

UFO researcher interviews those who report sightings

By MITCH WEISS
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LIMA, Ohio — When John Timmerman gazes at the night sky for stars he also looks for unidentified flying objects.

Timmerman, a marketing vice president for a Lima savings and loan, is also vice president of public relations for the Center for UFO Studies in Chicago. He has interviewed hundreds of people who claim to have seen UFOs and some who said they had been abducted by extraterrestrials.

He says he's not trying to persuade anybody that space aliens exist.

"I'm just trying to let the people who have these experiences know that we'd like to talk to them and make their cases part of our study," he said.

Timmerman said a man in Delphos had recently seen something that looked like a UFO on the outskirts of the northwest Ohio town. He said he would investigate the sighting.

"I'm not saying it was an extraterrestrial craft or UFO . . . it's just that we don't know yet what it was. Many of these things end up being explained. But the ones that don't . . . are the ones that remain in the file as the material from which we do studies of the phenomenon. And we have thousands of those. We have over 80,000 good cases on file in Chicago."

Timmerman has never seen a UFO, but says he asks a battery of questions of those who have to determine if the sighting can be explained.

"Often they see the planet Venus and they don't recognize it," he said. "Sometimes under the right conditions, Venus, and sometimes Jupiter, can be seen in the daylight. You have to know a little bit about astronomy and a little bit about human psychology."

He says there have been 40 to 50 UFO sightings in the Lima area that he considers valid. Because he has gone public with his research, he feels more people in the area are apt to come to him if they see something in the sky they can't explain.

"They know I'm interested in the subject so they're willing to talk," he said. "That might occur elsewhere if there were a John Timmerman in Toledo or someplace else who had equal visibility to trust and take the information."

He became interested in UFOs shortly after graduating from Cornell University in 1947, the year he read a newspaper account of a pilot who said he had seen nine silver objects hover near his plane. Timmerman calls that the first publicly discussed UFO sighting.

Later that year, he became in-

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involved in a study at Ohio Northern University which examined UFO sightings in the Midwest.

His interest in the subject waxed and waned until 1979, when someone from Ohio State University who was active in UFO research spoke to a local group. After the lecture, Timmerman told her of his interest, and she recommended he contact the Chicago center.

He was asked to join its board of directors. He now helps the center with publicity and recently attended the 40th annual Mutual UFO Network International Symposium in Washington. About 450 people attended to listen to UFO specialists talk about developments in the alien world.

The major topic at this year's symposium was the abduction phenomenon.

He said reports of abductions by some type of space entities were not new, but that widespread understanding of them was.

"I believe the people are thoroughly convinced it happened to them," he said. "I can't say I'm thoroughly convinced it happened to them myself. It's possible that things may be occurring and we just don't comprehend them because at this point it's beyond our understanding."

Alien beings are thought to impose some sort of memory loss on victims so that the event may be recalled only by reaching into the subconscious, he said. No one knows what these entities hope to gain from abducting humans and subjecting them to various physical indignities, but Timmerman hypothesized that perhaps they come from a dying planet and enter our environment for a genetic boost.

Timmerman says those who ridicule his work are entitled to their opinion.

"I think there are things in our environment that we can't begin to understand . . . I think that really we are not as far from the door of the cave as we sometimes think we are.

"One of the things we need to explore carefully is the human mind," he said. "If these events are not occurring as people think they are, if they're not really happening in real time and in our environment as we think they are, then there's something very interesting about the human mind and its ability to perceive this. So either we should examine these events as people say they happen, or we should examine the people who say they have (happened)."