

Vancouver, WA
Columbian
(Cir. D. 42,882)
(Cir. S. 44,968)

MAR 17 1981

Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

UFO

Area has close encounter; no one knows what kind

By **BILL STEWART**
Columbian Writer

It could have been little green men — what more appropriate on St. Patrick's day? — or perhaps it was an illegal drug delivery.

But whatever it was, a lot of officials were scurrying around this morning along the Columbia River between Ridgefield and Woodland. There was talk of an airplane crash and of an unidentified flying object. Some residents reported seeing an "orange ball" in the sky. An Oregon State Patrol trooper even tape-recorded the noise that accompanied a red glow in the sky.

Coast Guard officials were somewhat miffed, after sending two boats to the scene, to discover that no one reported that the "crashed" object later "uncrashed" and flew away.

A Ridgefield man apparently saw something and discussed it on citizens band radio. That conversation was overheard by a Washington State Patrol trooper, who relayed it to Vancouver where it was telephoned to the Clark County Sheriff's Office.

That report was of a "big red glow, and a loud screeching noise when the object went into the river." Ridgefield is about two miles east of the Columbia.

Dick Henderson, director of the Federal Aviation Administration area office in Hillsboro, Ore., speculated that the object might have been a craft heading to or from the Scappoose, Ore., airport, or, he speculated further, might have involved a drug operation — especially since there was a 56-minute gap between first and last sighting. Henderson said there were no aircraft

reported missing or overdue in the area.

The aviation official also said some of the details, such as the noise reported, did not match helicopter or high-performance aircraft sounds.

Coast Guard spokesman Norm Swenson said the Oregon police report at 5:05 a.m. resulted in the scrambling of a crew to run a 32-foot patrol boat from the Portland station to St. Helens, Ore. A private boat from the Coast Guard Auxiliary was dispatched from St. Helens.

"The Portland boat got all the way there and found nothing," Swenson said today. "Someone reported it down but did not report it when it went back up again."

Cascade Helicopters, based at Scappoose, said it had no units in the air at that hour.