

# UFO pandemonium struck

## PASCAGOULA

**T**hirty years ago this week, UFO pandemonium broke out.

Folks feared an invasion from outer space. Others thought there was much ado about nothing. Everybody wanted more information.

From a newsman's view, I have never seen before or since so many people caught up in such a frenzy. It was over a report by Charles Hickson and Calvin Parker that a spacecraft had landed on the banks of the Pascagoula River and taken them onboard briefly.

"Everybody was seeing



by Gary  
Holland

The Sun  
Herald

UFOs," recalled retired Mississippi Press Managing Editor Don Broadus.

A Pascagoula city councilman said he saw a luminous UFO the same night of Hickson's and Parker's report on the way to a church service in Vancleave.

"That's our story and we're

stuck with it," E. P. Sigalas said.

Pascagoula Patrolman Bill Gennaro stopped on Beach Boulevard to talk with a group of people and they saw an oblong-shaped, blue-haze object zip to the north.

About 3,000 motorists from Mobile blocked Interstate 10 when they heard of a possible rendezvous with UFOs at the Mississippi line.

A cab driver in Biloxi said a UFO caused his taxi to stall out on U.S. 90.

Ocean Springs aldermen failed to pass a motion to make it illegal for a UFO to land in the city. Mayor Tom Stennis broke a 2-2 tie, saying, "Let's welcome

them."

Then-Sheriff Fred Diamond's view: "Those men saw something. They underwent a dreadful experience."

UFO enthusiasts and news crews from all over the world called and many came to Pascagoula to gather more information about the stunning visit by a spacecraft.

"I estimate that we have received more than 2,000 telephone calls from news reporters from around the world wanting information, and from people in the area who wanted to report a sighting," Diamond said.

It was a media frenzy.

## 30 years ago

Networks and national publications showed up. The reports got wild and woolly. It was too much for two shipbuilders who had never been in such demand. They put out a memo: No more personal interviews. Our attorney, Joe Colingo, will arrange a news conference next week.

The space encounter was in the news for weeks. Hickson went on talk shows such as "The Dick Cavett Show." Parker went into seclusion.

I've followed the UFO account for 30 years and am amazed that Hickson and Parker have been so consistent with their account of what happened Oct. 11, 1973. Being a typical newspaper-skeptic, it's still too much to fathom.

Gary Holland is Jackson County associate editor of *The Sun Herald*. He can be reached at 762-0741 and e-mail [garyholland77@aol.com](mailto:garyholland77@aol.com).