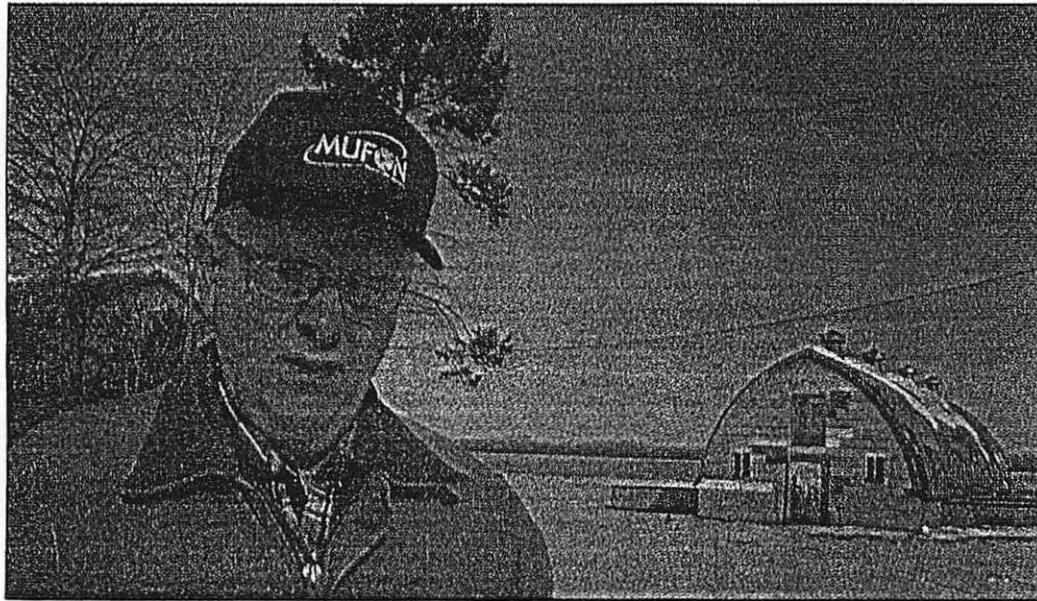


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## CLASSIC CASE OF A CLOSE ENCOUNTER



Joel Barrett/The Herald

PETE HARTINGER, DIRECTOR of the Roundtown UFO Society, at the site of one of America's first close encounter with a UFO. The building in the background was one of the building over which Bruce Stevenson said he saw a UFO hover. Hartinger visited the scene on the 56th anniversary of Stevenson's sighting.

# 56 years later, Stevenson's tale of UFO visit lives on

By JOEL BARRETT  
The Herald

From all accounts, Bruce Stevenson was a salt-of-the-earth, hard-working farmer back in 1948.

Stevenson was among the first in the modern era to claim to have seen a craft from out-of-this-world.

Sunday represented the 56th anniversary of what locals call America's first close encounter with an unidentified flying object.

Stevenson was on his farm off state Route 56 in Pickaway County one cold February morning in 1948 when he saw a strange, brilliant craft hovering over his outbuildings.

He kept quiet about it but told a Columbus newspaper four years later he'd never even thought about science fiction until that fateful cold February morn.

"I never drank, smoked or chewed in my life and I never read any science stuff before I saw it and the only science I've read since then has been about

"This part was glowing with a bright amber light - all of it glowing, not as though there were bulbs inside that would show bright spots," he said.

"There's no use saying why I didn't run and call others. Somehow I just stood spell-bound, almost in a daze, I guess, while I watched the saucer glide along the top edge of the tool shed roof," he told the Herald.

Four years after the encounter, Stevenson estimated the overall diameter of the craft was about 60 feet and the height of the dome-part was about 12 or 13 feet.

"Suddenly," he said recounting the event, "just while I was

these saucers," he told the media four years after the sighting.

It was about 2 a.m. Feb. 1, 1948, when he got up to check on some sows and piglets in his hog barn, a long, story-and-a-half tall building. As he stepped from his farmhouse's door stoop, Stevenson was startled by what he saw.

"As he came out his back door he saw a strange glow from behind the hoghhouse," the *Columbus Citizen* reported Aug. 10, 1952. "He said he thought first it was flames from a fire, but then the glow moved between the hoghhouse and a 120-foot-long toolshed...Then he saw it."

"The object was round like a dinner plate, a gleaming silver color with amber-lighted dome," the *Citizen* reported. As he stood about 100-feet away near a farm pump, the craft floated about 20 feet off the ground.

He noticed what seemed to be propeller-like lights running around the concave bottom of

wondering if maybe the thing would hit the chimney of my tool shed, the amber light went off and the thing traveled slowly off to my left and out of sight. The light stayed off but I could see the silver," he said.

The farm's sheds and barns are still intact today, as is an interest in Stevenson's tale. Pete Hartinger, director of the Roundtown UFO Society, said Stevenson's close encounter is something that's getting lost in the passage of time.

"When I give talks locally, maybe one in 20 people in Circleville even know who he was," he said.

On Sunday, Hartinger visited

**"He was a very honest person, he didn't tell the story right away because he thought people would think he was lying."**

— Bruce Stevenson Jr., son of UFO witness

the saucer.

"One detail in connection with the silver bottom section I noticed very clearly. There was something whirling around the bottom section, sort of like a big propeller or a series of propellers might do. The movement was clear, the bottom part did not turn. Something kept whirling around the whole thing," he told the *Circleville Herald*.

The dome-like top of the craft also caught his eye.

the site and recounted what he calls one of the first classic encounters with a UFO.

While Stevenson told his family about the encounter the next morning, but he kept quiet for more than four years out of fear of ridicule.

Historically, 1948 was a time of change. The Red Scare was beginning, the Berlin Wall had gone up, the Soviets had stolen the "bomb" from the U.S., and the clouds of war were gathering over Korea. Hartinger said Stevenson's encounter came about six months after the infamous Roswell, N. M., incident and about a month after an Air National Guard fighter reported

### LOCAL UFO RESOURCES

At the Pickaway County Library, North Court, has a extensive collection of UFO-related material, including:

- 20 Plusbooks on the topic
- Monthly MUFON Journal, with 10 years of back issues:
- Two-volume UFO Encyclopedia:
- Roundtown UFO Society newsletters with back issues to 1991.
- Four-hour UFO Disclosure Project video containing statements from ex-government and military witnesses;

- Annual public UFO display in library meeting room;
- Monthly meeting of Roundtown UFO Society, third Thursday of the month at meeting room;
- RUFOS information (740) 477-6252/Mail RUFOS, Box 52, Circleville, Ohio 43113/e-mail - rufos@columbus.rr.com

seeing a UFO over Kentucky and later crashed, Hartinger said.

Hartinger said Stevenson may have told those closest to him, but didn't go public with the story until 1952, when there was a reported UFO sighting over Washington D.C.

Others may have seen UFOs locally, but only Stevenson spoke up and stood by what he saw, Hartinger said.

"He's not the only farmer that's seen them, he's the only one who came out and said so. He never changed his story to the day he died. When there's a sighting, you look at the witnesses' credibility, Bruce's was

outstanding...he had an excellent view of it."

Others, such as Stevenson's nephew, Pickaway County commissioner John Stevenson, said his uncle wasn't prone to flights of fancy.

"I can't disbelieve what he said. I knew him well, he didn't make things up. He wasn't a publicist," Stevenson said last week.

Steve Richards, Stevenson's grandson, remembers hearing the story, having his grandfather gather all the children together and show them how close he had been to the silver craft.

"That's one thing, the proximity to it, he was about 100 feet from it. And he watched it for a long time," Richards said.

Original news clippings of Stevenson's story make a special point of the presence of eerie blue-tinted lights in the hog barn. The news accounts said the blue-tinted lights were used by farmers to aid in reducing unwanted bacteria. According to reports, the lights may have been visible from above through ceiling ventilation grids.

"I think it was the lights that gave them some kind of signal," he told the *Columbus Citizen* Aug. 10, 1952.

Bruce Stevenson Jr. was only about 10 at the time and still remembers those blue lights.

"I don't know if they worked but they were bright blue lights and you could see them for miles," he said.

He stands by his father's word. "He was a very honest person, he didn't tell the story right away because he thought people would think he was lying," Stevenson said.

"I'm a believer in them myself, because of my father's history. The universe is just so big..." he said.

Hartinger said the public's openness to the existence of UFO is growing.

"Most sighting have never been reported out of fear of ridicule. We find that attitude is slowing changing. Obviously, people who laugh at this subject have never done any research on it. Our local library has a lot of materials on UFOs, including a four-hour video that includes some high-ranking witness testimony to the UFO reality. The Internet has been a great improvement for communications and research. Sometimes, you can find out about a sighting the same day it occurs," he said.

Stevenson may have been among the first humans to claim he saw an alien craft, but Hartinger said he surely wasn't the last. Sightings continue today. In December, three police officers in Huntington, Ind., reported seeing a UFO, he said. Again, the witnesses were upstanding members of their community.

"Bruce Stevenson's unusual experience has been repeated to the present time by thousands of reported UFO sightings worldwide by reputable witnesses."

"I do know the UFO phenomenon does exist. Knowledge is not a matter of belief or desire, knowledge is a matter of evidence. There is plenty of evidence," he said.

"The Roundtown UFO Society doesn't know the origin of the UFO phenomenon, we can only speculate."