

REPORT NO. 3

THE LUMBERTON REPORT

UFO ACTIVITY IN S. NORTH CAROLINA

APRIL 3-9, 1975

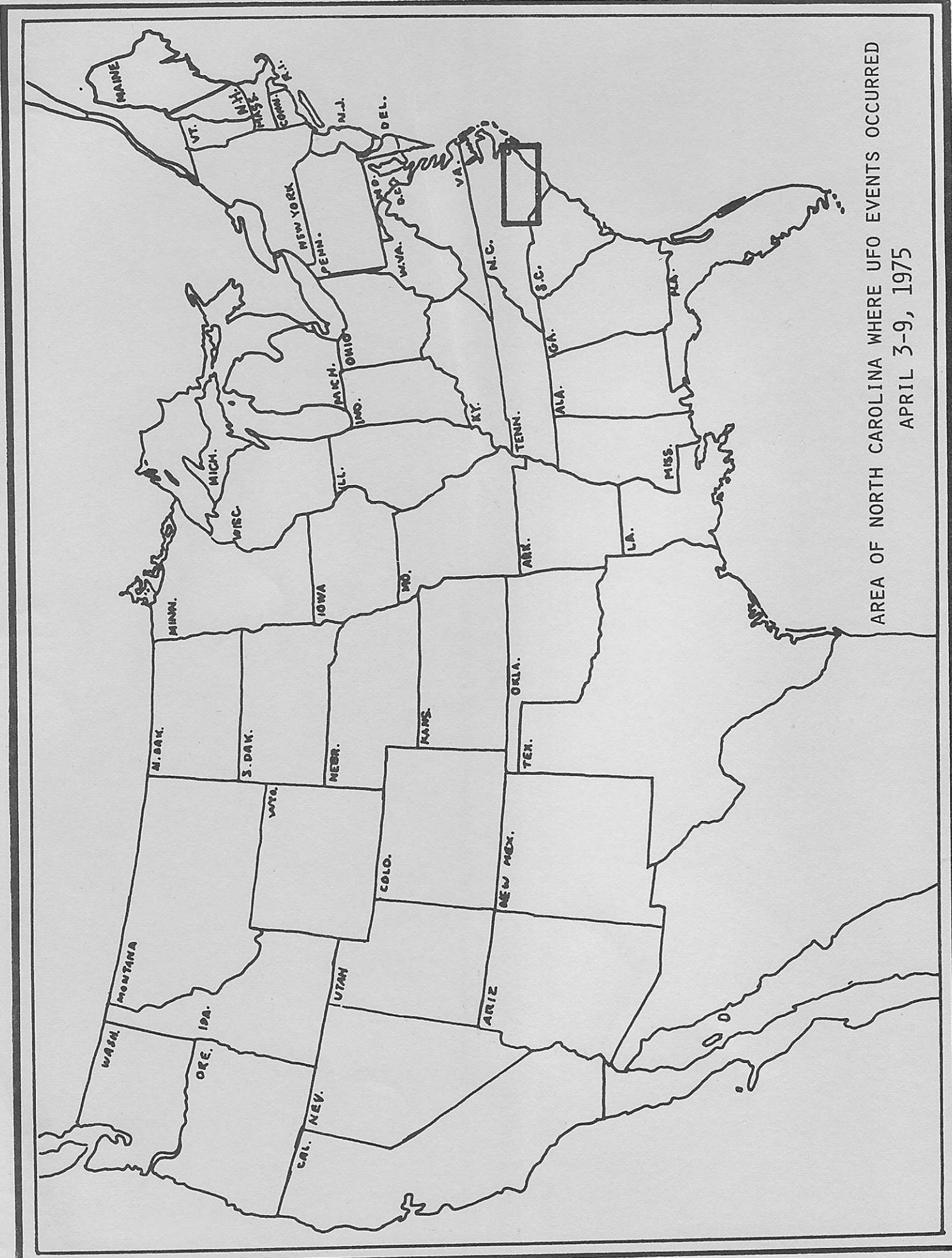
BY

JENNIE ZEIDMAN

CENTER FOR UFO STUDIES

EVANSTON, IL U.S.A.

MAY 1976



AREA OF NORTH CAROLINA WHERE UFO EVENTS OCCURRED
APRIL 3-9, 1975

THE LUMBERTON REPORT

UFO ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN NORTH CAROLINA

APRIL 3-9, 1975

BY

JENNIE ZEIDMAN

E. Lee Speigel and Ted Phillips

Principal Investigators

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FOREWORD

The UFO events of April 3-9, 1975, in southern North Carolina created a flurry of newspaper accounts and were variously treated in the media. The events themselves, however, seemed important enough to command the Center's attention, and an investigation directed toward unscrambling the welter of information and misinformation was instituted. This report is the result of that effort, undertaken by a coordinated team of investigators from the Center, specialists, technical consultants and cooperating laboratories, all directing their efforts toward one specific set of events.

This report is the first of a projected series of technical investigative reports issued by the Center, and is part of the continuing series of publications of the Center for UFO Studies.

Jennie Zeidman, the author of this report, is an established analyst whose concern with the UFO problem began in 1953 when she was a research assistant in the Department of Astronomy, the Ohio State University, and worked with me in the early days of Project Blue Book. Her long acquaintance with the UFO phenomenon and her ability as a technical writer and intelligence analyst made her the ideal person to assess and correlate the many facets of the North Carolina "mini-wave."

J. Allen Hynek

LIST OF MAPS, CHARTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of southern North Carolina:
Location, time, date of sightings and heading from Lumberton

Chart of UFO events:
Date, time, duration, location, shape,
heading and other details

Time Distribution:
Daily

The principal investigators for the Lumberton area sightings were E. Lee Spiegel, who worked with the various observers of the V-shaped object and of the daylight lights, and Ted Phillips, who studied the possibility of physical traces in the daylight lights case. To them go the major credits for these investigations. Frank Harrison also interviewed several observers at Dr. Hynek's request, and I spent a few days in Lumberton and environs in October 1975. The assistance of Ronn Thompson, Lumberton Police Dispatcher, in arranging interviews and collecting samples, and Mrs. Toni Goodyear, Robesonian staff writer, is also gratefully acknowledged; they acted as coordinators for the Center investigators and their help was invaluable. Thanks are due also to the Holiday Inn (North) Lumberton, for their generosity in providing facilities for Center investigators. Lastly, a very personal thank you to Mimi Hynek for her sustained work in editing this report.

Figures 11, 12 and 13 Photos of sandy deposits on soil
taken by staff photographer of The Jennie Zeidman

Figure 14 View from Strickland position

Figure 15 Relative positions of Strickland and
Locklear cars

Figure 16 Diagram of burned areas, by Ronn Thompson

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During the period April 3 to April 9, 1975, considerable UFO activity was reported in an area of approximately a forty-mile radius of Lumberton, North Carolina. The location is in the southeastern part of the state, bordered on the SW by the state of South Carolina and on the SE by the city of Wilmington and the Atlantic seacoast. The region is flat, with heavy patches of pine forests, open areas of farmland, swamps and canals. The soil is fine gray sand. Lumberton has a population of about 16,000; it comprises the largest community in the immediate area. UFO activity has been intermittently reported in this region over the years.¹ The present flurry of activity, however, stands as a distinct entity and is regarded as significant for several reasons:

1. The persistence of the phenomenon. The same apparent object was observed several days.
2. The large number of witnesses. At least 48 police officers, plus an unknown number of private citizens, reported the object.
3. The consistent descriptions of the object given by independent observers, and the consistent drawings of the object made by independent observers.
4. The rapidity with which CUFOS became involved in the case. Communication with UFO CENTRAL from Lumberton police reached the Center within an hour of the initial UFO sightings.

¹For a journalistic survey of UFO activity in the area, see Quarter Century of UFOs in Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee, by George Fawcett, Pioneer Printing Company, Mt. Airy, North Carolina. More recently Mr. Fawcett has written in Official UFO magazine, of November 1975, "The UFO Wave in North Carolina." Mr. Fawcett's work is based on popular news media coverage of UFO activity in North Carolina.

Two distinct categories of phenomena are represented by the Lumberton area activity; their inter-relationship has not been established:

- a) A V-shaped or wedge-shaped object,² brightly lighted, apparently about the size of an automobile, which was seen by many observers, at close range, over a several night span.
- b) Five reddish-colored lights which may have landed and left physical traces in a field, in daylight, and were observed simultaneously by three sets of independent observers.

The characteristics of the V-shaped object (each reported by at least two witnesses) which determine its being classified as a UFO are:

1. Range of speed from hovering to 200+ mph in very short periods of time.
2. Ability to execute flat (as opposed to banked) turns.
3. An intensely bright spotlight which had directional maneuverability, variable intensity, and, on at least two occasions, appeared to "signal" in response to automobile headlight or automobile spotlight blinking.
4. Absence of noise: only three witnesses (out of more than fifty) reported any sound from the object-- in spite of the fact that most observers felt that they were within 200 feet of it.

Specifically, with the data presently available, it appears that between April 3-9, 1975, in the Lumberton area:

1. There were at least 57 separate UFO events reported,
2. There were at least 60 observers whose names are available or are potentially available,

²Although the objects described and drawn could be more accurately described as triangular or delta-shaped, the term "Vee" is used in this report whenever that specific word was used by the reporter.

3. At least two of these events were possibly Venus,
4. Some events may have been generated by a Piedmont B-737,
5. Of the remaining events, specifically reported were:
 - a) 23 V-shapes
 - b) 9 spotlights
 - c) 3 flat turns
 - d) 11 sightings at tree-top level or below
 - e) 3 sightings with noise
 - f) 22 sightings without noise
 - g) 2 signal responses to headlights
 - h) 10 hovering objects
 - i) 3 objects passing directly overhead
 - j) 4 sightings of lights only; no shape.

First reports of this cluster of UFO activity in southern North Carolina began in the early hours of Thursday, April 3, 1975, soon after a thunderstorm had swept through the area.

At 01:45, two Lumberton policemen, P. H. Atkinson and Neil McCormick, while patrolling in their car near North Carolina 211 and 301, observed an unfamiliar light hovering over the water tower behind Lumberton High School. Their first impression was that it was a helicopter. They started driving north toward Fayetteville in an attempt to get a closer look, but lost sight of the object. At that time, the weather at Fayetteville, thirty miles to the north, was a measured 500 foot overcast, visibility 3 miles, with a light rain shower.

Simultaneously, Phil Stanton, Lumberton patrolman, was alone in his police car approximately 200 yards from the water tower. He, too, thought the object was a helicopter. Stanton reported: "...I saw it hovering directly over the tower. When I got closer, switched off my motor and got out of the car,

that's when I saw it close up. It was triangular-shaped with a row of lights down each side, and one big spotlight on the front [Fig. 1]. I estimated the object to be about 200 feet

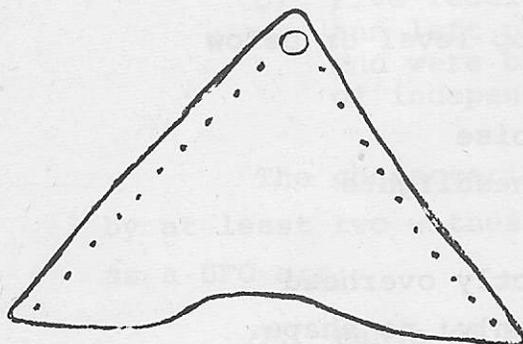


Figure 1. Drawing by Phil Stanton



Figure 2. Object hovering over water tower, drawn by Stanton over Polaroid print.

off the ground because the water tower is nearly 200 feet high.³ the craft looked like it was just about the size of my patrol car. I saw a beam of light just directed straight down and it lit up the lettering on the water tower. Then the spotlight went out and the thing just took off at a terrific rate of speed, making no sound."

The object sped away toward St. Pauls, 12 miles due north, and Stanton radioed St. Pauls police to be on the lookout for it.

Patrolman R.T. (Tommy) Hagens and civilian John "Bud" McPherson were in the St. Pauls police station when they heard

³Actual dimensions of the water tower: 162' high, 74' diameter (Robeson County Department of Public Works).

Stanton's call that a UFO was seen heading north from Lumberton along Route 301. About two miles out of town they saw a "blinding flash of light which lit up the woods like a giant flash bulb," McPherson said. "When I first saw the object it was coming up from behind some trees, which led me to believe it had been on the ground before that.⁴ I could see the outline of the trees silhouetted against the light."

"It rose slowly above the trees," Hagens added, "started to move slowly, then suddenly accelerated, changed direction, and in 15 to 20 seconds it had faded out and disappeared. The light had intensified real bright when it first started to accelerate."

McPherson estimated the object to be about the size of a twin-engine Cessna,⁵ and he said it made no sound. Fig. 3 shows the object as drawn by Hagens and agreed to by McPherson.

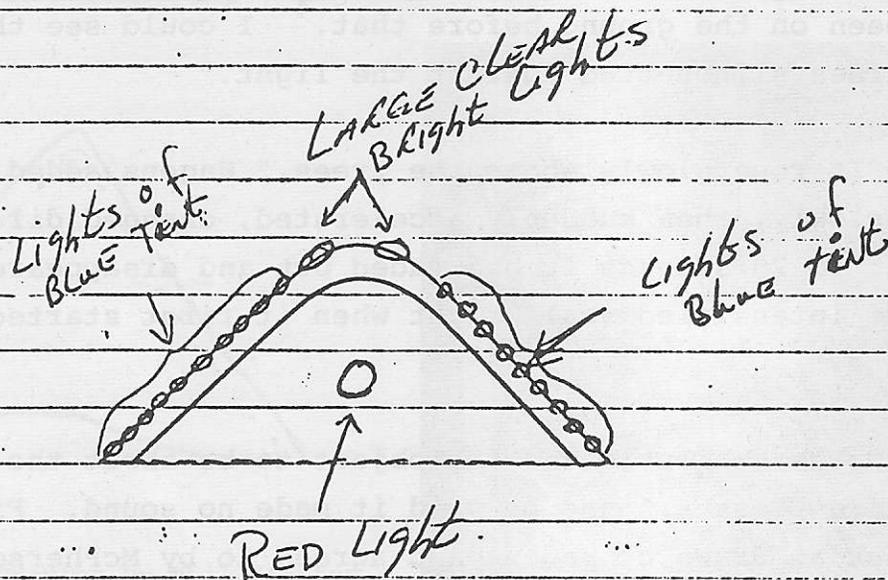
After the St. Pauls sighting, dispatcher Ronn Thompson notified Hoke County lawmen to be on the lookout, for the craft seemed to be heading their way. A few minutes later, at about 02:15, Deputy George S. McGuire, in Hoke County, reported that he was in pursuit of a V-shaped object which he last saw heading northeast toward Sampson County.

At 02:20, Officer Jim Driver of the Roseboro (Sampson County) Police Department, alone in his patrol car, noticed a series of lights in the air, hovering over some pecan trees.

⁴The fields and woods at the sighting area were later inspected by Lee Hamilton and Toni Goodyear, both of the Robesonian news staff. No evidence of a landing or other disturbance was apparent to them.

⁵Wingspan, depending on Cessna model, anywhere from 45 to 70 feet.

FROM St. Pauls
NOT TO SCALE



Lights INTENSIFIED REAL BRIGHT WHEN
OBJECT ACCELERATED AND SPED AWAY.

OBJECT SEEN BY: R.T. Hagens AND JOHN Mc PHEARSON

Figure 3.

After watching it hover for about a minute, assuming it to be a helicopter, he noticed a big light in the front of the object as it silently remained over the trees. "I got out of the car at that point and could not hear any sound coming from the object. When I tried to radio to headquarters my car radio became all scrambled, so I had to use my walkie-talkie instead. The light on the object swung around and lit up the pecan trees which were about 200 feet away," Driver said. He had a side view of the object and guessed it to be somewhat longer than an automobile. He estimated its altitude at approximately 200 feet. Some low scudding clouds remained after the storm, and the object was well beneath the clouds. "The bright light on it became much more intense," Driver said, "and then the craft took off at a very high rate of speed to the southeast."

Fifteen minutes later a seemingly identical object was reported by James Buchanan, a member of the Roseboro Rescue Squad. He observed it as it lit up the pecan trees. When he got back into his car to use the radio, he took his eyes off the object. When he looked back out, it had completely vanished.

At 03:30 an unidentified officer in the Bladen County town of Elizabethtown reported "an object" near Highway 701, heading SW toward Clarkton and Bladenboro. He gave chase, but lost the UFO in the cloud cover. Meanwhile, Dispatcher Thompson had notified the Columbus County Sheriff's Department and the police departments in Fairmont and Dillon Counties, South Carolina, as well as the South Carolina Highway Patrol, that the object might be headed their way.

At 06:55, five minutes before official sunrise, an unidentified lighted object was reported by Columbus County Sheriff's deputies.⁶

⁶Further data unavailable to CUFOS investigators.

Thus, on the basis of the first night's activity alone, with a brightly lighted noiseless object hovering under a low overcast, it would appear that no ordinary aircraft could possibly have been responsible for the reports of at least ten different observers.

Between 22:00 Thursday and 02:20 Friday (April 3-4), numerous fragmentary reports flooded the Robeson County Sheriff's Department. At 22:03 an unidentified flying object was reported over Highway 501, between Rowland and Maxton, and shortly afterward over Highway 71, between Red Springs and Maxton. The observations were reported to the Robeson County Sheriff's Department by the Rowland and Red Springs Police Departments.

Between 22:15 and 22:30 (Thursday night, April 3), six Robeson County deputies and one State Highway patrolman called in six sightings.⁷ At approximately 22:30, Patrolman Marvin Godley of the Grimesland (Pitt County) Police Department (130 miles NE of the last observation) reported a UFO "round in shape, with red, blue and white lights, traveling in a zig-zag flight path." This remains the only report of a round UFO in this sequence of sightings.

At 23:45, Scotland County deputies, to the west of Robeson County, reported that they were in pursuit of a V-shaped craft on Highway 71, headed toward Robeson County and Red Springs. Rowland Police Officer James Lewis reported without detail an unidentified object north of Rowland over Highway 301, headed NW. Sightings were called in shortly after by numerous private citizens in the Cumberland and Sampson County areas.

⁷Actual data for this interval are unavailable. The probability exists that some of the radio talk concerning UFOs at this time was of a casual nature and was unmotivated by actual sightings.

At 01:00 Friday morning (April 4), an unidentified man called the Robeson County Sheriff's Department to report a large white light heading toward N.C. 710 north of Rowland. Ten minutes later and 75 miles to the northeast, in Sampson County, Officer John Hayes of the Newton Grove Police Department had been alerted by the Sampson County Sheriff's Department that numerous phone calls from citizens, as well as deputy reports, indicated that a UFO was headed in his direction. Hayes was on patrol off U.S. 13 near rural paved road #1703. He stopped his car and turned off the lights and engine. An object passed directly overhead. The ceiling was unlimited and the visibility was seven miles. "I got outside the car then and estimated the object to be 300 to 400 feet high. The only sound I was able to hear was a very slight humming noise. I noticed a grayish-blue glow around the outer edges of the thing, and also noted that the craft was moving extremely slow...much too slow for any conventional aircraft." In the two minutes he was able to observe the object, Officer Hayes could clearly make out a V-shaped structure, a series of lights under each side, and a large spotlight on the front (Fig. 4). Hayes also stated that the object made a flat, as opposed to a banked, turn.

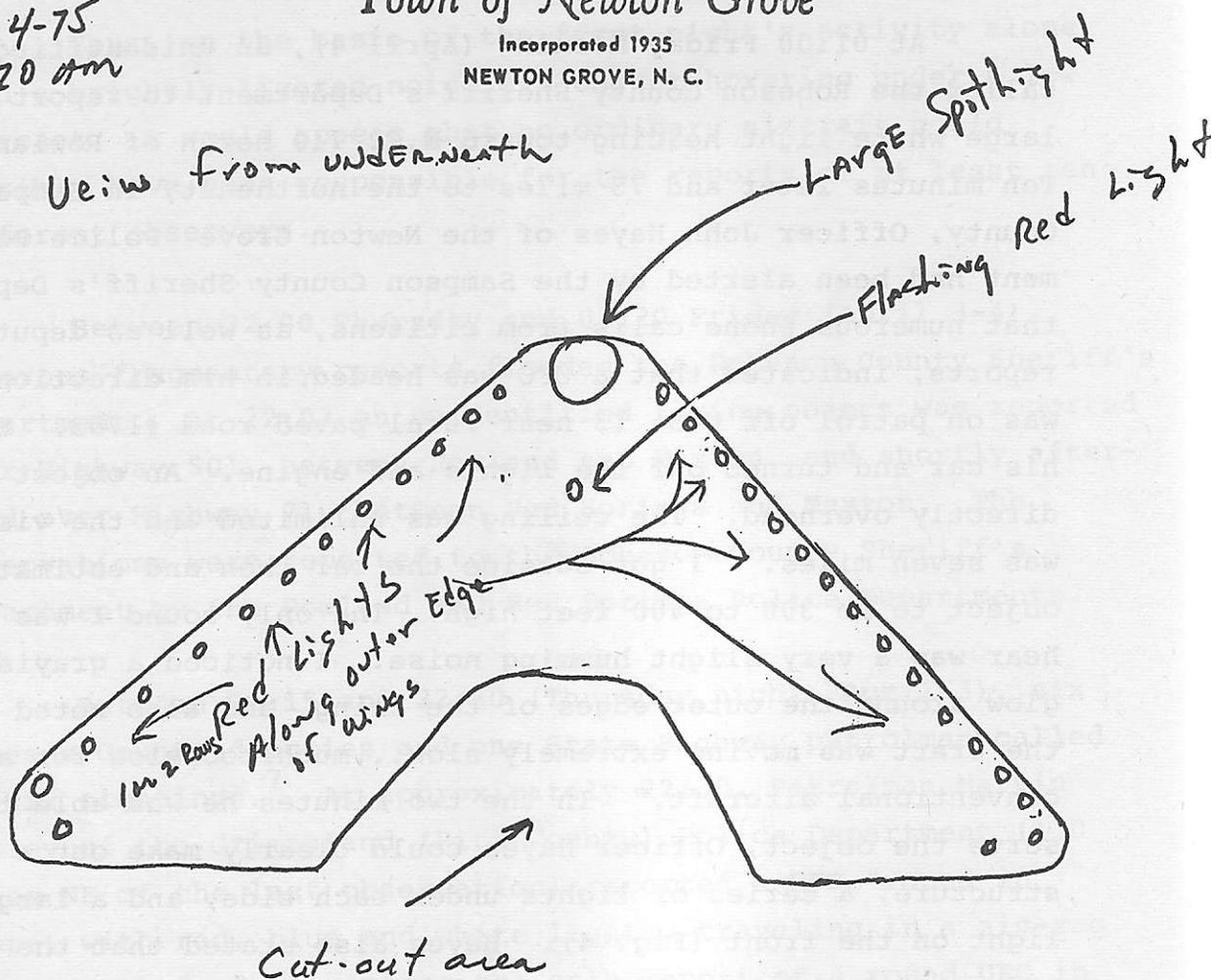
At 01:30 Policeman Ernest Haggin and two passengers were on a rural road north of St. Pauls when they spotted a flying V-shaped object. Haggin stopped and got out of the car. The outstanding features were a large white spotlight in front and rows of red and green lights along the edges. The altitude was estimated to be 200 feet; the distance to the object to be 500 feet. It appeared somewhat bigger than a car and was moving not less than 50 mph. "It was coming directly toward me when suddenly it turned sharply...it didn't bank...and started heading toward Fayetteville. I started to chase it in the patrol car. I got up to 70 mph, until I was right beside it, and then it started to pick up speed. I got up to 100 mph, and then it

U.S. 135. + RPR 1703
NEWTON GROVE
4-75
1:20 AM

Figure 4.

Town of Newton Grove

Incorporated 1935
NEWTON GROVE, N. C.



Heading S.E. Along NC 55 E.

This sketch drawn by Officer
John Hayes, Newton Grove, N.C.
It was also identified by other
law officers whose names are
on this paper.

Harry Moore
Ernest Hagans

John W. Hayes
William H. Hagans
Phillip A. Stanton

~~John W. Hayes~~
~~William H. Hagans~~
~~Phillip A. Stanton~~

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just left real fast. I viewed the object for about eight minutes, and I never heard it make any sound, except when it turned and made a 'shhh' type of noise."

Robeson County Special Deputy William Halstead was driving south along Route 301 at 01:45 with three other lawmen when a report came over the radio from the Rowland Police Department of a UFO heading north near Route 301. "A few seconds later I saw it myself," Halstead said. "I stopped the car, got out, and looked through binoculars at it for about 30 seconds. It seemed to have a V-shaped body that I could make out because a large bright light on the front of it illuminated the perimeter of the object. It was between 200 and 300 feet in altitude, and it remained stationary for about fifteen seconds before moving off rapidly without making any sound." Halstead described the object as "big as an average car." The three other men in the car were unimpressed by the object, according to Halstead.

An object matching this description was seen in Rowland, 15 miles south of Halstead's position, a minute and a half after his sighting.

Before midnight on Thursday night, Reverend Evander Parnell had been alone in his home in Lumberton monitoring the police radio. It occurred to him that he knew "a good place for UFO watching," so he drove out to a site in open country about eight miles west of Lumberton on Rt. 74. Rev. Parnell was parked about 90 minutes before he made his observation. At 01:45 on Friday morning he saw a "very luminous yellowish-white light, about the same size as the moon but brighter than the moon," which appeared "out of nowhere" and seemed to go down in the woods about a half-mile from his position. The light, which was soundless, increased in intensity as it descended, lighting up the woods "like they was on fire." The light came to a dead

stop, apparently on the ground, then after a few seconds it went out. Parnell never observed the light ascending. He felt that the UFO did have some form--"It was not just a light."⁸

The next reported sighting of a V-shaped object was by Mr. James Ed. Floyd, at the Alamac Knitting Mill. Mr. Floyd made four observations, each on a different date, and for purposes of comparison they are grouped separately, below.

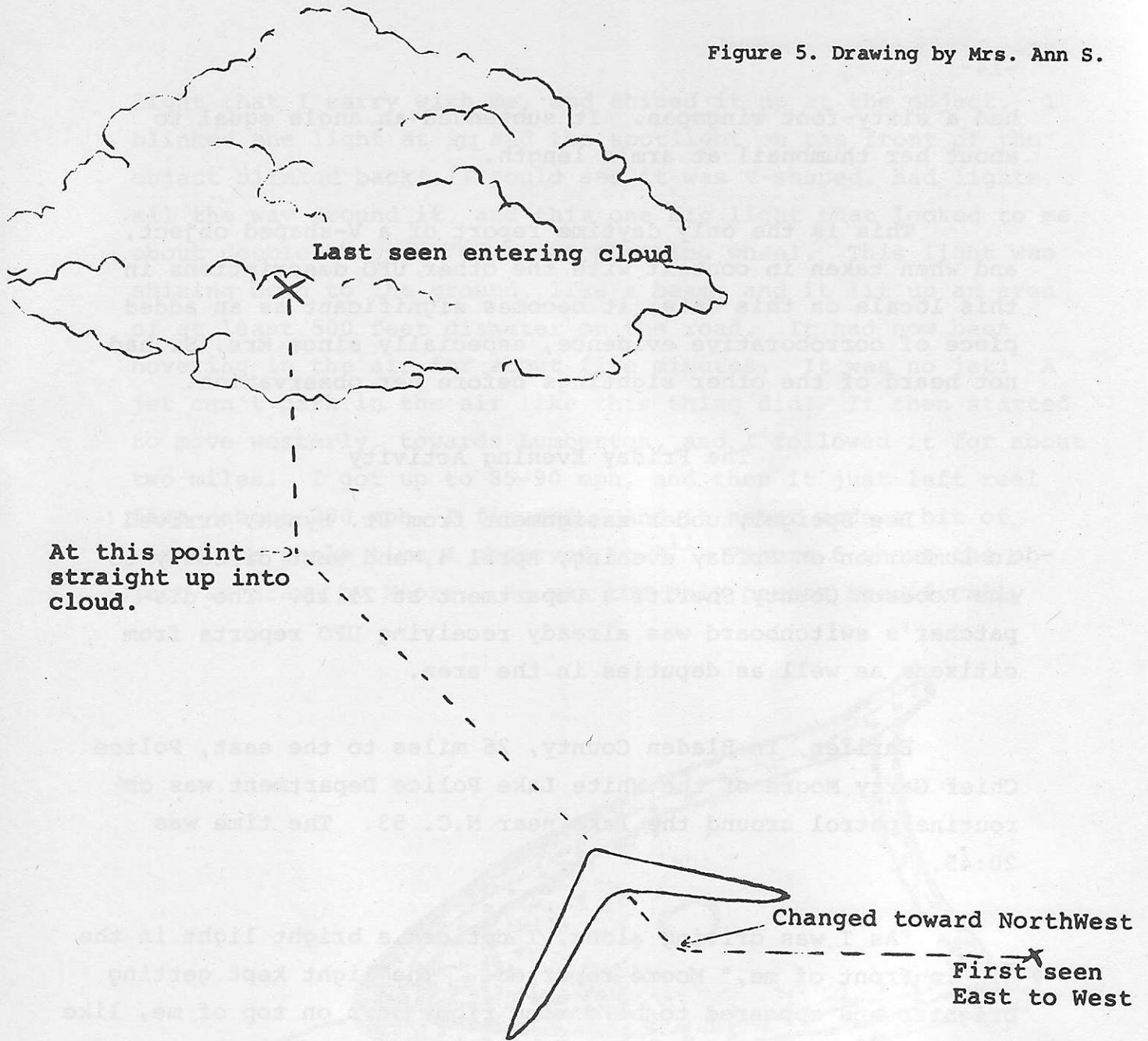
The V-shaped Object at Noon

The only known daylight observation of a V-shaped object occurred next, on Friday noon near Jacksonville, North Carolina, 100 miles east of Lumberton. The sky was clear with light scattered cumulus clouds, wind gusting up to 50 knots. At 12:20, Mrs. Ann S.,⁹ the wife of a Marine Corps officer, had just opened the drapes in her suburban home, and was watching two seagulls in flight. Suddenly a V-shaped craft flying almost in line with the gulls caught her attention. The craft was a bright non-reflective white with no visible seams or ports. It was heading into the wind at an estimated speed of 80 to 100 mph. She first sighted the craft flying from east to west. It then changed to a NW heading, flew horizontally toward a cloud, then flew straight up, disappearing into the cloud as the cloud passed over it (Fig. 5). The craft seemed to "slip" from one altitude to another. There was a slight hesitation but not a full stop as it changed flight path from horizontal to vertical. As it flew up into the cloud its speed increased to approxi-

⁸The above information was obtained in a phone conversation I had with Parnell on October 21, 1975. It conflicts with Lee Speigel's account of his original interview with Parnell soon after the event, in which Parnell allegedly stated "I saw a brightly lit object rise up from behind the trees, making no noise. It rose to about 300 feet and headed east real fast."

⁹She has requested that her name not be used.

Figure 5. Drawing by Mrs. Ann S.



mately 200 mph. Its altitude, while in horizontal flight, was estimated at 1500 feet; the horizontal distance could have been as much as one-fourth mile when first seen, but the object was almost directly overhead when it entered the cloud. Mrs. S. is very familiar with all kinds of aircraft, and felt that any conventional aircraft would have been audible from inside the house under these circumstances. She estimated that the object