

VIDEO

UFO story a fine mystery

With GRAHAM COOKE

Fire in the Sky. CIC Video. 105 minutes. Rated M. Stars D.B. Sweeney, Robert Patrick, Craig Sheffer, Peter Berg, James Garner. Director Robert Lieberman.

RETURNING home from work in November, 1975, six Arizona loggers notice a strange light in the sky above the trees. It's in the wrong place for the sunset and too steady to be a forest fire. They decide to investigate.

What happened next provided a fascinating pre-Christmas story for the world's media. Five of the men burst out of the forest into the small town of Snowflake to tell the authorities that the sixth, Travis Walton, had been abducted by an alien spacecraft.

Fire in the Sky is a dramatic representation of what followed, and of the incredible story that Walton, played here by D. B. Sweeney, told when he finally turned up, naked and dehydrated, five days later.

This was not the first story of

This was not the first story of man's encounter with an Unidentified Flying Object, and it certainly has not been the last. What makes it different is the dogged way individual members of the group have stuck to their story, without variation, over the years, and the inability of professional investigators and sceptics to find an impressive alternative scenario.

The most popular theory is that the group collaborated in a hoax, either as an attention seeker, or in the prospect of making money out of the publicity that followed. If that was the case, the plot was a failure. At first, before Travis reappeared, the others found themselves under



Police chief Frank Watters (James Garner) standing, questions members of the logging group on the mysterious disappearance of one of their number. From the left, Greg Hayes (Henry Thomas), Davis Whitlock (Peter Berg) and Mike Rogers (Robert Patrick). A scene from *Fire in the Sky*.

suspicion of having murdered him, then the stresses of facing an incredulous world quickly told. Mike Rogers (Robert Patrick) the leader of the group, lost his wife as a direct result, and retired to almost hermit-like isolation in the forest not far from where the incident occurred. No one, it seemed, made any lasting profit from their notoriety.

The men comprised a motley group, thrown together for one log-

ging contract. They were not all friends, there was some clear animosity between them (the reason for the original murder theory) but in the matter of what happened on this one night they have backed each other with a single mindedness that would do credit to a secret society — or the truth.

What is the truth? We shall probably never know, and certainly this Robert Lieberman-directed movie

does not attempt to provide the answers. At the end the crusty police chief, Frank Watters (James Garner) obsessed with solving the case and convinced the men are lying, says a flaw in the story will eventually emerge. Eighteen years later he is

emerge. Eighteen years later he is still waiting.

Watch the movie. Enjoy a first-rate mystery, and form your conclusions.