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Women spot UFO hovering over Duarte

Two Baldwin Park women were driving down Buena Vista Avenue near Arrow Highway in Duarte on the way to work when it happened.

"I happened to look up and I saw this really bright light," said Mrs. Hope Alderete, 47.

"It was really bright," she said. "We got kind of scared."

"At first it was very far away, but then it started getting closer. It spun around."

Said Mrs. Sylvia Ortega, 32: "We just saw this light. It had a little bubble on it. It was gliding with us."

Mrs. Alderete added that the object was round and flat. "I've never seen anything like it."

The two women were hesitant to report what they had seen. "Maybe people would think we are crazy," Mrs. Alderete said. Neither says it was a flying saucer, just that they saw something highly unusual flying in the air early on a cloudy morning about a week ago.

As is often the case, the National Weather Service has an explanation: a weather balloon. According to the NWS, a balloon had been launched from West Los Angeles about 30 minutes before the Baldwin Park women sighted their strange object.

The winds could have carried the balloon to the area, they said.

The morning in Duarte was partially cloudy last Monday; the women reported. The NWS said that weather balloons, struck by a rising sun, can pro-

duce a bright glow when seen through low clouds if the balloons themselves are above the clouds.

But the weather balloon explanation doesn't wash with Mrs. Alderete. "It didn't look like a balloon to me," she said.

What it was, nobody will ever know, and the sighting itself was not all that unusual. The point is that reports of Unidentified Flying Objects, which used to appear like clockwork in news stories, have become scarce critters. Does this mean there are fewer sightings?

"No," says Jim Eppes of the UFO Education Center in Valley Center, Calif. "The number of sightings remains pretty constant."

What happens, he explained, is that the amount of coverage given by the media to UFO sightings fluctuates. When movies like "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" or "E.T.—The Extraterrestrial" hit the silver screen, the news media is more likely to pick up UFO stories.

Another thing that is happening, Eppes said, is that police and sheriffs are now referring sighting reports to organizations like the UFO Education Center rather than taking it all down themselves. Fewer detailed reports wind up on the police report boards, so police reporters don't see them as often.

But, whatever the fluctuations of media interest, he said, the number of sightings reported to the center remains constant at between 10 and 15 per month.

While the number of sightings remain constant; they tend to occur in clusters in different areas. Lately, he said, there have been a number of reports of sightings in the Sacramento area.

The UFO center, one of many in the United States and the world, was started officially sometime in the 1960s, but got its real beginnings in the 1950s, when George Adamski wrote books about visits from aliens that look just like us but are from other planets. These aliens are benign, intelligent creatures.

They were attracted to Earth in large numbers after the first atomic bomb blasts, Eppes said. They are afraid we'll blow ourselves up and wind up polluting the solar system, he explained.