

Fyffe weary of UFO mania

By Frank Sikora
News staff writer

FYFFE — It was raining across much of Alabama Saturday and at no place was it more welcome than in Fyffe, a Sand Mountain town of 1,300 about 95 miles north of Birmingham.

"I hope it pours and I hope it rains again next Friday," said Tammie Mitchell, the town municipal clerk. "We need a rest."

This DeKalb County town has been the center of reported UFO sightings in recent weeks.

The lure of a close encounter with some extraterrestrials drew an estimated 4,000 earthlings to the town Friday night, turning Main Street into a traffic carnival.

"It looks like we're having a Christmas parade or something," Police Chief Junior Garmany said.

At one point he had to order another officer to clear a traffic tie-up at the blinking yellow light a block from city hall.

As out-of-towners rode slowly through the streets, several teenage boys — some wearing red Fyffe High School jackets — hooted and pointed to the sky, shouting "There it is. It's a UFO."

Muttered the chief, "I think some of these people are trying to perform for the TV crews."

It was Garmany and Assistant Chief Fred Works who reported the sighting that put Fyffe on space watchers' maps.

The two said that on the night of Feb. 10 they saw a large pale object that passed directly over them without a sound. They said it had three large white lights which illuminated the craft.

Others have reported seeing a craft that looked "banana-shaped," but Garmany and Works said that was not what they saw.

Regardless, that sighting prompted a bevy of others — bluish lights, red and green lights, white lights, things that



NEWS STAFF PHOTO/BEVERLY TAYLOR

With bonfire blazing in the background, Ken Williams of Gadsden, his daughter Katie, 11, and son Kenneth, 9, search for UFO Friday night.

were not airplanes.

On the outskirts of town Friday night, Fire Chief Ricky Dobbins built a huge bonfire behind his house. About 50 people gathered, gazing into the night skies for some sign of a lighted object.

But all they saw were the sparks that popped and hissed from the fire. Larry Kennedy was one of those at the fire.

"There have been too many sightings all over the world for there not to be some significance," he said. "Whether it's psychological or material, there's something to it. I'm just curious."

He and others later listened as Doris Kilpatrick, 50, of Crossville, told of seeing a UFO. She said she saw it last Wednesday at about 9:30 p.m. She said it had green and red lights on the perimeter and three large white lights on the bottom.

"It went over the Rodentown community where my sister Agnes Kilgore

lives, and she told me later that there was such a bright white light that it lit up the inside of her house and hurt her eyes," Mrs. Kilpatrick said.

There have been other reports of people being "blinded" by a bright white light.

There was one report — never confirmed — that a resident of the Lick Skillet community fired a 12-gauge shotgun at an object he sighted.

The celestial mood here has prompted Charles Bailey, 31, and Nathan Jones, 37, to start selling T-shirts with UFO designs on them. Friday night they sold about 60 at \$12 a shirt. Part of the funds were to go to the Fyffe Fire Department.

Since Feb. 10 the reports have come in with regularity from other small towns that line the crest of Sand Mountain, places such as Geraldine, Crossville and Powell.

The people here believe that some-

thing is being seen — they don't know what.

"There must be something to it," said Charles Finley, who lives here. "If there wasn't, all these people wouldn't be here."

And his wife Faye added, "If I did see something, it'd scare the fire out of me."

And Ms. Mitchell, the municipal court clerk, added, "We believe the officers. If they told us they saw green men coming out, we'd believe it. But they didn't say that. They just said they saw something which is unidentified. But they've been having a hard time. That's why we need a break."

Chief Garmany is noticeably deliberate when a UFO report comes in.

"I don't get up and start running," he said, adding that "if one sits down in the middle of the street and blocks traffic, then I'll respond."