

# Spectral Skull Session News



## UFO FESTIVAL IN PIEDMONT MISSOURI YIELDS SHOCKING REVELATION: **THEY NEVER LEFT!**

Expert Advises Those Interested in Seeing UFOs to “just look up!”

It started in February 1973 when the Clearwater High School basketball team pulled off the road after being tracked from the sky by an unknown multicolored light source. So began the Southeastern Missouri UFO flap of 1973 (a rash of UFO sightings is known as a ‘flap’). By March, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat described recurring motorist encounters with a “shy yet friendly” nocturnal visitor that would illuminate the dark mountain roads ahead of advancing vehicles. That month the local sheriff told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that nearly half of the town’s population had contacted him after seeing unidentified aerial lights.



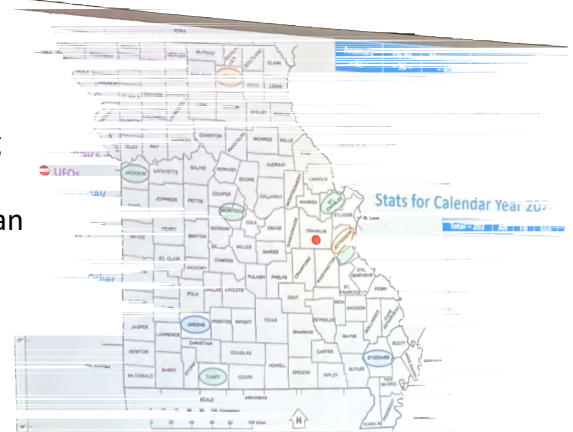
Fifty-years later, the people of Piedmont, Missouri regathered to commemorate the event with a weekend festival, a collaboration between the Piedmont Chamber of Commerce and Missouri UFO Network (MUFON), which occurred from April 21 – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. Local businesses displayed alien-themed decorations, the town held a 5K race, a parade, and the local drive-in movie theater played science fiction films. Missouri MUFON State Director, Debbie Ziegelmeyer, described the vicarious nostalgia she experienced watching the 1977 classic *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* in the same location where residents had once asked their projectionist to please turn off the machine because

“they’re back!” Apparently, on at least one dark spring night, Piedmont drive-in-goers had enjoyed an impromptu intermission courtesy of the lights.

The festival culminated in a series of presentations by Missouri MUFON experts. They delighted the audience with a combination of historical research, updates on regional UFO findings, and personal anecdotes. One of the most fascinating historical aspects concerned the local community's collective efforts to comprehend the inexplicable events of '73. Ziegelmeyer recounted a network of volunteers who climbed to the tops of nearby hills to observe the skies and communicate their sightings to a local airport via radio. In addition, Harley Rutledge, a SEMO physics professor, conducted a formal investigation that he later published as *Project Identification: The First Scientific Field Study of UFO Phenomena* (1981). When Rutledge conducted formal interviews with witnesses, Piedmont officials, including the mayor, took the time to make themselves physically present as well. The community of that era took their experience seriously.

By the end of Saturday's presentations, one thing was clear: the phenomena was neither confined to the Southeastern Missouri highlands, nor did it abate after 1973. Director, Margie Kay, presented on "Buck Nelson," (aka the 'Ozarks Saucerman') a Missouri man who claimed to have met aliens repeatedly on his farm near Mountain View, MO. Nelson contributed to America's early flying saucer enthusiasm by inviting people from around the world to camp on his farm and see the visitors for themselves. Missouri MUFON chief investigator, Mel Van Vickle, displayed recent photos and video footage of enigmatic aerial phenomena from all over Missouri, including images he had personally captured of the recent Chinese spy balloon. Finally, Missouri MUFON investigator, Forest Crawford, told the crowd that UFOs are so common to Missouri that anyone who is interested need do little more than "just look up!"

#### Missouri MUFON Assistant State



One of the reasons why UFOs are not more widely reported in regional news? They're so common in some parts as to be almost unremarkable. And yet, "50 years later it is still something that is widely talked about in our area, we still have people that report things all the time." Sara Philips, a representative of the Piedmont Area Chamber of Commerce, told KFVS news. – *Editor*

*MUFON is a nonprofit association "dedicated to the scientific study of UFOs." Information about MUFON events, membership, and filing UFO reports is available at <https://www.missourimufon.org/>*

### ABOUT US

The *Spectral Skull Session* is an independent media service dedicated to taking the woo out of the weird and bringing the weird in from the cold. We strive to cover stories that professional journalists, scientists, and philosophers refuse to take seriously, even when they probably should. Our coverage aims to be even-handed, open-minded, and critical. We ask questions, we search for alternatives for every explanation, but we refuse to carry water for any ideology, regardless of whether it is scientific materialism or paranormal dogmatism.

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