

UFOs? They'd come as no surprise to some

By DARLENE H. GARDNER
Post-Courier Reporter

If extraterrestrials are patrolling our airways, a lot of people aren't going to be surprised.

Unidentified Flying Objects have been lighting up the skies — or, at least, people's imaginations — for hundreds of years.

No one can say for sure who or what is in the pilot seat, but legions of people swear they weren't hallucinating when they spotted a UFO.

Others say there are logical explanations for the sightings. Most UFOs, in fact, are later identified as weather balloons, meteors, stars, artificial satellites, optical illusions and the like.

In a year when people are looking up at the sky in search of Halley's Comet, it seems appropriate to review newspaper accounts of unexplained UFO sightings reported over the years by state residents.

■ **Anderson, September 1980** — An Anderson County man peered inside a UFO, but it was so brightly lit he couldn't see anything. It all started when he and his wife were awakened by a humming noise. They looked in the sky and saw the culprit — a disc-shaped UFO that was about 70 feet long and two stories high. His wife told the Associated Press: "It was beautiful, just beautiful. It was just like a giant star."

The man and his wife weren't the only ones seeing stars that night. Several Anderson County residents and two county sheriffs also reported seeing the object.

■ **Charleston, August 1979** — A UFO that McDonald's would envy was spotted above the treeline along U.S. Highway 17-A near Summerville. "It hovered about 200 feet away spinning like on an axis. It had the shape of a big hamburger," reported one of the two men who claimed to have seen it.

The object was small with a shiny metallic surface and reflected the sun's rays as it slowly rotated. The men were so fascinated they pursued the object when it moved on, but they lost it in the chase.

"If we hadn't both seen it," one man said, "I would be afraid to talk about it."

■ **Charleston, May 1979** — Merely spotting a UFO thrills most people, but a Charleston man's brush with extraterrestrials was even more eye-opening. He claimed to have boarded a UFO not once, but twice.

He said he didn't remember the first incident, however, until extraterrestrials sent him a strange-looking metal bar shaped like an ingot bearing the letters "MAN." Only then did he recall the March 1978 abduction.

This was his story:

He was writing one night when his home shook, his lights flickered and "a globe of blue-green light" grew on his desk. It was the bar, which aliens later told him was a gift to convey their gratitude for the way he handled the first encounter.

The first time, he was watching a UFO from some railroad tracks when it suddenly zoomed toward him and shone on him a blinding beam of aquamarine light. He tried to move, but "it was like I was paralyzed."

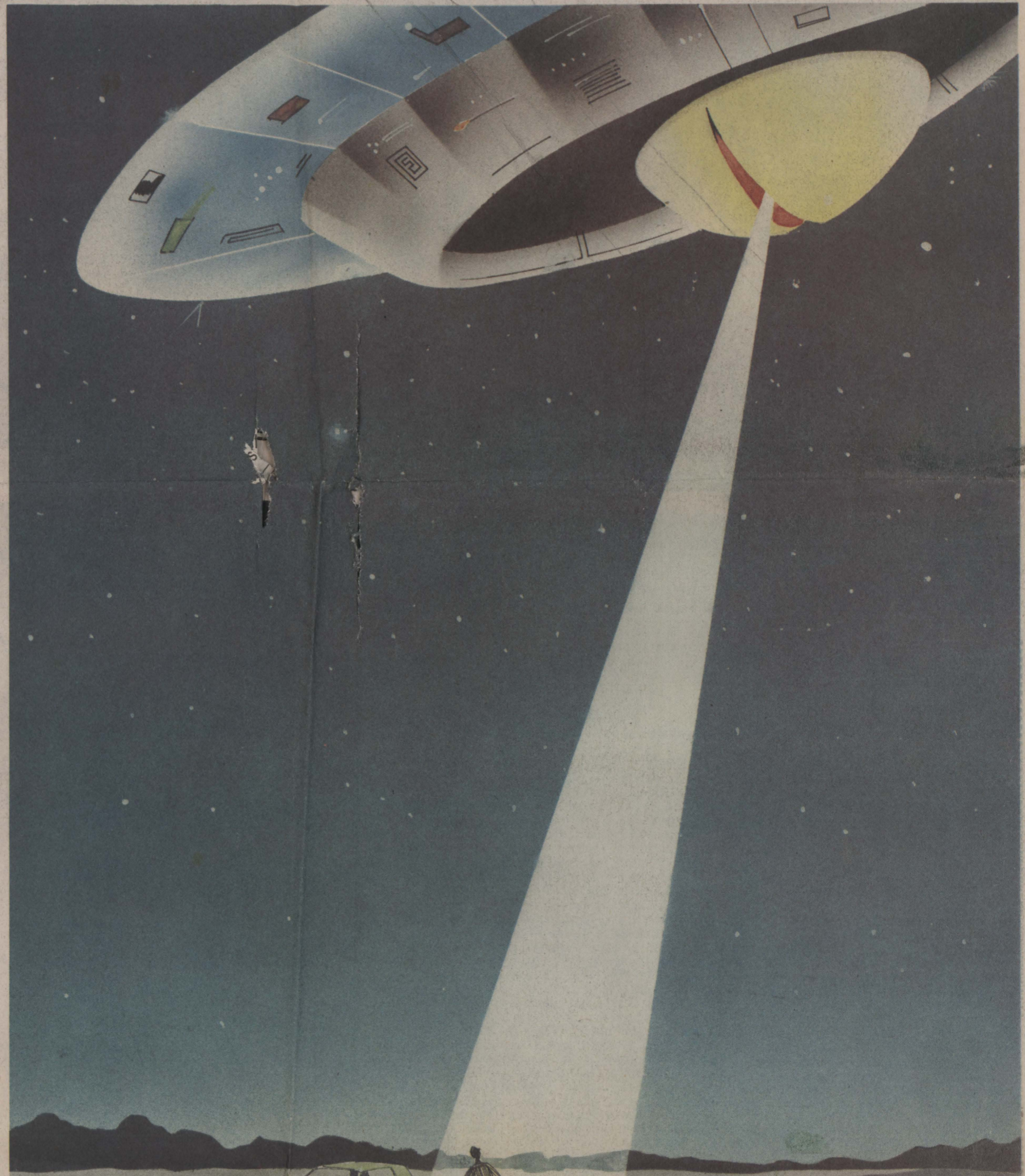
He later remembered being on a low examination table about two feet off the floor as three strange-looking beings watched him. "Their skin was the color of marshmallow. Their eyes were long and dark with a brown iris. Their heads looked like overgrown human fetuses with no ears or hair," he said.

The second encounter occurred about a month after the bar appeared. He again boarded the UFO after feeling an urge to go to the spot where he had first encountered it.

In June of 1983, the man informed the public through a letter to the editor that he was no longer involved in the subject. He called the UFO phenomena "satanic in nature, demonic in origin."

■ **Georgetown, April 1975** — If a UFO did drop a half-foot piece of something onto a Georgetown man's car, it must not have liked the looks of the vehicle.

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The man was driving north between Charleston and Georgetown when his car was struck by something resembling flooring material from a military aircraft or helicopter. He took the incident in stride until he heard radio and television reports of UFO sightings in North and South Carolina.

His curiosity aroused, the man drove the road back to Charleston in search of the object. Near Cape Romain, he recovered the large piece of metal that had struck the car.

The mystery deepened after a check with Air Force bases turned up no reports of military or civilian aircraft accidents in the area. If the source of the fallen debris was a UFO, the visitors must not have been friendly.

■ **Bonneau Beach, June 1973** — Imagine gazing into the heavens and seeing a radiant pink UFO. That's what a Hanahan woman said happened to her while she was spending the afternoon at Bonneau Beach.

"It was the oddest color. It wasn't blue or green or red, but a hot, radiant pink. It was round like a headlight," she said. The object moved from left to right faster than a commercial plane but slower than a jet. Finally, while she and a friend watched, the silent UFO zoomed out of sight.

■ **Sumter, October 1973** — Spaceships seemed to like the area around a Sumter couple's home. The UFOs put in a repeat performance a month after the couple spotted the objects while returning home from a movie.

The second time, the couple went to the window of



their home after being awakened by a speeding car and saw two bright lights blinking on and off. "The lights seemed like they were connected to two solid egg-shaped things," the woman said. "They had thin tube-looking things hanging down from the bottom, kind of like landing gear."

The couple watched the UFO for at least two hours before going back to bed. "We didn't get much sleep, though," the woman said.

■ **Charleston, October 1973** — No one could say there wasn't a UFO in the sky around Charleston in 1973. Ten callers reported sighting the UFO to police and The News and Courier. One of our own reporters even claimed to have seen it.

The reporter was sent to investigate after members of a fire department told the newspaper they had a telescope focused on the object. The reporter found that the object — which pulsed with red, white and green lights and appeared to be the size of a large star —

could be seen with the naked eye.

The reporter didn't say whether he thought spacemen were inside.

■ **Somewhere near Owings, September 1973** — UFOs can sometimes play funny tricks on the eye. A woman returning to Greenville from Columbia mistook one for a transfer truck.

As it got nearer, however, she noticed a blue light in the front end of the oblong object. She said the object stirred up dust, moved in a cumbersome manner and made no noise. It did, however, make the radio go dead.

The sides of the UFO were pitted and the object had three lights — one red, one white and one blue. She said she had a strange sensation as if needles were in her eyes and her pupils were exploding. She then had a severe headache.

Meanwhile, the UFO rose and zoomed over a pine forest, disappearing from sight.

■ **Charleston, March 1966** — An employee of a soft

drink bottling plant had irrefutable evidence that he and another man spotted a UFO while heading for work. "I know we saw it," he said. "We were both wide awake and neither of us drinks."

The men were in a car when they saw the object spinning directly overhead. They stopped and watched the UFO — which was about 14 feet tall and 20 or 21 feet in diameter — for seven or eight minutes.

"It looked like a sterling silver disc," one of the men said. "We just happened to look into the sky, it was such a pretty day."

■ **Spartanburg, July 1964** — A UFO with a penchant for derring-do was reported by a sales executive. He said a circular object that made a hissing sound buzzed his car twice. It flew away when he pulled off the road and turned on his lights.

The object was decidedly unpleasant. The man said it

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gave off heat and burned his arm. It also had an odor like embalming fluid and fin-like attachments around its outer edges. The bottom portion whirled in one direction as the upper part twirled the opposite way.

Federal Aviation Agency employees examined his car and found oily spots. The sales executive concluded that it was fuel from the UFO.

■ **Charleston, August 1952** — UFOs filled the Charleston skies one summer night in 1952. Three people phoned The News and Courier to report sightings and two of them came up with some hair-raising stories.

One caller claimed a UFO came in-

to his house and burned a hole through his screen door. He said it was a "kind of silver thing, like fire and making a whistling sound. It was about five inches in diameter and it moved around the room and then suddenly it was gone."

Another caller said she was sitting on the piazza of her Murray Boulevard home when she and her nephew saw an object making a leisurely arc down the river toward Fort Sumter.

"Now I haven't got mass hysteria," the woman said. "It had red and green lights, and I tell you it was a creepy thing. I got 20 years older just all of a sudden."