

UFO

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UFO sighting brings media attention, investigative team to Southern Illinois

Credibility of witnesses piques interest

Drawing resembles "stealth blimp"

By HEATHER RATCLIFFE
Of the Post-Dispatch

It appeared as a floating two-story house with a glowing red interior.

A week later, it has attracted

national media and a team of investigators led by a former FBI agent who wants to know if the object was an alien spacecraft.

John Velier and his team from Las Vegas flew to St. Louis on Friday to learn more about a UFO spotted a week ago first by a miniature-golf course owner in Highland and then by four police officers.

When it flew over Melvern Noll's head as he stood on his golf course about 4 a.m., the craft was traveling silently at a snail's pace. He said he saw at least two rows of windows and red lights inside the object and along its metallic dark belly.

"I kept my eyeballs on it," said Noll, 66. "It was all lighted up and so low that someone could have waved at me out the window." He estimated it was about 1,000 feet above the ground.

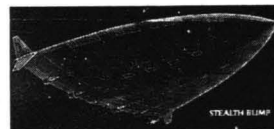
Noll said he drove to the Highland police station and asked the dispatcher to call the Lebanon police because the object was floating that way.

Besides Noll, four Metro East-area police officers saw the object as it moved above Lebanon, Shiloh, Dupu and Millstadt.

More than 20 calls about the sighting have been ringing into

the Millstadt police station each day since it was first reported by the media Friday. Chief Ed Wilkerson posted his officers' report on the department's Web site along with the drawings and photo. He stopped media interviews, refusing inquiries from ABC News in New York and Extra, the tabloid TV news show.

"It's going to affect policing if we don't put a stop to it," he said. "I never thought anything like this would draw this much attention. Well, at least it puts Millstadt on the map."



POPULAR MECHANICS WEB SITE
Police witnesses reported that the UFO resembled a drawing of a stealth blimp that appeared in Popular Mechanics magazine. However, the director of the National UFO Reporting Center said that the equipment needed to generate the reported brilliant glowing lights would be too heavy for a blimp. Scott Air Force Base officials say their only knowledge of the event comes from news reports.

Sequence of police UFO sightings



POST-DISPATCH

Police in Millstadt don't believe the sighting was a visitor from outer space. But they won't make any assumptions about what it was either.

"This has been one of the biggest things we have experienced in this area. It's reached the world," Wilkerson said.

Velier's team came from the National Institute for Discovery Science, a Las Vegas research institute, to collect evidence of the sighting.

The institute, founded in 1995, has about a dozen former law enforcement officers and scientists investigating sightings professionally.

"We are using the scientific method," said Colm Kelleher, an administrator for the institute. "We are looking for facts, not trying to promote any agenda."

The institute sent a team to the Metro East area because of the overwhelming credibility of the witnesses — nearly all police officers, Kelleher said.

"Police officers are a higher-quality observers than other witnesses, because they have good memories," he said. "And from our initial calls, we know these people are not delusional."

Velier, who said he doesn't know if aliens exist or not, said he's now investigating about 136 cases of UFO sightings, as well as cattle mutilations.

He interviewed the police officers and Noll. He couldn't find any other witnesses.

"Usually we are inundated with people who have seen these objects," he said.

Velier won't make an assumption about what the officers saw yet because his investigation is still in

its initial stages. However, he will post a preliminary report on the organization's Web site at www.accessnv.com/nids in a few weeks.

Two of the police officers who saw the object contacted the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle the morning they spotted it, said Peter B. Davenport, the center's director. The center, founded in 1974, records, corroborates and documents reports from individuals who have witnessed unusual, possibly UFO-related events.

The descriptions of the flying object don't fit conventional aircraft, Davenport said. The lighting is not consistent with U.S. regulations, and the flight pattern characteristics exceed anything that could have been achieved with an airplane, Davenport said.

The center has also taken reports from at least two civilians in the area who saw the object while driving to work that morning. The center will not release their names.

Forest Crawford of Collinsville, assistant director of the Illinois Mutual UFO Network, said he believes the police officers saw an experimental government aircraft.

A couple of the police witnesses told reporters that the object resembled a drawing of a "stealth blimp" that appeared in Popular Mechanics magazine.

"That drawing is such a close match to what these guys described," Crawford said.

Davenport disputes the theory that the aircraft could have been a secret government "stealth blimp." The amount of power needed to generate the brilliant glowing lights would be generated from equipment too heavy for a blimp, he said.



JERRY MAUNHEIM JR./POST-DISPATCH

Melvorn Noll describes what he saw floating over his business in Highland early one morning last week. "I thought it slowed down a bit," he said. "I thought, 'Did that see me down here?'"

Officials at Scott Air Force Base said Tuesday that the only knowledge they had of last week's UFO sighting was from news reports. The air traffic control tower for Scott and MidAmerica Airport was shut down at the time.

Noll said although the sighting has brought lots of unexpected

calls and attention, he doesn't regret telling his story.

"I'm glad I saw it. Only once in a lifetime you get to see something so exciting," he said.

P postnet.com/links Has the local UFO sighting intrigued your imagination? Go online for more about unidentified flying objects

VILLAGER, Moscow, PA - Nov. 10, 1999

Did You See Anything That Night?

"The Villager" received reports from two area men who quite possibly may have seen an "unidentified flying object," a UFO, in Madisonville the night of Nov. 3. We choose not to use their names to prevent any ridicule they might be subjected to as a result of their sighting - but they definitely saw something and are curious if any other area residents had seen anything unusual in the sky that night as well.

The two gentlemen, one from Covington Twp., the other from Madisonville, both hold responsible positions in the community. They were at the Madisonville man's home working on the Covington man's car, and were done by about 10:45 p.m. They then left the Madisonville man's home in separate vehicles heading for Covington, the Covington man driving about a quarter mile ahead of the other along Route 690 in Madisonville.

At that point, the Covington man saw lights in the sky, first shining from behind trees, and once he travelled on to open areas along the roadway, near Schreck's Corners, he could see the lights of this unidentified craft clearly. "Most of the lights were white, others were yellowish, all on the same level. They didn't light up the ground like spotlights would, but I couldn't see the body or shape of whatever this was," the Covington man said.

When he spotted this unidentifiable craft, the

Covington resident pulled his vehicle into a nearby parking lot to get a better look, and at that point, his friend following from behind also pulled over, thinking his friend's vehicle had broken down. Both men then got out of their vehicles and watched this object as it hovered a few hundred feet above trees in a nearby field. It didn't make a sound as it hovered motionless for about 30 seconds. It then made a quick move to the right, then straight out, toward the direction of Elmhurst, and disappeared, also without a sound. Amazed, the two men tried to track it for a short period but it had vanished from sight.

The Madisonville resident noted that this was no airplane, helicopter or hovercraft, as it was completely silent and created no downdraft.

The following day, the men learned that a woman was taking astronomical photos in Gouldsboro that night and reported seeing an unidentifiable flash in the sky, and also spoke a man who had seen an unidentifiable object in the sky that night in Tobyhanna.

Both men felt that most likely the government and businesses do projects that aren't talked about publicly, which is quite understandable, and maybe they saw something like that. "That's no problem, of course, and is nothing to worry about. We're just curious if anybody else had seen something that night as well," the Covington man noted.

ON SCIENCE

UFOs: Seeing is believing — or is it?

What is a scientist to make of UFO sightings by reasonable people?

Have you ever sat on a roof on a cold December night looking up into the sky for flying reindeer? I have. Many readers have asked what happened that Christmas Eve when my daughter Caitlin and I set out to scientifically test the theory of Santa Claus. Well, the bells on the roof jingled. They jingled off and on all night, however, and however often I was sent to go look, I saw no reindeer.

It has occurred to me several times, thinking over that night, that what was really wrong with this attempt to detect Rudolph and Prancer at work was that it was me up on the roof, not Caitlin. Any kid could have told me that adults can't see leprechauns, Peter Pan or other magical personages. Maybe imagination just dies with age, matured out of us like baby teeth.

Imagine my delight, then, to read in the newspaper on a recent morning that my surmise about only kids being able to see the magical is in error. It appears clear from what I read that imagination does not atrophy with age after all. Adults too can see with imagination's eyes, at least in Illinois.

I am referring, of course, to the sightings of a UFO one morning two weeks ago. It flew over Melvern Noll's miniature golf course the morning of Jan. 5. Flew is perhaps too strong a word. It wasn't moving fast at all. Floated might be more like it. Noll says he saw rows of windows. "It was all lighted up and so low that someone could have waved at me out the windows."

Noll, after digesting this unusual sight for a few minutes, lighted out for the police station in Highland. The dispatcher called the police in Lebanon — it was headed that way — and they saw it, too. In addition to Noll, four police officers in the Metro East area filed reports of seeing the object in the sky as it passed Lebanon, Shiloh, Millstadt and Duplo. At least two civilians also saw the object as they drove to work early that morning.

I can think of three ways to account for the UFO. First, it's all some sort of joke or hysteria, and

there was in fact nothing real floating over Noll and his miniature golf course. This doesn't seem to me a likely explanation. Four independent police reports are no casual bit of nonsense, no encounter of the after-the-bar-closed kind. Police are high-quality observers, neither delusional nor fanciful. And the police who saw the UFO did not think it a joke. Indeed, two of the officers contacted the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle the morning after their sighting.

Second, Noll's UFO might be some sort of novel military craft, not known to the general public. The police witnesses told reporters the object resembled a drawing of a stealth blimp that appeared recently in Popular Mechanics magazine. Was it an experimental military aircraft? There is no radar track to confirm or disprove; the air traffic control tower at Scott Air Force Base was shut down at the time. Lambert Field reported no UFOs. The government denies all knowledge of any such craft. Still, this is where I would bet my money.

Third, Noll's UFO might be a real intergalactic spacecraft. All those windows and brilliant glaring lights don't sound like any blimp I ever heard of. How could a blimp generate enough power? But if it wasn't a blimp, what was it? Sherlock Holmes said that when you have eliminated the impossible, what remains, however improbable, must be true. I suspect Holmes would vote for the UFO.

A particularly interesting thing about Noll's UFO becomes clear if you plot the five confirmed reports of police sightings on a map. The sightings move south and west on a slow swooping curve aimed right at — St. Louis! The thought of just what in St. Louis is attracting UFOs beggars the imagination.

So, bottom line, are there UFOs? I am not about to write a column saying No, Virginia, there are no UFOs, for the same reason I will never write a column saying there is no Santa. UFOs, like Santa, are real for those able to see them. Kids don't see UFOs, and adults don't see Santa. The window of imagination opens differently for us than for our children, but no less vividly.

Of course, as a scientist, I don't accept UFOs as anything more than highly unlikely, sort of in the same category as Santa Claus and jackalopes. But I have seen a jackalope, and I am personally acquainted with very together kids who say they have seen Santa.

So I live quite comfortably in a world where reasonable people see UFOs. I can no more imagine a world without UFOs than one without Santa. If there were one, I suspect it would be a drab, gray place, with no X Files, no Men In Black, no Independence Day. I wouldn't want to live there.

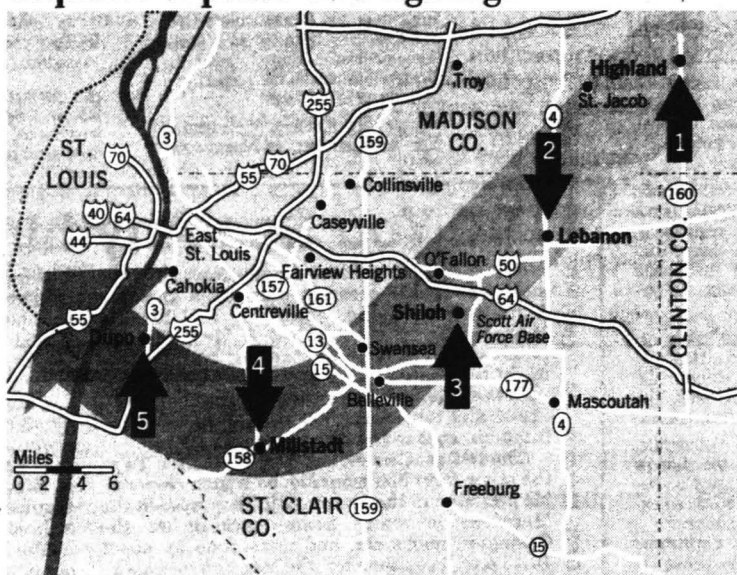
George Johnson is a biology professor at Washington University.

George Johnson



onscience@btwriter.com

Sequence of police UFO sightings



POST-DISPATCH

THE WORM Speaking of UFOs ...

Close Encounter I: Who said things were dull around here New Year's Eve? Last week, a reader told us she'd spotted three bright lights in the sky over East Wenatchee at midnight. "They were in a triangle sort of and didn't move for a long time, just hung there," the woman reported. "Did anyone else see them?"

Indeed, others did, namely the managing editor and city editor of The Wenatchee World, who stood outside the newspaper's office at midnight, looked up and saw the three aforementioned lights. The lights rose as if hoisted by balloons for several minutes, then one of them plummeted, apparently into the river.

Hmm. Delving deeper into this mystery, we contacted East Wenatchee police, who knew nothing about the lights in the sky. But Douglas County Undersheriff Dave Wallace said he and the sheriff saw a red parachute flare, probably military, that appeared to be shot from Wenatchee over the river. He said it hung in the air for about 30 or 40 seconds before it fell into the river, just upstream from the pedestrian bridge.

Close Encounter II: Not to be outdone, two known associates of The Worm (reporter Dan Wheat and photographer Kelly Gillin to be exact) were driving down Highway 155 near Steamboat Rock State Park at 6:40 p.m. last Wednesday when they spotted lights, seemingly hovering, above the road.

Thinking they were onto a UFO, they stopped, rolled down their windows and saw the outline of a large jet pass about 500 feet overhead, heading toward Grand Coulee Dam. They heard the plane's engines. It banked west.

Jim Anderson, flight scheduler for Japan Airlines at Grant County Airport, said the company hasn't had a jet in since Dec. 19, and the jets don't fly at night.

But Jerry Johnson, shift manager of flight controllers at the FAA's center in Auburn, said McChord Air Force Base routinely flies C-141s and C-17s (larger than airliners) down to 1,000 feet on training runs in that area. He said they may go lower in uninhabited areas.

■ Researchers say a craft seen near Downstate Belleville was an unidentified flying object, but whether it's otherworldly remains unknown, staff writer **Scott Fornek** reports.

Bufs baffled by UFO

It is certainly a UFO. It is being called a close encounter of the first kind. But don't expect E.T. to be phoning home just yet. That's because all that sci-fi-like jargon does not necessarily mean the enormous triangular object spotted drifting silently through the crisp night air over southwestern Illinois two weeks ago is from outer space.

"To prove something is an alien spacecraft requires a piece of it, requires the aliens to land and say 'Here we are,'" said Mark Rodeghier, scientific director of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, based on the Northwest Side.

"You can't prove something like this is an alien spacecraft without some extraordinary piece of evidence."

But so far, it definitely fits the "unidentified flying object" label—because no one seems to know what it was.

Experts are baffled by the object seen cruising over six towns in the Belleville area about 4:30 a.m. Jan. 5. UFO sightings are not uncommon in Illinois, although all but a handful wind up being easily explained by earthly means. What is unusual about the Downstate object is that as many as four police officers and one civilian in four different towns reported seeing it.

"The witnesses are excellent to unimpeachable," said Peter Davenport, director of the Seattle-based National UFO Reporting Center. "They don't seem to have any motive for misleading us."

"In my conversations with them, generally they just seem to be level-headed, no-nonsense types of individuals who were just doing a job and happened to stumble into something that morning."

And all described pretty much the same thing: A craft shaped like an arrowhead, about 100 feet long, two stories tall, with bright lights on its tail and underside.

"While I was sitting there I observed a very large flying object coming from a southward direction," Millstadt Police Officer Craig A. Stevens reported on the police department's Web site. "The object was flying very low from 500 to 1,000 feet, and was flying very slowly."

"The object was making no noise. I could only hear a very low-decibel buzzing sound. Then the object began banking to the northeast direction, and continued to cruise away from me toward the area of [the nearby town of] Dupu."

Stevens took a photograph of the object but believes his Polaroid malfunctioned because of the cold. The photograph posted on the Web site, millstadt police.homepage.com, just shows a few lights in a dark background.

Also on the site is a sketch Stevens drew, showing a triangular object with a series of lights on its concave back.

Davenport said he interviewed both Stevens and an officer from Lebanon, a town about 30 miles east of St. Louis. Three other police officers reportedly saw the craft, but Davenport has not spoken with them.

He said the officer from Lebanon told him the craft had bright red lights that "radiated so much light in the sky it was similar to the Japanese rising sun symbol."

Davenport said the officer told him the craft passed over his stopped squad car before streaking off "at warp speed"—about 8 miles in 3 seconds.

Davenport declined to say if he believes the craft is from another planet but said "the object that has been reported appears to be grossly incompatible with any kind of terrestrial aircraft that I am aware of."

The speculation Downstate has included more earthly



"You can't prove something like this is an alien spacecraft without some extraordinary piece of evidence," says Mark Rodeghier, scientific director of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.



explanations, ranging from a government test of a top-secret stealth blimp to some new aircraft flying out of nearby Scott Air Force Base.

Even big-time UFO buffs have to admit that it's possible the mystery craft was a top-secret, man-made experiment. The Stealth bomber, for instance, was test-flown in the Midwest for eight years before the Pentagon unveiled it.

During that time, local UFO societies got dozens of reports of black delta-shaped ships zooming overhead, said Forest Crawford, an Illinois UFO researcher.

Not that the government is about to admit it, if in fact it was involved. A spokesman for Scott Air Force Base says personnel there know nothing about the UFO. Then again, if it was a classified military project, "I can't imagine that we would know," Lt. Col. Allan Dahncke said. "If we did, it wouldn't be so secret."

Rodeghier said he has no doubt the federal government has stealth blimps for military uses or drug interdiction cases, but he is not convinced that that is what was hovering over southeastern Illinois.

"The question is what would the federal government be doing flying this over East St. Louis on Jan. 5 at 4:30 in the morning?" Rodeghier said. "On the other hand, if you are looking for something saying this is an alien spacecraft, there isn't much evidence for that either."

"It didn't move very quickly, it didn't do anything unusual in terms of its motion, nobody saw little creatures in the windows on it—all it did was fly over the town and just keep flying away."

Still, the sightings are close encounters of the first kind, a designation created by Hynek, the late Northwestern University astronomer who founded the center and wrote *The UFO Experience* in 1972.

A close encounter of the first kind is a sighting where

an unidentified object comes close enough for witnesses to see some details. In a close encounter of the second kind, the object leaves some physical evidence, such as a burn mark on the ground or a clear image in a photograph. The third kind involves the sighting of an alien being on or near the object.

Investigation of such phenomena depends on which class the sighting falls into, but Rodeghier said the first step is to rule out conventional explanations—such as stars, planets, streetlights, hoaxes and the like, which account for 90 percent of the 200 UFOs reported in Illinois each year.

The next step is to look for more unusual—but still earthly—explanations, such as blimps, stealth fighters and other unusual crafts.

Rodeghier said the Downstate object is likely to remain a UFO, rather than an IFO (identified flying object).

"If it is a government stealth blimp, we are unlikely to find out," he said. "They are not likely to tell us."

Rodeghier, who earns his living teaching statistics and survey research workshops, won't say whether he believes in aliens. Davenport, a former Russian translator and college business instructor, said he does—although he admits experts in "Ufology" have failed to come up with scientific proof.

"But the significant thing about this is that human beings are clearly witnessing things that by any human measure should not be there," he said. "And that is happening over and over."

Contributing: Los Angeles Times



COLUMBIAN, Vancouver, WA - Nov. 25, 1999

Local UFO observer convinced we're not alone

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
Columbian staff writer

In June 1947, unidentified flying objects apparently made their first appearance—at least in American newspapers.

A man in a plane over the Pacific Northwest spotted nine shiny objects flying with a dipping motion and moving at an incredible speed. Using Mount Rainier and Mount Adams as reference points, the man, Kenneth Arnold, figured they were flying at about 1,200 mph.

He told his story to local papers, and immediately afterward, similar reports surfaced across the country. Individuals, groups, it seemed like everyone was seeing or had seen UFOs. Reports continue



... Tales from the Clark side

area "and sharp as a tack, despite being in his 80s," called Beck and told him to look in the sky.

With the view from his house blocked

today.

It was after 6 p.m. in October 1973 when former Columbian writer Bob Beck saw his UFO.

Leo Ronchette, a longtime resident of the Camas-Washougal

area

by trees, Beck drove to the East County News office near downtown Camas and "saw the light."

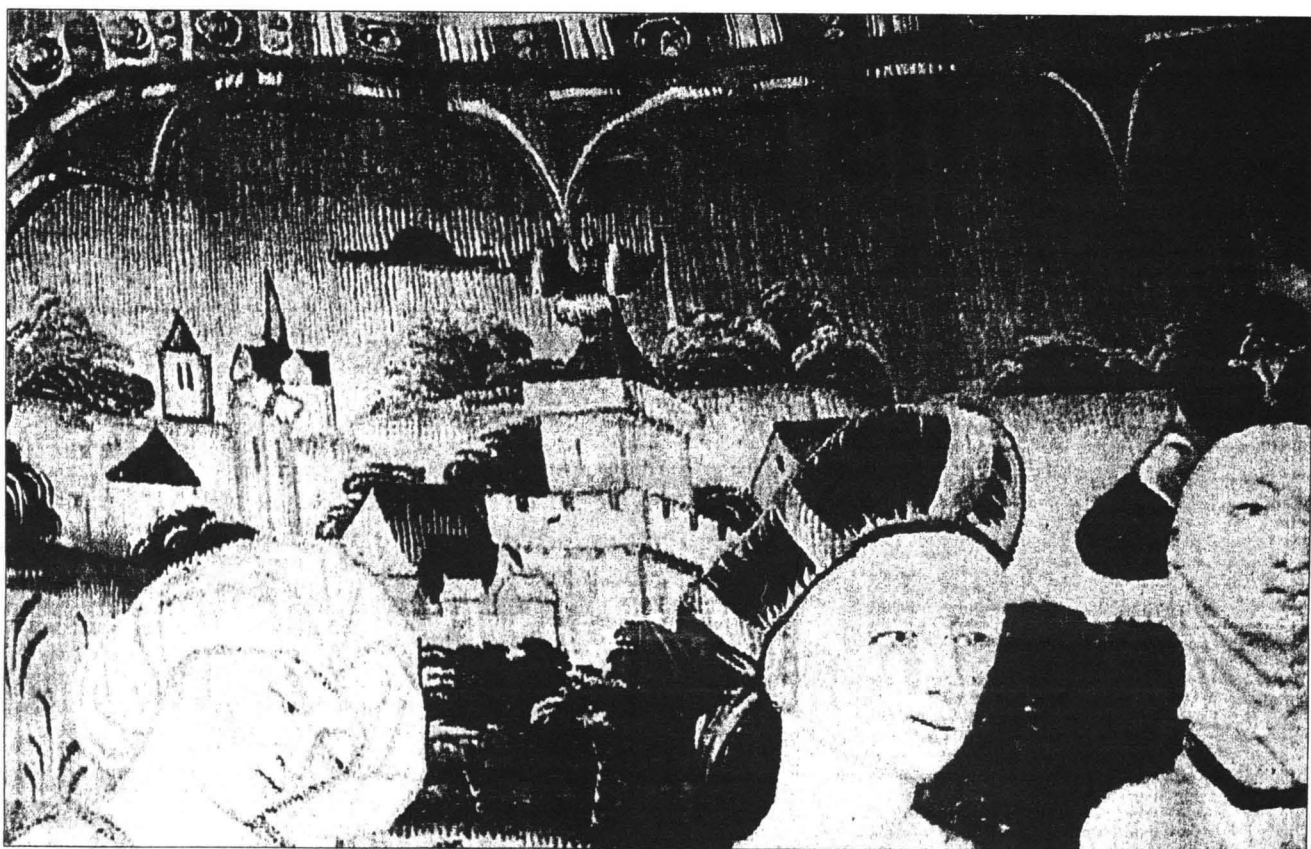
"It seemed to hover in the sky, at an elevation of maybe 1,000 feet, somewhere between Portland and Vancouver," Beck wrote. "It did not move. It seemed to be about half the size the moon would appear, if seen in that particular part of the sky. It was round and emitted a white light."

"Gradually, after I had watched several minutes, the light became more elongated, almost a tear drop shape. Then, it gradually faded away," Beck continued.

Beck said he's convinced UFOs aren't a hoax. He's not alone.

But are we?

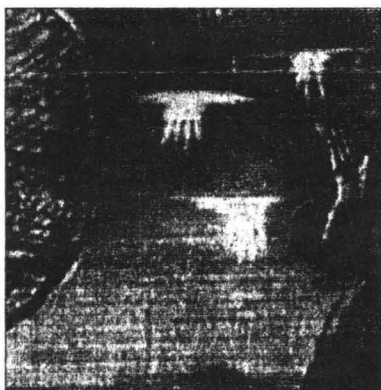
In one of five tapestries depicting the life of the Virgin Mary, circa 1500 in the Notre Dame de Beaune church in the French Cote D'Or, an object hovers in the sky above the trees near the bell tower of the church. Writer Daniela Giordano says the object could be a priest's hat, but asks, "Why weave a hat in the sky?"



PHOTOS COURTESY DANIELA GIORDANO

UFOs! Unidentified Fantasies of Old Masters

A miniature made from a French text in 1455 shows what appears to be a squadron of flying objects, and a solitary spherical hull drifting over a storybook illustration.



An Italian science writer has sighted unexplained flying objects in paintings of the Renaissance.

By Joan Altabe
ART WRITER

In 1947, civilian airplane pilot Kenneth Arnold reported unknown objects speeding through the air. His description of the sighting launched the phrase "flying saucer."

But a report in the Italian astronomy and space magazine, *Nuovo Orione*, by science writer Daniela Giordano of Palermo, Sicily, demonstrates that painters were picturing flying saucers as far back as the Renaissance.

Which is doubly notable: Renaissance painters are known for depicting nature as they saw it, and if they witnessed UFOs, they did so 500 years before Arnold.

Giordano illustrates her point with several depictions by Old Master painters.

An unsigned 15th-century Vatican Museum work, "La Contemplazione di San Gernemia," shows UFO-like imagery alongside conventional depic-

tions of both the real and spiritual world.

While you see men on horseback in a landscape of mountains and buildings with a representation of a God-like figure in the sky, you also see a sphere emitting blazing, undulating rays and a straight beam of light.

Giordano said that she feels that it indicates the artist's awareness of the difference: "Since the mountains, the surrounding countryside, the town, the men and the horses are perfect representations of objective reality, and the divine image falls in the classic patterns of religious iconography, the object represented on the upper right side seems to be a representation of an unusual visual experience." Given that there are three distinct worlds represented in this painting, one factor became apparent to Giordano: "The artist wanted to tell us something."



Next to the God-like figure in the center of the sky in an unsigned painting in the Vatican Museum - "La Contemplazione di San Gernemia" - a sphere-shaped object on the right can be seen emitting rays, along with a straight beam of light.

(continued on page 5)

"The artist wanted to tell us something."

She makes a similar point with the painting "The Virgin Mary and Saint Giovannini" at Florence's Palazzo Vecchio, thought to have been rendered by the leading painter of the early Renaissance — Fra Lippo Lippi.

The work shows a gray-domed disc with yellow-gold rays discharging from the hull near the head of the Virgin Mary. There also are three small fires beneath the sun.

Again, Giordano pointed out that such details "show that the artist well knew the difference between a mystic/symbolic representation and a real event."

Confirming the artist's "will to communicate something of special emotional intensity" in the painting, Giordano also noted a small human in the lower right part of the painting who is looking up at the unidentified flying object with one hand shielding his eyes, while a nearby dog barks at the object.

Giordano didn't mention it, but history shows that while Fra Lippo Lippi was a man of the cloth, he also was a man of the earth, and thus would not be inclined to science-fiction.

Known for his religious pictures and for becoming a monk — hence the title "Fra" (Brother) — he impregnated a nun and, following the birth of the child, was released from his vows, as was the nun, to marry.

Another example in Giordano's article is in the collection of the Accademia in Florence — "La Tebaide" by Paolo Uccello, celebrated for his writings on the development

of perspective as a method of representing reality.

In Uccello's painting, Giordano directs attention to an object shaped like a dish hanging over a dome, its motion suggested with semicircular swirls, "as if to indicate a turning — something similar to the manner in which motion is represented in the comics," she said. "Moreover, the mordant effect of the color used (red) makes one think that he wished to underline the possible incandescence of the object."

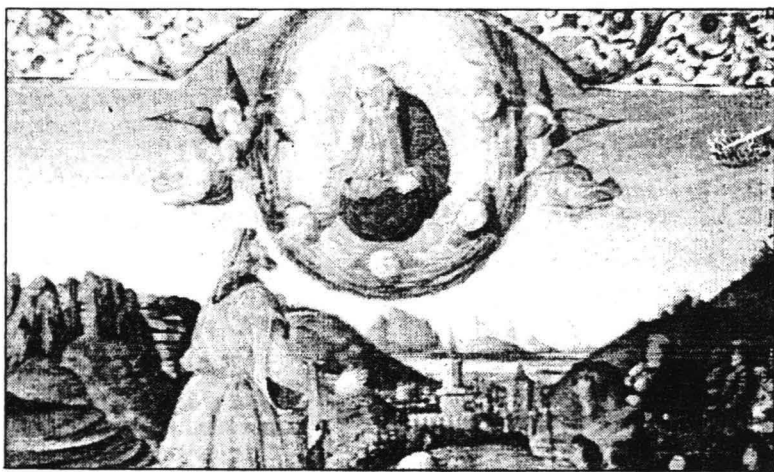
More flying objects in paint: On a wooden drawer for furniture at the Earls D'Oltremont in Belgium, Moses is seen receiving the Ten Commandments while a squadron of flying vessels hovers overhead.

Giordano is careful to say that the meaning of these phenomena in Renaissance painting is not clear, and that the objects in question — although alien to the culture of the time — could be justified as allegoric. But if that's the case, she said, the symbolism is unclear.

"However," she continued, "it seems that these paintings depict devices suited to flight, devices unknown by the technology of those centuries. If we can make a supposition as to what the authors of the paintings had really observed in the skies, we could state that they witnessed some kind of unusual event they wanted to hand down to the future generations."

Giordano said that she awaits an art expert who can provide an explanation for the flying objects.

Meanwhile, she concluded, "What remains are some disquieting questions to which there are no possible answers."



Correction

The photograph on Page 1G of the Arts & Travel section today does not depict the object in question. In the accompanying photograph, the object can be seen in the upper-right quadrant.

TIMES, Los Angeles, CA - Jan. 18, 2000

MYSTERY

Folks Know Truth Is Out There, but Flying Object Is Still Unidentified

By STEPHANIE SIMON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

MILLSTADT, Ill.—It drifted ever so slowly over grain fields and railroad tracks and modest little houses, silent and stealthy in the dead of night.

It was immense: As long as a football field. Two stories tall. Triangular, like an arrowhead. Bright lights winked from its rear. Red lights shimmered from its belly.

And no one has any idea what in—or out of—the world it was.

Four police officers on patrol in four rural towns all saw it. So did at least one civilian. Each witness independently described the object the same way. Each was baffled.

Southeastern Illinois, it seems, has a genuine UFO mystery to chew on.

Was the government testing some top-secret, slow-moving, lit-to-the-max mega-blimp? Was nearby Scott Air Force Base trying a quirky new weapon? Did four police officers hallucinate simultaneously? Or were extraterrestrials scoping out the heartland with a 4 a.m. fly-by on Jan. 5?

"It's going to be a long while before we determine what went on that night," said Colm Kelleher, who studies UFOs at the National Institute for Discovery Science in Las Vegas.

Sightings Electrify UFO Researchers

Folks out here don't seem too taken with the mystery. They tend to be pragmatic sorts; they worry about their jobs and their farms and the weather, not giant flying arrowheads. Some think it was an alien craft. Others nod knowingly: secret military project. Either way, it doesn't much affect them.

But the sightings have electrified UFO researchers nationwide.

A team of Las Vegas investigators led by a former FBI agent spent several days interviewing witnesses here. And at the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, Director Peter Davenport calls the case "a UFOlogist's dream" because the officers make "excellent to unimpeachable" witnesses.

Based on his interviews so far, Davenport says the UFO "clearly does not appear to be compatible with any conventional terrestrial aircraft that we

know of."

The catch is "that we know of."

Even big-time UFO buffs have to admit that it's possible the mystery craft was a top-secret, man-made experiment. The Stealth bomber, for instance, was test-flown in the Midwest for eight years before the Pentagon officially unveiled it. During that time, local UFO societies got dozens of reports of black delta-shaped ships zooming overhead, said Forest Crawford, an Illinois UFO researcher.

"If it was up to me, I'd like [this latest sighting] to be a giant alien craft," Crawford said, "because those are more fun to investigate." He thinks it most likely, however, will turn out to be some sort of stealth blimp.

Government Isn't Saying Anything

Not that the government is about to fess up, if in fact it was involved.

A spokesman for Scott Air Force Base says personnel there know nothing about the UFO. (Then again, if it was a classified military project, "I can't imagine that we would know," Lt. Col. Allan Dahncke said. "If we did, it wouldn't be so secret.")

The Federal Aviation Administration is similarly clueless: Air traffic controllers "didn't see anything, didn't hear anything, didn't catch anything on radar," spokeswoman Liz Cory said.

But those who saw the UFO are sure it was for real.

It floated along about 1,000 feet overhead, emitting a low-level buzz and following a southwesterly course for 20 minutes or more. Millstadt Officer Craig Stevens tried to take a photo but captured just three bright lights on film.

Excited and sleepless, Stevens spent days combing the Internet for clues about the object. (That, and fending off callers who offer to examine him for alien implants.) He now says he's "almost 98% sure" that the craft was man-made. "There is that slight possibility, though," he added, "that it may be from elsewhere."

That prospect pushes Davenport to keep on investigating. "Until you have one of these objects on a laboratory table and are talking to the occupants, you can't say definitively what it is."

TIMES, Washington, DC - Dec. 9, 1999

PRESTON

Unknown flying objects sighted in the sky

Glowing objects, one resembling a missile, were spotted over the Eastern Shore by at least two persons.

Kathy Dink, of Federalsburg, said she was delivering Christmas trees and wreaths about 6 a.m. Tuesday when she saw a "bright blue flame that looked like a missile or a rocket" that appeared to be falling.

At the same time, she also spotted a missile or tube-shaped object about 20 to 30 feet in length traveling in a different direction.

"The blue flame seemed to hit the rocket," Miss Dink said, "if the blue flame hadn't hit the rocket, it looked like it would hit me."

Miss Dink didn't hear any noise but noted the windows of her vehicle were rolled up.

Jim Henderson of Princess Anne was hunting when he saw the objects in the sky.

"I turned toward the west and saw what looked like a comet tail, with colors of yellow and orange. It was beautiful," Mr. Henderson said.

Worried that a plane may have crashed, he called NASA's Wallops Flight Facility.

OZARK MYSTERIES

The Phantom UFO sighting

by Sam Uptegrove

The Internet electronic newsletter UFO Roundup is one of my favorites, and I always read it as soon after it is posted each Monday as possible. On September 22 I was surprised to find that it carried an account of a daylight UFO sighting at Ozark, Mo. As I read the article my reaction changed from surprise to amazement.

The incident was said to have occurred on August 22 at approximately 2:15 in the afternoon, and it has been a classic.

The report indicated that a witness, identified only by the name Douglas, had been sitting in this home office surfing the Internet and listening to a police-band scanner when he noticed an unusual humming sound on the local Christian County Sheriff Department frequency. As he paid more attention he realized it was causing the dispatcher to have difficulty in communicating with patrol cars, and that the hum also seemed to be audible within the room itself. At first he assumed the town had been struck by some type of "power surge," but when the situation persisted for about five minutes he went outside to look for a possible cause.

As he stepped off of his porch he saw a metallic looking disk-shaped object hovering almost directly above his house, tilted at a slight angle from the horizontal. It was silver-gray in color and had a circular light source emanating from its underside which repeatedly changed color from blue to white to red. In other words, a typical UFO.

What was not typical about the object was its size. While most disk-shaped UFOs tend to fall into the twenty-five to fifty foot range in size, this monster was estimated by the witness to have been approximately 300 feet in diameter - on other words, the size of the a football field.

The only other information given in the account was that the object moved off over the Finley River toward the northwest, then ascended vertically until it was out of sight.

As editor Joseph Trainor noted in his comments following the article, the Ozark area has been the site of several UFO sightings over the last decade, some of which I have either been involved in gathering information on or have heard about firsthand from local ufologists who investigated them personally.

I immediately contacted Brian Adams, head of the Ozark Area Research Group. I was surprised to find out that he also learned of the report for the first time when he saw the account in UFO Roundup, but he assured me that he and other members of his organizations were doing everything possible to track it down.

I also placed a call to the Christian County Sheriff Department. The dispatcher on duty checked the log for the day and time indicated and said he found nothing mentioned about any unusual radio interference. He also said that the department had not received any calls from the public concerning UFO sightings that afternoon.

Over the next three months Brian Adams and I both tried to track down the only named witness

or locate others who had seen what should have been a very visible sight in the afternoon sky above the town. All of our efforts, along with those of others we enlisted to help us, proved to be fruitless.

The situation remained unchanged until last week, when I picked up a copy of the December issue of UFO magazine. In their two-page summary of worldwide UFO sightings I found a brief account of the same sightings included, only now new elements had been added. The duration of the observation was specified as being 20 minutes, and local residents were said to have "come out to stand on Main Street afterwards." It was also noted that numerous jets and helicopters appeared in the area immediately after the UFO departed and that one witness reported his watch gaining five minutes during the sighting.

I contacted Brian Adams again and told him of his latest turn of events. He filled me in on what he had done so far in an effort to track down the original source. UFO Roundup editor Joseph Trainor had provided him with the e-mail address of "Linda H," who had provided the information used for the original article. She, it turned out, lived in Texas. In electronic correspondence with Brian she indicated that she had contacted the witness after he posted a brief summary of his experience on some paranormal site, although she had forgotten which one. She also informed Brian that she had inadvertently "lost" the witness' e-mail address.

At this point Brian and I are in total agreement that the entire incident appears to be questionable at best, and it will remain so until (if that ever occurs) we are able to track down and interview the primary witness or locate others in the area who also observed the UFO.

Why does an account of what may have been a "non-sighting" appear in this column. Simply put, to short-circuit any further spread of what may be nothing more than a rumor. If the sighting can be documented at a later date, that information will appear in this column.

(The Ozark Area Research Group meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the new library complex on South Campbell in Springfield. These meetings are open to the public and are well worth attending if you enjoy lively discussions and updates on what has been going on in the Ozarks, make plans to attend. UFO Roundup can be found on the Internet at <http://216.71.21.191/roundup/index.shtml>. UFO Magazine can be found on magazine racks throughout the state.)

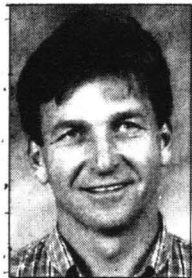
Merry Christmas to all of my readers throughout the Ozarks and across the country!

Sam Uptegrove has been investigating unexplained phenomena for more than 25 years. He was the founder and director of the Heartland Research Project as well as the editor of that group's publications until it disbanded. To comment on this column or to report your own encounters with the unknown write to him at PO Box 440, Lockwood, MO., 65682 or call him at 417-232-5086.

Professor to discuss unusual phenomena

Jim Deardorff is a retired OSU Atmospheric Sciences professor who during his career here was a renowned expert in turbulence and diffusion. I remember hearing him at a conference many years ago and being very impressed with his grasp of very complex science issues.

Since retiring from OSU, Jim has been studying "unusual" phenomena. Among these are "crop circles," the subject of a great deal of speculation and



GEORGE TAYLOR

media interest in recent years. I'm passing along an announcement from Jim about an upcoming meeting. This is not exactly weather, but some scientists have suggested that weather phenomena are responsible for the crop circles, and I think that many weather fans are interested in this topic.

Some of you are aware that the crop-circle phenomenon has been continuing every summer now for the past 20 or so years. But it receives little or no media coverage despite the fact that the formations appearing in English fields have been getting progressively larger, more intricate in design, and ever more impressive in appearance and creativity. This lack of coverage was due mainly to the 'crop-circle hoax by a couple of Englishmen in 1991, after which they claimed to have made all the hundreds of previous formations. The news media bought their story.

But those who have looked into the matter for themselves know better. One of these investigators is Ian Christopher, a researcher at a company called Mariposa-Pacific Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif. The past several summers he has taken time off to travel to England and investigate the phenomenon. In cooperation with British videographer Peter Sorensen, Ian has had a video made up depicting many of this past summer's crop-circle formations. Some of them exhibit geometry that takes on a three-dimensional appearance as viewed from above, a new feature of the 1999 crop circles. Ian will present and narrate this video on a large screen at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Corvallis Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship (one block west of 29th and Circle). You are cordially invited to attend. An optional \$2 donation is suggested at the door.

Ian will include some specifics as to why the 'genuine' crop-circle formations are far beyond the reach of human hoaxers to have fabricated, and why most scientists have so far not dared to study the phenomenon openly. There will be ample time for questions at the end.

Those desiring to see a preview of some of the crop-circle formations may visit <http://www.crop-circleconnector.com/1999/1999.htm>.

MUTUAL UFO NETWORK

The truth is out there

Lincolnton man
has pursued
UFO evidence
with a passion
since he was 15

By DIANA ABBOTT
Record Staff Writer

Lights in the sky, flying saucers, little green men. "E.T.," "The X-Files," aliens and UFOs are the talk everywhere today, but this is not a new phenomenon for one area man.

George Fawcett of Lincolnton, has been researching UFO reports in the Carolinas for 56 years.

"I saw one in Lynchburg, Va. in 1951 when I was a senior in college there," said Fawcett, a member of the Carolina's Mutual UFO Network and a UFO investigator. "I watched it for four and a half minutes. It appeared to be 300 feet above the ground, the distance of a football field. I was able to see both the sides and the back. It looked like a big orange cut in half. It was a brilliant orange in a dark blue sky. It was about 10 in the morning.

"Then it began to move up and down like a yo-yo on a string four or five times. It took off at a 45-degree angle and got smaller as it went away. But I was already investigating. I had been investigating seven years before I ever saw one."

Fawcett, a native of Mount Airy, actually began his UFO investigation when he was 15. He was keeping a scrapbook of newspaper clippings from World War II and noticed an article about strange flying objects in the sky. It made him curious, he said.

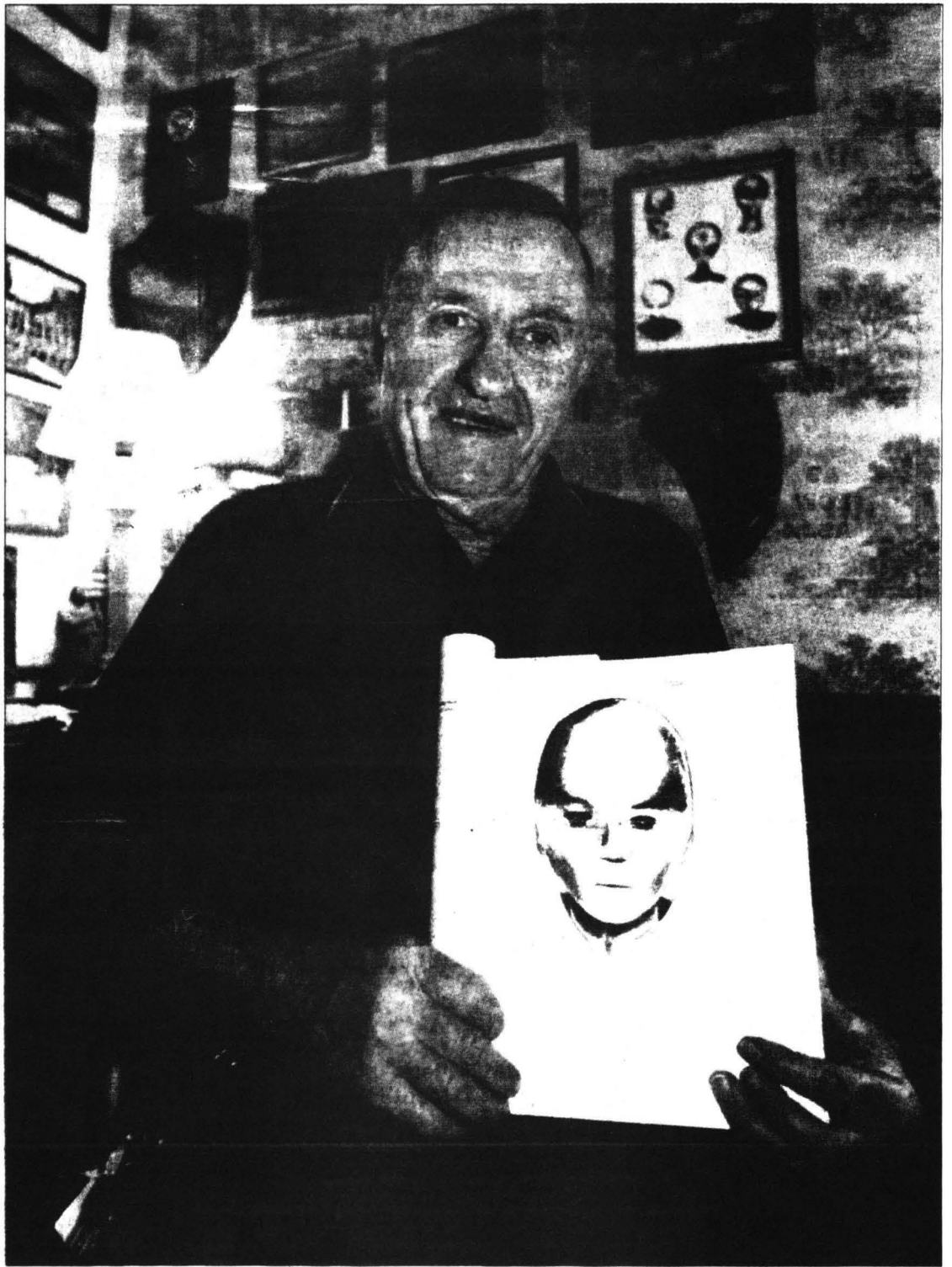
Now, 56 years later, he has written 10 research articles, taught a course at Gaston College, written one book and is in the middle of his second, he said.

Once a fringe idea, the topic of UFOs and extraterrestrial life that have intrigued Fawcett for decades are becoming more mainstream. Even so, not everyone is receptive to his ideas.

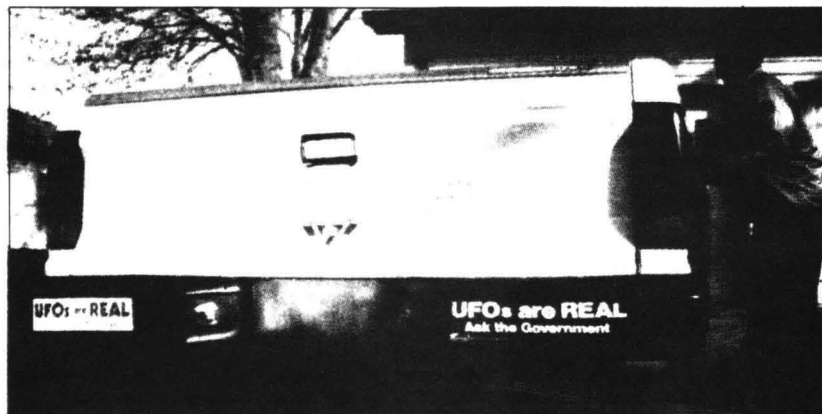
Does he know that many people do not believe in UFOs, and that they view his ideas as eccentric?

Yes, but he said that most of the people who contact him now just want more information.

"I don't get the ridicule I did 40 or 50 years ago," he said.



Record photos/JENNIFER GUTHRIE



Above, Lincolnton resident George Fawcett shows a sketch of an 'alien' done by Don Schmidt. At left, he gets into his truck. His bumper stickers are evidence of his beliefs about the government and the existence of life on other planets. Fawcett is a member of the group Mutual UFO Network. He says he is not a 'believer.' He knows UFOs exist because of the evidence he has seen.

(continued on page 8) **7**

Details

.....
"The last 40 years I've been a nonskeptic. I'm not a believer. I don't believe in UFOs at all, but I do recognize their existence based on what I know from my investigative research."
.....

— **George Fawcett**
UFO
Investigator
.....

According to literature written by Fawcett, there are 25 aspects of UFO sightings and reports that are consistent regardless of location anywhere on earth. Some of the 25 are reported in brief here:

- Superior speeds and intricate maneuvers.
- Radar trackings.
- Reported by planes, cars and ships.
- Falls of 'fragments or 'angel hair.'
- Increase in background radiation, soil contamination.
- Near collisions with UFOs and reports of pacings and head-on passes.
- Physiological and psychological effects, such as electric shock, radiation burns and headache.
- Electromagnetic interference with compasses, radios, motors etc.
- Appearances of 'little men.'
- Ground markings.
- Power failures both local and widespread.
- Severe animal reactions.
- Levitations in close proximity to UFOs.

HERALD, Circleville, OH - Jan. 22, 2000 CR: J. Fry

Hartinger leads UFO society in quest

By LINDA BLAINE
The Herald

Don't ask Pete Hartinger if he believes in UFOs. He objects to the word "believe."

"Knowledge is not a matter of belief or desire," Hartinger said. "Knowledge is evidence."

Hartinger became interested in unidentified flying objects while researching a high school assignment. After he witnessed a UFO himself, his interest intensified and he now heads a group in Circleville that documents, analyzes, and reports sightings as well as provides an exchange for current information about UFOs.

"Roundtown UFO Society is a non-profit organization," Hartinger said, "and we're an outlet for people who want to report UFO sightings or who want to learn about the latest research."

People sometimes remain silent

about seeing an object in the sky for fear of ridicule, Hartinger said. However, recent news coverage and documentaries about UFO sightings have removed much of the stigma attached to UFOs. With improved media coverage, Hartinger expects a more rational treatment of the phenomenon.

non.

"Witnesses can remain anonymous when they make a report to us and we submit the data for scientific analysis," Hartinger said. "We are associated with national and international organizations, such as Mutual UFO Network in Texas and the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies in Chicago."

Hartinger encourages people who are interested to check out the group's quarterly newsletter and the MUFON Journal at the Pickaway



PETE HARTINGER

County District Library.

Hartinger spent two years in the Army, 20 years in the Air National Guard, and retired from DuPont in 1998. In addition to his position as director of the Roundtown UFO Society, he is a member of Pickaway County Friends of the Library, Soldiers Monumental Association of Pickaway County, AMVETS, and the VFW.

A member of the Pickaway County Historical Society, he wrote an article for the periodical, *Pickaway Quarterly*. "America's First Classic Close Encounter," printed in the Fall, 1996 edition, which details a 1948 sighting by the late Bruce Stevenson on his farm on Route 56. According to Hartinger, the event was widely cited by ufologists (the term for professional UFO researchers) in books such as *Flying Saucers: Top Secret*, by Donald E. Keyhoe, a retired Major in the Marines and one of the country's earliest ufologists.

Although UFO's continue to be

seen by witnesses all over the world, Hartinger admits we still don't know where they come from or what they are.

"Whether they are extraterrestrial, secret military projects, or something else, we just don't know," Hartinger said. "What we are sure of, though, is that people are seeing unidentified objects and they need to be investigated."

The next meeting of the Roundtown UFO Society is at 7 p.m. Feb. 17 at the Clarke-May Museum on West Union Street in Circleville. For more information, call 477-6252.

Here are Hartinger's answers to *The Herald's* list of "Snapshots" questions:

MOST SATISFYING PART OF HIS ROLE IN THE GROUP: "Some people are relieved to have a place to report their sighting. The public is frustrated. They don't know who they can trust. It's a very personal experience, and I take their trust very seriously."

MOST FRUSTRATING PART

OF THE ROLE: The unscientific reaction of some members of the scientific community. "A lot of times they just dismiss the sightings without investigating them," Hartinger said. "Also, it's frustrating that people are reluctant to report sightings because they are afraid of looking foolish."

FIRST JOB: "Picking up pumpkins in the fields on the farm where I lived. I was about 11 years old, and I earned \$12."

FAVORITE RESTAURANT: "Bob Evans. I like the house dressing they put on their salads."

FAVORITE SNACK FOOD: "Ice cream."

FAVORITE MOVIE: "Patton. I served under his son, George S. Patton Jr., at Fort Hood, Texas. He was my battalion commander."

DREAM TRIP OR VACATION: "My wife, Patricia, and I went to Hawaii for our 25th anniversary. While we stopped back at the Dallas airport, I picked up *The UFO Casebook*, by Kenneth Randall, where I first learned about the Circleville-Roswell connection."

PERSONAL HEROES: "The American combat veterans. A lot of them gave the ultimate sacrifice."

GOAL IN LIFE: "To enjoy my grandchildren, Kaly, Abbey, and Tylar."

SPARE TIME, HOBBIES: "I helped the Monumental Association at the High Street cemetery. I helped put in 82 markers. I'm also president of the Ohio MUFON Group, a statewide organization. We're trying to organize the smaller groups in Ohio so we can have better communication. The era of the computer is helping us gather information so much more quickly. For instance, some of the sightings reported on the website www.ufocenter.com are just an hour old."

BEST ADVICE EVER RECEIVED: "Live a good, honest life."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Herald welcomes suggestions for people to feature in this series. Call the newsroom at 474-3133.

UFO lawsuit to get hearing

By Diana Balazs
The Arizona Republic

The UFO, triangular and big as a football field, flies so low that

the Department of Defense surely must know about it, Scottsdale lawyer Peter Gersten suspects.

Gersten will have his day in court Monday when a federal judge in Phoenix is to hear motions in a lawsuit he filed seeking any public documents about the UFO, which was reported over the Valley three years ago and in Illinois just last month.

Gersten, 57, executive director of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy, filed the suit Jan. 22, 1999, under the Freedom of Information Act.

District Judge Stephen M. McNamee will hear oral arguments at 10 a.m. on a Defense Department request to dismiss the suit.

Richard Patrick, an assistant U.S. attorney, said the Department of Defense conducted a

reasonable search for information requested by Gersten's group and could not find any records.

Usually, Gersten said, the government denies release of public records on UFOs by saying the information is classified or a matter of national security.

"It's just a unique object and it's been seen flying so low over populated areas," he said. "You would think the Department of Defense would have information."

Gersten said he has 33 affidavits from witnesses, including nationally syndicated radio talk show host Art Bell, who claims to have seen the silent, low-flying craft. UFOs and government conspiracies are regular fare on Bell's popular nighttime show.

The affidavits include several from Arizonans who say they

saw mysterious lights over the Valley on March 13, 1997, as well as a huge triangular-shaped flying object.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC
Phoenix, AZ
Feb. 4, 2000
CR: P. Cook



[All British clippings courtesy of Timothy Good, unless otherwise credited.]

LICHFIELD MERCURY, Staffordshire, England - June 17, 1999

Mist begins to lift on local UFO 'landing' after a decade

SUFOG

A COUPLE, driving across Cannock Chase late one summer night saw a glowing 30ft circular object, partly shrouded in mist, land and then silently lift off in front of them.

Wheatman's Bridge was the scene of that allegedly remarkable UFO encounter and one which the Staffordshire UFO Group's investigators, Graham Allen and Robbie Graham, have been able to shed some further light on, even though it took place over a decade ago.

It happened during

August 1988, at a time of unparalleled UFO activity and sightings in the Midlands, although Cannock Chase is described as a 'hotspot' for sightings.

The couple were heading towards Little Haywood when they saw: "This big cloud of smoke, but with lights flashing in it in a ring, all different colours."

"It was hanging, hovering over the hedge and half way across the road and you couldn't hear a thing," they said.

They watched the object for up to a minute before it flew off.

But what makes this case stand out is the hard evidence of the sighting in the form of crumpled and crushed dead hedges and trees - making this a close encounter of the second kind.

The couple also returned to the scene three days later

with a press photographer and claimed to have seen two men in a white Land Rover taking samples from the area.

An investigation by the

"It was hanging, hovering over the hedge and half way across the road but you couldn't hear a thing."

British UFO Research Association was carried out two months later, their conclusion was that it may have been a natural phenomenon.

This did not satisfy Robbie or Graham who have recently gone over the investigation and found major shortcomings in the original report.

They have re-interviewed the couple and other key witnesses and searched through

official files from the time.

Using this greater hindsight the pair have put the sighting in the context of the wave of apparent UFO activity over the area that year.

They have also found a probable third witness, from the Moorings, who describes the same sight at the bridge at the same time of night, but cannot recall which day in August 1988 she saw it.

Graham, the group's director of investigations has recently discovered there are eight Ministry of Defence files on the sighting, more than is normal, and all are classified.

They confidently speculate the two men seen taking samples were from the Ministry. They believe if they were UFOlogists they would have approached and inter-

viewed the couple.

The Ministry states their only interest in UFOs relates to the issue of defence and they do not investigate further unless a sighting poses a threat to security.

Robbie said: "The MoD did not just take an interest in this case, on the contrary they have files on other sightings from that UFO wave."

He said the secret status of the MoD files show it is not a mere natural phenomenon. However whatever the couple actually saw remains a mystery.

The UFO history of this part of Staffordshire dates at least back to the 1950s.

In 1954 three Rugeley teenagers saw a 'flying triangle' while in 1964 a mysterious object crashed in Cannock Chase. Official files on this remain classified.

"What it is that attracts so many UFOs to this area we don't know, but we are lucky," Graham added.

EVENING HERALD, Plymouth, England - Aug. 11, 1999

A close encounter for photographer Peter

A MYSTERY object was spotted apparently flying above the Mewstone at Wembury Point.

The pod-shaped object was snapped early one morning near the HMS Cambridge gunnery school by amateur photographer Peter Harris.

The dockyard engineer said: "I live at Wembury Point and took the photograph at about 6.30am on July 13 because there was a rainbow over the Mewstone."

"It was developed at Safeway. At that time of the morning the sun was coming around the headland out to the east of the Yealm estuary, so there were all sorts of glints on the sea. So I wasn't sure what I was seeing."

Intelligence

"It was a still morning and there was no wind blowing at all. I couldn't swear I saw anything definite when I took the photograph. I've no idea what it might be."

Mr Harris, 49, added: "I took it into the photographic section at the naval base, where they're used to dealing with intelligence pictures and engineering photographs."

"They thought it could have been a problem in the printing or chemical process but the mark is on the negative, too."

There is a black line on the picture just underneath the strange craft, which Mr Harris says is a power cable. The photographs, which show the object glinting in the sunshine, have baffled experts and the military alike.

UFO expert Bob Boyd said: "I would have to see the negative before I could say for certain



LEFT: The mystery object is at the top of the picture

Picture Peter Harris

BELOW: Peter Harris with his picture

Picture Lucy Blake DR13605

whether it is a genuine sighting of an unidentified flying object. I would treat it with caution. I have heard of no other sightings on that day."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said: "At that time of the morning it's unlikely that there was any military helicopter activity. We are unaware of any other sightings of the unidentified object."



WOKINGHAM TIMES, Berkshire, England - Aug. 11, 1999

Man's 'close encounter' leaves experts baffled

IT was a case for Mulder and Scully when a man had a close encounter in darkest Finchampstead.

Stephen Jessop, a married 44-year-old student in computer programming, said he was walking his dog behind his house in Ryecroft Lane, Nashgrove, Finchampstead, at

10.50pm last Thursday night, when the grass lit up in front of him.

He said: "The bright blue light came shooting down and I looked up and saw a round object."

"There were no engine noises, piston or jet."

"There was a shadow like a

full moon. Then it just went out like a bulb being turned off."

The police said there was no record of other reported sightings in the surrounding areas.

White Waltham Airfield, which sometimes houses an air ship, said it had nothing in flight at that time.

A spokesman for the Civil

Aviation Authority said it did not sound like an aircraft, as they tended not to fly that low and hover for that amount of time.

A spokesman for the MoD said it was unable to comment on Mr Jessop's close encounter.

► Did you see the UFO. Tell The Times if you did.

A U.F.O. Boom Doesn't Worry China's Rulers

By ELISABETH ROSENTHAL

BEIJING — The last few months have been a boom time for U.F.O. enthusiasts in China.

Just before the start of the year 2000, there were dozens of sightings. Strange shining objects were observed scooting through the sky by hundreds of people, from former airport workers to college deans.

"Warning Wuhan! Warning Dalian! Warning Xian! Jiangsu! Beijing! Shanghai!" exulted the Jiangsu U.F.O. Research Society's Web site. "Frequent U.F.O. visits have enveloped all of China."

Buoyed in part by the sightings, the ranks of the research societies in major Chinese cities devoted to unidentified flying objects have grown to more than 40,000 members.

More important still, the normally conservative official news media have been lavishing attention on U.F.O. news, with documentaries on the main government television station, CCTV-1, and credulous newspaper articles.

"The level of interest and acceptance is definitely rising," said Sun Shili, a retired Foreign Ministry official who is president of the Beijing U.F.O. Research Society. "Because of the frequent sightings recently in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities that have had many witnesses, even the media — which are very serious and careful — have been paying attention."

Of course, in many ways it would seem a most awkward time for fleets of extraterrestrials to be buzzing China, what with the government jailing leaders of the Falun Gong spiritual movement and a few other groups, also associated with the traditional Chinese practice of qigong exercises, for "superstitious" and "anti-scientific" behavior.

But so far, at least, the government has decided to tolerate the U.F.O. craze even if it does not financially support it. Wildly popular and politically unthreatening, U.F.O. research is the kind of unorthodox pursuit that is allowed in China today. Anyway, government officials and citizens alike tend to view U.F.O. research as science or at least possibly scientific.

And officials of U.F.O. societies are determined to keep it that way. "The study of U.F.O.'s is fundamentally different from other things like Falun Gong and qigong, which have come under criticism lately," said Jin Fan, an engineer who heads the Dalian U.F.O. Research Society in northeast China. "This is a purely scientific field, whereas Falun Gong deals with cults and superstition."

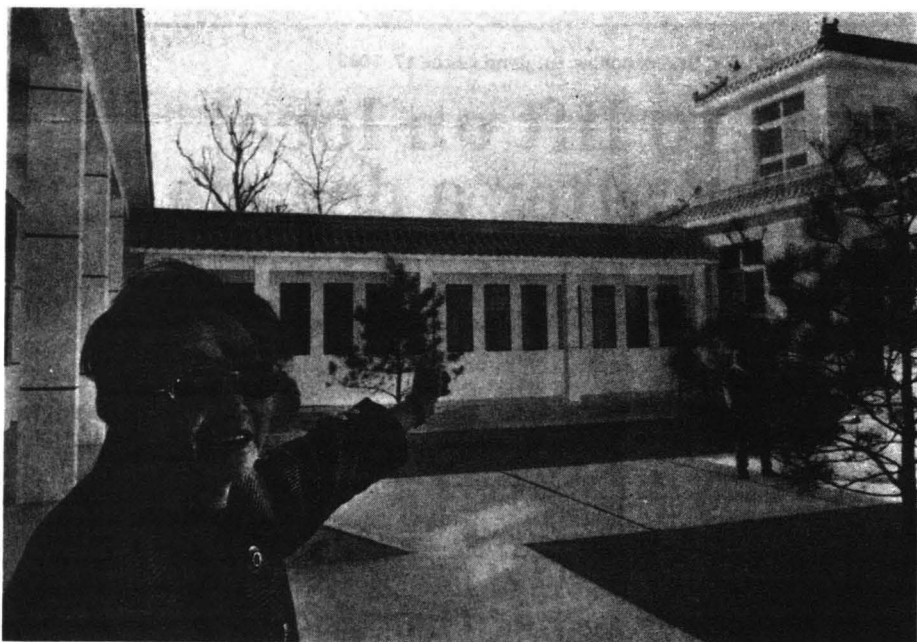
Indeed, a large portion of China's U.F.O. enthusiasts are scientists and engineers, not the sci-fi buffs or apocalyptic stargazers who are the stereotype in the United States. Many of China's U.F.O. research societies require a college degree and published research for membership. The Chinese Air Force attends important U.F.O. meetings.

"If our conditions for membership weren't so strict, we'd have millions of members by now," said Mr. Sun, a cheerful intellectual in a gray sweater and striped tie, who seems to embody the movement — a bit offbeat, yes, but also scholarly, serious and strictly establishment.

In his cluttered Beijing study, he proudly displays old photographs of himself interpreting for Chairman Mao and a more recent vintage Alien Collection set containing models of a Nordic alien and of those reportedly found in Roswell, N.M., for example.

Applauding the Chinese government's "enlightened and practical attitude," Mr. Sun said: "In the U.S., scholars investigating this are under pressure and have been derided. But in China the academic discussion is quite free, so in this area American academics are quite jealous of us."

The cluster of dozens of sightings in the last four months has given China's enthusiasts new grist for discussions. Most episodes involved glowing orange-yellow objects that were reported to have lingered in the late-afternoon or night sky for more than



Associated Press

Over there, gestured Wang Cunqiao, she saw an unidentified flying object in the sky above the village hall in Pusalu, near Beijing. Often derided in the United States, U.F.O. research is officially sanctioned in China.

15 minutes before disappearing in an instant.

In a country where camcorders and cameras are now common household equipment, many were captured on film, and the images found their way into newspapers and onto television.

Mr. Jin videotaped some suspected U.F.O.'s over Dalian on Dec. 25. "I believe what I saw was a U.F.O., based on its pattern of movement, its glow, its shape and its appearance," he said. "It had substance and dimensionality — it was clearly an object."

Mr. Jin, an engineer, said the turns and dips made by the objects, as well as their rapid acceleration, could not have been the maneuvers of man-made planes or rockets. He added that he had been researching

major news organizations.

This is an extraordinary reversal in a country where 25 years ago life was so focused on Communist politics that most people could not imagine anything so ethereal as an unidentified flying object, and expressing belief in them might have been a ticket to jail.

Indeed, Mr. Sun said he did not appreciate his one and only U.F.O. sighting — a "bright object in the sky" — in 1971, when he was sent to the countryside as a young Communist Party worker during the Cultural Revolution. "I assumed it must be some sort of monitoring device, since relations between China and the Soviet Union were very tense at the time," he said, laughing. "It was only years later, when I got more access to foreign materials, that I realized what I'd experienced."

He and others credit China's two decades of liberalization and market reforms for allowing U.F.O. fever to flourish. "As China has opened to the outside world in the last 20 years, people's thinking has also opened," he said.

Some of the current U.F.O. research in China centers on investigating sightings, but much of it involves trying to create new forms of propulsion to try to explain how U.F.O.'s might work.

Mr. Sun describes with great excitement a small balloonlike device invented by one of his members that moves faster than other man-made devices. Although it exists now only as a small model, the society is planning to test it, first on water and then on land and in space.

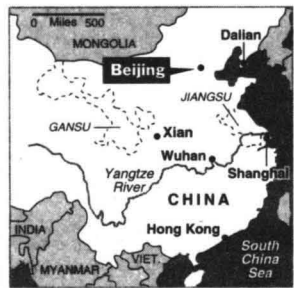
The research societies also share information and reports on the quirky aspect of U.F.O.'s, like alien abductions. They are looking into the case of a Beijing worker who said that in December he was held for two hours on an alien spacecraft, where he was studied as part of a medical experiment.

But Chinese U.F.O. society officials say they prefer to maintain a sober exterior, often playing down controversial topics, which they prefer to discuss in private.

And so the most recent issue of the Journal of U.F.O. Research, published in November, scoffed at the notions of a millennial apocalypse — even as it carried articles on "interstellar migration" and the notion that the Egyptian pyramids were instruments for communication with extraterrestrials.

And U.F.O. enthusiasts say they will avoid the troubles that have befallen qigong.

"We're very careful and cautious to present things scientifically and to filter out things that head in a superstitious direction," Mr. Sun said, "since there's a great deal of fakery in the U.F.O. field as well as real occurrence."



The New York Times

Though Beijing outlaws some sects, it allows U.F.O. research.

the subject long enough to distinguish a true U.F.O. from an "atmospheric phenomenon."

Experts have various theories about the recent rash of U.F.O. sightings. A recent article in the Journal of U.F.O. Research, published by the Gansu Science and Technology Press, notes that sightings in China peak each year around Oct. 1, China's National Day.

"If you think about it, it makes a lot of sense that visitors from an extraterrestrial civilization would come now," Mr. Jin said. "We're entering a new millennium, so any extraterrestrial civilization that's been observing us would want to document the state of our civilization at this particular moment, as sort of a historical snapshot."

He attributed the high frequency of sightings in China to its population density. And club officials say more than half of Chinese are interested in U.F.O.'s and believe that they might exist.

The Beijing U.F.O. Research Society has 280 members, and 30 percent are managers or Communist Party workers. The yearly research meetings of the national U.F.O. society are covered by reporters from the

We saw UFO claim couple

A COUPLE got a shock when they spotted an unexplained object in the sky over Tendring.

As they turned off the A120 near Frating to join the A133 to Clacton they saw a white light — which they initially took to be a star but about ten times bigger.

When they approached the object the driver experienced difficulty steering the car and the clocks on their mobile phones went off.

Then as they got right underneath they saw red, green and white rotating lights as it hovered above them.

The object then changed to a triangular or a pyramid shape and started to move slowly before coming to a halt. It then zoomed off at incredible speed.

Michael Joyce of the Essex UFO Research Group said the incident was reported by the couple who had previously not believed in such phenomena.

It took place on July 14 and Mr Joyce would like to hear from anyone else who may have seen it. He can be contacted on 01255 821121.

BRIDLINGTON FREE PRESS,
Yorkshire, England - July 1, 1999

'Flying saucers' spotted

VISITORS from a galaxy far away have been spotted in the Bridlington area along with a mysterious crop circle according to a UFO investigator.

Amanda Gibson, who has been probing UFO activity on the East Coast for the past five years, was contacted by people who said they had seen a silver disc with a dome on top flying over the Bridlington area.

She said there has been 17 sightings on the East Coast since February but the recent sightings over the Bridlington area started on June 5 over Cayton Bay.

She said another disc, with the same description was seen on the same day at



about 11.40am over Reighton, hovering for about seven minutes. The third sighting took place on Friday, June 11, when a member of the public, who was driving from Flamborough to Bridlington, saw three silver discs with dome tops at about 8.55pm.

Free Press photographer, and UFO enthusiast, Paul Atkinson, helped by his son Paul, went out to Burton Fleming to see if they could find the crop circles. But they found what they believed had been mistaken for the mysterious circles — crops flattened by the rain.

Paul senior said: "We saw intermittent flattened patches obviously caused by the heavy rain. We were very disappointed."

SUN, Vancouver, B.C., Canada - Jan. 22, 2000

Aliens: A positive experience

What do people really want when they think about UFOs?

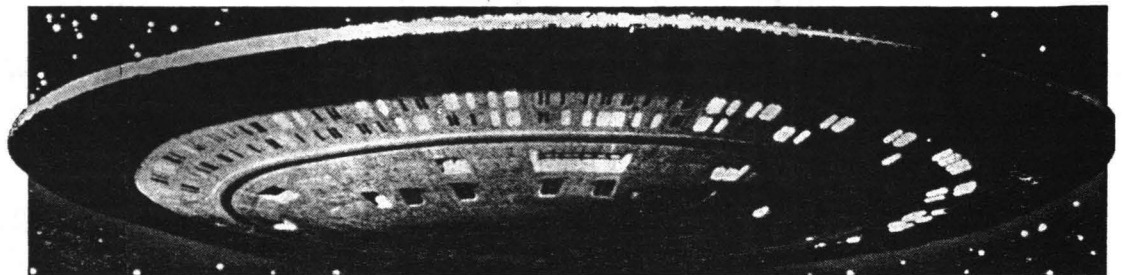
According to John Mack's newest book *Passport to the Cosmos*, the first thing they want is for their experiences to stop. Only after they realize they have no power to stop the experience do they begin to accept a process that is informative and transformative — a process that propels them out of their narcissistic concerns and towards active involvement with environmental values, the survival of humanity and an exploration of spiritually-based consciousness. The Harvard psychiatrist also includes three other perspectives of contact with the "Star People." These perspectives include those of a Native-American healer, a South African shaman, and an indigenous anthropologist from South America. The same themes continue to resonate through all perspectives.

It seems that John Mack may be treading on Ken Wilber's turf (*Blend*, Jan. 15). For his part, John Mack has a few comments to make about the doubtful, referring to them variously as the skeptical elite and uninformed debunkers. Furthermore, Mack states that these people are "usually misnamed skeptics...who speak from an ideological bias, putting their viewpoints forth as a scientific perspective." Perhaps Wilber, the philosopher, should think about turning off the television and picking up a book. He might discover he has more in common with Mack than he realizes.

DEBORAH WARREN
Vancouver

Goodbye, cruel world

Doomsday cult heads for hills and rendezvous with spaceship



HUNDREDS of members of a doomsday cult vanished yesterday into remote Colombian mountains saying they were off to board an alien spaceship to escape the end of the world.

Police fear the two megalomaniac leaders of the Gnostic Church Stella Maris cult may persuade their followers to commit mass suicide when the spacecraft fails to turn up on time.

"These people are no joke - they are deluded and dangerous," said a

From IAN COBAIN
in New York

there for the arrival of a second Noah's Ark, a spacecraft which will whisk them away to another world. Citing passages of the Bible as evidence, cult members say a chosen group of 140,000 humans will be saved to start another life on the new planet.

The Stella Maris cult, a breakaway group from another organisation called the Gnostic Church, has gripped people from all walks of life in Cartagena.

Adherents had half built their own temple in the city when the call apparently came for them to rendezvous with their alien saviours.

Doctors, accountants, motor mechanics and housewives are among those who have disappeared. The youngest is a boy of 16, while the oldest is in her 80s.

Police were last night searching for the missing cultists, but fear they may be unable to bring them to their senses and talk them into climbing down even if they find them alive.

"We think around 200 people have joined Perea and Perez, but we can't be sure how many people are involved because some are still leaving the city," said the spokesman.

"There is not much we can do about it, because our constitution is very clear about the right to religious freedom, and about freedom of movement." Among those missing is San-

dra Herrera, a 19-year-old music student who fell under Perea's spell when she went to babysit his children.

"She came back saying we had to sell all our belongings and leave," said her mother Aida.

"She really believes that a tidal wave is going to come and sweep us all away, and that only the aliens can save us."

"I tried to tell her that these ideas were just crazy, but she wouldn't listen. When I woke up

and saw she had not slept in her bed I went to the Perea place to look for her, but it was completely empty. There was not a stick of furniture in there."

Mariela Tovar, whose 23-year-old daughter Patricia went with the cult, said: "I am going out of my mind with worry."

Enrique Impidis, whose wife also fell under the influence of Perea and Perez, said: "I had to restrain her to stop her from selling all our belongings to go on

the trip." Former cult member Gabriel Nicholls told local journalists that talk of UFOs was 'nonsense' and the devotees were simply attending a regular retreat at a cabin 16,000ft up the mountain.

"They have been there before and they always come back," he said.

But Mrs Herrera said: "My daughter says this trip is final - she was very definite about that."

'She believes a tidal wave is coming'

spokesman for the Colombian state police.

Former teacher Rogelio Perea and his deputy Rudolfo Perez have told disciples that the world will end in a series of massive earthquakes at midnight on December 31.

Cult members are convinced the coastal city where they live, Cartagena, will be engulfed by a tidal wave, and have sold all their belongings and taken out bank loans.

Much of the money is thought to have been handed to Perea and Perez before the duo led their followers up the ice-capped 18,000ft Sierra Nevada mountains 300 miles away.

Devotees believe they must wait

ADVERTISER, Rugby, England - Aug. 19, 1999 CR: R. Archer

The Editor's Viewpoint Wrong to dismiss UFOs

OVER the years there have been so many thousands of UFO sightings, in every part of the globe, that one

has to accept the likely existence, within our atmosphere, of extra-terrestrials.

I know that our story last week, and its follow up this week, only relate to Unidentified Flying Objects, which are likely to have nothing to do with extra-terrestrial life:

But, I guess what I am saying is that not only do I think these people truly believe they saw a UFO, but there could be more to it... Whether or not there is, the argument about the number of planets there are in the universe, logically meaning there must be life out there, is very strong.

Certainly, it would be naive to suggest that it is impossible, and consequently therefore, that they are not more advanced than we are.

It is easy to imagine that the number of UFO sightings could be at least double or treble the figure that are reported. People are justifiably worried about being labelled a crank.

I don't know what I would say, in public, if I had seen a UFO or had a 'close encounter', but the brave people that speak out, are the ones who are gradually leading us towards acceptance.

Maybe when the level of acceptance is high enough, someone will drop down and say: "hello". I hope I am there with my camera when they do.

I have to say that however sceptical one might be, I don't think these things should be ruled out, or ridiculed, simply because one doesn't understand, or can't explain them.

REPORTER, Sechelt, B.C., Canada - Nov. 14, 1999 CR: G. Conway

▼ ABDUCTION?

Local man reports strange sighting and lost time

JAMES EKE
EDITOR

There are strange things going on in the skies of the Sunshine Coast.

After a recent story in *The Reporter* describing an incident where a family in Sechelt saw an apparent UFO in the skies above East Trail Bay Island, a B.C. UFO research organization is reporting a flood of calls from the Coast.

"Just as a result of your story I can say we've had at least 10 calls," Graham Conway, president of UFO

"He saw what appeared to be a headlight coming over the roof towards him...something knocked him back and then there was a loss of time."

B.C. told *The Reporter*. "We get a lot of calls but it is very rare to get so many in just a week."

Many of the calls were of the same sort that was reported previously, with strange lights seen in the sky but Conway noted they

are very intrigued by the story of a 35-year-old Sechelt man.

Harold Weichler called the watchdog organization with a report that on Oct. 27 while he was working outside at a home on Norwest Bay Rd. he felt

like someone was watching him. "Then he says he saw what appeared to be a headlight coming over the roof of the house towards him. He says something knocked him back and then there was a loss of time. After this he got up and went to the corner store thinking it was 7:30-8 p.m. but they were closed—it wasn't until he got home that he realized it was actually 11 p.m. As you could imagine he was very confused. The next morning he found a scar under his right arm that wasn't there before and there was no

hole in his shirt or rain jacket," Conway said. He noted that another puzzling thing was that while it was raining he wasn't wet.

Weichler said he doesn't really want to know what happened during the hours he can't account for, noting that while hypnosis is an option, he isn't entertaining it.

"He is still very confused by the whole incident as you can imagine," Conway added.

If you have seen anything odd in the sky, report it to UFO B.C. at 604-878-6511.

VALE ADVERTISER, Denbigh, England - Aug. 13, 1999

Flyer puts glider in a spin



Space oddity? The flying object Noel Humphreys saw over Denbigh golf course.

PARAGLIDER Noel Humphreys really got the wind up him when he saw a suspicious object flying in the sky.

Noel, of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, says the aircraft was silent, disc-shaped, very agile, about 15ft across, and could have been anything from a UFO to a highly-elaborate trick.

Noel's incredible adventure began when he went out paragliding near Bodfari.

He travelled across across the countryside through the skies. When Noel reached Denbigh the conditions meant he had to come down, so he prepared to land on the edge of the town's golf course.

But when he reached the ground Noel says he spotted a most unusual object flying near some trees.

"It looked a bit like a disc, I quickly moved in to have a closer look. My camera was with me as part of my paragliding kit, so I took some pictures."

"At first I thought it might have been a peculiar type of model plane, but there was no noise being made."

"Then I wondered if this was meant to be some sort of hoax. But there was only me there and I had just landed so it couldn't have been planned in any way."

Eventually the craft flew away, leaving Noel wondering if the truth

really is out there. He emphasises he has got nothing to gain from telling the story, in fact a few of his friends have pulled his leg about it.

"I really can't explain what it was. I didn't feel scared, just puzzled as to what was going on."

Noel says that when he is in the sky it is sometimes difficult to identify what objects really are because their shapes and sizes may be obscured.

But this sighting was made when he was on the ground and able to get a clear look at the craft.

A spokesman for Denbigh Golf Club said that he had not heard of anyone else claiming to have made a sighting of a UFO at the time.

Looking for the truth out there

UFOs / *Graham Conway of Ladner has been chasing after sightings and reports worldwide for over 50 years*

by Laura Stapleton

Imagine being in the business of the unbelievable. Imagine being called crazy, insane and mentally unbalanced because of your field of work. Imagine experiencing and seeing things you cannot explain. For 52 years, Ladner resident Graham Conway has done just that.

Conway has been chasing UFO sightings and reports all over the world, particularly in B.C. It all started in 1947 when a sighting over Mount Rainier by a Washington state man got him intrigued.

"I became hooked on flying saucers at the age of 20 when I heard about that report," says Conway. "I've always been interested in mysteries of all kinds."

In 1961, Conway joined the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization as the representative for eastern Canada. He wrote many UFO-related articles and eventually worked with the Canadian director of Texas-based Mutual UFO Network. When it paid little attention to reports from B.C., Conway and other researchers created UFO BC, of which he is the president.

Since then, the retired teacher and property manager has collected countless reports from around the Lower Mainland. He says the calls the group receives do not properly reflect what is actually going on — he believes the number of actual experiences are far higher.

"Based upon the Gallup poll, more than 50 per cent of people have seen something which they can't explain and may be reluctant to say," says Conway. "It would be equally fair to say that maybe a quarter of people are having some experience which they would be much happier if the experience did not involve them and if it went away."

Conway feels UFO sightings are on the rise, mainly because people are more willing to talk about what they have seen.

"In all honesty, the reports that we get appear to be on the increase but it may simply be because people are now less socially reluctant to talk about what's taking place. Last year, here in B.C., we had something like 98 reports."

Conway says he has seen UFOs at least 30 times. His longest sighting occurred in Ontario in 1966 when he viewed two unidentified objects through binoculars for over an hour.

He attributes increased sightings to the more widespread acceptance of the phenomenon.

"Due to the popularity of television shows like The X-Files, for example, they (people) are much more open to reporting something that they've seen in the sky which they can't identify."

People weren't always accepting of the phenomenon. In 1947, when Conway



Graham Conway has been hooked on flying saucers since he was 20. The retired teacher is president of UFO B.C. and has collected countless reports of UFOs in the Lower Mainland.

developed his interest, the public was highly skeptical. "The explanations for UFOs were misinterpretation of sky objects, possibly to some extent inebriation, delusions; therefore there was nothing to this; therefore the whole thing was really viewed as just a waste of time."

Today, there is a greater acceptance. "Initially, when I started off, my goal was to put my hands on the thing itself. I now know that will never happen, because it's too elusive."

"But I would say I have achieved my goal as a UFO researcher, which was to see a public acceptance of the phenomenon, and a pursuit of it and the readiness to talk about it."

Conway is still faced with strong skepticism, however.

"I'm not trying to change the world, I'm not trying to convince the world," he says. "You (skeptics) have asked me questions, I have given you answers. You don't agree with me, fine, that's OK with me, I don't care. Doesn't make any difference to me. If you think I'm nuts, fine. You're entitled to that opinion."

In 1955, Conway married and throughout the years that followed, had four children.

He credits his wife Shelagh with bringing him down to earth when he gets carried away with his work.

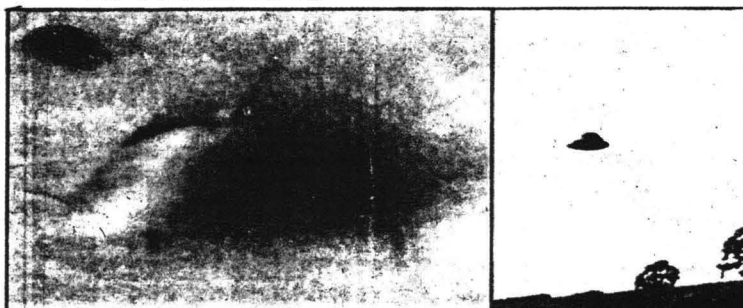
"She kind of jars me into her perspective," he says.

Their children make jokes about the subject of his work; however, in varying degrees, they are caught up in it, he says.

Throughout his 50 years of research, Conway has seen many strange things and investigated many bizarre reports. He believes the government is covering up evidence.

"Is the government hiding something? Yes, yes, yes," Conway says.

"I have met government officials, people working for the government or have worked for the government who have told me stories."



A blow-up, above, of the 'UFO' photographed by paraglider Noel Humphries and the mystery object in flight, right, close to Denbigh Golf Club.

MYSTERY OF 'UFO'

By SHAUN DAVIES

FLYING high from Bodfari, Noel Humphries could have been forgiven for thinking that his latest paragliding exercise was just a routine one.

But for the Llanfair DC man, his flight was far from routine — and he has the photographs to prove it.

Noel, 48, spied what he thought was an Unidentified Flying Object.

"I was flying near Bodfari and

I was getting a little too low nearing Denbigh, when I saw something strange," Noel said.

"It looked like a UFO and it looked as if it was hanging around the trees."

As a paraglider, Noel has to be aware if there is something else flying and is always on the lookout for aeroplanes.

But the last thing he expected

to see was an alien aircraft from another planet.

Paraglider Noel ditched his aircraft near Denbigh Golf Club at approximately 5pm on Wednesday, July 28, and began to photograph the flying object with a camera he always keeps in his kit.

"It was like a flying saucer without flashing lights," said Noel.

"I didn't recognise it and I was really intrigued by it because I have always been sceptical about UFOs."

Noel took four pictures of the saucer-shaped object before it disappeared as quickly as it appeared. "It hung around for a couple of minutes and it was glinting near the ground. I landed, kept an eye on the UFO and then snapped it before it disappeared behind some trees."

The Llanfair paraglider then went around to the other side of the trees on the lookout for any pranks, but there was nobody around apart from a few golfers at the Denbigh club.

But Noel is convinced that this was not the work of a prankster.

"If it was a model, it was a very quiet model and if it was a hoax then it was a very good one, because the object was darting around and it was very quiet."

A spokesman from Royal Air Force said: "Nobody is aware of anything strange over Denbigh at that time and there have been no reports of anything unusual being seen."

More sightings lead to expert UFO probing

UFO sightings are sweeping across Rugby and have prompted leading experts to investigate alien activity in the skies above the town.

Last week the Advertiser reported a UFO had been spotted at Shakespeare Gardens and since then people across the town have reported similar experiences on the same night.

And now the International UFO Research Network based in Bradford has launched an enquiry into the sightings to get to the bottom of the mysteries which lie in Rugby's skies.

Area Investigator for Warwickshire Geoff Brownlow, said: "This is the first case I have investigated in Rugby. We need to look into this and the increased amount of sightings adds extra weight to the research."

The story of an unnamed pensioner and her son who saw a UFO above Shakespeare Gardens has prompted several people to come forward saying they saw the object at the same time.

On the same night Ronald Brannen of Baffin Close, Rugby, saw lights in the sky and is struggling find an explanation for them.

He said: "They seemed to be a ring of lights and I saw them flying over Lytham Road. What amazed me was when they suddenly

took a sharp turn. No aircraft can turn like that. It was like something out of a computer game."

Gavin Nightingale from Conrad Close, Rugby, was sitting in his living room with his wife on the same night when they spotted the flying object.

He said: "Both my wife and I saw lights in the sky at the same time, about about half a mile from our home, so around Shakespeare Gardens."

"At first I thought it was an aeroplane crashing because of how low and bright the lights were but this obviously wasn't the case."

"I didn't believe in anything like this but there's no explanation for them — it was like a massive firework but much brighter, faster and not fading. I simply cannot explain it."

Other anonymous sightings have also been reported to the Advertiser from the same time and area and the International UFO Research Network has now stepped in.

Mr Brownlow said: "It seems that these sightings are quite rare in Rugby, but now there are several people reporting the same sightings."

"We need to talk to these people to match up their stories."

SOUTH LONDON PRESS, London, England - Aug. 13, 1999

Plumstead: first stop after Mars

SO WHO can solve the mystery of the latest spate of UFO reports? Last Friday the SLP reported claims of a mysterious orange object over Streatham, ponders Peter Harrison.

This week it is a bright orange cylinder shaped object over Plumstead. Robert Parrin, 57, of Genesta Road, was chatting to a friend on Tuesday, July 27, when he saw a bright orange cylinder shape out of the window. He said, "I don't know what it was, but I'm sure it wasn't a plane."

A Civil Aviation Authority spokesman said it is just as flummoxed. "We only keep a log of civilian aircraft, but we are certain it was not a commercial craft." A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said it is also stumped.

But Roy Lake, chairman and founder of the London UFO Studies, is unsurprised by the MOD denial. "They wouldn't admit to suspecting anything — but the public do have a right to know if they are being watched. There's no guarantee that visitors from another planet or dimension would be friendly."

For Robert Parrin this latest experience will just go down as yet another bizarre moment.

In the past, he said, he has picked up a hitchhiking ghost and a nearly run over a werewolf...

13

Encounters of the third kind

□ By Advertiser reporter

FLASHING lights, cigar-shaped objects and tales of the unexplained enthralled delegates at Southampton's first-ever national conference on extra-terrestrials.

Up to 80 people listened and watched as some of the country's foremost experts spoke and showed video and photographic evidence of UFOs.

Visitors from Essex, Devon and Dorset joined the mainly local audience.

The gathering was organised by the Southampton UFO Group, whose spokesman Ernie Sears, of Netley Abbey, said: "We were quite happy with how it went. Our speakers were really brilliant. We heard some fascinating things and saw some dramatic, almost frightening, videos."

Graham Birdsall, editor of Quest magazine, outlined the history of UFOs, cover-ups by those in authority and looked forward to what might happen if the millennium bug strikes.

He played a taped conversation between a NASA space shuttle and ground control after astronauts saw hundreds of lights of all different sizes.

The space agency wrote off the episode firstly as reflections from the moon, secondly as an ice shower and finally as a computer problem.

Photography and video expert Russel Callaghan showed a video taken recently by guests at a barbecue of a possible UFO sighting in Aylesham, Kent. The film showed a strange formation of lights in the sky that no-one has yet been able to satisfactorily explain.

British UFO Research Association member Lionel Beer and phenomena investigator Malcolm Robinson also spoke to visitors.



STRANGE DAYS: Russel Callaghan picks up some UFO magazines.

UFO sighting at Leedstown

YET another strange object has been seen in the skies above Leedstown.

Neil Edwards of Foundry Hill, Hayle, was in his garden at 6.15 in the morning looking towards Leedstown when he spotted a strange shape in the skies.

Mr Edwards said the 'UFO' was shaped like a cross section of a planes wing - similar to the silhouette of a carrot - and slowly in a southeasterly direction.

The object shone with incredible brightness, said Mr Edwards, and left no vapour trail and made no noise.

In recent months there have been two other reported independent sightings of UFOs in skies above Leedstown.

CORNISHMAN, Penzance, England - Aug. 12, 1999

WALES ON SUNDAY, Cardiff, Wales - Aug. 1, 1999

A NORTH Wales shepherd stands to make a fortune after claiming he was abducted by aliens.

There's just one thing stopping him picking up an astronomical sum - proving his claim.

Rhodri Jones, 40, who runs a farm at the foot of Berwyn Mountain, near Bala, says he has been twice visited by aliens.

And now Welsh bookmaker Jack Brown has offered odds of up to 1000/1 if Rhodri can back up his story.

Last year, we revealed Rhodri's amazing claim that he had been "transported" to an alien craft, and subjected to tests by extra-terrestrial beings.

Now, he says the aliens returned to visit him in the middle of the night, and took him back to their ship.

Rhodri said: "Just like last time, I was half asleep and I felt this strange sensation.

"There was a buzzing sound and my whole body felt like electricity was running through, and I rose above the bed.

"Somehow, I travelled through the farmhouse walls, and began moving at a terrific speed.

"Then, I was in a room with a dozen beings, who appeared just like humans. They were wearing very loose clothing, not space-age suits or anything like that.

Shepherd twice visited by aliens told to prove it - and win a bundle

By BRENDON WILLIAMS

"They all looked very sincere. Then one of them asked me why, as a species, we are all so hostile to one another?

"He spoke telepathically. I couldn't give him an answer. Then he said lots of people were going to die. A few weeks later, the Kosovo crisis started."

Originally, Rhodri kept his story a secret, for fear of being ridiculed.

But now he says he can find no other explanation, other than he was abducted by aliens.

But bookie Jack Brown is not convinced.

Spokesman Karl Williams said: "I think he'd have a little bit of difficulty proving these stories.

"So we're prepared to offer odds of 1000/1 if it happens again this week-



QUESTIONS: Rhodri Jones

end. And we'll match those odds if he can bring an alien back with him."

But Rhodri is not sure whether he'll be putting his money where his mouth is.

As he says, he can't guarantee that the aliens will return.

"Last time I just had a feeling they would be back.

"Now I'm not so sure, because it was all a bit embarrassing, to be honest. I wasn't able to answer their questions.

"Some people might say I'm mad. But I know it wasn't a dream, neither was last time.

"Dreams are never so vivid, so easily remembered, and you don't find yourself paralysed after them.

"I can't explain what happened. I don't like to use the word aliens, but these beings were not from this world."

SPACE: THE HACKNEY FRONTIER

**EXCLUSIVE
GAZETTE
REPORT**

**by RUSS
LAWRENCE**



● Kevin Brady looks for space traffic, while Paul Southcott has an idea what aliens will look like.

6 Sightings in month

SIGHTINGS of mysterious flying "orbs" have convinced sky-watchers of UFO activity above Hackney in the run-up to next month's solar eclipse.

Strange lights and unusually-shaped craft have been observed for the last three weeks, according to a UFO-investigation group based in the borough.

They've been swamped

with calls from members of the public who've seen them and they claim to have received more than 40 calls in one week alone.

"We're not saying they are of extra-terrestrial ori-

gin, but these are confirmed sightings by independent witnesses and they haven't been adequately explained by the authorities," said Paul Southcott, 40.

Paul, from New North Road, Hoxton, runs the Ufology and Supernatural Studies group from his home in New North Road, Hoxton.

In a three-week period since Friday, June 25, the group have logged reports of six sightings in the night skies above Hackney or neighbouring Islington and all have been close to take-off and approach flight paths to Heathrow airport.

"The elongated-shaped craft is the strangest sighting because it just stopped in mid-air and went off at speed in the opposite direction," added Paul.

"The only terrestrial craft that can do that is a Harrier jump jet. The flying triangle shape is also unusual because that is usually associated with the military.

"There was an unusual amount of air traffic which had built up during the

July 6 sightings as if they'd been forced to take evasive action."

Paul said that many of those who called his group to report the sightings felt self-conscious and silly in case they were thought "mad" and that's why they didn't phone the police.

None of the borough's three police stations said they had had any reports of UFO sightings, although they added that night flights by the Metropolitan Police helicopter have been mistaken for a UFO by members of the public in the past.

The Ministry of Defence - the government department which deals with unidentified flying objects - said

checks had not revealed any unusual activity over the period.

"We don't claim to investigate sightings for evidence of extra-terrestrial beings," said a spokesman. "We are only concerned about unidentified craft penetrating British air space."

He added that could be many rational explanations for the sightings, like the refraction of the light, atmospheric conditions and mistaking the rising and setting of planets and stars.

"At this time of the year with long, clear nights, the conditions are suited to these optical effects," he said.

FREE PRESS, Rossendale, England - April 16, 1999

We saw the UFO as well!

A SECOND couple claim to have seen an Unidentified Flying Object identical to the one that terrified a couple on the moors.

Readers were astonished last week when a couple said that a brilliant blue-white light had pursued them across Deerplay moor, above Weir, in 1954.

Two readers, a husband and wife from Haslingden, were so astounded that the wife fell silent and just handed the newspaper to her husband.

She said: "We saw something identical 34 years ago but never said anything to anyone. We were amazed that other people had seen something that seemed exactly the same."

The couple were walking down Fields Road, Haslingden, towards Broadway, when a light appeared from behind.

"We thought it might have been a car so we turned round and moved to one side. We were

Second couple come out of closet after 34 years to say they've seen it too

By NEIL GRAHAM

frightened when we realised it was directly above our heads. It didn't buzz or hum. Light from it was all around us so we started running.

"It followed us, still above our heads, for about five minutes and suddenly it vanished. Today you might say it was a helicopter but you hardly ever saw one in those days."

The light was about the size of a large beach-ball and the couple believe it was only yards above their heads.

The Deerplay ball of light was a similar size

and its "victims", now living in Ramsbottom, hid behind a wall - only to find that it followed them and hovered on the other side of their wall.

"It really un-nerved us," the Haslingden lady, then aged 18, said.

"We've never seen anything like it since and never heard of anyone else seeing anything like it either."

"Then we read the Free Press and both experiences were identical."

There must be a lot of other people who have seen something like that but are frightened of ridicule."

UFO sighting leaves big question mark

IT WAS just another Tuesday night in Monifieth for Jennifer Young and her friend as they sat in her back garden enjoying a chat and a glass of wine.

Average, that is, until they looked skyward and witnessed what they both described as "completely unexplainable" and "straight out of the X-Files."

The sighting at around 9.30 pm appeared to the women as a huge fireball travelling through the sky in a northerly direction, towards Forfar.

But the shape, which was "completely orange, did not seem to have a vapour trail and made no sound," then stopped in its tracks and changed direction, splitting into two vertical, parallel lines.

Bemused and bewildered, the two sat gazing in awe at the sight until Jennifer telephoned a friend in Monikie, who had also witnessed the bizarre shapes.

Jennifer (25), who works in a gift shop in Broughty Ferry, said, "It was amazing. As we watched the shapes,

which were still glowing orange, they appeared to alter shape again and bend into a sort of question mark, without the dot.

"I don't know what it was, but I've never seen anything like it before. I don't think there could be a plausible explanation for it."

Neither Mills Observatory in Dundee nor the observatory in St Andrews had anyone on duty at the time of the sighting and equally had no explanation. However, Mills had a report from someone in Tayport

who had also seen an unusually coloured shape flying over the Dundee area.

But although the scene was undoubtedly a strange one, there seems to be a logical explanation for it.

A spokesperson for the St Andrews Observatory said that a fighter jet, travelling at a high altitude would create vapour crystals and cause the plane to take on the appearance of a fireball.

Likewise, the parallel lines could have been caused by the wing tails, which would also account

for the change of direction as planes use their wings to alter their course.

The vapour would have then remained in the air and could have easily been blown into the shape described by the friends.

But Jennifer refutes the explanation. "If you'd seen what we did you would have a very hard time accepting the fact that it was a jet."

"I see jets flying over my house all the time."

"It looked like nothing I've ever seen before."

OBSERVER, Quesnel, B.C., Canada - Oct. 31, 1999 CR: G. Conway

Crop circle mystery explained

By Roger Kook
Special to the Observer

THE TRUTH is out there about Vanderhoof's crop circles.

Or at least one good theory based on scientific study.

Scientists at the BLT Research Centre in Cambridge, Massachusetts believe "high energy vortices" caused the 11-circle formation that appeared on District land near the Vanderhoof Airport in September, 1998.

"Dr. William C. Levensgood, leader of the

BLT centre, says the presence of an increased concentration of magnetic particles and the alteration in respiration patterns found in the formation plant samples, strongly suggests that high energy vortices were involved in the organization of this crop formation," said Nancy Talbot, a researcher at BLT.

According to Levensgood's final report, what may have happened in Vanderhoof was a highly-charged atmospheric plasma system that formed in the

ionosphere, triggered by increased technological transmissions (e.g. cell phone activity).

The increased transmissions triggered a system that, once formed, oscillated around the earth's magnetic lines and descended to earth. If such a system hits a crop field, you end up with crop circles.

"Plasma systems have a strong magnetic field which may indicate why batteries go dead, TV reception goes funny and why animals behave funny on nights that formations appear,"

Talbot said.

Levensgood's findings, Talbot admits, are "a theory in development."

"It's not a final answer, but it is a reasonable conclusion that fits the known facts," she said. "It's the only model proposed to explain the physical findings. The problem is science does not recognize plasma systems as descending to the earth's surface."

The Northern Lights and lightning are examples of plasma

systems.

Talbot said Levensgood has ruled out a hoax as the cause of the Vanderhoof formations.

Testing on the Vanderhoof circles showed "significant increases" in alterations

to the respiration cycles of the plants, which the centre says indicates exposure to "unusual energies."

Increases in the number of magnetic particles found in soil samples were also part of the equation that led to Levensgood's theory, as

well as a microscopic exam of the particles that showed spherical black-bead like formations, 1-5 micrometers in diameter, on the plant stem nodes.

The BLT Centre is the only such facility in the world that studies crop circle formations and samples.

EVENING NEWS & STAR, Cumberland, England - Aug. 3, 1999

Mystery of the strange orange glow in the sky

WHITEHAVEN police have been left baffled by the sighting of an unidentified object in the sky.

A Whitehaven police officer reported a sighting of an unusual orange glow in the sky off the West Cumbrian coast at 10.30pm on Sunday night.

She filed a report to police colleagues working on the weekend helpdesk to say that that she had

By Claire Lewis

witnessed the glow off the coast above the Irish Sea.

The officer, who has not been named, said the light had moved upwards before stopping and shooting off to the left at high speed.

Officers telephoned the Ministry of Defence to find out whether it had organised firing exercises in

the area but it denied any knowledge.

Whitehaven's crime prevention officer Pc Alan Hurton, said: "It has been a long time since we have had any calls of this nature but whenever people see things we are often one of the first people they call."

"We take these calls seriously and even rang the Ministry of Defence to find out if any firing

tests were being carried out in the area, but we were guaranteed that they were not."

"There could be all sorts of explanations for the glow such as the weather conditions but it is always best to report things like this."

■ Call our Talkback line on 01228 612300 if you witnessed this incident or have experienced similar sightings.



AS NASA SCIENTISTS LAMENT THE LOSS OF A £100m SPACECRAFT, THE MAIL SPECULATES... MIGHT IT HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED BY MARTIANS?

SO ANOTHER Mars spacecraft has vanished. Nasa scientists have abandoned hope of further contact with the Mars Polar Lander.

The £100 million probe has not been heard from since Friday and is the second craft to have disappeared in the vicinity of the Red Planet in three months.

Of course they are blaming technical problems to do with a malfunctioning radio aerial. But we all know they are not telling us the full story.

In fact, I think the Mars probe has been sabotaged. I am certain that there are living beings on Mars, and they just don't want us there. So quite understandably, they have seen off our probe.

Before you dismiss all this as a joke, just have a look at the evidence — and formidable evidence it is.

Mars is not a dead planet. In 1976, a Viking lander tested the soil there. Nasa announced that the results showed Mars is barren. But when the soil was treated with organic nutrient, oxygen was released.

Other tests revealed that the soil showed signs of photosynthesis and chemosynthesis, both of which are life-giving chemical reactions. This is not obscure research either: all of it can be found in the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Professor Colin Pillinger, of the Open University, says: 'I passionately believe that conditions on Mars were once conducive to life.' In which case, there would still be signs of life in the Martian soil — as in fact, Britannica admits there is.

My belief in life on Mars has been further strengthened by the ideas of Gordon Vincent, a Massachusetts mathematician. He is convinced that the small moons that orbit Mars are in fact artificial satellites, put into place by beings far more intelligent than Man.

He says that, many thousands of years ago, Mars was plunged into its own Ice Age, probably due to the impact of an asteroid 11 miles across. At that time there was plenty of water on Mars: Nasa photographs show a great number of river beds.

THEN Mars began to lose its atmosphere and became steadily colder until it turned into the bitterly inhospitable environment it is today — always below zero and sometimes as low as minus 137c. The Martians, who resembled human beings but were much taller, because of the lighter gravity, began to move underground.

A quarter of a mile below the surface, Mars could be as pleasantly warm as Britain in midsummer. If the temperature on Earth dropped, slowly and gradually, to 50 below zero, most of the Earth's inhabitants, too, could live comfortably underground.

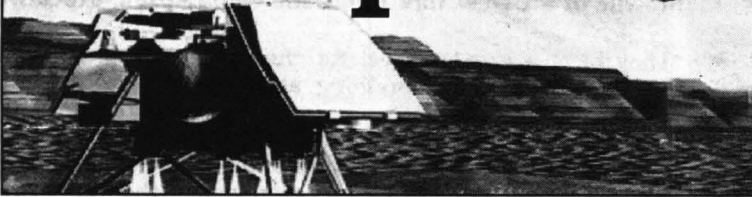
Indeed, there is evidence that this happened on Earth. Near the town of Derinkuyu, in Turkey, a vast underground city was discovered in 1963. Probably made during the last Ice Age, it covers two-and-a-half square miles, and once held 10,000 people.

They came to the surface when the weather was warm enough, to tend their crops and herds.

There are other suggestions to support intelligent life on

REVEALED

What really happened to that missing Mars probe



by COLIN WILSON

Mars. A book co-authored by the late Professor Carl Sagan, one of the most important advisers of the Mars programme, suggests that Martians made their own satellites to orbit their planet. 'The idea that the moons of Mars are artificial may seem fantastic at first glance,' remarks his co-author, the Russian radio-astronomer Josef Shklovskii, in *Intelligent Life in the Universe*.

'In my opinion, however, it merits serious consideration. A technical civilisation substantially in advance of our own would certainly be capable of constructing and launching a massive satellite.'

Commenting on this, Sagan himself stated: 'Conceivably, the capture and hollowing of a small asteroid may be technically more feasible than the construction in orbit of an artificial satellite.'

Ten years later, in May 1976, Nasa placed an unmanned craft in orbit around Mars. A few weeks after that, a Nasa researcher named Toby Owen was staring at pictures taken over an area called the Plain of Cydonia when he found what looked like two eyes looking back at him.

They seemed set in a human face. But the visage was a mile long. Nearby were a number of objects that were obviously giant pyramids.

Nasa said that the face was nothing more than a trick of the light; a second picture taken soon afterwards confirmed this. The newsmen wanted to see the picture, but were told that it was not at present available.

However, three years later researcher Vincent DiPietro managed to find the missing photograph and instantly saw that Nasa had not told the truth. The face was symmetrical, with two eyes, a nose and a curved, ape-like mouth.

Computer enhancement suggested an eyeball, teeth, and a kind of cowl across the forehead. Ten miles away there was a five-sided pyramid, aligned north-south, and a complex that researchers called 'The City', which looked like rectilinear buildings and more pyramids.

YET Nasa continued to fight its rearguard action and, in 1998, just before publication of a book called *The Face on Mars* by Graham Hancock and Robert Bauval, issued another photograph taken from another angle, which, Nasa claimed, showed that the 'face' was merely a hill.

But, of course, there was no sign of the giant pyramid or The City, which surely would have shown up.

Oddly, Carl Sagan, who had declared that the Martian moons might be asteroids manoeuvred into place, now became a sceptic and wrote an article debunking the face.

But even if we decided to admit that the face might be a 'trick of the light', there can be no doubt that the pyramid and city on the Plain of Cydonia are signs of intelligent life.

According to Gordon Vincent, these intelligent

beings — remember that they would be taller than humans — have already visited Earth many times, and are probably the origin of the statement in Genesis: 'There were giants in the earth in those days.'

They helped our ancestors build the earliest civilisations and were regarded as gods.

But they decided to leave us alone — and for a very simple reason: they knew that when a more advanced civilisation comes into contact with a less advanced civilisation, the results are always disastrous.

No matter how well-meaning, 'visitors' destroy the individuality of less sophisticated people, as we Westerners have destroyed the individuality of every native population we have encountered.

That, Gordon Vincent has convinced me, is why the Martians have no intention of coming into close contact with modern humans. They are more intelligent than us and understand that contact could be devastating not only for humans but also for them.

But just why are those who run Nasa so reluctant to admit to intelligent life on Mars? Because they are frightened? Or because they know that an admission that Martians exist would be so disruptive to the Mars programme which keeps them all in work that it could actually bring it to a grinding halt?

Whatever the reason, the more probes we send, the more the Martians will sabotage them, so they are lost from our communication systems.

Which is why nine months ago, when I heard the Mars probe had been launched on a 416 million-mile journey to Mars, I told my wife with complete confidence: 'That's the last we'll hear of it.'

■ *Alien Dawn* by Colin Wilson (Virgin, £16.99).

Police flooded with calls over noise

By ROBERT F. MOORE
Staff Writer

Cabarrus County authorities were investigating reports of a loud noise late Friday, described by residents as a possible explosion that shook homes from Mount Pleasant to Kannapolis.

Sgt. Dennis McClure with the Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office said the first of more than 30 calls came in about 8:30 p.m.

'Most of the calls were from the northeast part of the county,' McClure said. 'We investigated, but we couldn't find anything. We thought it might be a jet or something, but we called Charlotte/Douglas (International) Airport and they said there were no planes in the area that would make that kind of noise.'

McClure said there had been no reports of injuries, fires, debris or structural damage. Concerned residents were still calling the Sheriff's Office after 10 p.m., but no one seemed to have any answers.

'Some people described actually feeling their houses move,' McClure said. 'I honestly don't know what it was. I don't even know who else to call.'

Beth Cossart, who was walking her dog along Mooresville Road in Kannapolis, didn't call anyone.

'My fiancé and I were outside and we both heard it,' said Cossart, 44. 'It sounded like a sonic boom. I felt a vibration from it.'

Cabarrus County authorities said a few calls also came from Iredell and Rowan counties.

'We looked into it and we think two jets may have been flying low,' said a Rowan County dispatcher, who took dozens of calls about the noise Friday night. 'Some people called in thinking it was an earthquake, but I think we can rule that out.'

Earthquakes in the Charlotte area are rare, though a small quake hit the Piedmont in April 1998. No one was injured. It lasted 10 to 20 seconds.

OBSERVER, Charlotte, NC - Dec. 18, 1999 CR: G. Fawcett

Panel says no to UFOs, mermaids

Writers discuss reporting on science stories

By BRENDA SCHORY

Kane County Chronicle

AURORA — Scientists may be doing breakthrough work or making important discoveries that impact lives around the world — but you'd never know it if science writers and producers did not present it to lay-people.

In "Science and the Media," presented as part of the Great Minds Dialogue Series at the Illinois Math and Science Academy in Aurora, media heavyweights weighed in on the importance of science reporting and science education in general.

The panel, which presented before 500 students from various school districts, included Bill Kurtis, well-known CBS news anchor for 30 years, who now does Investigative Reports and American Justice on cable; Malcolm Browne, senior writer for the New York Times and winner of several science-writing awards; and Paula Apsell, executive producer of NOVA science documentaries on public broadcasting.

Browne said one of the problems in presenting science to an unscientific public is that it is often portrayed as fun.

"Science is hard work, and it's getting harder all the time," he said. He also took on editors who do no science research themselves, then try to edit news stories about complex scientific issues.

In a survey conducted by a chemistry consortium, 72 percent of the public had a lot of respect for chemistry and what it could do. But, only 28 percent of the same people surveyed could define a molecule.

science, such as Unidentified Flying Objects. He once was invited to a woman's house in New Mexico who claimed UFOs flew over her house every day at 11 a.m.

Kurtis came out with a crew and filmed strange things tumbling through the sky. Though they never concluded exactly what they were, he said, the nearest natural explanation was that it was garbage or debris that was moving through the sky.

Like Apsell's medium, Kurtis said, telling a scientific story with film requires good visuals. He said to consider that if a meteor were headed for Earth and was going to kill us all in a matter of months, how there would be a panic.

He showed a short tape of scientists measuring a glacier in the Andes Mountains of Peru that is melting because of glob-

al warming.

"It took 10,000 years (after the asteroids) to kill the dinosaurs, by changing the balance of gases in the atmosphere," he said. With the release of industrial gases into the atmosphere, the temperature of the permafrost in Alaska rose 5 degrees.

It may not sound like a lot, but it's enough to leave telephone poles standing at angles, Kurtis said.

The story of the melting glacier is a component of the type of high-impact scientific story Kurtis and other science writers are trying to tell the lay public.

Another component is the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

When the parts per million moves from 350 now to 650 in the year 2050, and the air gases "reorganize" themselves not to



Randy Pomaro — Chronicle photo staff

TV personality Bill Kurtis speaks at IMSA about how media covers scientific issues. The panel, moderated by former Fermilab Director Leon Lederman, also featured Malcolm Browne of the New York Times and Paula Apsell, executive producer of NOVA.

"They have a great respect for chemistry but they don't know anything about it," Browne said.

Apsell explained that to present scientific themes in one-hour documentaries requires a good story as well as good visuals and good drama.

"You have to have action and visuals, not just people sitting there talking."

Consider when NOVA presented the Human Genome Project, the scientific community's attempt at mapping out human DNA. Apsell used the drama of a clash between public-interest scientists who want to make the information available to everyone and corporate interests who want to patent their findings for profit.

"The fight between different parties," she said, "was the prism," through which the

story of the Genome Project could be told. "You have to have a strong story with characters who have passion."

Another story that presented strong visuals was the "Miracle of Life" series on the human reproductive system, told from the perspective of the developing fetus about 15 years ago. The new, revamped version, which will be presented next year on high definition television, will be called "Life's Greatest Miracle."

"The bottom line," she said, "Is that television is voluntary. Why put partial differentials on the screen? People would watch even if it is complicated (if) we educate and entertain."

Kurtis not only works on promoting science in his series, but in debunking false

sustain life for creatures that require oxygen? Will we then go the way of dinosaurs?

"That," Kurtis said, "is the chilling reality."

Aside from trying to use great storytelling to inform the public, Apsell also warned that pseudo-science is everywhere.

A quick check on the Internet to see what was available in science news for the month included alien autopsy, the mysteries of the Bermuda Triangle, "Are mermaids real?" and ghostbusters' new technology for haunting investigations.

"Science sells, but it is also cause for concern," she said.

In fielding questions from students, the three panelists and moderator Leon Lederman, IMSA's resident scholar, gave a big thumbs down to the creation story.

All said they subscribed to

Darwinian evolution theory as science and the Biblical creation story as religion.

"Telling the 'other side,' I take the Bible as metaphor of creation theory," Kurtis said.

Browne said creation "science" was fraught with fraud, such as dinosaur tracks "found" with human footprints to make it appear they were on the earth together. According to the fossil record, this is not the case.

Apsell weighed in, saying, "Creation science is an oxymoron. It is religion, it is not science."

In answer to other questions from students, there were many things they could do to counter global warming and cut down on emissions; and the Y2K "disaster" was much exaggerated.

Marfa's puzzling phenomenon an enduring mystery of the night

By Kathryn Straach

Travel Writer of The Dallas Morning News

MARFA — I want to believe. I really do.

My friend Cheryl and I came here looking for the mysterious Marfa Lights, and we saw them. I think.

At least we saw lights out on the horizon where unexplained lights have been reported for more than a century. But what we saw were more of the white headlight variety instead of the multicolor, dancing-through-the-sky, chasing-after-cars performances reported by some.

For two chilly nights, Cheryl and I stood atop a picnic table at the designated viewing site 9 miles southeast of

Marfa, the highest incorporated city in Texas, gazing intently to the south toward a red television transmission tower light — mentioned in materials about the Marfa Lights as the place to look.

The lights appear almost nightly on the mesa between Marfa and Alpine, somewhere east of the Chinati Mountains across an area called Mitchell Flat, but they have been reported other places in the area.

The viewing site is nothing more than a roadside park with three picnic tables. The land was donated by former Texas gubernatorial hopeful Clayton Williams in 1988.

There aren't too many roadside

parks where I would stop after dark — much less get out of my car, but ever the tourist, I was at this remote area's No. 1 attraction. Nevertheless, Cheryl and I were a little nervous the first night when we pulled in around 9 p.m. (OK, the truth is, Cheryl was threatening mutiny.)

We expected crowds, but there were none on this Thursday evening — only a lone pickup truck with music blaring. We got out and went directly to the picnic table recommended to us earlier that evening by a couple at dinner in the nearby Tumbleweed Grill. The pickup viewers

day, would not cooperate. With flashlight in hand and chattering teeth, I did all I could to get my camera to operate, but to no avail.

The biggest light that night came as the Amtrak train passed on the track running parallel on the other side of the highway. The giant headlight on the front of the train rumbling through the dark night added an eerie feel.

Another diner at the Tumbleweed, Gary Oliver of Marfa, had recommended getting to the site before dark. Viewers can then get their bear-

stayed in their vehicle behind foggy windows.

Almost immediately, I saw a light in the distance that turned from white to purple, and I hadn't had even a single glass of wine with dinner. It swirled briefly before disappearing. As it turned out, that sighting was the high point of both evenings.

For the next hour, we watched small white lights on the horizon — very similar to car headlights. I had set my camera on a tripod with a remote to capture the lights, but the remote, which worked earlier in the

ings and eliminate what are not Marfa Lights, he said.

So that's what we did the next night. As we pulled in shortly before dusk, three RVs were already parked there. We scouted the area and selected a different picnic table.

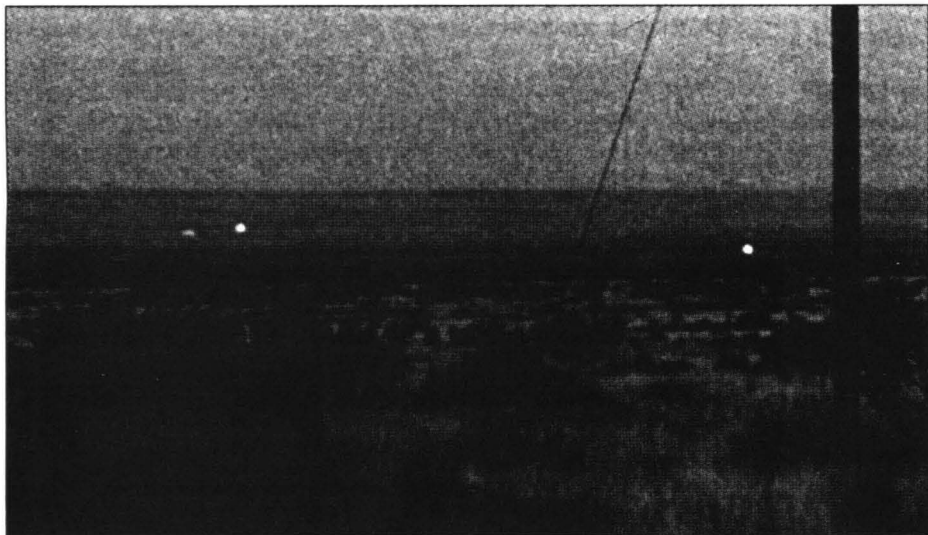
A steady stream of cars stopped by. And surprisingly, before it was even dark, we started seeing white lights on the horizon.

The remote to my camera reluctantly operated while there was still some light (it had no problem when I tried it again that morning), but as



The Dallas Morning News: Joe Raedle

Lights-watchers gather outside Marfa to catch a glimpse of the mysterious phenomenon.



Marfa Lights glow at dusk over Mitchell Flat 9 miles east of the West Texas town.

The unexplained lights have been reported for more than a century.

Special to The Dallas Morning News: Edson C. Hendricks

soon as the sun set, it went down, too.

It must have been the area's magnetic field.

Mr. Oliver had told me of a man who tried more than 100 hours to photograph the lights before having any luck. Camera-shy little aberrations, they are.

A woman traveling alone in her RV wandered over and watched for a while. A man in walking shorts got out of his car to check the situation for his wife who didn't want to venture into the chill.

A man from Spain joined us for the duration of our two-hour stakeout. He seemed thoroughly delighted by the phenomenon and remained after we left.

Lights — always white — came and went in the distance. They weren't large or very high in the sky. Some were more intense than others. Some would merge. Sometimes there would be only one light. Other times, there would be as many as five.

They were entertaining, but I guess I had hoped for something more distinctive. Some reports of the lights are more Disneyesque, with soft yellows, pinks, blues dancing through the sky.

But no one can predict what the lights will do from one night to the next.

Marie Hill and Paul Scott of Brazoria had visited the area in early October and had great luck seeing the multicolored lights then, but on the third day of this trip in November, the lights seemed to be on strike.

"What they're seeing out there now I think are car lights," said Ms. Hill.

That's one of many theories bandied about regarding the lights — and it's certainly easy to see why — but reports of the lights started long before car headlights and paved highways.

According to the state historical marker at the designated viewing site, the first recorded sighting of the lights was by Robert Ellison in 1883.

The marker goes on to say: "Various explained as campfires, phosphorescent minerals, swamp gas, static electricity, St. Elmo's Fire, and 'ghost lights,' the lights reportedly change colors, move about, and change in intensity."

That's right. An official state historical marker suggests that the lights might just be swamp gas.

One of many local legends concerning the lights is that they are the ghosts of the Apache Indian Chief Al-sate. Some locals tell their children that they are witches to keep them inside at night.

Other theories range from aliens to ball lightning.

Judith M. Brueske, author of the book *The Marfa Lights* — a big seller in the region — says the lights could be electromagnetic hot spots or possibly "earthquake lights."

"There is a lot of electrical stress in the rocks," she says. The area has several short fault lines, and when quartz rubs together, it will glow, she says.

"Also, people's vision at night plays tricks on them," she says.

Yes, this author who devoted a year to gathering firsthand accounts of sightings and has updated the book each year since 1989 is a skeptic.

She has never witnessed firsthand extraordinary lights — only those that she calls atmospheric distortions.

And she says that lights are seen most often on Friday and Saturday nights, when the traffic on U.S. Highway 67 to Presidio is heaviest.

"They're a local pastime in an area where there's not much else to do," says Dr. Brueske, who has a doctorate in cultural anthropology.

"But there are lights that deserve to be explained," she says. "People should keep their eyes open anywhere in the Big Bend."

Dr. Brueske does believe that if

anyone is going to solve the mystery of the lights, it will be Edson Hendricks of San Diego, Calif., an MIT graduate who is an electrical engineer, computer systems designer and scientist.

He first saw the lights in 1991, carefully distinguishing the unexplained from car headlights, and is convinced that they are more than optical illusions.

"I suspect a combination of solar activity and small seismic movement may cause a sort of underground lightning that is normally undetectable," he wrote in a report shortly after observing the lights. "However, on occasion it may produce something above the ground similar to ball lightning, which we observe as the Marfa Lights."

Dr. Hendricks, who is studying how ball lightning works, has traveled to Marfa twice a year since he first saw the lights in 1991.

"It could be the key to possible fusion power," he says.

Bob Phillips, host of *8 Country Reporter*, which appears on WFAA-TV (Channel 8), and *Texas Country Reporter* seen across the state, says he has been to the viewing site numerous times and always see the lights. He even has taken several tour groups of 120 people each.

"Once we point them in the right direction, there isn't a person who doesn't see them," he says.

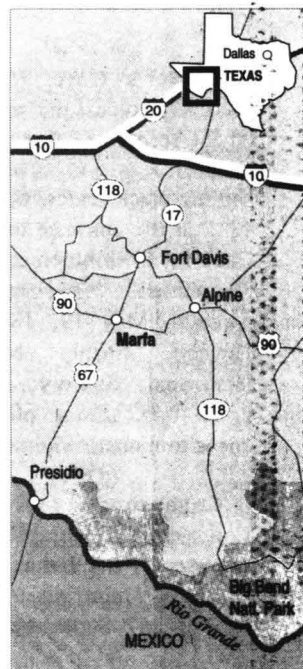
An eight-minute video about the Marfa Lights is shown at the Apache Trading Post in Alpine. It features Dr. Hendricks and his experiences with the lights.

Asked why she shows the video, the store's Charlotte Allen says she became tired of answering all the questions and figured it would be easier to set up a separate room where people could learn about the local tourist attraction.

She should be used to questions. Here's a woman who has a donkey penned up outside the trading post in an area called Jackass Park. Huey, the star donkey, appeared in several films shot in the area, including *The Good Old Boys*.

Whatever they are, the lights are the big topic of conversation in the triangle of Marfa, Fort Davis and Alpine.

Visitors in shops and restaurants discuss the lights. Signs and pamphlets promote them.



The Dallas Morning News

Some believe, while others don't.

"There's definitely something there," says Don Parkinson, desk clerk at the Hotel Limpia in Fort Davis, although he admits, "It's not the aurora borealis."

Carol Crook, a clerk at the McDonald Observatory gift shop northwest of Fort Davis, scoffs at the mere mention.

"We can't aim a telescope at the ground to disprove them," she says. "If people have fun with them, that's fine, but I have no interest in getting down there."

After our chat with Ms. Crook, Cheryl and I attend a solar viewing at the observatory. The group gathers around a snow-filled television monitor showing a few spots. We are told by a scholarly individual that these are parts of the sun.

And because this is a scientific establishment — without a doubt, one of the world's most highly regarded — we are expected to believe that the fuzzy images on the screen really are parts of the sun.

Why shouldn't I believe in the Marfa Lights?

Monsters Here & There

Recent news in the press and on TV of sea and lake monsters prompts us to dust off our phenomena file of Monsters and provide here some reports of them from ancient times to the relative present in Scandinavia, New York, Minnesota, Indiana and other such places. We are sorry that space does not permit including those equally interesting ones from Scotland, Wisconsin and Alaska. The illustrations are from the *Chicago Tribune*, 1894, cited hereafter in this text.

Rush Lake, Chisago County, MN. Lytton Taylor surmises that "sea serpents" found in Rush Lake and other places may be either giant sturgeons or otters. (*St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, sports section, June 19, 1949).

Pine Lake, Pine county, MN. "Monster of legend lives in Pine Lake," *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, Feature Magazine, p.3, May 15, 1949; James Cordes, formerly of Amador, has additional information on this sighting.

Carver's Cave, [St. Paul, MN] Our oldest midwest sighting: a serpent 15 feet long with 4 short legs and covered with shining black scales, was seen in 1817 at the entrance to Carver's Cave by J. Montgomery, Prairie du Chien. *Pittsburgh [PA.] Gazette*, May 19, 1818; Lois Fawcett, former Minnesota Historical Society Librarian noted this, among other references to monster sightings.

Logansport, IND. "The Logansport Telegraph and the Monster of the Indiana Lakes," (*Indiana Magazine of History* 42:249- 267, September, 1946).

Lake Mazaska, Shieldsville, Rice County, MN. This lake monster was reportedly first seen by an old gentleman on his way home from—somewhere—when the moon was full; he may have been drinking but the monster was seen again two years later, in July, 1875 by Dennis McEvoy, proprietor of the local mill, and his wife, who were coming home from a temperance rally. McEvoy said it resembled a basswood log in color and was longer than six feet. Michael McMahon, also an early settler at Shieldsville, in the late 1880s or early 1890s, also saw a strange creature swimming around in the lake. It "looked like a boat bottom side up." McMahon saw the creature one morning while milking his cow. McMahon, a man of talent and

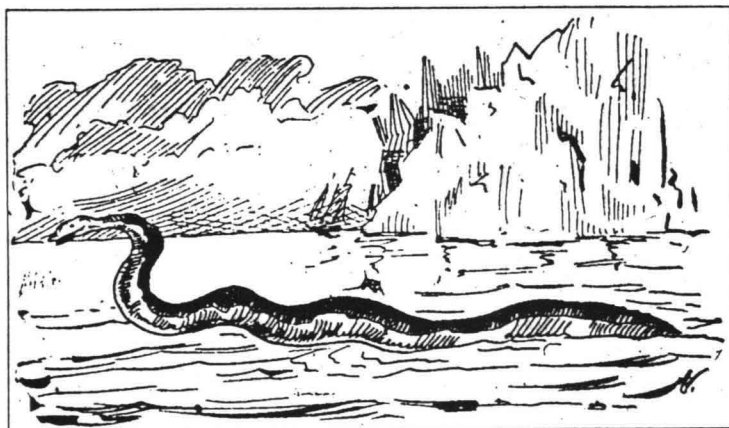


invention held patents for a thimble skein for a wagon wheel and a plow as well as a flying machine and wrote a book about *Perfection of Aerial Navigation*. He noted in 1894 that he had seen in the sky at St. Peter "a formation of nine strange objects . . . one large one, with four a little smaller, and four still smaller making a circle around the large one." He saw a similar formation later in Faribault, Oliver Towne, *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 7, 1974; Catherine Spartz, "Monster Bash To Be Held in Shieldsville," *Montgomery Messenger*, February 12, 1886; Mary L. Hagerty, *Meet Shieldsville, Faribault Republican*, August 4, 1875. McMahon's and Hagerty's books are in the Minnesota Historical Society.

Lory Lake (or Little Holy Lake) Maple Ridge Township, Isanti County. The purported sightings of a "monster" and a drawing of it discovered among the papers of an old Day School student are related, by Vernon E. Bergstrom, to the legend of an encounter between Sioux and Chippewa Indians when a 15 year old Sioux youth saw a creature or "snake" as long as seven or eight spears, "spewing waves from his nostrils" that disappeared underground. The Indians said the site was haunted by a spirit and avoided it as did early settlers. Vernon E. Bergstrom, "The Lory Monster," 1980, Bergstrom, np.



Storsjoe Lake, Oestersund, Sweden. According to an AP dispatch there have been in 400 years as many as 175 sightings of the "Big Lake Monster" in this lake about 250 miles northwest of Stockholm. The creature is described "as being from 15 feet to 50 feet long, serpent-like or chubby, gray, green or red, with a head like a dog or fish. Some say it wails, others say it rattles." *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and



Dispatch, 6D, August 17, 1998.

Discovery Channel, September 10, 1998.

Bear Lake, Utah. The first known report of the Bear Lake Monster was made by Louis C. Rich on July 17, 1868 in the *Deseret News*. Rich recounted Indian legends about the monster who was alleged to have carried off tribe members. More sightings have been reported since then describing it as "an alligator-like creature with a horse's head to [or] a sea serpent that roared like a bull." "Bear Lake Monster lives on in legend," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, 4A, January 2, 1984

Lake Champlain, New York. A monster creature has been seen as far back as the 17th century. Recent eye-witnesses have photographed it and call it "Champ." Reports, interviews, studies by sonar and underwater cameras are all a part of a feature on the

London, England. A detailed study of sea serpents from ancient times in Greece, Scandinavia, North America, and other more recent times as reported by the crews of sailing vessels. "Once More the Mysterious Monster," with illustrations, *Chicago Tribune*, November 11, 1894, as found in the Ignatius Donnelly Papers, Roll 113:276 Minnesota Historical Society.



DAILY NEWS, Anchorage, AK - Jan. 30, 2000 CR: J. & L. Nicholson

MYSTERY ICE



Ice balls falling from the sky over southern Europe claimed their first victim when a man in the Italian city of Ancona suffered head injuries after being bombarded by a chunk of ice weighing more than one pound. Spain had also reported similar incidents during the previous week, including one nine-pound block falling on a car in Seville. Cold weather, experts in Italy were no more able to explain the phenomenon than their counterparts in Spain. However, some of the ice was known to have been created as a hoax.