

Close encounters in Utah

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By [Deseret News](#), Zack Van Eyck, Staff Writer

At first, Lennis Gines didn't think much of the blue and yellow lights in the field behind her rural Summit County home.

Probably some kids in a four-wheel drive, she thought. It was a little early - about 4:30 a.m. - for teenage visitors. And the silent, rotating lights weren't anywhere near the narrow country lane that meandered past the family's two-story home and on to the Provo River.

Then she saw a beam of white light shining on the family's horses, moving from animal to animal.

But in her half-awake state, Gines was unalarmed - until she reached the downstairs sewing room at the back of the house. With her widening eyes fixed on the brightness beyond the window, she reached through the doorway of the adjacent bathroom and flicked on the light.

At that instant, on a pitch-black, moonless morn in the fall of 1972, Lennis Gines knew what it was like to see a UFO.

"I turned the light on and this thing, whatever it was, went right up in the air to the top of the trees," said Gines, a 63-year-old widow. "That's when it scared me. I turned the lights back off and it went down again.

"If it hadn't gone up without a sound, I may have convinced myself in my mind that it was just kids driving around. But I know what I saw."

Gines soon was joined by her teenage son Sam, who was ready to round up the cows for milking. Together, they waited and watched in the dark for 45 minutes as the blue and yellow lights, some 150 yards to the east, cascaded across the river bottom.

Eventually, Gines' 16-year-old decided he'd waited long enough. His father, who was working the night shift, insisted the cows be milked on time. But Sam got no help from the family's otherwise loyal cattle dog, who whimpered and ran inside to hide.

"My boy gets in the truck and goes over, and he said he could see a doorway, windows and shadows going in and out," Gines recalled this week, nearly 25 years after the event. "It was like someone was going in and out on the ground.

"The cows were bunched together, he said, and he had quite a hard time getting them out (of the field) without the dog, but they did come down the road and into the corral. The cows were nervous and didn't give the milk they usually gave."

Gines, still frightened, helped her younger son Will get dressed, then hustled to the barn to bring Sam back to the house. But when she re-emerged from the barn, the lights were gone - all except the distant glimmer of sunlight.

The incident is one of several UFO tales that made the rounds through this highland village in the early '70s. Craig Gines, an unrelated man who lives nearby, had his own run-in with a UFO around the same time. A group of young campers were visibly shaken by an aerial observation and a local shepherd often spotted UFOs, or so the stories go.

"When I was growing up there was a lot of people saying they'd seen things but didn't know what they were," Gines' daughter, Mary Jones, said in a telephone interview from her home in San Jose, Calif.

Jones was a teenager at the time but slept through the event. She still wishes her mom had roused her out of bed.

The next morning, she went out to the pasture with her mother. In a dampened area, just across the fence on a neighbor's property, the pair saw a 25-foot wide, clockwise swirl of flattened grass.

"I don't know how a car could have gotten in there because it was real swampy. There were no tire tracks," Jones said. "My mom doesn't make up stories. She's always been real down-to-earth, so I really believe her."

Mary's father, however, was skeptical. And Sam, who was tragically killed a few years later, didn't like talking about it. For years, the family kept the story to itself.

Then, in 1988, a relative told the story to some co-workers. And one of them told Ryan Layton, a Davis County man who has made a hobby of investigating UFO reports on his own.

Layton called Mildred Biesele, a Salt Lake County resident and state director for the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), one of the country's oldest and most respected UFO research organizations. Together, they visited the 15-acre Gines farm and recorded the story for the first time.

Biesele, like any sincere UFO investigator, knows there's a mundane explanation for the large majority of sightings. In this case, she couldn't find one.

"It sounded credible," she said of Gines' account. "They weren't making a big deal of it. They were inclined to sort of underplay it. We had to find them. They weren't coming forward as an attempt at publicity."

They still aren't. Gines, whose husband died six years ago, reluctantly spoke to the Deseret News. Will Gines, who also got a look at the lights that morning, now lives next door to his mother but declined an interview.

Craig Gines, one of Sam Gines' best friends, likewise refused to talk about his own brush with the unknown. He told his story to Layton and Biesele years ago and isn't going to relate it again, he said through a family member.

According to Layton, Craig Gines and some friends were driving through Woodland not far from Lennis Gines' farm when a UFO appeared above them. At the same moment, the car's engine stalled.

"Apparently, the craft was right over the vehicle," Layton said. "There was a shadow and they felt some type of turbulence over them from it, and (Gines) even was of the opinion it felt like it might have touched or bumped the top of the car."

Thousands have made the pilgrimage to Roswell, N.M., to commemorate the alleged crash of a flying saucer 50 years ago this month. No one is flocking to Utah. But perhaps the only difference between the two states is that Utah's otherworldly visitors have a better piloting record.

In addition to this area's reported activity, the Uinta Basin has a long history of UFO observations, including some recent ones. Biesele has investigated dozens of Utah UFO sightings over the past 20 years. Layton has researched three eyewitness reports of UFO landings in Utah and another in Idaho.

Lennis Gines doesn't make any claims about who or what was controlling whatever it was that flattened grass, spotlighted horses and gave her a good scare nearly 25 years ago. But she does have one regret.

"I wish to this day I'd called somebody to have (the site) tested," she said. "To me, it was really an experience. I really think it was a small craft that had come down and was taking samples."