



Steve Bond and a map of UFO sitings in North Carolina. Bond was in Lincolnton Sunday to meet with others who either claim to have seen UFOs or have investigated reports of the alien ships.

CURTIS PARKER/SHM

# Out Of This World

## UFO Enthusiasts Gather To Share Accounts, Mark Anniversary

By JOE MARUSAK

**LINCOLNTON** — Steve Bond and Susan Lightcap were traveling south of Asheville in Transylvania County one night two years ago when they suddenly saw the light.

It was a large, fuzzy yellow light. Bond, who had been trained to spot aircraft during his three years in the Navy, had never seen anything like it.

The pair drove 10 miles before reaching the light, which Bond said hovered 1,000 feet above U.S. 64. They stopped the car and got out.

"I said, 'That is no helicopter because helicopters make a lot of noise,'" Bond recalled.

The silent object then vanished without a trace, he said.

With that, the two friends joined a growing number of people who have reported seeing unidentified flying objects.

They came to Lincolnton from Asheville Sunday to meet with others who either claim to have seen UFOs or have investigated reports of alien ships.

George Fawcett, who has investigated 1,200 such reports worldwide over 45 years, hosted the gathering at his home on Battleground Road.

Fawcett, 59, takes his work seriously but still keeps a sense of humor about it.

"My wife had me down as a UFO one time," Fawcett joked to the 23 people who exchanged UFO literature and first-person accounts during the three-hour gathering.

Still kidding, Fawcett said he agrees with people who dismiss UFO spotters as drunks.

"Most people start drinking after they see

UFOs, not before," he said to laughter.

Lincolnton resident Danny Barger has never seen a UFO, but he knows where they reportedly were sighted.



Barger of the iceberg."

UFO enthusiasts have recorded 74 re-

Barger has made a map of all reported UFO sightings in North Carolina, with a pin stuck in each location. It reflects 829 reported sightings through 1988.

"And this is probably only 10 percent of what has been seen," Fawcett said. "It represents the tip

ported sightings in Lincoln County since 1957 — most were of a nighttime light or a disc- or dome-shaped craft. At least 40 such incidents have been recorded in Gaston County, according to the map.

Fawcett said reported UFO sightings tend to come in waves, the last big one in North Carolina in 1973. "Sometimes we have the most reports when there's no publicity at all," he said.

Fawcett became interested in UFOs as a teenager reading a newspaper account headlined, "Silver Balls Floating in Air (Are) Nazis' Newest War Device."

In fact, the account did not confirm where the objects came from.

Fawcett has since amassed 35 filing cabinets containing UFO documents.

He also just became president of the N.C. unit of the Mutual UFO Network Inc., a self-described international scientific organization that studies and researches UFOs.

At Fawcett's home, network members and their guests celebrated the 42nd anniversary of UFO sightings in modern times.

They looked at UFO books and newspaper clippings with such headlines as "UFO Chased By Car" and "I know UFOs are real because I've seen one."

Fawcett said a Gallup Poll last year showed that about half of all Americans believe UFOs are real.

Bond acknowledged that other people "are already waiting there with their response to disprove it. Something unknown and unidentified is threatening to them."

In an effort to inform the public, Fawcett is now trying to raise money for a \$4 million UFO museum he hopes would be built in North Carolina.

After all, he says, the state was home to the first airplane flight.