collapse and the fires."

— That is what NIST says, but it's a bit farfetched to claim that the failure of a single column could cause a modern skyscraper to collapse completely in a matter of seconds.

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— "NIST found the collapse occurred in *three* stages. The first stage, which lasted 1.75 seconds, is when the fifty-eight perimeter columns were buckled; during this interval, the rooftop actually fell only about seven feet. In the second stage, which lasted 2.25 seconds, the already-buckled columns provided negligible support, and the north face of the structure free-fell about eight stories."

— NIST used a camera looking up at the building, so the inward movement of the north wall would register as a downward movement using the method of counting light-colored pixels to determine the skyline. The point NIST chose, a little to the west of center, is where its computer model has an inward bow, so NIST had to have known that its claim of a seven-foot drop was fraudulent.



The video cameras that aim roughly level with the roofline show a slight downward movement of all but the northwest corner, just before the entire roofline goes into free fall. There was no bending of the exterior columns on the west end (right side) of the building before onset of free fall.



The NIST model (below) shows the exterior framework still bending after about 34 feet of descent, *well* into the free-fall portion of the collapse. In free fall, all the energy is being converted into motion, but bending steel requires energy, so the NIST model is *not* falling at free fall.



Figure 12-62. Exterior column buckling after initiation of global collapse with debris impact and fire-induced damage (slabs removed from view).

In Stage 1, ... the north face had descended approximately 2.2 m (7 ft)
 In Stage 2, the north face descended at gravitational acceleration NCSTAR 1A p. 45
 Global collapse occurred as the entire building above the buckled region moved downward as a single unit. NCSTAR 1A p. 48

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— "(Try taking a plastic drinking straw and buckling it by folding it over and then pushing down on the bent straw with your hand. The crimped straw provides almost no resistance to vertical forces, and neither did the buckled columns of WTC 7.)"

— This analysis is absurd. Steel columns weighing 500 to 1,000 pounds per lineal foot, which were designed to hold up three times the design load and were tied together with 3-foot-high steel beams on every floor, do not fold up like straws.

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— "The other half of the equation is that WTC 7 resembles a 'classic controlled demolition' because it supposedly 'imploded, collapsing completely, and landed in its own footprint.'"

— There was damage to two of the five surrounding buildings, but the majority of the debris landed within the footprint of the building.



"Loss of strength due to the transfer trusses could explain why the building imploded." (See FEMA, Chap. 5, p. 31: http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/fema403_ch5.pdf.)

"The debris of WTC 7 was mostly contained within the original footprint of the building." (See NIST 2004 Progress Report, Appendix L, p. 33: http://www.nist.gov/manuscript-publication-search.cfm?pub_id=860567.)

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— "Many 'serious' groups such as AE911Truth quietly champion 'no-planers' such as former pilot Dwain Deets, engineer Anders Bjorkman"

— False. AE911Truth has never taken a position on MIHOP/LIHOP or "no-planes" issues at WTC. Although some individuals who are members of AE911Truth have taken a position on these and other issues, the organization AE911Truth has so far confined its research and comments to the demolition of the three towers.