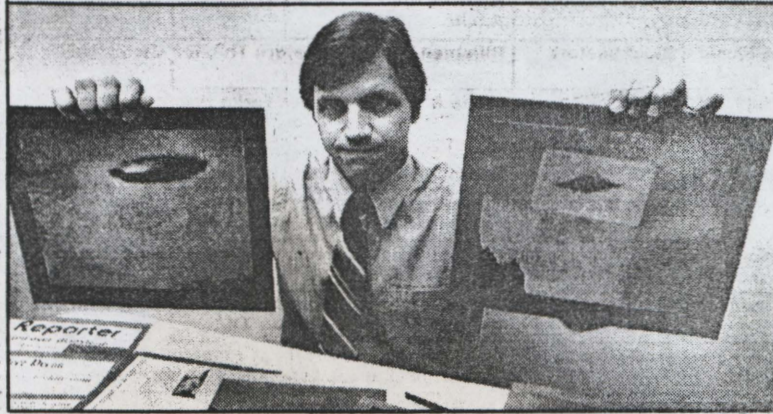


tracking UFOs



AP Photo

Dan Wright, a policy analyst for the state Department of Social Services, spends much of his time looking for UFOs over Michigan.

Policy analyst by day is sky scanner by night

LANSING — (AP) — Dan Wright finds his job as a policy analyst for the Department of Social Services interesting, but his obsession is looking for UFOs over Michigan.

Wright's fascination with unidentified flying objects has made him the regional director for Mutual UFO Network Inc. Police agencies refer the numerous reports they receive of mysterious flying objects to his organization.

"We perform a public service," Wright, 38, said. "The police don't have to send out cruisers on every UFO call, and we also perform a service to the general public because most persons who call do not want us to tell them they are looking at a UFO. And in most cases, we can tell them they are not."

Wright and his network of investigators kept tabs on an errant Soviet Union rocket booster that fell from space and blazed a trail across the Midwestern sky just after midnight June 21.

DOZENS OF UFO calls were reported to police agencies around the state and Wright was kept busy for two hours answering his telephone.

Wright acknowledges that being a UFO buff could jeopardize one's credibility, but he said he has not been hurt.

"The people I work with know

I'm serious and many give me the benefit of the doubt or take an active interest," he said.

Wright became interested in UFOs in 1968, when his truck driver father had a "close encounter" on a western Michigan road. According to Wright, "his truck was paced for about 20 minutes by a very large globe which had a pulsating orange light.

"He eventually stopped his truck and watched it with another motorist."

WRIGHT has had one UFO encounter, in 1978 when reports of strange objects were common. "I just stood in my backyard and watched what I can only describe as lights," he said.

Wright said at least 600 sightings of aliens have been recorded. He said Michigan's significant UFO incidents include a chase by a refueling tanker plane from Wurtsmith Air Force Base on Nov. 1, 1979.

According to a Strategic Air Command memo on the incident, the plane chased what appeared to be two objects with strobe lights flying in close formation over Lake Huron and Saginaw Bay at speeds of about 230 m.p.h. about 10:30 p.m.

Each time the refueling plane tried to get closer than a mile to the objects, they would speed away, the memo said.

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