

Mysterious fireball surprises fishermen

3464
Associated Press

Bellingham, Wash. — A large white and orange fireball trailing sparks splashed down early Saturday off Lummi Island and sent a plume of water 100 feet high, then sank and bubbled, a fishing boat crew reported.

The Coast Guard investigated but found no debris. Checks with other authorities revealed no missing planes or space junk crashing in the area and the object remained an "unknown flying object," said Petty Officer Gene Hoff in Seattle.

"It depends on what you care to believe. I have personally never seen a UFO, but anything is possible, I guess," he said.

The Coast Guard has no plans to investigate further. The object apparently sank in water 270 feet deep in an area of intense currents in Rosario Strait and it would be "difficult to do a survey down there," said Rich Rogala, the officer in charge of the Coast Guard station at Bellingham, which sent a boat to the scene.

"A white and orange fireball trailing sparks was observed by the fishing vessel Steeva Ten. It was traveling west to east and dived into the water," he said. "The observation was very brief. The impact sent a plume of water about 100 feet in height."

The incident was reported at 3:45 a.m. Saturday about 1,000 yards south of Lummi Island, about eight miles south of Bellingham in the inland waters of northwest Washington.

The splashdown was reported to the Coast Guard by the Steeva Ten, a 42-foot fishing vessel

tender. A flash in the sky was noticed at the same time by a tugboat at Anacortes about five miles to the south, Rogala said.

He speculated it could have been a meteorite. But there are a couple of other mysteries in the Coast Guard report.

"The crew of the fishing vessel said the object dropped straight down and just before it hit the water it did a 'U' and came back up, then went down," Hoff said.

And a crewman aboard the Coast Guard vessel that found no debris noticed an "object, white in color . . . in the sky at the south end of Lummi Island," Rogala said. The crewman saw the object while his vessel was searching for debris from the earlier "flash."

The object sighted by the crewman "was not a plane because of the velocity at which it was moving. It was described as slightly less bright than a parachute flare, which is pretty bright for that time of night," Rogala said.

The Coast Guard vessel searched the area for more than an hour with the master of the fishing vessel, Richard Dale Hartman of Port Orchard.

"There was no indication of anything having gone in the water, other than the information we received from the witness," Rogala said.

The Coast Guard checked with the nearby Whidbey Island Naval Air Station and nothing unusual had been sighted on radar there, Hoff said.

Anchorage, AK
Daily Times
(Cir. D. 43,212)
(Cir. S. 53,595)

JUL 29 1984