

# Jackson families see UFO

Professor believes in phenomena

By Dana Swoboda  
News Guardian staff writer

No sightings of Santa Claus crossing the night sky were reported on Christmas Eve, but an undetermined object traveling the winter skies that night startled at least two Jackson families.

A muffled boom reportedly was heard then a light, like that of a spotlight, was seen moving across the sky. Within a split-second, the light disappeared only to later return and vanish once again.

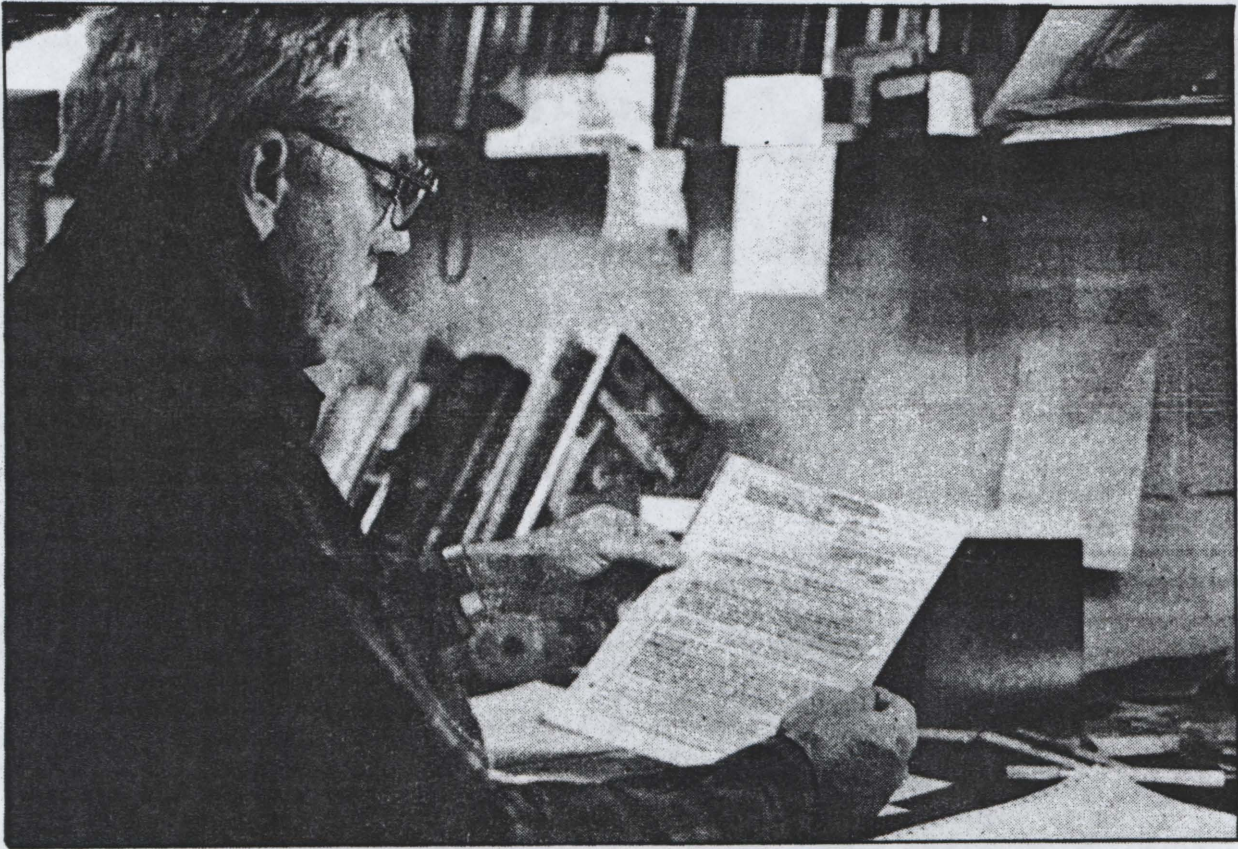
The Christmas Eve sighting was classified as an unidentified flying object (UFO). According to Harley D. Rutledge, a physics instructor at Southeast Missouri State University, the sighting was just one of numerous sightings in the area.

Rutledge has studied UFOs for more than 15 years. During that time, he has seen 163 UFOs himself. Most of those sightings occurred between Piedmont and Farmington.

Rutledge's interest in UFOs was aroused following reports of alien craft hovering over the streets of Piedmont. Rutledge and his wife, accompanied by another couple, went to see the phenomena students and newspapers had cited.

Their first night in the Piedmont area, Rutledge saw what he and his wife term a UFO.

On a return trip a month later, the skeptical Rutledge had an experience that altered his views of alien beings forever. The experience occurred while he and three students were traveling in an aircraft just before dusk.



Staff photo by Dana Swoboda

Harley Rutledge, professor of physics at Southeast Missouri State University, studies aerial research of UFO sightings reported at

the Kirtland Air Force base in New Mexico. Rutledge has studied UFO phenomena for more than 15 years.

"We were flying with the lights off on the aircraft over Clearwater Lake heading north at about one mile high," Rutledge said. "We had already seen low beams of light go across the sky at low altitudes.

"Seated in the co-pilot's chair, I began scanning the sky through a binocular. After three or four sweeps across the windshield, a light came on out of the blue. It pulsed at about one beat per second. Before it was over there were nine lights altogether.

"It thrilled the hell out of me even more so than getting married and dropping my ring on the plate four times. All of a sudden, I had to accept the possibility of UFO existence."

Rutledge said most UFOs appear as beams or spherical lights glowing

in colors of orange, amber, red, green or white. Those UFOs he said oftentimes transform from lights to crafts then back again or simply disappear without trace. He added that UFOs can adopt any shape apart from the saucer made popular through fiction novels and movies.

Rutledge said he has seen only nine alien crafts out of 163 UFO sightings. One of those crafts he believes was observing him through his office window at the university.

"It was hanging in the sky in view of my office window. When I looked at it, it responded to me with a flash of light then took off."

While both the governments of West Germany and the United States have experimented with the creation of speed projecting flying saucers for military purposes, Rutledge

believes UFOs are extraterrestrial.

"God only knows what they are," Rutledge said. "There have been different types reported. I don't discuss aliens much. I know there has to be an intelligence."

Rutledge has been unable to substantiate his sighting with airport radar because he said alien craft tend to fly beneath radar detection. He has, however, authored a book titled "Project Identification — The First Scientific Field Study of UFO Phenomena" in which he details his study of various sightings he has witnessed. The book is now out of publication.

A second book addressing the origination of alien craft and beings is on the horizon.