

# MUFON is ready for any visitors from outer space

By MAX RIZLEY JR.  
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UFO Network, a non-profit organization that investigates claims of UFO sightings. Their members include engineers, pilots and astronomers, their methods are scientific and methodical. These are not people you'll find sitting on mountaintops in aluminum-foil hats, talking to Martians.

As a matter of fact, you'll more than likely find Schuessler, MUFON's deputy director for administration, sitting in the office that takes up much of his home's second floor, "talking" to a per-

sonal computer.

He and about 50 people cover the Galveston-Houston area, interviewing witnesses of sightings, taking down descriptions of what they see, and calling area airports, military bases and the Goodyear blimp base to make sure they aren't flying anything unusual.

Schuessler and his MUFON colleagues pore over the data, looking for the high-value stuff —

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multiple-witness sightings, sightings involving animal reactions or interference with electrical equipment, things beyond a vague "light in the sky."

"We try to eliminate the knowns," such as aircraft and astronomical phenomena, "and get it down to the category of the unknown," he said.

Some 90 percent of UFO sightings turn out to be identifiable, Schuessler said. "It's generally re-entry debris (the burning remains of old satellites falling back to Earth) or aircraft in unusual positions," he said. "That's pretty easy to track down — it just takes time."

It's that 10 percent of sightings that remain unidentified that keep this sober, silver-haired space operations engineer fascinated with his hobby.

"My personal interest is in cases that are more than just a light in the sky," he said. "I like the cases where there are a number of witnesses, and — I hate to say it — where people are injured. People won't do that to themselves."

Injuries? Oh, yes, Schuessler said. Some people who have been close to a UFO suffer burn injuries, severity varying with proximity. The injuries usually appear to be radiation burns — not the kind one would get from exposure to a radioactive substance, he explained, but rather the sort of injury a high-energy source might cause.

"Something has to cause an injury," he said, explaining the

value of such incidents. "If you can get enough data, you can model a range of things that might have caused it. It begins to tell you a little bit about the nature of the object."

Other valuable sightings are those seen by several independent witnesses — such as Galveston's 1981 visitation, which was seen by several policemen as well as civilians, and is thus especially valuable.

"A policeman is a very good reporter," Schuessler explained. "He puts it in distinct, police-report terms — just the facts, as they say."

The UFO scene, at least in Galveston County, is quiet now, although Schuessler says there has been a worldwide upswing in sightings last year. In fact, there was one tumbling light in the sky over Red Bluff Road in Pasadena April 22, watched by a San Jacinto Junior College student and several policemen.

One reason Galveston has been so quiet, Schuessler said, may have more to do with its isolation rather than disinterest on the UFOs part.

"Galveston's so separated," he said. "Galveston's news stays in Galveston — you have to get it by word of mouth. If you don't get it that way, you don't get it." And, he said, most incidents anywhere go unreported, since the witnesses tend to assume someone else also saw it and will report it.

Schuessler would like to get some volunteers in Galveston County to improve his coverage here. Anyone interested can write him at P.O. Box 58485, Houston, 77256-8485.



Staff photo by Lee Beier

John Schuessler, MUFON deputy director 198