

Expert on UFOs still

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By Joan Morris
Times staff writer

LAS CRUCES — J. Allen Hynek has spent much of his life considering the phenomenon of unidentified flying objects.

But today, Hynek is no closer to a theory or an answer that would explain what UFOs are, where they come from and what they are doing flying around the earth.

"I don't have the slightest idea where UFOs come from," Hynek said during a speech Saturday in Las Cruces. "But I do know it constitutes a phenomenon that should be studied."

Hynek was the guest speaker at a mini-symposium conducted Tuesday by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Hynek is a noted astronomer and editor-in-chief of the International UFO Reporter.

Hynek said some scientists have refused to examine evidence that UFOs exist. He said that's because the scientists speculate all UFO sightings are indications of visits from outer space, which they dismiss as impossible and improbable.

But Hynek said UFOs are simply unidentified objects, and no evidence exists to prove or disprove where they come from.

They (doubting scientists) have put the cart before the horse," Hynek said. "The scientific community has substituted one theory for the whole phenom-

New Mexico

enon. They have assumed UFOs mean visitors from outer space. It doesn't."

Although Hynek said he does not discount the theory some UFOs are alien spaceships, he does not embrace it as the only theory. There could be many different explanations, some we are not yet advanced enough to comprehend.

"There are no theories that fit all the facts and explain UFOs," Hynek said. "There are no explanations I'm ready to buy."

Hynek endorses a general study of the UFO sightings, calling them part of a the UFO phenomenon. He said more than 80,000 reports of UFOs have been received from 140 countries.

Scientists have compiled lists of the sightings and recorded characteristics of the UFOs in a computer, Hynek said. Many of the same characteristics are reported in each case.

Rapid acceleration, vertical movement and hovering ability make the objects true UFOs, Hynek said, and not IFOs -- identified flying objects. The Goodyear blimp and weather balloons, Hynek said, do not perform in those ways.

The number of UFO reports have decreased in the past 10 years, Hynek said. But he sees

that not as a negative trend, but a positive one.

The public is becoming more sophisticated, Hynek said, and skywatchers are able to distinguish a UFO from a weather balloon or a meteorite.

The reports also are of a better grade, Hynek said, with more substantiation, several witnesses and more believable witnesses. In the past, Hynek said, about 90 percent of the reports could be explained. Now only about 50 percent of the sightings can be identified, he said.

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