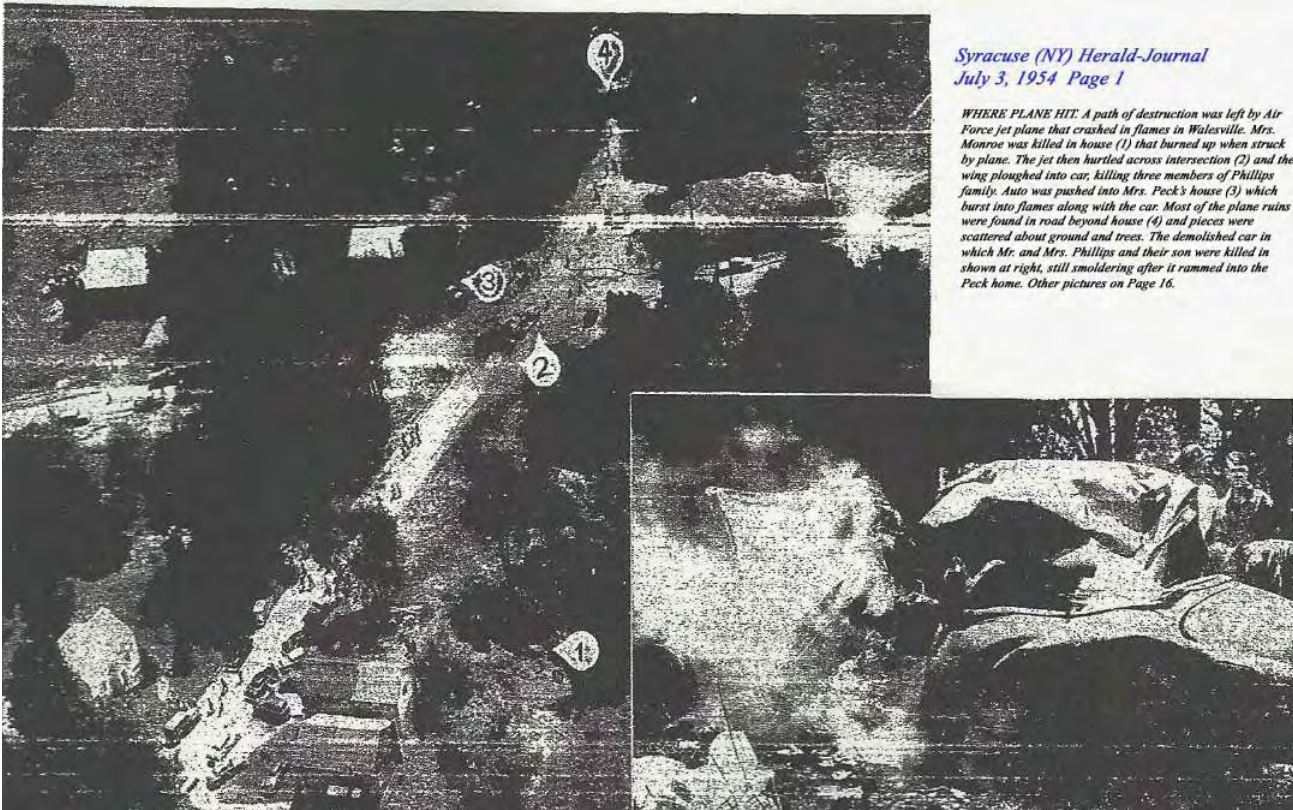


## Probe is Opened in Fatal Jet Crash at Walesville

- 2 BAIL OUT SAFELY -

### 4 Die as Plane Strike 2 Homes, Passing Auto



*Syracuse (NY) Herald-Journal  
July 3, 1954 Page 1*

*WHERE PLANE HIT. A path of destruction was left by Air Force jet plane that crashed in flames in Walesville. Mrs. Monroe was killed in house (1) that burned up when struck by plane. The jet then hurtled across intersection (2) and the wing ploughed into car, killing three members of Phillips family. Auto was pushed into Mrs. Peck's house (3) which burst into flames along with the car. Most of the plane ruins were found in road beyond house (4) and pieces were scattered about ground and trees. The demolished car in which Mr. and Mrs. Phillips and their son were killed is shown at right, still smoldering after it rammed into the Peck home. Other pictures on Page 16.*

UTICA – An intensive investigation was opened today to determine the cause of an F-94 Starfire jet plane crash, which yesterday claimed the lives of four persons at Walesville.

The jet burst into flames and plunged into two homes and a passing car at 12:30 P.M.

Officials of the public relations service at Griffis Air Base at Rome said the two seater jet carried 48 high explosive rockets, of which 47 were recovered.

It was piloted by Lt. William E. Atkins, 24, of Dutton, Va., who along with Lt. Henry F Couden, 26, of Perryville, Md., radar observer, escaped possible death by bailing out.

Dead are an entire family of three, Stanley Phillips, 48; his wife, Mrs. Florence Phillips, 42, and their son, Gary, 11 of Hecla, and Mrs. Doris Monroe, 28, of Walesville.

The plane was one of two jets ordered up in a practice “scramble” flight from the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Griffis Base.

A spokesman at the base gave this account of events leading up to the crash:

While the two planes were aloft they were ordered by radio to check on an unidentified plane that had entered the area guarded by the air defense operation.

(A Pentagon spokesman said in Washington the unidentified plane was about 75 miles north-east of Rome, on the edge of the Griffis patrol zone, when the jets intercepted it.)

The pilots were satisfied the aircraft was “friendly” and were heading back to their base when fire broke out in the cockpit of Atkins’ plane. Both men stuck to the craft as long as they could, then Atkins ordered Coudon to bail out. He followed the other man over the side from about 7,000 feet.

In a statement released last night at the air base, James H. Douglas, undersecretary of the Air Force, expressed "profound sympathy and sorrow" to the families of those killed.

Douglas said "preliminary reports indicate a fire developed in the forward section of the aircraft in flight and the heat in the cockpit became so intense the pilot and radar observer were forced to leave the aircraft at an altitude of 7,000 or 8,000 feet."

The Undersecretary dispatched the investigating team from Norton Air Force base at San Bernardino, Calif., to assist a Griffis board of inquiry in a probe.

An officer at the air base said earlier the craft apparently had exploded in its flight to earth. But the base said later it was not certain whether the explosion occurred before or after it struck.

The Phillips family died in their car when the machine was struck at the highway intersection at Walesville by the plummeting jet. The car crashed into the two story frame home of Mr. Mary Peck, 72. She escaped uninjured.

The plane, approaching from the northwest, sheared off tree tops and smashed into the home of Lloyd Monroe. His wife, Doris, mother of four children, was trapped in her home while preparing lunch.

The Monroe children, Kenneth, 9; Lloyd, Jr., 5; Nora Mae, 3, and Betty Lou, 18 months old were playing in the vicinity of the home when the plane crashed. Monroe was at work at the Westmoreland Malleable Iron Company. Upon learning of the tragedy, he was overcome by shock and grief, and was taken to St. Elizabeth's Hospital for treatment.

Betty Lou suffered a deep laceration of the right thigh and was sped to St. Luke's Hospital by a neighbor. She was treated by Dr. John Rudolph and her condition is reported as "good."

It was learned she was struck by flying debris.

Their one story frame dwelling and garage was destroyed by the fire. While the Peck home was badly burned, with firemen able to save a portion of the dwelling. Mrs. Peck, who was alone in the home, was led to safety by neighbors.

Shattered parts of the jet severed power and telephone lines, ripping communications out of service for several hours, and crews of the telephone company sped to the scene and installed emergency equipment to aid State Police, firemen, deputy sheriffs, officials of the Rome Air Base and others who took part in the preliminary investigation.

Dr. Preston R. Clark, New Hartford coroner, called at the scene by State Police, said the victims died of fourth degree burns of the entire body and ruled accidental death in each of the cases. However, Dr. Clark said an inquest will be conducted, pending further investigation. Also, responding at the scene were Drs. William B. Falvo and James Douglas, both of Utica.

The crash occurred about a half mile from the Labor Day crash of a passenger plane in 1950, when a total of 17 lives were claimed.

Sixteen state police and BCI men from the Utica area, under the direction of Lt. Melvin Handville, conducted the preliminary investigation, which is being continued today. Deputy sheriffs, police from Clinton, Whitestown, Whitesboro and Yorkville also aided in the investigation and kept thousands of motorists from entering the roped off area. Persons were warned not to seek souvenirs since the rockets were dangerous and could explode.

Fire Chief Anthony Dewozkas, of Westmoreland, who was visiting at the home of his mother about 150 feet northwest of the four-corner intersection, told authorities he ran to the Monroe home but realized it was hopeless to enter the flaming structure.

After seeing the four children safe outside, he drove to Westmoreland, about two miles away, to sound the alarm, all responding after the alarm was relayed through the Oneida County mutual aid system, located in Utica's central fire station. Firemen, a crew from Griffis base and investigating authorities remained at the scene for several hours.

The plane barely missed the general store of L. Dresley, which is to the northeast of the leveled Monroe home. A car in the rear of the Dresley store was slightly damaged.

The demolished plane spread debris over more than 500 feet radius. The engine landed about 200 feet south of the Peck home and buried itself several feet into the ground.

A triple funeral service will be conducted Monday at 8:30 A.M. for the Phillips family from the Heintz Funeral home, and at 9 from the Church of the Annunciation, Clarks Mills. Burial will be at Mt. Olive Cemetery.

Mr. Phillips was born Jan. 18, 1906, in Oriskany, a son of Welcome G. and the late Lida Clark Phillips. On Nov. 2, 1935, he married Florence E. Murray. For seven years he had been occupational therapy instructor at Rome State School, and prior to that served in the same capacity at Mercy State Hospital.

He is survived by his father, a sister, Mrs. Carl R. Crandall, Whitesboro, a brother, Lynn A. Phillips, Miami Beach, Fla., and several nieces and nephews.

Mrs. Phillips was born Feb. 22, 1912, in Lyons Falls, a daughter of Robert and the late Cora O'Hara Murray. She graduated from Illon High School in 1930 and from Cortland State Teacher's College in 1933. For the past four years she had been an occupational therapy instructor at Rome State School and prior to that has served in the same capacity at Mercy State Hospital.

Mrs. Monroe was born in Utica, June 7, 1925, daughter of Arthur and Elizabeth Schimmel of Utica. She was educated in Utica schools, and in May, 1948, was married to Lloyd Monroe.

Besides her husband and parents, she leaves four children, Kenneth, Lloyd, Jr., Nora Mae, and Betty Lou; two sisters, Mrs. Harold Eddy, Utica, and Mrs. Ray Wagner, Whitesboro; three brothers, James, Theodore and Arthur Schimmel, all of Utica.