

La Grange Daily News on UFO Sightings

West Georgia logs over 100 UFO sightings

By Jackie Kennedy
Staff Writer

LaGrange has been called the UFO Capital of the Nation.

Georgia? Maybe. But the nation? That's probably going a bit far. That distinction must be shared with at least two other U.S. cities, according to local UFO investigator John Thompson.

As state director of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), Thompson's task is to look into all UFO sightings reported to the organization. It's a daunting chore when you consider that, in the past two years, he's filed reports on close to 100 alleged sightings in west Georgia alone. And that doesn't include close to 150 more verbal accounts of sightings, Thompson said.

"Just this morning a guy came in and said he saw one in 1989 at the high school," Thompson said recently.

The insurance agent admits he used to be a bonafide skeptic when it came to unidentified flying objects. But, as they say, seeing is believing. And when Thompson saw what he's sure was a UFO three years ago, he began to believe in their existence.

It was June of 1994 when Thompson, his wife and children all spied what the investigator describes as "a bright stream of lights that looked like Christmas tree lights just sitting there, maybe a hundred feet off the ground."

The red, blue, green and white lights circled an object that spun around, Thompson said, and at one point the UFO "lunged forward," his family members agree.

"I ran and got the camera and video-taped it for about ten minutes," Thompson said.

Since it was 10 p.m. and pitch-dark, Thompson had difficulty focusing on the object and "didn't quite grab onto it" until just before the battery died. He only got about a minute's worth of the sighting on video, but MUFON's staff photo analyst, after studying the video, declared the sighting a "genuine UFO," according to Thompson.

"I might add, he doesn't declare too many of them genuine," the MUFON director added.

Now Thompson keeps a loaded camera and good battery handy. He hasn't seen any UFOs lately, but he's talked to dozens of folks who say they have.

Soon after he saw the unidentified object behind his house, Thompson joined MUFON and about a year later he began conducting research into local and area sightings. The earliest sighting he's documented was made in 1938 by a man who, as a teenager, said he saw a UFO fly over the southwest part of LaGrange.

"He said it flew faster than anything he'd ever seen and made some erratic maneuvers," Thompson said, keeping confidential the name of the man who reported the sighting.

Confidentiality is adhered to strictly, the investigator said, adding that many would never report a sighting if they thought their name would accompany it in a public report. That's why sightings aren't typically reported to police, according to Thompson.

While it's accurate to say that the LaGrange and Troup County area is home to the most reported sightings of UFOs in Georgia, Thompson stops short of saying it's UFO capitol of the nation. But, east of the Mississippi, it ranks among the three hot spots along with Gulf Breeze, Fla., and Pine Bush, NY, he said.

"I'm glad it's getting out that people have been seeing things around here," Thompson said. "It's as good a spot as you'll visit to see UFOs."

Most of the area sightings have been in the north Troup/south Heard counties area and in south Troup County in the Salem/Whitesville roads area, Thompson said.

"The phenomenon of UFOs is a horribly complex subject," Thompson said. "Most people think there's something that comes from outer space manned by aliens but most aren't. At least half of all reported sightings turn out to be the planet Venus."

Venus, he said, is the brightest thing in the sky beside the sun and moon and, when it orbits the sun, comes close to the earth and, "as a round, white disc hanging in the air," is often mistaken for a UFO.

"I do think there's an extraterrestrial component and that 10 percent of the UFO sighting can't be explained," Thompson said.

That makes them sure-enough unidentified flying objects and, with the mystery surrounding them so intriguing, Thompson can't help but investigate.

"You're left with a handful of really solid cases that can't be explained," he said. "I didn't believe in this at all until my own sighting. Then I was converted."

Even with recent publicity about his service as MUFON director, Thompson said no one yet has called him a "kook."

"I think as long as you're up front, honest and straightforward, you won't run into the kook factor," Thompson said.

He urges anyone who's seen something "unexplained, UFO or alien related" to give him a call or drop by the insurance agency.

For more information: Call John Thompson at 845-1145 or read about UFO sightings on the Web at www.isur.com.

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