

'WE ARE NOT ALONE'

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Harvey Jones • Seattle Times

Robert Gribble takes a UFO sighting report from a man in New Jersey. Gribble logs in UFO reports 24 hours a day.

'UFO-ologist' listens — and believes

by Ronald W. Powell
Times staff reporter

Robert Gribble believes in UFOs. He wishes everybody did.

"If people realize we are not alone — as we have been taught for hundreds of years — man's outlook as to how we treat each other would change," said Gribble, a self-described UFO-ologist.

"Now we think of ourselves as citizens of the U.S. If we thought of ourselves as citizens of the planet Earth, things would change for the better."

Pursuing UFOs, and expanding the world's knowledge about them, has been Gribble's passion for more than 30 years.

A retired firefighter, he has recorded and investigated thousands of UFO sightings from his South Seattle home, which doubles as the National UFO Reporting Center.

Gribble considers himself a modern-day pioneer in the mostly civilian realm of UFO studies. Yet he also feels a connection with curious ancient Egyptians and Romans who scanned the skies for objects they described as silver shields.

The UFO center is in a small second-floor office. It is cramped but neat, crammed with filing cabinets, UFO literature and Gribble's operations station — a desk with two phones, a tape recorder and miniature clipboard.

He pays \$1,200 a year from his own pocket to keep the center going.

From his desk, Gribble fields an average of six calls a day from around the globe from

people who think they have seen a UFO.

Some callers are calm, some hysterical.

But all seek an explanation for what they have seen in the heavens, from someone who un-

derstands, someone who won't snicker.

Yesterday, the phones began ringing early.

A woman from Utica, N.Y., said she witnessed an "enormous fire trail extending all the way to

the horizon" shortly after 3 a.m. Sunday. No noise accompanied the vision, which resembled an explosion in the night sky, the woman said.

Within half an hour, a man called from northern New Jersey



Gribble uses thumbtacks to mark reported "close encounters" on a map of the United States.