

UFO POTPOURRI

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UFO hunters keep their eyes on the sky

By DAVID TORTORANO
United Press International

They're five average folks living relatively obscure lives in northwest Florida, but they all have an unusual avocation they don't discuss much — at least not with outsiders.

They hunt UFOs in their spare time. "I figured that by becoming an investigator I'd find out some answers," says Ralph Dalton, 67, a retired soldier and one of five people in northwest Florida who investigate reports of unidentified flying objects. So far, he's had scant opportunity.

"There hasn't been much going on the last year and a half," says Col. Donald Ware, 49, a former Air Force pilot who trained Dalton and heads the team from his home in Fort Walton Beach. In fact, "ufologists" say overall sightings worldwide declined in 1984 and have been spotty this year.

Despite the paucity of local UFOs, Dalton has his truck packed and ready to go. When there's a sighting, he'll take along a tape measure, camera, magnifying glass and 11 forms to record everything from animal reaction to weather conditions.

UFOs have been around for years. The first were reported in the United States in 1896 as "great airships," then popped up as "foo fighters" in World War II. They gained wide publicity after a 1947 sighting at Mount Rainier, Washington. Alleged abductions, supposed crashes and even rumors that Uncle Sam has alien bodies stored in Ohio hangars have become part of the national psyche.

The Air Force looked into sightings for a while, then publicly dismissed them. The civilian groups that began their own investigative efforts have been called open-minded by some, crackpots by others.

"We don't have a vast radar network, we don't have paid personnel, and we don't have laboratories at our disposal," says Raymond Fowler, chief investigator for the Texas-based Mutual UFO Network — MUFON — which has had its eyes on the stars for 16 years.

There are 300 card-carrying MUFON investigators worldwide, including a police chief from a major northeast city and scientists. The organization says its investigators can explain 90 percent of the 20 to 30 UFO sightings it receives daily from around the world. Only two or three a day end up listed as unexplained.

Fowler of Wenham, Mass., author of several UFO books and the man who developed MUFON's investigative technique, says authorities and witnesses don't always take investigators seriously.

"They take the subject seriously. Sometimes they don't take the investigator seriously," he says. Recognizing that, MUFON's Field Investigator's Manual has tips on how investigators should present themselves for a professional image.

Ware's crew includes Dalton, a homemaker, a corporate pilot and a retiree who worked in electronics. Most of the group declined to discuss their interest, and even Dalton said he doesn't go around telling everyone he hunts UFOs.

"If it comes up, I'd mention it. Other than that, no," he says.

Dalton had eight weeks of training before taking a multiple-choice, open-book test with 100 questions about light and optics, physics, conventional aircraft and what's called "the UFO experience."

Among other things, the test asks for the name of the president who claimed to have seen a UFO, the name of the pilot whose 1947 UFO sighting prompted the term "flying saucer," and the year an inauguration shared headlines with UFO sightings.

The answers: Jimmy Carter, Kenneth Arnold and 1952.

Dalton says he saw a UFO when he was a child and for years was haunted by a recurring dream of a mysterious "wheel." Seeing the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* made him think the "wheel" might be the underside of an alien craft.

It was after a rash of UFO sightings in the Southeast in 1973 that Dalton asked himself, "Is anybody doing anything? Is anybody writing anything? I couldn't find an answer. I had a gut feeling there was more. You couldn't write it off. I figured being an investigator I would find out some answers."

Another MUFON member, physicist Willie Smith of Longwood, Fla., has spent the past 18 months compiling a computer listing of "exceptional" UFO sightings.

"This has not been done before," he says, explaining that only a fraction of sightings are good enough to get listed on his computer.

"What we have been doing is building

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a database with no conclusions," he says, while admitting it's a temptation to try to draw some. Smith says he'll refrain from that until there's sufficient data.

Ware thinks it's time MUFON goes on record. The group's charter says it's dedicated to finding out if UFOs are spacecraft controlled by alien intelligence or unknown physical or psychological manifestations.

Ware says published statements by a majority of MUFON board members indicate they would agree that "at least some UFOs are spaceships controlled by advanced intelligence." He thinks it's time to find out where they come from and how they got here.

In light of that, Ware has prepared a resolution noting that millions of people have seen UFOs and that some have fired on them. The resolution says "UFO occupants" have shown no hostility and resolves "not to shoot at UFOs no matter how strange they appear or how frightened I may be."

BY

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UFOs are in the limelight at conference in Beverly

By NELSON BENTON
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BEVERLY — Thirty-three summers ago a young Coast Guard photographer stationed on Winter Island in Salem looked out his office window and saw four huge lights in the daytime sky.

His picture of the strange phenomenon with the stacks of the Salem Harbor generating station in the background caused an international stir. While military and scientific experts were quick to dismiss the strange sight as the result of a natural occurrence, others remain unconvinced.

This weekend, at the Beverly Golf & Tennis Club, the Mutual UFO Network, Inc. will host a gathering of people who believe phenomena such as that witnessed over Salem Harbor in 1952 may be evidence of visitors from outer space. Among those who will appear during the Aug. 17-18 forum are Dr. J. Allen Hynek, one of the foremost experts in the field of UFOs; John Schuessler, former flight operations manager for the Space Shuttle program; and Dr. David Jacobs, author of the book, "The UFO Controversy in America."

The Salem picture, which was

taken July 16, 1952, but not released by the Coast Guard until several weeks later, received worldwide distribution. The Aug. 4 edition of the Paris-based International Herald Tribune featured the picture on the front page under the line, "Photo Adds New Twist to 'Flying Saucer' Puzzle."

Marge Christensen of Beverly, MUFON's Massachusetts state director and the group's national public relations director, said she is familiar with the Salem picture and its aftermath.

"The military tried to explain it away as reflections in the glass windows," she said. But in a class she taught at Salem State College recently, Christensen commented, there was a student who recalled seeing the same bright lights at the same time from the Beverly side of the harbor.

"So it couldn't possibly have been a reflection," Christensen declared.

Raymond E. Fowler of Wrentham, author of several books on UFOs, said the Coast Guard people laughed at the explanation offered by the U.S. Air Force that the picture was the result of a reflection or a double exposure. In fact, Fowler added, the Air Force was fu-

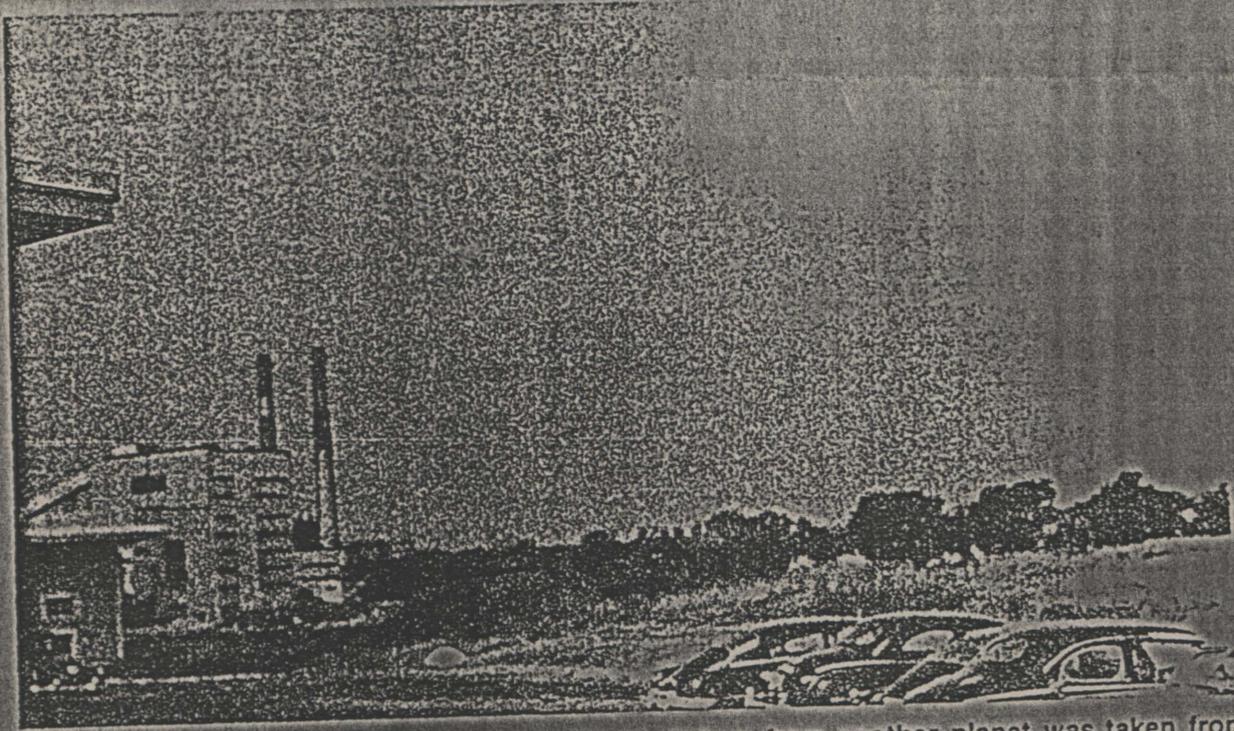
rious with the local Coast Guard commander for releasing the picture to The Salem News, and had the base declared off limits while its investigation was under way.

The Coast Guard office in Boston has no records regarding the whereabouts of photographer Shell R. Alpert, who was 21 at the time the Salem picture was taken. Another witness, whose whereabouts today is similarly unknown, was Hospitalman 1st Class Thomas Flaherty.

Alpert, in The Salem News account of the time, said he couldn't explain the lights, but added that he did not think they were flying saucers because "they didn't look that solid."

But there were an unusually large number of unidentified flying objects sighted in the United States that July — 114, more than in any month since the initial spate of them occurred in the late 1940s.

The Salem Harbor incident, although the most spectacular, was by no means the only report of flying saucers that have occurred hereabouts. National UFO Information Week, of which this weekend's forum is a part, is designed to increase people's awareness of the UFO phenomenon, Christensen said.



This photo which increased speculation about visitors from another planet was taken from the Salem Air Station at 9:35 a.m., July 16, 1952.