

Texas group seeks closer encounters

By Kristin Gazlay
Associated Press

SEGUIN, Texas — In 1948, Walt Andrus changed his life by looking up into the clear Arizona sky. What he saw made him believe that unidentified flying objects exist.

Thirty-five years later, UFOs are Andrus' passion and provide him with a full-time job.

Andrus is the international director of the Mutual UFO Network, a non-profit organization formed in 1969. The group has about 1,100 members worldwide.

MUFON operates from Andrus' home in Seguin, about 45 miles northeast of San Antonio, where books on UFOs and thick files on mysterious cases share shelf space with his bowling trophies.

"Any scientist or engineer who takes the time to look at the scientific data, they wouldn't question the existence of UFOs," Andrus says.

MUFON, he said, is "a network of investigators, researchers and consultants working together to document cases of UFOs."

Andrus readily concedes that many UFOs reported to police departments or radio stations turn out to be the Goodyear blimp or an errant weather balloon.

But the cases that remain tantalizingly unexplained — those with baffling physical evidence or involving close encounters with alien "entities" — that fascinate MUFON members, he said.

UFOs became real to Andrus 35 years ago in downtown Phoenix, Ariz., when he looked into a cloudless sky and saw four silvery balloons instantly disappear, only to pop back into sight about 10 minutes later.

"There could be no explanation for it," said Andrus, a retired executive. "Something that defies any earthly definition we call UFOs."

MUFON's hot line logs about 20 calls a month, Andrus said, although many tips don't pan out.

Andrus said he believes UFOs merely want to observe life on Earth, to collect terrestrial samples or satisfy their alien curiosities about humans.

He pulls out files documenting

dramatic changes in soil content, burnt vegetation, radiation levels and other physical phenomena he says verify reports of UFOs — or at least should raise questions in skeptics' minds.

One such document, released by the Air Force, describes a bizarre encounter involving two airmen at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Nisland, S.D., on Nov. 16, 1977.

The airmen answered a security call and "observed a bright light-shining vertically upwards," according to the report, signed by the colonel in charge of base security.

One airman, Wayne E. Raeke, "observed an individual dressed in a glowing green metallic uniform and wearing a helmet with visor," the Air Force report said.

"The intruder turned towards Raeke and aimed an object at Raeke which emitted a bright flash of intense light," it reads. "The flash of light struck Raeke's M-16 rifle, disintegrating the weapon and causing second- and third-degree burns to Raeke's hands."

The second airman, Kenneth C. Jenkins, "observed two intruders dressed in the same uniforms . . ." the report said. "Jenkins aimed and fired two rounds from his M-16 rifle."

"One bullet struck one intruder in the back and one bullet struck one intruder in the helmet," the report said. "Both intruders fell to the ground. However, approximately 15 seconds later, both returned to an upright position and fired several flashes of light at Jenkins."

The report said Jenkins, who was not hit, followed the fleeing "intruders" over a hill and "observed them go inside a saucer shaped object approximately 20 feet in diameter and 20 feet thick" that "emitted a glowing greenish light."

"Once the intruders were inside," the report said, "the object climbed vertically upwards and disappeared over the eastern horizon."

High radiation levels were noted at the scene and "missile maintenance examined the missile and warhead and found the nuclear components missing from the warhead," the report said.