

# Chardon Twp. family stumped by mystery object

By Michael Drexler  
News-Herald Staff Writer

The Blum family of Chardon Township say they saw it.

But everyone else has no idea what the Blums are talking about. This includes Chardon police, Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Department of Defense, all the local airports, Geauga County Sheriff's Department, U.S. Coast Guard station in Fairport Harbor, National Weather Service and even television weatherman Dick Goddard.

Jim Blum said he and his parents spotted what they believe might have been a

UFO at 1 p.m. last Saturday from his parents' home, 10100 Kirtland Road, Chardon Township.

It was hovering over All Souls Cemetery and slowly descending into Holden Arboretum. But this one wasn't a flying saucer — or anything close to the typical descriptions of UFOs.

"There were about 40 or 50 different size silver balloon objects, like scuba tanks about 1,500 feet up," said Blum, who called The News-Herald Wednesday afternoon, after looking in vain for media reports on the object since Saturday.

Not a word was mentioned.

And a spokesman at Holden Arboretum said there was nothing spotted over the weekend. Yesterday, though, they received a call from Jim's mother, Louise Blum, further inquiring about the strange object, which she and her husband also saw.

"I work the weekends, and she called to see if there were any reports," a spokesman at Holden Arboretum said. "I said no, and no one said anything the rest of the day. I've checked with everyone here, and there have been no reports."

But the Blums remember it well and still wonder

what it was.

"There was a long red rope dangling from the (cluster of) balloons," said Louise Blum. "Attached to that were two cylindrical objects."

"We first thought it was a parachutist," Jim said.

They even called a neighbor down the street, Arnold Melby, and told him to look out his window. He saw it. They agreed later that it wasn't a parachutist.

"It looked pretty big, like a partially collapsed parachute. But when my son got the binoculars, it wasn't that," Mrs. Blum said.

Jim, a salesman at Brookpark Fence Co. in Cleveland, said he thinks it might be a military object. But the Department of Defense at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton disagrees.

"I checked with case operations people," said Lt. Tim Cothrel, at the office of special investigations. "There were no aircraft from Wright-Patterson in the Lake County area. From the description, it doesn't sound like a military item."

Asked what it could be, Cothrel said he hasn't "the faintest idea. Sounds like with the cylinders, it could be some kind of observation balloon."

But the National Weather Service told the Blums weather balloons don't look like that. And the Coast Guard said they didn't see anything like it. Kirtland police said they received no UFO calls.

A NASA spokesman at Lewis Research Center said, "It doesn't have anything to do with us."

And the Federal Aviation Administration at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport said it wouldn't have spotted such an object at 1,500 feet, even with radar.

"I just had two rather brief glimpses of it," recalled Melby, 72, of Chardon. "I really can't describe it. It was a nebulous thing, sort of drifting as it carried along."

The Blums tried unsuccessfully to reach WJW-TV 8 weatherman Dick Goddard, who has had more than his share of UFO calls over the years.

Reached Wednesday, Goddard said, "I've had no reports on anything like that. Who knows?"

But it did remind him of a story. "I once had a lady call me saying she saw a UFO. I asked her, 'How do you know it's a UFO?' She said, 'It had 'UFO' written on it.'"