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Concord class offers UFO info on scientific basis

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One long sighting inspired man's try to debunk 'myths'

By Elaine Herscher
Times staff writer

CONCORD — It was the summer of 1974 in Glens Falls, N.Y., and Daniel Ross was a straight-arrow young man, just out of the Navy, who would see something that would alter his life forever.

The local radio station was abuzz with reports of luminescent objects hovering over Saratoga Lake. On that warm August evening, Ross, his family and several hundred others watched as a group of unidentified craft cartwheeled in the night sky.

"We saw a formation of about six," Ross said. "One left the group and streaked across the horizon and was a solid amber glow. It stopped, retraced its route, then joined the group. Then they went off to another portion of the sky ... They cast off brilliant colors, color changes like a kaleidoscope effect. They would vary from reddish to green. They were visible about two hours. Then they just went off in one direction."

What Ross experienced is defined as a close encounter of the first kind (the sighting of a UFO but no physical evidence), documented by radar readings from the Albany airport and witnessed by state police, 400 residents and scores of media people.



Times photo/Eric Rakkonen

Daniel Ross's fascination began with a close encounter of the first kind.

Like the hero in the film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," who had a brush with aliens and became obsessed with finding them again, Ross was overcome with feelings that the space visitors were offering something worth pursuing.

"They do bring a very peaceful and beautiful feeling with them ... I felt wherever they are from, we

will be there too. I felt this very strong, instantaneous connection. It was hard to describe."

From that time on, Ross sought to become the Ralph Nader of extra-terrestrial information, a sort of crusader in the public interest who debunks the myths of UFOs.

His course "UFOs — The Truth About Space," taught through the

Concord Leisure Services Department, offers what he says is documentation of the existence of extra-terrestrial space craft, including photographs of sightings and the testimony of scientists and other researchers. (Information on the spring course to begin in a few weeks is available through Ross at 798-6485.)

"For most people it is a hobby.

'Most people believe there's life elsewhere. They just don't believe it's this close to us'

— Daniel Ross

There's no serious education," he said. "I wanted to put it on a scientific basis. If it was true — and I thought it was — I knew it would have to be backed up with space science."

Ross has spent the last 11 years doing scholarly research in a field full of hucksters, lunatics and cultists who make UFOs the bread and butter of supermarket tabloids. His self-published book compiling his research is expected out in June.

A reactor operator on nuclear submarines in the Navy and a science student in college, Ross said there have been 83 documented UFO landings, that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration has viewed films of UFOs in flight and that over the years congressional committees have been presented with UFO documentation but have swept it quietly under the rug.

Ross' Public Interest Space Sciences Center, with a small group of Bay Area members, is gathering information from as far away as Japan.