

ARIZONA

Former governor admits he saw UFO

He originally ridiculed mania surrounding lights seen over Phoenix

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Former Arizona Gov. Fife Symington trotted out an aide dressed as an alien 10 years ago to spoof the frenzy surrounding mysterious lights in the Phoenix sky. Now he says he saw the lights himself and believed from the start that they were extraterrestrial.



Symington

Symington, who faced fraud charges at the time, also said he didn't need the additional problems such an admission would have created.

Now a pastry chef and business consultant, Symington said he didn't acknowledge his own encounter at first because he didn't want people to panic.

Symington discussed the sighting with a UFO investigator making a documentary, and in interviews this week.

"I'm a pilot and I know just about every machine that flies," Symington, a former Air Force captain, told the Arizona Daily Star on Thursday. "It was bigger than anything that I've ever seen. It remains a great mystery."

Symington said he initially told no one but his wife that he had seen the lights on March 13, 1997.

Later that year, Symington was convicted of bank fraud charges. The conviction was overturned, and he was pardoned by President Clinton in 2001.

The Phoenix lights, which appeared in a V shape, were widely explained as flares dumped by a military training flight.

Tucson astronomer and retired Air Force pilot James McGaha said he investigated two sightings over Phoenix that March night and traced both to A-10 aircraft flying in formation at high altitude.

McGaha said Symington "is not a trained observer and what he feels in his gut doesn't make any difference."