

Something's out there, UFO club members say

By Craig Cairns
News Journal

Charles Flannigan remembers the exact time, date and place he began believing in UFOs.

"I crossed the line (of disbelief) on July 12, 1962, at 2:30 p.m.," said Flannigan, a Pensacola real estate agent and director of the Escambia-Santa Rosa chapter of Mutual UFO Network Inc., or MUFON.

"Myself and three other people observed two daylight discs maneuvering in the sky above us for 12 to 15 minutes in Indiana. I thought 'UFO' at the time," he said.

"Later I spent 20 years in Naval

aviation, and no nation on earth has such technologically advanced craft."

Numerous reported sightings of UFOs in and around Gulf Breeze has helped make the local MUFON chapter the largest in the nation, MUFON officials said last week.

They asked any local citizens who see or hear what they believe to be a UFO to call 477-7777 at any time



Flannigan

and ask for a MUFON investigator. Confidentiality is guaranteed.

Walter H. Andrus Jr., MUFON international director in Seguin, Texas, said the 30 active members in the Escambia-Santa Rosa chapter give it more members than any of the nearly 150 chapters nationwide.

MUFON, an international scientific organization of people interested in researching the UFO phenomenon, has 2,000 members worldwide, with about 1,800 members in the United States, Andrus said.

He said belief in UFOs is not a requirement of membership.

But Flannigan and three other local

MUFON members said they are convinced of the existence of UFOs and a massive government cover-up of an alien presence.

They said local MUFON investigators have probed 135 sightings in the two-county area, most since a Gulf Breeze businessman known as "Ed" first reported sightings and took pictures in November 1967.

No one has been able to prove Ed faked the photos he took, although many have questioned their validity. MUFON members said numerous sightings by Ed and other responsible local citizens prove this

is not a UFO hoax.

"We're talking about the greatest mystery of all time — the greatest cover-up of all time," Flannigan said about the government's refusal to confirm the existence of UFOs.

But Maj. Lou Figueroa, a U.S. Air Force public information officer in Washington, D.C., said the Air Force hasn't investigated UFOs since 1969, when "Project Blue Book" ended.

Figueroa said that project investigated more than 12,000 reported UFOs from 1948 to 1969, but found no proof UFOs are extraterrestrial, present a threat to national security or go beyond the limits of nature and modern technology.

Still, MUFON members Rex and Carol Salisbury of Navarre Beach, and Vicki Lyons of Pensacola, said they agree with Flannigan that all is not as it appears.

Rex Salisbury, a retired Air Force colonel and mathematics professor for St. Leo College northeast of Tampa, which offers classes at area military bases, said he became a UFO believer in the early 1960s.

He said nine Air Force personnel in three planes were flying over Kansas City, Mo., "when we all saw a lighted object at an altitude of 40,000 feet and traveling at about 1,500 mph."

The next day a Kansas City

newspaper reported a UFO landing, Salisbury said. But he said none of the men he flew with wanted to report their sighting to officials.

"It would have been too much of a hassle — a lot of paperwork and nobody would believe it," he said.

Carol Salisbury, an assistant professor of psychology and English for St. Leo College, said she and another woman were driving along Navarre Beach at 7 p.m. on April 7, 1988, when they spotted two disc-like lights in the sky.

"We drove closer and they blinked out. We were amazed. Then we drove off and they blinked back on," she said. "If I had been by myself I never would have reported it. I just wouldn't have believed it."

Lyons, a piano teacher, said she has never had a UFO sighting, but became convinced they exist after extensive study of the phenomenon and hearing reports of sightings from people like the Salisberys.

Flannigan said MUFON believes that 90 percent of UFO sightings worldwide go unreported because people fear ridicule or worse if they tell people what they saw. "One of our chapter's main goals is to encourage all people to report sightings," he said. "We could learn so much more."



Carol Salisbury: UFOs blinked out, then back in.



Rex Salisbury: Lighted objects traveled at 1,500 mph.