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HUNTSVILLE, AL. (A8)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1983

Return of the UFO

We let pass without comment the reports several days ago about the unidentified flying objects near the Browns Ferry Nuclear Power Plant in Limestone County. After all, over the years we've seen UFO flaps come and go and they definitely seem to run in cycles — although we've never determined exactly what the cycle is.

By the same token, we generally are hesitant to pass judgment on those who say they have seen strange objects and lights in the sky, especially when the witnesses are the likes of law enforcement officers, public officials and ministers. When we saw the photos of the folks waiting in the field all night with their cameras, we weren't too surprised, but we didn't expect them to turn up anything.

Then came the discovery of the three orange and translucent garbage bags, filled with helium and with flashlights that were found Monday night in a field near the Browns Ferry Plant. We chuckled over the obvious hoax and figured the persons who reported the UFO sightings must have felt relieved to learn that they had seen something anyway.

But then, almost like the chilling twist at the end of an old horror film, a Limestone County deputy reported that in the pre-dawn hours Wednesday his patrol car was pursued by a strange bright light as he drove toward Athens. The deputy reported that when he would speed up, the UFO would do likewise and only when he approached the city limits of Athens, did the light veer off. Other law enforcement officers also reported they saw strange lights that night.

Perhaps an elaborate hoax is continuing — we may never know. If it is a hoax, however, we'd like to meet the perpetrators, for we can't help but admire them for their ingenuity, as misdirected as it is.