

Our reporter sees some UFOs — really!

The call came about 10 p.m., not long after I'd gotten home from a commissioners' meeting in Corydon, donned my county robe and stretched out on the sofa.

"They're here," she said.

"Who? I wondered. The commissioners?"

Shaking the cobwebs from my reporter's Monday-night, get-ready-for-tomorrow's deadline brain, it struck me — UPO! In New Middletown.

Mickey Shawler, a spunky, not-afraid-to-tell-it-like-it-is type, had promised to call if "they" paid her another nocturnal visit.

I could come see for myself that she wasn't crazy, she said.

So I grabbed my sweats from the dirty clothes basket, threw on a jacket and, because someone had hidden my Reeboks, slipped on my fuzzy red houseboots and ran out the front door. Virgil, my helminth, had already cranked up the Chevy, and was backing out the grave-driveway.

"Hurry," he said, "or they'll be gone before we get there."

We hit every pothole between our private lane and Shawler's place off the Corydon-New Middletown Road — a trip of about five miles.

"I can't believe we're doing this,"

Jackie

Carpenter



Virgil said, "Don't you dare tell anyone!"

(Sorry, buddy, I'm a reporter, and UPO stories don't land in my territory every day. That's not to say there haven't been stranger stories, but they were the down-on-earth variety.)

After passing up Mickey's house, we doubled back and finally found Harrison County Police Officer Steve Hamm, standing on the porch, gazing up.

The star-studded night was clear, but nippy, with a strong wind. Planes slipped overhead, to and from Louisville's Standiford Field in the east.

Sure enough, there "they" were — and there were several. One hovered

in the northeast, rising above the treeline some 500 yards across a field. Hamm estimated they were about 12 miles away, in the vicinity of Lanesville.

Not knowing the actual size, it was difficult to judge the distance, he said.

One of the bright orange objects, glowing silently like a lightbulb, would grow dim and disappear, then reappear minutes later, either in the same spot or rising from behind the trees. At one time, it hovered as long as five minutes, about 200 yards above the treeline. At the same time, other, seemingly smaller lights, would appear nearby briefly or fly sideways — like a flash — to the south, either disappearing suddenly or after a brief stop.

"There has to be a reasonable explanation for this, but I sure can't figure out what it is," Virgil said. At first he thought they were airplanes in a holding pattern, but he discounted that theory because the activity of the recognizable ones was obvious. Sometimes a plane would fly over and the object would disappear, then return. Gas pockets in the atmosphere? Not seven nights in a row, surely. Secret Fort Knox maneuvers? Silent helicopters? Nothing fit.

Even Virgil, a no-nonsense fellow who avoids space flicks and other tall tales, admitted, after watching the goings-on for more than an hour, "Something is really weird here."

Well, I thought, if they would only land, I could get the interview to beat all interviews.

Now I was afraid they would leave. There was absolutely nothing frightening about the strange encounter. Father, it was fascinating.

I was struck by the idea that, while we stood there gawking, "they" might be gawking back, not believing their eyes, and asking: "What could those things be? Look at those creatures moving around, silently, and that one in silly red shoes. How big do you think they are? Do you suppose there really is intelligent life on earth?"

"Nah — couldn't be. They don't even know how to glow."

But a few days later, my friend and colleague, John I. (Jah) Combs of The Crawford County Democrat, was quick to shoot down my theory.

He said, "If there was life on any other planet, we would've been sending them foreign aid by now."

OK, Combs. So where's the Iran-Contra missing millions? Mars?