

August 27 1984 SF chron

Thousands of UFO Sightings Dazzling Suburban New York

Jenny Marie

New Castle, N.Y.

A public hearing was plodding along routinely at the Town Hall one night last month.

"All of a sudden, a cop burst in yelling: 'The UFO's here! The UFO's here!'" said Peter A. Brandenburg, a 43-year-old real estate developer. "Everyone jumped up and jolted out. We went flying down the stairs to see this thing, just staring at it."

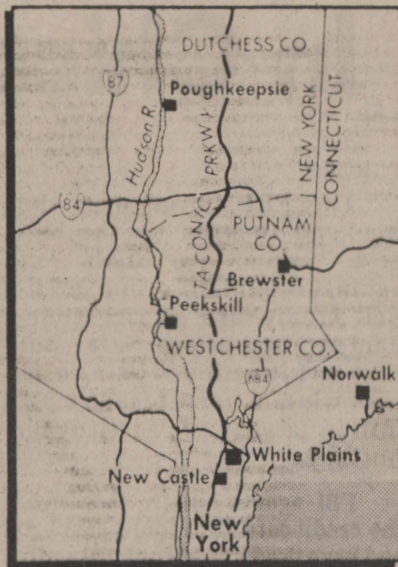
On a night before that, 29-year-old William A. Pollard was driving along Interstate 84 near Brewster.

"My neighbors said they had seen something," said Pollard, who manages an automobile service center. "I said, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.' I never believed in that stuff. But off in a field I saw this gigantic triangle with lights, about 30 feet off the ground — hovering. Then it turned off its lights and shot straight up — straight up. That's when I said, 'Whoa! Wait a minute here.'"

Throughout northern Westchester County, Dutchess and Putnam counties and western Connecticut this summer, thousands of residents have reported strange objects in the sky — each usually in a V-shape or a circle, about the size of a football field, absolutely noiseless and outlined in brilliant lights of white, red or green.

At night, the curious sometimes crowd the Taconic Parkway, a prime site for viewing.

The state police say the "object" is really five or six small planes flying in tight formation as part of a hoax. Some residents are not so sure. Others say that if that is the case, authorities ought to put an end to it.



The area where the UFOs have been most frequently seen

"If it's not a UFO," said Irene Lunn of Mahopac, "I want to know exactly what it is and what it's doing around here. And I want it stopped."

Lunn was among those who reported the most recent sighting, last Monday night. She was coming home from the supermarket at 9 p.m. with her 5-year-old daughter, Erica, when, she said, "I saw it over a pond on a nearby farm, high enough to just clear the trees, traveling south."

"It wasn't an airplane, it wasn't a helicopter, it wasn't a hang glider. There was no sound at all. You could hear the crickets."

She described an object "about three-quarters the size of my house,

with an L-shaped structure suspended underneath it."

"It actually stopped over the house," Lunn said. "At one point, all the lights went green, then red, then they went back to a pattern of green and red and white. I felt like it was letting us know it knew we were watching it. That was scary. It went on for about 10 minutes."

Sergeant Kenneth Spiro of the state police, which is responsible for the area in which sightings have been, said one officer followed the object.

"He tracked it to Stormville airport," Spiro said. "It was a group of light planes. They fly in formation. The undersides and under the wings are painted black, so they can't be seen from the ground. The planes are rigged with bright lights that they can turn from one color to another. It's the lights that give the shape to the UFO."

"The trooper spoke to a couple of the pilots, and they're getting a big kick out of it. There's no violation of the law here."

He refused to name the trooper or the pilots.

Yet, for many people, questions remain. Some wondered how airplanes could hover silently or shoot straight up into the air. Others said that they had seen the hoaxers but that they had also seen something different.

Many residents want an investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration, but the agency does not seem interested.

In an effort to pull together information, Peter Gersten, a crimi-

nal lawyer who has made sightings from his apartment in Peekskill, organized a meeting Saturday that was attended by UFO experts and local officials who heard witnesses and saw photographs of the myste-

rious objects.

Among those present was J. Allen Hynek, heads the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Ill., a private group that acts as a clear-

inghouse for UFO reports. He said, "When you have highly trained technical people, lawyers, CPAs, government people seeing what they're seeing, you have to look into it."