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Close encounters: UFO investigators discuss possibilities of extraterrestrial life

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Redondo Beach, Calif., just south of Los Angeles International Airport, March 31, 2007.

A man took a leisurely walk along the beach when he saw a saucer-like object speeding through the sky.

The object then stopped and hovered, and the man is able to shoot a picture of the object before it zips away.

Two days later, UFO investigator William Puckett took a closer look into the case.

"People that live in that area went to see if they could reproduce the event, and it seems to be the real deal," Puckett said.

He said from 1947 to 1969 there were a reported 11,000 sightings. About 750 of those were unidentified.

The sheer number of unidentified sightings was what originally piqued Puckett's interest in UFOs.

Puckett has a Bachelor of Arts in biology from Carroll College and a Master of Science in atmospheric science from Colorado State University.

Before he retired in 2007 he worked 30 years for the government as a meteorologist.

Puckett is based out of Seattle and focuses mostly on reports from the Pacific Northwest.

He has been investigating UFO reports since the late 1970s, but did not launch his website until 2003.

"I grew up during the 1950s," Puckett said. "A time when UFO reports were in the news."

Back then extraterrestrial life was portrayed in everything from comic books to television and movies.

The media began to report sightings of lights in the sky, strange objects that would hover in the distance and abductions.

Lacking proof

Kenneth Rines, an assistant professor of physics and astronomy at Western, has a more cynical view of UFOs and extraterrestrials.

"I am extremely skeptical of any UFO sighting or report," Rines said. "There is a great quote by Carl Sagan: 'Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.' UFOs are a pretty extraordinary claim and



THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE: Retired meteorologist William Puckett conducts his weekly meetings inside the deli area of a Bellevue Top Food and Drugs. Each week the public is encouraged to turn out and discuss UFO sightings and reports. Puckett talked about the recently released FBI files regarding UFO reports dating back to 1949. Photo by Paul Wright | THE WESTERN FRONT




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should have extremely rock-solid evidence to support that (claim)."

Rines said most reports come from individuals who are unfamiliar with the night sky. He said it often comes down to people not appreciating what they really are seeing, such as the brightness of Venus and Jupiter in certain cycles and various atmospheric and natural occurring phenomena.

Rines said the idea of alien life contacting humans is unlikely. If there is life elsewhere in the universe it would take a long length of time to travel to Earth, or vice versa, he said.

Austin Baar, an independent UFO investigator based out of Bellingham, said many people do not understand or comprehend what they are seeing.

"If a person who has never seen a helicopter before saw one, then they would say that was a UFO," Baar said.

Baar works independently but also consults with the Bellingham Observers of the Odd and Obscure, an organization that investigates spirit sightings, haunted houses and unexplainable phenomena.

Both Puckett and Baar said most reports are dismissed as satellites, stars and pollution in the atmosphere. The key factor in verifying a true UFO is to have multiple credible reports that corroborate a specific phenomenon.

Puckett said from his experience, only about 5 percent of reports are true UFOs.

It is more likely that UFOs are from a higher dimension or another dimension, he said.

"Physicists are in agreement that there are other dimensions," Puckett said. "Explanations could be parallel civilizations or time travelers. And another possibility is renegade Nazi scientists that disappeared after World War II. I have found no evidence, however, that they are E.T. or from a higher dimension."

Student skeptic

Western junior Brian Svoboda, an astronomy and physics major, specializes in the study of the night sky.

"There are unexplained phenomenon in the atmosphere," Svoboda said. "We simply do not have the detailed evidence to explain them as UFOs."

Svoboda said the concept of UFOs being visiting aliens is false, but he does believe there is evidence of life elsewhere in the universe.

"What we have learned about life, even in the past 10 years, is that life is a common phenomena," Svoboda said. "In astronomical terms, it is perfectly plausible that life exists elsewhere."

Puckett said some reports may be advanced military technology, but he is not convinced that it accounts for all of the true UFO sightings.

Baar believes that most of the UFOs are advanced military technology.

"The U.S. military is a good 20 to 30 years more advanced than the private sector," Baar said.

Baar and Puckett both said that whatever UFOs are, the U.S. government is well aware of the situation but does not and will not share that information with the public.

"People would panic," Baar said. "It would destroy most religions if people knew the truth."

Puckett takes a toned-down approach to what the government may be hiding.

"I strongly believe we are being visited by higher dimensional beings," Puckett said. "The government knows that we are being visited."

Puckett believes humans have coexisted with higher dimensional beings for years, which leads him to believe they are not a threat.

Another theory is UFOs are spirits.

"It's as plausible as anything else," said Brian Lee, a member of the Bellingham Observers community. Lee works with spirit sightings, mostly darker spirits.

Some of the early angelic sightings could be UFOs, Lee said; however, he also has heard the theory that UFOs are demons, and abductions are people being drawn into the netherworld.

"It kind of depends on the case and who is being sincere about it," Lee said.

Puckett has appeared on the History Channel in recent years as a consultant and worked with motion picture productions. He appeared in two episodes of "UFO Hunters."

Since his retirement, Puckett has devoted a majority of his time to UFO investigations and his website.

"I do not charge money from anyone," Puckett said. "I spend a lot of my own money on equipment."

Puckett holds weekly meetings in Bellevue where he and others gather and discuss sightings, share photos and stories and get a chance to discuss questions and concerns.

At this week's meeting, Puckett and his group discussed the recent release of FBI files regarding UFOs.

Most of those files could be found elsewhere through extensive research.

One such incident reported was the 1949 Utah sighting when 15 different witnesses sighted a strange explosion in the sky.

It was determined that the explosion was but in fact a B-29 making a trial bombing run high above the desert.

Puckett has never claimed to have solid evidence to the existence of higher dimensional beings or of extraterrestrial life, but he believes the evidence is there to be found.

Puckett hopes to open peoples' eyes to the possibilities.

He vows to continue searching for that one sighting that will be the concrete proof that UFOs exists.

While Puckett and others continue to seek proof, most scientists do not believe in the existence of UFOs or extraterrestrials.

"You can say unicorns exist," Rines said. "But unless you have a caged unicorn, it is hard to prove."

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