

# Sightings attract UFO watchers

PINE BUSH, N.Y. (AP) — Clouds quickly fill the night sky, obscuring a nearly full moon. It's not a good night to find whatever's out there.

Still, a half-dozen people who've parked their cars on the shoulder of a country road in New York's Hudson Valley crane their necks to scan the sky. This is supposedly a prime area for spotting UFO activity, but the only things visible on this cool autumn evening are airplanes banking into nearby airports.

Peter Gersten waits suspiciously. The silver-bearded lawyer believes 99 percent of supposed UFO sightings are easily explainable, despite the vanity license plates on his Porsche that read UFOSREAL. He's devoted hundreds of hours to wrestling UFO documents from the government in court.

Most UFO watchers are more patient than the federal government. The U.S. Air Force canceled its surveillance program, Project Bluebook, on Dec. 17, 1969, almost five months after the Apollo 11 astronauts landed on the moon. Dr. Edward U. Condon of the University of Colorado recommended that the program come to an end after years of unconvincing research.

But UFO searchers persist. Victoria Lacas waits expectantly. She's mad because most people abducted by aliens are unwilling victims, and she'd be more than happy to submit herself to experiments.

Linda Doern waits calmly. Linda and her husband, Peter, both real estate appraisers, admit to being fascinated by psychic and other unexplained phenomena. An evening in Pine Bush, she jokes, "beats watching television."

Ellen Crystall waits excitedly. The self-described UFO photographer is the guardian of the field, where she claims to have seen aliens and dozens of unexplained lights. She's driven to this field from her New Jersey home hundreds of times since 1981 in the hope of making contact again.

"You missed it, Ellen," Gersten tells Crystall when her car pulls up a half-hour later than expected. "The mother ship was here. There used to be several more of us waiting."

Crystall dismisses the joke and checks the sky. It doesn't bode well. The aliens, whom she suspects are building an underground base in the Hudson Valley, don't seem to like clouds or rain, she says.

Whatever the reason, strange sightings seem commonplace in the

Hudson Valley. Hundreds of people — not just those who go out looking for them — have seen things in the sky that can't be explained, says Philip Imbrogno, author of "Night Siege: The Hudson Valley UFO Sightings."

These sightings caused a sensation in 1983 and 1984 in this area of New York City suburbs and farmland, stretching into western Connecticut. Reports have been less frequent since then, but still steady, Imbrogno says.

Most, if not all, can be easily explained, says Jeff Lehman, spokesman for the nearby Stewart International Airport. He says a group of pilots, whose identities are not known, enjoy fooling UFO fanatics by flying in close formation many evenings. It's not illegal, but it's annoying, he says.

"I don't see scaring people with aircraft as a game," he says. Crystall believes. She says she saw something unusual at the cornfield off Searsville Road, 20 miles from Middletown, soon after she was first taken there by a magazine writer.

Gazing over a distant treeline while alone at the field one night, she spotted what appeared to be a craft drifting slowly to the ground. After seeing something flutter, almost like a moth, she shined a spotlight into a wooded area. She says she saw a 3-and-a-half foot creature with a beige body and huge yellow eyes staring back at her.

"This thing had a worried look on its face and it totally threw me off," Crystall says. "I was panic-stricken. I could not utter a sound."

The blonde music student claims to have taken 800 photographs of UFOs. She says she holds no grudges against people who don't share her beliefs but confides, "I try to avoid them."

At a restaurant 20 minutes from Searsville Road, Crystall's friends passed the time waiting for dusk to turn to darkness. Ignoring quizzical looks from a waitress, they discussed landmarks in UFO history with the sort of insider's lingo that renders the conversation meaningless to anyone else.

Gersten, who has set up a hot line telephone number for UFO fanatics to keep up on the gossip, says he enjoys the mystery and glamour of UFOs.

"It seems like we're prisoners on this planet and we've lost the ability to explore," says Gersten, who fixes companions with a penetrating

stare. Most people accept that UFOs exist, he says, "because we simply can't be the only people in the universe."

But he dismisses most reports of unexplained lights in the Hudson Valley. Most sightings are probably conventional airplanes, he says, adding that he has offered a reward for the mysterious group of pilots to come forward and identify themselves.

Gersten belongs in the "government conspiracy" camp of UFO followers, believing that secret military technology is being tested in the skies.

"Imagine a civilization 10,000 years more advanced than us," the New York City lawyer says. "Do you think they'd come here in space-ships?"

Yes, Lacas says, because they want to investigate the inhabitants of Earth. The legal assistant and flower-child holdover is fascinated by the current UFO furor over abductions, during which people are supposedly "beamed up" by aliens.

Lacas calls herself an "abduction volunteer." "I want to bring trinkets to trade," she says, fingering some jewelry, "because I want to make friends

when I go on board."

For the Doerns, all aspects of the paranormal are fascinating. There's a lot more going on in the world than meets the naked eye, Linda says, but she understands why most people look at UFOs and psychic phenomena with abundant skepticism.

"There are a lot of strange people involved in it," she says. "I think it discredits it for a lot of people. It turns a lot of people off. I think you have to look beyond them and not let it deter you."

After the drive to Searsville Road, some participants note the "eerie strangeness" they feel while gazing at the sky. But when it's apparent most of the lights in the sky are either stars or airplanes, conversations drift to baseball and photography.

One of Crystall's companions points the flash of her camera at some shrubbery, hoping others notice the particles in the air she sees during the brief burst of light. What she claims is "angel dust" looks suspiciously like pollen.

It was the only unusual sighting of the night. As the hour grew late, the search for warmth became paramount and the evening ended in disappointment.

# 'Bran Man' claims oat bran experiments made him a believer

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — The man responsible for the current oat bran craze, Dr. James Anderson of Lexington, prefers a bowl of old-fashioned oatmeal every morning — because it has more texture than the instant types.

He battles a cholesterol problem (an inherited tendency from his mother's side), so he usually lunches on two oat-bran muffins, V-8 juice and an orange. "If I'm ever served a slab of prime rib, I really cannot enjoy it anymore," he says.

Anderson is professor of medicine and clinical nutrition at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine and chief of the endocrine-metabolic section of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Lexington.

He was treating diabetics and noticed that their blood cholesterol levels had dropped 60 points by following a healthy eating plan.

Anderson had been aware of Dutch studies more than 20 years earlier that showed oatmeal lowering cholesterol levels, but it took five bowls of oatmeal a day to be effective.

"We felt that was too intense, even for oatmeal gourmets like me," he says.

He called Quaker in 1977 to ask about oat bran, the outer layer of the whole grain.

"Back then, wheat bran was all the rage," he says. "Quaker told me that there was no such thing as oat bran, but I was persistent and called a second time." Anderson was finally sent 100 pounds of bran.

Anderson's cholesterol count was 280 at the time, so he decided to test oat bran on himself and dropped his blood cholesterol level to an acceptable 175 after five weeks.

"That made a believer out of me," he says.

# New book tells of aftermath of divorce

Associated Press

Every year, more than 2 million Americans in some degree of desperation seek a "second chance" in life through divorce.

But a new look at this phenomenon finds that things are not necessarily better the second time around and the chances of success are more elusive than was thought.

Judith Wallerstein, a psychologist at the University of California and founder of the Center for the Family in Transition, has studied in depth 60 families for more than 10 years.

Her findings are to be published next month in a book, "Second Chances — Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce," written in collaboration with science writer Sandra Blakeslee.

The sub-sub title is even more provocative: "Who Wins, Who Loses — And Why."

Society often forgets to think much about the approximately one

million children a year who are involved in divorce, most of whom sense a loss of protection and fear of the future.

Furthermore, the study shows, the aftershocks of divorce echo through the personal lives of all concerned at least a decade later.

Among the findings that Wallerstein discovered as "new, scientific and unexpected," was "that in most instances one person was much better off."

"One person is very important in life," she says. "But the other member was, on balance, either in the same place or not doing too well. You're looking at a much greater divergence after divorce, and that's entirely new."

Who gets the major benefit of "the second chance" boils down to who wanted the divorce, whether male or female.

Wallerstein says she is not against

divorce.

"Divorce is much more than the coup de grace of a stressful marriage," she writes. "It is a new beginning that offers people second chances."

"It is no more and no less than an opportunity to rebuild lives. And there's the rub."

The book tells of the pitfalls, the expectations, the denial, and the quiet dramas through the voices of those involved.

Wallerstein has obviously won the trust and the understanding of these people with whom she has been involved these many years.

"In the book there are three major families we built on," she says. "I think those people started off equal."

We ask, "Why did you get married?" Almost all of them tell us they married for love. They thought they were equal.

"They weren't shotgun marriages

because someone got pregnant, although some of them were. By and large they knew each other . . .

"In some of the marriages that we see, there never was a marriage, however one defines marriages in terms of love, intimacy, friendship. There was unhappiness, loneliness or violence — whatever — from the start."

"But in a whole group of these marriages, there was at some point a real marriage, and then it didn't endure for a whole lot of different reasons."

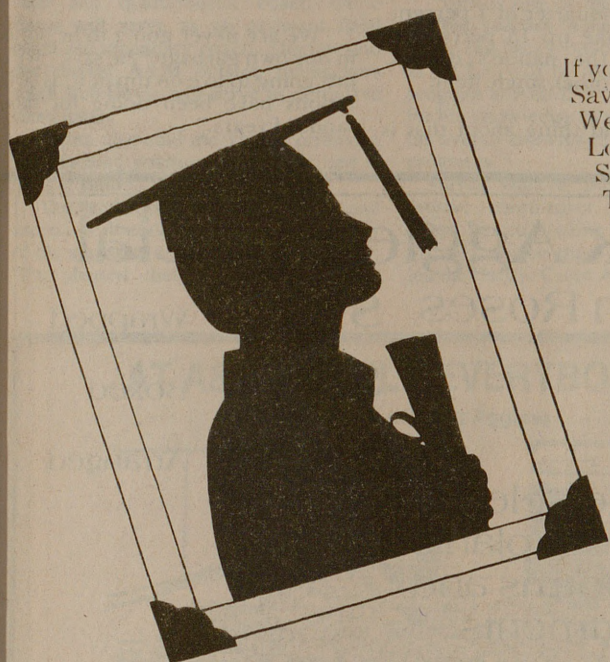
In investigating the aftermath of divorce she found that each participant has a different view, even the children, although they are almost unanimous in thinking that the divorce was a good thing for their parents.

"You're in a mine field of moral issues, because the children feel they are worse off," Wallerstein says.

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