

The Gresham UFO Lights Display

An Oregon MUFON Case Study

by

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Abstract

Keywords: Lights Display—Maneuvering—Hovering—Metallic Sheen

Description	A man and his nine-year-old daughter and another man and his wife watched a strange formation of bright, bluish-white lights hover and maneuver over an apartment building for over an hour. There was no sound associated with the lights in the sky. One observer used binoculars.
Witnesses	Edwin Wesson and his daughter and Mike Randle and wife. (pseudonyms).
Time and Date	September 2, 2009, 10:30 PM.
Place	First sighting: Gresham, Oregon, at S.E. 1st St. and S.E. Kane Road. Second sighting: Gresham, Oregon, at Winco Foods on S.E. 1st Street.
Weather	Broken clouds at about 9,000 feet at the start of the sighting giving way to a ceiling of about 8,000 feet; visibility 10 miles; wind: 2 to 4 mph from the west; temperature about 70° F.
Duration	About one hour and 15 minutes.

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INTRODUCTION

This case is a good multiple witness UFO event of long duration. Historically, genuine UFO events last around five minutes or so for average duration. And, of course, most sightings are by single witnesses.

This case is also valuable since the witnesses ended up seeing the same thing from significantly different vantage points. Initially, they were together and then two of the witnesses traveled four tenths of a mile away and then saw the same thing again. This is important because witnesses separated by a reasonable distance allows triangulation of the UFO, which means that a height above the terrain can be calculated for the UFO if you can also get reliable elevations above the horizon.

This allows us to locate the UFO in space, which helps eliminate identification candidates. Most of the time we only get to ballpark an estimate of height above the terrain from witnesses' (vague) ideas about how high up a UFO was, and ballpark an estimate of how far away a UFO was. Here we are lucky and have a significant separation of witnesses.

EVENT DESCRIPTION

Edwin Wesson (pseudonym) and his daughter got out of his vehicle in the parking lot of his apartment building and noticed three very bright lights hovering in the air to the west southwest of their location. These lights were approximately 15° to 20° above the horizon, just above the roof of one wing of the two-story apartment building. Edwin described them as being like "bright LED lights" because of their brilliant bluish-white color. The lights appeared to be solidly connected together and appeared to move swiftly back and forth between the tops of two tall trees near the apartment building, sometimes moving behind the tree branches, then coming back into full view. No sound was reported. No animal reactions were noted.



Source: Edwin Wesson

Figure 1. Edwin Wesson's Pencil Drawing of UFO

This is Edwin Wesson's rendition of what he saw hovering to the west southwest of their location very close to S.E. Kane Road and S.E. 1st Street, as seen through 8 power binoculars.

A Metallic Object?

Edwin and his daughter continued to observe the lights for a while, then Edwin went to get his eight power Barska brand binoculars. With these, he was able to observe more detail and saw that there were actually five lights—three brighter lights plus two smaller lights in line with the first three, plus the curved, reflective surface of what appeared to be a somewhat larger object near the lights. This other object appeared to have a metallic sheen that reflected the light cast by the smaller lighted objects.

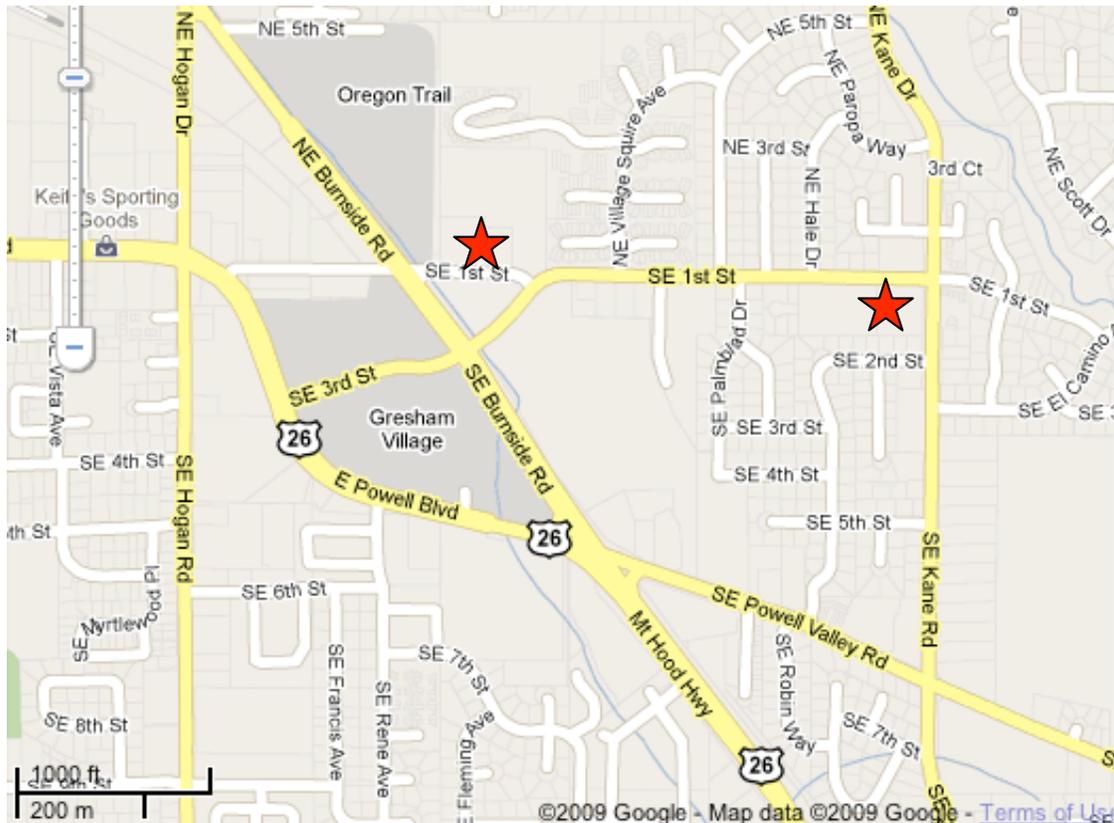
A Neighbor Also Sees the UFO

During this time, a neighbor, Mike Randle (pseudonym) and his wife, also observed the object and discussed it with Edwin. Then Mike and his wife drove to a grocery store about four tenths of a mile from the apartment building. After exiting the grocery store, they looked for the object and found that it was still visible in the southwest at about 15° to 20° above the horizon.

Meanwhile, back at the apartment building, Edwin and his daughter continued to watch the lights until they started to move away behind the roof of the apartment building. At this point they got in their vehicle and tried to drive to a location with a better view. However, by this time, they were no longer able to spot the lights.

ENVIRONMENT

This area is a densely populated area of mixed residential and commercial use. There are many stores including automobile dealerships within a mile or so of the witnesses' locations. See *Figure 2, Location of Both Sightings in Gresham, Oregon.*



Source: Google Maps

Figure 2. Location of Both Sightings in Gresham, Oregon

The initial sighting was nearby S.E. Kane Road and S.E. 1st Street by all four witnesses. The second sighting was by two witnesses who had gone west on 1st Street to shop at Winco Foods grocery store.

Weather

The weather conditions in Gresham, Oregon, on September 2, 2009, were broken clouds at about 9,000 feet at the start of the sighting giving way to a ceiling of about 8,000 feet. Visibility was 10 miles and the wind was 2 to 4 mph out of the west. The temperature was about 70° F.

EVIDENCE

The evidence in this case consists of the following:

- The CMS report made by Edwin Wesson.
- The testimony from interviews with three witnesses: Edwin Wesson and his daughter, and Mike Randle. (Mike's wife also saw the UFO display, but wasn't present for my interviews.)
- Measurements were taken of the direction and angle of elevation above the horizon as indicated for the UFO display at their sighting locations.

All witnesses cooperated fully with my investigation, and I have no reason to doubt their testimony. I thank these witnesses for taking their valuable time to deal with a MUFON investigator.

The Investigation

On September 21, 2009, I interviewed Edwin Wesson, his daughter, and Mike Randle at the apartment building where the sighting occurred near S.E. 1st Street and S.E. Kane Road. I took azimuth and elevation readings from the parking lot area where the witnesses were standing while viewing the lights. I also went with Mike to the Winco Foods grocery store to obtain readings from that location.

I questioned Edwin about aircraft in the area. He mentioned that one commercial airliner appeared to pass near the lighted objects. He also mentioned a pair of military aircraft that passed overhead later in the evening. He recognized them from their sound and their typical red lights displayed in busy air traffic areas. These were probably F-16s based at the Oregon Air National Guard station near Portland International Airport (PDX).

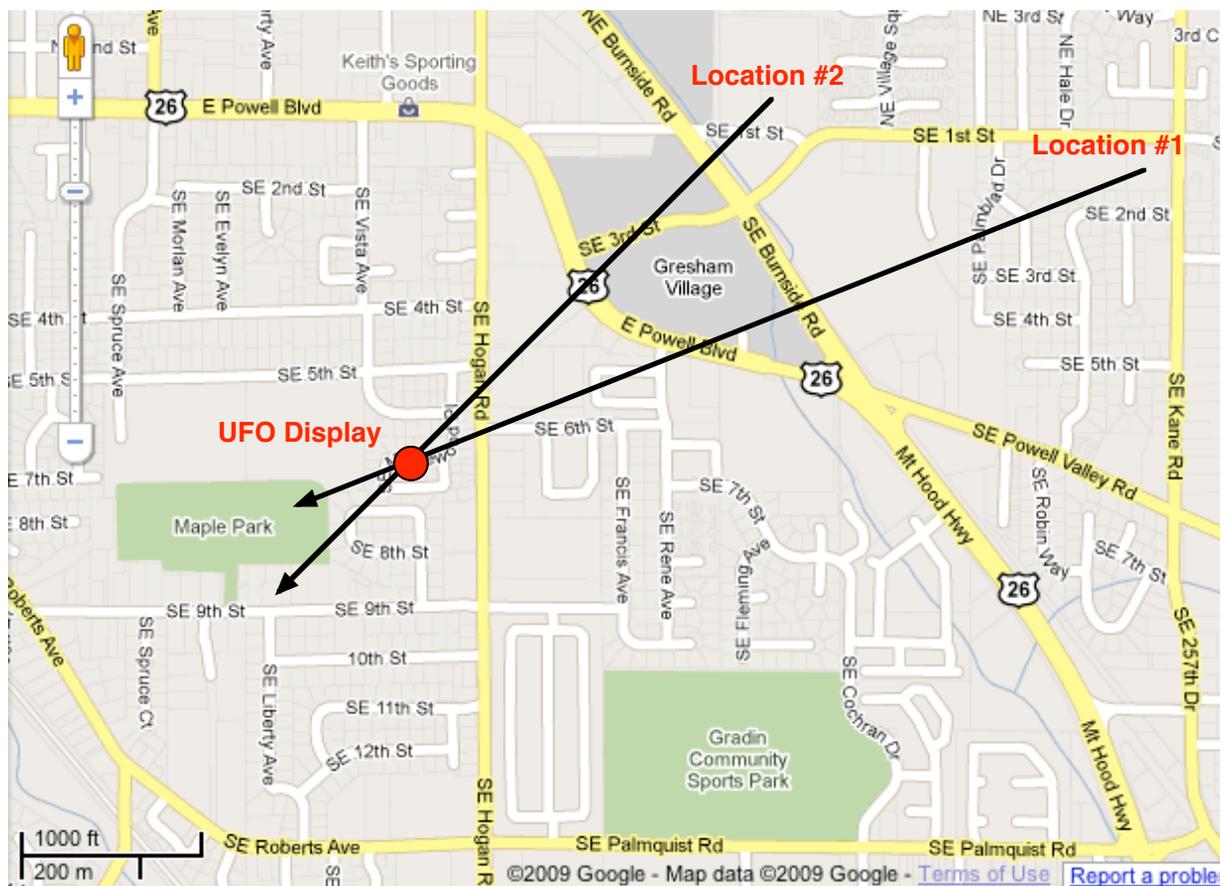
Like most people who live in this area, Edwin is very familiar with all types of aircraft frequently seen approaching PDX or Troutdale Airport, just a few miles to the north.

A few days after the interviews, I checked with some of the auto dealerships in the area of the sighting to see if anyone would have been flying a lighted, tethered balloon or blimp. I was told that they never use such devices because of the frequent windy conditions in this area. Also, I was told that a few years ago, one of the dealerships was forced to take down a high-flying tethered balloon because it interfered with air traffic control radar at Troutdale Airport off to the northeast.

ANALYSIS

Since we have two groups of witnesses seeing the same UFO from different locations, we can use some math and figure out how far away the UFO actually was and also how high up in the sky the UFO actually was. See *Figure 3, Triangulation of Two Separate Locations*. The calculation results that follow are only accurate within the range of error of the measurements, but these are within plus or minus 10% to 15% accurate, which is a big deal for UFO investigation since we so seldom get this kind of data.

We use the measured compass directions and angle of elevation estimates to derive with simple trigonometry the distance to the UFO from both locations and the height of the UFO above the ground level (altitude). *Table 1, UFO Distances and Altitudes for Two Locations* summarizes the data and calculated numbers. Thus, the UFO display appears to have been about eight tenths from Location #1 at the apartment building parking lot and about six tenths of a mile from Location #2 in the Winco Foods parking lot. And, for both locations, the UFO display was about 700 to 1500 feet above ground level.



Source: Google Maps

Figure 3. Triangulation of Two Separate Locations

From compass directions taken from the two different witnesses locations, we can determine the location above the terrain where the UFO display was hovering. It turns out in this case that the UFO display was about 3000 feet from Location #2 and about 4000 feet from Location #1.

Table 1. UFO Distances and Altitudes for Two Locations

Witnesses	Location	Compass Direction (°)	Elevation Angle (°)	Distance to UFO (feet)	UFO Altitude (feet)
Edwin Wesson & Daughter	Location #1	WSW	15 to 20	4000	700 to 1500
Mike Randle & Wife	Location #2	SW	15 to 20	3000	700 to 1500

Astronomical Data

After examining the astronomical data for the date and time of the sighting, I could find no bright planets, stars, or satellites near the reported position of the UFO display. The gibbous Moon and Jupiter were very close together in the south; however, they were not in position to be seen in the direction of the sighting.

CONCLUSION

Multiple witnesses described lighted objects that hovered and maneuvered silently for over one hour. And the UFO observations in this case were made by four people in two locations about four tenths of a mile (about 2000 feet) apart. This allows triangulation of the UFO and shows that it was less than a mile from the two locations of observation. Calculations also show that the UFO was around 700 to 1500 feet above the terrain. This helps eliminate some of the UFO identification candidates.

Identification Candidates

The candidates for identification for the lighted UFO display are the following:

- **Planets or Moon.** No bright planets or the moon were in the position indicated by the witnesses. And, of course, triangulation has eliminated this possible identification. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Star.** No bright stars were in the position indicated by the witnesses. And, of course, triangulation has eliminated this possible identification. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Helicopter.** Helicopters can be stationary in the sky for minutes at a time and sometimes have bright lights, and, if close enough, can be heard under the right weather conditions. But helicopters don't look at all like what Edwin saw through his 8 power binoculars. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Airplane.** The witnesses, Edwin Wesson and Mike Randle, are well aware of typical airplane traffic in this busy part of the sky so close to Portland International Airport and the Troutdale Airport. They both saw no resemblance between this long duration UFO object and airplanes. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Blimp.** A blimp would account for the unusual light display, perhaps. But, the superstructure of a blimp through binoculars would have shown up, probably, even at night, around the unusual lights display. Additionally, the (unusual) arrival of a blimp in a metro area is usually noted in the news media. There were no news reports of a golf tournament or other unusual event which would pay for the expense of hiring a blimp. And it is quite unusual for blimps to fly around this late at night with no obvious advertising message, which would have been visible in binoculars over a many minutes long viewing period. Also, the long duration in a single place in the sky is not characteristic of blimp flight patterns. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*

- **Tethered Lighted, Advertising Balloons.** As noted in *Evidence* earlier, no auto dealers admitted to deploying tethered, lighted advertising balloons. And, indeed, they noted that because of the constant heavy air traffic in the area, they were forced to take them down one time when they did! Besides that, their balloons were not lighted. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Spotlight Shining on Clouds.** Usually, spotlights shining on clouds are moving around to attract attention. The UFO did not show this typical, well-known behavior of spotlights on cloud bottoms. In addition, the detailed observation in binoculars of distinct and intensely bright lights and a possible craft reflection of the lights eliminates this candidate. Also, this advertising method is very unusual today. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*

Since the identification candidates fail for the reasons stated, this UFO observation is classified as a true UFO.