



AP photo

Robert Gribble, of Seattle, takes a UFO sighting report from a man in New Jersey. Gribble

logs in UFO reports 24 hours a day in his South Seattle home.

Seattle man looks for UFOs

SEATTLE (AP) — Robert Gribble has never seen a UFO himself, but he believes others who say they have and has investigated thousands of UFO sightings for about 30 years.

Gribble runs the National UFO Reporting Center from a cramped but tidy office in his home.

"Even though I've never seen one, there's not the slightest doubt they're there," said Gribble, a retired firefighter recognized as one of the country's foremost authorities on unidentified flying objects.

"Either that or we've got a lot of notorious liars from all around the globe," he said.

He pays \$1,500 a year from his own pocket to keep the center open and fields an average six calls a day from people who think they have seen unidentified flying objects.

All seek an explanation. Gribble records their comments, asks questions and takes their telephone numbers in case he gets additional information.

"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," he said. "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."

Gribble's office contains a large map of the United States studded with 3,500 shiny red pinheads, each representing a so-called close encounter sighting of a UFO. Some of the sightings date from 1946.

A witness must be within 500 yards of an object to classify as a close encounter.

Gribble said he wasn't surprised by the recent UFO report of a veteran Japan Air Lines pilot who said his plane was followed for nearly 400 miles over Alaska by one gigantic and two smaller aircraft in mid-November.

The Federal Aviation Administration later confirmed that an air traffic controller spotted the unknown aircraft. But agency spokesmen say their investigation has been hampered by a radar recording's failure to show the aircraft's signal.

From the thousands of calls he has investigated over the years, Gribble says most of the craft are described as disc-shaped, spherical, oval, triangular or cigar-shaped. People reporting close encounters say a humming sound emanates from the object.

The government is covering up the existence of UFOs to prevent panic, said Gribble, who cites as evidence his own research and reports from declassified government documents.