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The "Flying Saucers" Episode

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THE "FLYING SAUCERS" EPISODE

by

E. Earl Wennegren

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, in the Department of Journalism, in the Graduate College of the State University of Iowa

June, 1948
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The subject of this thesis perhaps is an odd one, but an enjoyable one to study. To the man who encouraged my enjoyment, Professor Leslie G. Moeller, director of the School of Journalism, State University of Iowa, I owe my deepest appreciation for his kind indulgence, indefatigable patience, and keen interest in the foibles of life. He allowed me a delightful study.

My next citation I owe to Paul Lyness, instructor of journalism, who made available valuable hours and his adept knowledge of research techniques to the completion of this thesis.

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To my wife, Andrene, I promise full restitution for surviving the treachery of my temperament during the writing of this thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

Amidst the devilment occasioned by the traditional Hallowe'en witchcraft in October, 1938, the people of the United States were suddenly moved to fright and terror by an unusual radio dramatization that described an invasion from Mars. Panic swept the nation during and in the wake of Orson Welles' Mercury Theater presentation of H. G. Wells' imaginative novel, War of The Worlds. ¹

Perhaps the foremost mass reaction to an unusual incident since that memorable night began in bright daylight June 24, 1947, over the Cascade mountain range of western Washington. The so-called "flying saucers" were reported sighted for the first time in the United States.

The subsequent results are well-known to anyone in touch with a medium of communication at that time. The first newspaper accounts preceded a sweep of confirmative stories - some creditable, some doubtful, some proven hoaxes, and innumerable explanations - that caught the nation's attention in a matter of days, and the world's inside of three weeks.

Yet a hypothetical person not in contact with a medium of communication during the incident, and returning to read an American newspaper after July 20, 1947, would know nothing of the episode which, shortly before, held the world in its grip. The episode was that short, that concentrated, that volatile.

The event itself was accorded little substance, being taken in large measure with the utmost levity. So far, since it is a most recent occurrence, historians have not given it the courtesy of their talents, except the press and periodicals, which, in many cases, also recorded it humorously. Its immortality may go no further than that, but it will not be forgotten by observers and newspaper readers.

There was a minority which swore by the existence of flying objects between June 24 and July 20. There was a mass audience which reflected a heterogeneous reaction, but admittedly were stimulated to read, listen, and ponder the incredible mystery of the skies. The "flying saucers" may have been a hoax, imagination, illusion, mirages, phantoms of preposterous eyesight, et al, yet they caused a phenomenon reverberations of which were heard around the world.

Robert U. Brown, writing in Editor & Publisher for July 12, 1947, commented it seemed strange that no reporter had dug back into the files far enough to compare the "flying saucers" with the Mercury Theater's Martian invasion in 1938. Undeniably there is a connection, since both might be loosely counted under mass hysteria. This thesis might be said to be partly in response to Mr. Brown's observation, being merely the singular history of the "flying saucer" episode in narrative form, not a study in social psychology.

The material for this recount was taken entirely from newspapers and periodicals published during the tenure of the "flying saucers." Most of the publications were available in the periodical library at the

2. Editor & Publisher, July 12, 1947, p. 72.
An anomaly noticeable throughout this work is the variation in spelling of the sobriquet applied to the "flying saucers." They were called "disks" or "discs" and spelled both ways, depending upon the newspaper. According to Webster's International Dictionary the following definitions differentiate the spellings:

"Disk: A flat, circular plate, as a disk of metal."

"Disc: A disk. The preferred spelling in zoology and in some senses in botany."

Specifically, objects that are artifacts of some sort are called "disks." If they should happen to be alive, the spelling "disc" is more probably correct. The particular spelling used in individual papers is, where used, reproduced verbatim.
Chapter I

THE FIRST OBSERVERS

The majestic peaks of Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams, in the Cascade mountain range of western Washington, are separated by forty-seven miles of wooded hills. On the morning of June 24, 1947, high above that stretch of fir and pine trees, a lone man in an airplane used that distance to time the speed of nine flying objects.

The time he reported, and the description of the nine aerial companions, started a series of spectacular stories that have few equals in modern journalism.

The pilot reported that he sighted "nine shiny objects" flying at a speed of "1200 miles an hour." He said they were "bright, saucer-like objects, flying at 10,000 feet altitude." They flew with a peculiar, dipping motion, "like a fish flipping in the sun," he said. "They were extremely shiny, and when they caught the sun right it nearly blinded me." He also called them "aircraft."

He also carefully estimated their size. He related that a DC-4 (commercial passenger plane) was flying in the vicinity and that the "objects were about the same size as the four-engined passenger ships, although they did not have wings."

A genuine puzzle troubled his peace of mind at the disappearance of the odd flyers. What were they? They had appeared to be real

and swift as a bullet. As a pilot, he often had watched strange actors under the upper proscenium of the heavens. The silhouette of a hawk, the turgid shoulders of a storm approaching broadside, spots in the sky - distant planes, weather balloons, reflections - cloud-wrapped mountain peaks, the whole multifarious lot of common and foreign flyers, had moved before his sky-tested vision. These new objects he had never before met along the skyways.

Apparently the pilot dallied in telling his tale for the story did not emerge in the newspapers until June 26, approximately two days later. Then word of the mysterious sky speedsters was dispatched over the wire facilities of the Associated Press, United Press and International News Service, with the dateline Pendleton, Oregon.

That day the name of Kenneth Arnold, the Boise, Idaho, businessman pilot, who was sole witness to the unusual flight, began to appear in newspapers throughout the United States and Hawaii. 2

The first reports created a ripple of melodrama. Most of the major dailies in the United States reported the sighting; the Chicago Tribune and Sun and New York Times notably ignored it until later. These first stories were the original descriptions by the three major news agencies. Papers in the western area - particularly those in mountain states and Pacific coast regions - being nearer the locale of the "flying saucers," gave more prominence and space to the story than those eastward.

People throughout the country read the story and reflected various attitudes. They wondered about Arnold, what he looked like,
what he did, what he could have seen. He had penetrated to their curiosities with a novel and strange tale from out of the romantic skies. They dissected the story, questioned parts at a time, underlined facts, and waited for more.

The complete facts of the first story were that Arnold, a 32-year-old pilot, allegedly had seen lightning-fast, flying objects while on a routine flight over the mountain ranges of western Washington. He was flying south when "a flash of reflected sunshine brought them to his attention and for a second he was stunned by their 'incredible' speed." He then rolled down the window of his plane, thinking it might have caused a reflection, but they were still there with the window down. He said he first sighted them about twenty-five to thirty miles away, flying south. With his instrument-panel clock, he timed them between Mt. Adams and Mt. Rainier, a distance of forty-seven miles. He reported:

It took 1:42 minutes...adding that after he landed, he got out a map and by triangulation figured the speed of the 'objects' at 1200 miles an hour.

'I might have missed a second or two in my timing, but the speed still would be near 1200 miles,' he asserted.

'One thing that struck me,' he said, 'was that they were flying so low. Ten thousand feet is very low for anything going at that speed.'

He said they appeared to fly almost as if fastened together — if one dipped, the others did too. One speculation was that they were

geese, but he quickly saw that they were too big - in comparison with the DC-4 airplane nearby. Then Arnold said he thought of jet planes...
"but their motion was wrong for jet jobs."

When he later put down his small aircraft on the airfield in Pendleton, Oregon, he told his startling experience to a group of fellow pilots, finishing with, "'It seems impossible, but there it is.'"

So Arnold brought in the story of the "flying saucers." It is doubtful that he expected to confront a phalanx of scoffers and quizzical hat-tippers. But that is exactly what happened. His fellow pilots had a field day, nettling, joshing, questioning his beverage preference, but he stuck to his story. In a matter of hours he became famous, his name everywhere connected with those remarkable flying things he had seen in the Washington stratosphere. Two days later, astounded, a buffoon to some, a prophet to others, Arnold summed up his narrative of the incident in these words: "'All I wanted was an explanation of what I saw.'" By now he was rueful and obviously disgusted.

In those first hours after the puzzled Arnold told his story, almost everything happened that is essential to elevating an innocently posed tale to the level of fame and common knowledge. Here the instigation can be levelled squarely on newspaper editors throughout the nation. The newspapers liked the story; it was a natural. It had a thrill and a punch that would catch the focal eye of their circulation.

5. Portland Oregonian, June 26, p. 1
Editors everywhere saw portents and potentialities in the sky story. They swung into action, sent reporters scurrying with a hatful of questions to ask, and dialed the phone incessantly themselves. Here was a story out of nowhere that had mystery; it was simple but unusual; it reeked with sensation, a magnet with a plot pull. They weren't to be caught sleepwalking at the coming of Buck Rogers.

And that newshawk exuberance compiled results. In Portland, Oregon, Edward Leach, state senior Civil Aeronautics Administration inspector, said he doubted "that anything would be traveling that fast." In Washington, D. C., an unidentified army spokesman expressed interest in any object that would fly at Arnold's estimated speed of 1200 miles an hour. His official response spread more mystery: "As far as we know, nothing flies that fast except a V-2 rocket which travels at about 3500 miles an hour - and that's too fast to be seen." He said the army was not conducting high-speed experimental tests in the northwest area and certainly not in populated regions. Moreover, he cited, the V-2s, unlike the saucer-shaped missiles Arnold saw, are cigar-shaped. But Arnold soon had his first supporter; in fact, about the very next day, as soon as Bryon Savage, 38, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, could digest Arnold's report and deliver the word of a similar sighting he had made some weeks earlier. Savage, also a businessman pilot, told of seeing a "flat, disklike object come across the city from the

7. Portland Oregonian, p. 1
8. Ibid.
"The machine... was a 'shiny, silvery color - very big - and was moving at a terrific rate of speed. The funny thing... was that it didn't make any noise. I don't think it had any kind of internal combustion engine.'"

A second verification came from a Kansas City, Kansas, carpenter on June 26. He related that he also saw "nine of them (saucers) flying in a group, with one a little to one side... they were flying so fast I barely had time to count them before they were gone. They were leaving vapor trails," he said.  

Skeptics immediately accused these backers of being influenced by Arnold's story and seeking publicity through the medium of their own fancies or due to bad bi-focals. Savage, for one, denied this, insisting fear of ridicule kept him quiet. Before the incident ended, many others confessed an aversion to telling what they had seen in the skies weeks before Arnold asked for an explanation. All the while Arnold stuck to his story, pestered by scoffers and believers. The raillery was not too intense, indicating an inclination to doubt rather than dispute the existence of Arnold's nine shiny objects.  

"'It is very peculiar that he was the only person to witness such a spectacular sight,' remarked Charles Steeves of the Portland office of Civil Aeronautics Administration. 'There were lots of other planes up in that area and many people on the ground, none of whom confirmed the story.'"

9. Denver Post, June 26, p. 1. An exact date for Savage's sighting could not be found, but from inferences an estimation would fix it about June 10.  
10. Chicago Tribune, June 27, p. 5.  
Meanwhile, newsmen probed for reactions and explanations. The incident was variously described as "fantastic," "impossible," "a mirage," "a distorted, persistent vision." Elmer Fisher of the United States Weather Bureau in Portland believed the saucer author had suffered a touch of snow blindness. A veteran United Airlines pilot, Captain Al Smith, of Seattle, Washington, shook his head at the story: "I've never seen anything like that...What that other fellow probably saw was the reflection of his own instrument panel." Arnold countered this opinion by reiterating that he had made sure the objects were not reflections and that his story "is positively true."

That same day, a housewife on Manette peninsula, three miles northwest of Bremerton, Washington, saw "saucers" twice during the day over her house. By Friday, just three days after he had been eye-witness to the swift objects, Arnold was a famous man, his name everywhere attached to those polemics of the northwest skies. He had touched off a controversy that threatened to engulf a nation with all the fervor of a presidential campaign. Amazing as its contagion was, nothing about the incubator days of the affair was so foreboding to Arnold as its lack of authenticity. It aroused too few serious thoughts; mostly it tickled funny bones in the same manner as bow-ties and sockwear worn by the bobby-sox multitude - it was a novelty.

12. Portland Oregonian, June 27, p. 1
13. Ibid.
Nevertheless the pioneer backers were ardent. Friday, June 27, was but one of many memorable "flying saucer" days that produced life-blood reports for the episode. A rugged, emphatic railroad engineer of Joliet, Illinois, came forward to report that Arnold's accuracy was beyond question. Just a few hours after Arnold was audience to the startling flight, Charles Kastl insisted he saw "flying pie pans" streaking through the skies eight to ten miles east of Joliet. "There were nine of them, not very large" and "going very fast" toward the South. He emphasised their similarity to Arnold's objects, inferring they may have been the same flight. The Chicago Times, which published Kastl's account, was not the least bit ruffled because at "1200 miles an hour" the trip could have been made "in jet time." 14

Kastl declared that he had perfect eyesight; and for fourteen years he had trained his eyes to peer at distant objects out on trackage ahead of trains. Moreover, he was not a man "given to rash estimates" and had not indulged in "refreshments" before he saw the "pie pans." "I was on my way to work, and you know a railroad man never touches the stuff on or before duty hours..."

The State of New Mexico also produced "saucer" reports. Bright "falling bodies" were seen over Tularosa and near Engle. A flyer, cruising at 3,000 feet out from his airbase at Alamogordo, said he watched a speeding "ball of fire with a blue, fiery tail behind it" disintegrate. 15

These sightings were made at night.

Lt. Colonel Harold R. Turner, commander of the White Sands Proving Grounds in southern New Mexico, immediately proposed an explanation. He said the alleged flying "discs" might have been "jet airplanes which have circular exhaust pipes that might give the illusion of discs when heated." 16

Among the first academic explanations was that of "persistent vision" given by Dr. Hugh Pruett, astronomer in the University of Oregon's extension division, Eugene. He was asked the question that was to become a frequent, unofficial explanation of the fleeting saucers: "Were they meteors?" He answered:

Meteors don't sway and dip... and they wouldn't have been visible for the approximate minute and three-quarters. I believe this man could have been a victim of 'persistent vision' from reflections on the glass of his plane. Such vision errors often develop, like when looking too long at an acetylene torch. 17

Arnold had spotted the flight of saucers Wednesday, June 24. By Saturday, June 28, newspaper readers knew a little more about him. They learned he was a representative of a fire control equipment firm in Boise, Idaho; he was a one-time football star in North Dakota, and that he had just the day before purchased a $150 movie camera in case he should see the elusive saucers. Any sequel to his story would have pictorial proof, he vowed.

17. Ibid., June 28, p. 1.
Proof in the way of testimonial backers increased rapidly. Another Kansan, an electrician living in Lonejack, thirty miles southeast of Kansas City, reported a flight of seven or eight platter-shaped objects, with white vapor trails streaming behind them. The same day a Eugene, Oregon, man said enlargements of a snapshot he took "showed seven dots, shaped like an 'X' or 'V' lined across the sky." Laboratory tests suggested the dots were dust spots in the negative.

The day before in Portland, a woman saw some "'bright and shiny'" flying discus south of Kelso, Oregon. Two Washington residents' reports of the mysterious missiles predated Arnold's. A Bellingham man looked into the sky about 10:00 A.M. June 24 and "saw three shiny objects 'like kites' heading south toward Seattle." He said they had no pontoons or wings and were traveling fast. A woman in Yakima saw the "'whatsits'" the same day. "They sped so fast she could not count them and they abruptly disappeared." 19

The acclamation of the nation apparently would not have pacified Arnold. He was disconsolate. The resounding effect of his story left him bewildered. He became a cynosure, something of an ogre and a seer. On June 28, he disclosed that a preacher had called him from Texas and informed him that the "saucers" were the vanguard of doomsday. The preacher, whose name Arnold didn't get, said he was "getting his flock 'ready for the end of the world.'"

"Half the people I see look at me as a combination Einstein, Flash Gordon and screwball. I wonder what my wife back in Idaho thinks," reflected Arnold.

Arnold said he hadn't had any peace since he told the story. Two nights before in a Pendleton cafe, he said, a "woman rushed in, took one look at him and then dashed out shrieking, 'There's the man who saw the men from Mars.'" Arnold added with a shudder that she left "sobbing that she would have to do something for the children." 20

By this time, however, he had found some consolation in his aviator friends who suggested what he saw were either secret planes or guided missiles of the army air forces, or experimental equipment of another nation, probably Russia.

"Most people," he said, "tell me I'm right."

Meanwhile, aeronautical experts in Washington were discounting Arnold's story with figures and facts from their official books. Their salient points seemed to be that nothing short of radar could track anything going 1200 miles an hour; and that the fastest man yet had flown was 647 miles per hour - a record set shortly before that time by Colonel Albert Boyd in a P-80 jet plane. They also pointed out that radar sets across the nation had not picked up any trace of the saucers.

From a round-up of the scattered reports, the Associated Press attempted a scientific explanation:

... (the) mysterious disc-like objects roughly agree with the way light is occasionally reflected from a distant airplane...

In clear air the flash of sunlight from a plane can easily be seen 50 miles. The flash is round, the shape of the sun. Any other reflection at a great distance is also likely to be round, coming only from a small area on the plane. 21

Finally, on Saturday, June 28, Arnold had gotten his fill. He sent a telegram of self-vindication to the Portland Oregonian, saying:

I am certainly on your side of the fence - as I did not believe it either, but I have never suffered from snow blindness, mirages or spots before my eyes of any kind.

His telegraphic defense also informed the editors of the Oregonian that he was not an irresponsible pilot. He had not been charged with a flying violation in three years as a licensed pilot.

Long before the editors had finished reading the telegram, Arnold had opened the throttle on his single-engined, three-seated plane, and headed for Boise to spend the week end with his wife and children and try to forget the furor he caused as the father of the flying saucers.

While Arnold attempted to escape the controversy, more reports began to filter in, mostly from individuals, and the puzzle of the skies grew. On June 28, at Manitou Springs, Colorado, seven employees of the Manitou and Pike's Peak railway corroborated in a report that they saw saucers similar to those described over Washington state. 22

21. Salt Lake City Telegram, June 28, p. 4.
22. Denver Post, June 28, p. 5.
The birthplace of the saucers was in Washington state, but their playground was the region generically referred to as the West. Westerners everywhere – from Texas to Canada – witnessed objects zipping through the skies. Three persons in El Paso, Texas, and two residents of Vancouver, British Columbia, increased the coverage of reports on June 23. A woman in Seaside, Oregon, saw a saucer before sunset June 28. Another Washington resident, the manager of a bulb-growing firm near Woodward, got a good view of the flying wonders:

(1) saw nine or ten of them skimming along silently between 1000 and 2000 feet... They were going fast, but not any 1200 miles an hour. I'd say about twice as fast as an ordinary airliner, maybe 600 miles an hour... The peculiar thing was the way they moved along – tilting back and forth, tipping up and down, undulating – and, every time they reached the right reflection angle, the flashes came...

The "meteorite" explanation again came to the front in the Sunday newspaper editions of June 29. The theory particularly seemed to attract the enterprising editors of the Denver Post who, along with the Portland Oregonian, Los Angeles Times, and other western papers, notably were in the vanguard of researchers seeking to clarify the dilemma streaking over their western heads. The Post contacted Dr. H. H. Nininger, world famous meteoriticist, at his laboratory, meteorite crater No. 2, nineteen miles west of Winslow, Arizona, and asked if Arnold's report might have meteoritic origins. In his telephonic response, Dr. Nininger said the objects didn't sound like meteors, but more "'like mechanical objects.'" He said that he "'knew of only one
other meteor trailing for that period of time, and that one lasted fifty
seconds. 23 This Post account, and later ones, connoted a valiant
effort to expose the apparent case of "chronic spots before the eyes of
people west of the Mississippi." Dr. Hininger was wont to compare:

The people in this country have grown
tremendously air-minded. Twenty years
ago it was a great event when people saw
an airplane in the sky. Now they scan
the skies for the appearance of jet-
propelled planes, test rockets...many
of which appear to speed through the
skies with the speed of a meteor...

Questioned about the flying object reported sighted over
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, several weeks before by Byron Savage, Dr.
Hininger said he had checked that story and that he believed the object
actually was a meteor. 24

Also, Lt. Colonel Harold R. Turner, of the White Sands Proving
Grounds, suggested that the puzzling objects seen over New Mexico on
June 27 were meteorites. Such meteorites could give the appearance of
shiny discs because of the reflection of the sun's rays. He said a
meteorite could give the "illusion of being quite near and traveling
slowly, while actually it is probably many miles away and traveling at
high speed." 25

"They appear much larger and apparently are coming closer to
earth," he said.

In Washington, D. C., General Carl Spaatz, commander of the
Army Air Forces, was quick to discount any army air forces connection

23. Denver Post, June 28, p. 5. Arnold's objects were in sight for
about one and three-quarters minutes. See p. 2.
24. Ibid., June 29, p. 6A.
25. Los Angeles Times, June 29, p. 33.
with the affair. Asked if the objects were army flying wings, he answered: "Army Air Forces have no aircraft that could fit the reported description of the objects. They are not jet propelled flying wings." 26

One report from a forest service lookout put a momentary crimp in the clamour of the skeptics. The lookout reported:

(I) saw some shiny, silver objects that didn't look like airplanes. I was on lookout at Diamond Gap, near Salmon, Washington, Tuesday (June 24) when I heard an airplane. It was black. While I watched it I saw flashes in the distance quite high up in the east. They seemed to be going in a straight line and made a strange noise, higher-pitched than most airplanes make... They did not look like a flying wing. 27

The lookout, who was reported to have not seen a newspaper from the time he went on duty Monday (June 23) until June 28, said he believed the objects were a new type of plane being tested.

In Los Angeles, California, the wife of a bus driver quoted her husband as seeing sky objects at 11:30 A.M. June 29, saying:

My husband said that they were traveling at an unbelievable speed in a closely-bunched 'L' formation. They flashed out of sight in less than five seconds, and did not resemble any type aircraft or rocket projectile he had ever seen. 28

Then, on the same day, newspaper readers were finally given what, for a time, appeared to be a plausible explanation. The key to the mystery was found in the May issue of Mechanix Illustrated magazine,

27. Ibid.
which described the navy's "Flying Flapjack," a queer saucer-shaped object, at that time reported to be the fastest navy plane known. The man responsible for the disclosure was V. C. Brisentine of Portland. Referring to the magazine article, Brisentine told the Portland Oregonian the plane was designated the KF5U-1, and called the Flapjack because of its odd appearance. When equipped with a gas turbine engine, the plane had a speed far in excess of 500 miles an hour.

There is no record that more than brief citation was given this observant reader. The Sunday Portland Oregonian carried the story on page 26, leading a three-quarters column round-up story of sightings with Brisentine's version of the mystery. His story apparently was carried no further, coveted locally, and leaving Brisentine to expound his Mechanix magazine marvel to neighbors and fellow workers.

Several days later, the exact story was to re-appear, credited to the sharp-eyed editors of the Los Angeles Daily News who, according to the press dispatches which gave the story wide circulation, found it in "a recent issue of 'Science' magazine." Except for additional detail, it was the same story Brisentine had uncovered days before. But now it had the benefit of distribution over the far-flung wires of the press services. When the story broke nationally, denials were immediately forthcoming and will be related in another chapter.

The night of Sunday June 29 brought into the flying saucers orbit the port city of San Francisco. A resident - and a group of his friends - of San Leandro, California, a San Francisco bay city, heard "'swishing, whistling sounds'" over the bay. The moon was high and the
objects, said to be "30 to 50 feet across," moved in a northerly direc-
tion at an estimated altitude of four to five thousand feet. The observers
thought the night-flyers had too much body for jet planes, and the host
declared he didn't have an inkling what they could have been. Then he
added, "You can't tell what the secret scientists are doing nowadays." 29

The month of June ended. For six days and nights the flying
saucers had challenged the observation and guesses of the western populace.

Preeminence was established in favor of the first observers. Ex-
planations had been forthcoming and common, allied to everyday subjects,
so flatly plausible they were lost in the sea of sky-searchers and their
fantastic reports. The people of the western states had an elusive, un-
identified stranger in their skies, a fabulous flyer whom the entire coun-
try and parts of the world waited to hear about through them. It was per-
plexing, even frightening, but there was a mystic attraction.

The conte of the flying saucers, true or not, was read by an
enormous public even in its first week of publication. Hardly a paper in
the country failed to give it space in the last week of June, either in
the way of summary stories or serial coverage. Whatever the answer, the
editors had a real story. There is sufficient substantiation to show that
the saga had a universal appeal perhaps beyond the comprehension of those
who advertised it. Readers were looking into the heavens and finding
things, while the papers, generally, printed their favorite feature in a
ludicrous vein. But Arnold's objects had only just begun to fly.

Chapter II

WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE

The enigma discovered in the skies over western Washington in June overlapped into the month of July with only a slight recession. The continuity of flying rumors and eye-witness reports multiplied to aggravate the riddle to the point that it became a global disturbance.

The Pacific Northwest, already the birthplace of the episode, provided the bulk of stories which fed the phenomenon in the first three cradle days of July. After that, it grew to overwhelming proportions itself. It drew its growth from the nation and eventually the world. Over a score of people in Pacific Northwest swelled the tabulation in July alone.

In La Grande, Oregon, a high school student, and two Catholic nuns, sighted nine flying "discs" over that city on July 2. "They were weaving in and out of formation and looked 'bright and round.' They seemed to have fins," he reported for the group. 1

Another delayed report of "seven perfectly round, umbrella-like objects flying in a northerly direction about 11:00 A.M. June 29," was given by a farm wife of McKay Creek, Oregon. The "'planes' made a humming noise resembling the sound of a musical top," she related. Before she could get verification by calling her husband and a hired man, the objects had vanished. 2

1. Portland Oregonian, July 1, p. 16.
2. Ibid.
At the same time, the foreman of a ranch about fifteen miles north of Pendleton, also reported objects so high in the sky that he was unable to determine their shapes, but they were "weaving in and out of formation," and going at an unusual speed, he said. He likened the objects to those seen by Arnold, as did two other Pendleton residents, all separate reports.

One Portland couple was not surprised at the stories for they had seen a "flying freak" a year before and had watched the papers for comment. They recalled that "it flew very fast and silently, arching toward the earth. It had a tail like a rocket but it was saucer-shaped."

Other Portlanders were more current. One man, catching his neighbors gazing at the sky shortly before 1:30 P.M. on July 2, joined them and they found a "disc" moving rapidly "above cloud level" in an easterly direction. The group was soon increased by four others. All reported a flying object, but not a one could estimate its size or speed.

Seven persons in Moscow, Idaho, prefaced their report with clear avowals that they were not "drunk" or "crazy" when they followed the flight of a "flat, shining disc," spinning across a sunny sky on June 29.

The state of Oregon rallied in support of the aerial objects in grand style. An amazing event occurred July 2 in Beatty, near

3. Portland Oregonian, July 1, p. 16.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
Klamath Falls, where "practically the whole town gathered in the streets to watch two birdlike patches of light, which residents said moved silently back and forth across the sky, sometimes crossing each other." This time there were many witnesses to confirm the flight. Someone suggested that what they saw were beams of light thrown on cloud formations by two carnival searchlights in nearby Klamath Falls. But the townsfolk would have none of that; they had witnessed a call from the "flying saucers."  

Age did not slacken the speed nor stale the variety of the slippery saucers, but for a time it did diminish their appeal. It had provided the month of June a mystery thriller more poignant than the missing bride on her wedding day. Doubtlessly, many editors saw in its most obvious clues a kind of air sickness peculiar to the sky-gazers of the west. Generally, editors in both the east and west, except those in the Pacific northwest and the intermountain states, would have let the story die; and, in fact, it did disappear from the pages of the large dailies throughout the nation during the three initial days in July. To them, apparently the story of the western heavens had had its day.

Despite this three-day slack in the story, editors in the Pacific northwest and the intermountain states found in it more than fading facts that had been good the week before. Two additional reports braced the saga. One, in particular, lifted the puzzle from the layman to the professional level.

Who had not heard of the late Tex Rankin? Where the subject concerned capers in the sky, the barnstorming aerial ace of earlier years, was synonymous with anything that flew. His flying had been no less spectacular, although slower and more in the open, than the flying saucers. Perhaps many of his admirers were among the readers of the Portland Oregonian story of July 3 which revealed that his younger brother, Richard (Dick) Rankin, himself an experienced pilot of more than seven thousand flying hours, had seen curious shapes in the skies. Here was a man who ought to know what he saw.

They read that he had viewed the "silver saucers" over Bakersfield, California," on June 23, while taking a sun bath. In Portland for a brief visit, he proposed an explanation in his statements to the Oregonian which was identical to one printed several days before:

I hesitated to say much about them... until I noticed all the hullabaloo in the papers. I puzzled over their strange shape for a while and finally concluded that they were the navy's new XF5U-1 flying flapjacks, which are thin and round, with twin propellers and stubby tail.

These planes were flying high, maybe 9,000 feet, and fairly fast, about 300 or 400 miles an hour. I first counted ten of them in formation...

They were not weaving or bobbing in formation. I couldn't make out the number or location of their propellers and couldn't distinguish any wings or tail. They appeared almost round. They looked like pictures of the navy's flying flapjack.

Another development that day was a response from E. F. Smith, assistant cashier for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Eugene, Oregon, who saw "silver discs being dropped out of a light airplane flying over" Eugene. 9

Newspaper men were quite keen on this report. They learned the "disks" Smith saw disgorged from the plane "seemed to be about two feet in diameter and were fastened together. A dozen or more were dropped." The scribes attempted to identify the plane and trace the disks, but reportedly failed.

The army air forces right along maintained a noncommittal interest and on July 3 revealed officials had made a preliminary inquiry into the reports, but had not found enough fact to warrant a continued investigation, according to an Associated Press release.

Yet the saucers kept flying. Men of prominent occupations entered the race as belated reports, probably influenced by the spreading interest, were received. Lt. Governor Donald S. Whiteshead of Idaho said he saw strange comet-like objects in the sky over Boise June 24. A woman in Monterey, California, sighted "flying saucers" that "were quite rounded," but not circular, with a red glow on the edge," the week before. July 3 reports included one by a state highway patrolman, of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge detail, who saw a "dozen bright metal objects 'about the size of a football'" whiz over San Francisco bay.

The state of Iowa joined the throng when three flying instructors at Keokuk reported three "bright silver" objects in the noonday sun. 10

Also the reports of July 3 indicated the saucers were extending their flight pattern to the Atlantic coast. A man, living in Bath, South Carolina, described a disc twelve inches in diameter, "giving off a small weird light as it whizzed through the sky." A United States meteorologist, E. E. Unger of Louisville, Kentucky, recognized a circular flying object, which moved at 100 miles an hour and gave off an orange light, the night of July 1. 11

By this time the so-called saucers had been exposed in thirteen states - Oregon, Washington, California, Kentucky, New Mexico, Idaho, Colorado, South Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Illinois.

Then came the deluge. Traditional Independence Day fireworks burst in colorful showers across the nation, and the editors regaled the facts as well as the fun of the day. But sightseers beheld other strange visitors in the skies and the editors again took to their typewriters to tell the "tall tale" of the sky racers, seen from coast to coast.

Again the reports centered in Washington and Oregon. The Portland police department broadcast an "all car" alert when Patrolman Earl Patterson, in one car, and Patrolmen Walter Lissy and Robert Ellis, both veteran pilots, in another car, saw them. Patterson, an air corps disc veteran, saw "aluminum or egg-shell white that did not flash,

traveled fast, and were "erratic in flight, wobbling and weaving."
Lissy and Ellis reported "three discs which remained in sight about thirtys seconds. The "discs" were moving at "terrific speed" over the southern suburbs of Portland. They heard no sound but saw flashes in the erratic flight. Captain K. A. Prehn of the harbor patrol, Harbor Pilot A. T. Austed and Patrolman K. C. Hoff, who were at police head­quarters at the time, saw similar "discs" at about 10,000 feet, which turned "until sometimes a full disc, sometimes only a crescent was visible." Captain Prehn described them as "wobbling hubcaps."" Sgt. Claude Cross, at state police headquarters, noticed what "looked like toy balloons, almost pure white, and traveled sidewise with no flashing lights."

In Washington, Clark County Sheriff's Deputies John Sullivan, Clarence McKay and Fred Krives, counted twenty "discs" streaking over Vancouver "in a straight line... They heard a low hum or drone, and the objects were 'dark, not flashy, and more like a bunch of geese.'" 12

Scores of similar reports were listed from persons in the Portland area. It was learned from officers at Ft. Lewis, Washington, that a flight of six bombers and twenty-four P-80 jet planes made a holi­day demonstration flight at high altitude over Portland about the time the first reports were made.

Reports of whole crowds of people who had observed the "saucers" came out of Idaho on Independence Day. A reported audience of 200 people watched a "disc" circle over Hauser Lake, according to a brief report

which originated with the Associated Press. 13 A smaller group of sixty picknickers at Twin Falls Park, near the city of Twin Falls, left their holiday fun to watch several echelons of "discs" in the afternoon. A party of seven first saw them. Ten minutes later, a group of twenty or thirty people sighted what they considered "another" batch of nine or ten. Word passed around, and soon the waiting crowd intercepted still "another" batch circling and climbing. 14

Excitement flared in the Portland neighborhood of Sherman Cook when he and other neighbors actually captured a "flying disc" which fluttered down from 4000 feet to land on a golf course. Their catch was a two-by-three-foot piece of "low quality" paper. 15 Several other reports substantiated Arnold's original observation as to time but differed in the number of objects.

A St. Louis, Missouri, mechanic, Nova Hart, trained as a wartime aircraft observer, saw a saucer near Pattonville in St. Louis county. At 300 feet, it "was circular, about 14 feet in diameter, with a ribbed framework and silver." It appeared to have a "motor, with a propeller attached in the center...and it kept turning in the manner of an airplane doing a slow roll." 16 Farmers near Summerside, Canada, saw "bright objects" and residents of Huron, Michigan, reported "flat, translucent plates 12 to 15 inches in diameter...criss-crossing the sky." 17

The name of Kenneth Arnold and his first description were never forgotten. Newspapers reiterated the origin of the "flying saucers," as the reports mounted. He received tremendous support but no report shook the incredulous so much as the account of Captain Emil J. Smith, veteran airline pilot, and his crew. His story, written for the International News Service, appeared July 6:

I didn't believe the stories about flying discs myself when I first heard about them. Now I don't know what to believe.

We were on our regular run from Salt Lake City (Utah) to Seattle (Washington), just eight minutes out of Boise, at 9:04 P.M. July 4, when my co-pilot, First Officer Ralph Stevans, who was flying at the time, blinked our landing lights.

I asked him what he was doing and he replied, "There's a plane approaching of our bow."

But a few seconds later we both decided the object was not a plane, it was a flying disc.

We saw only one of them at first, but soon four more appeared to the left of our plane, in a northwesterly direction.

We couldn't tell what their exact shape was, except to notice that they definitely were larger than our plane (DC-3), fairly flat, smooth on the bottom and rough on top.

Just to check, I called our stewardess, Marty Morrow, to the cockpit, and simply asked her: "Do you see anything in the sky around us?"

Immediately she pointed at the discs and said, "Yes, what are those?"

That's what we wanted to know, so I contacted our ground radio station at nearby Ontario, Oregon, gave them our estimated direction and altitude and asked if they could see them. They couldn't.
Shortly thereafter, the discs disappeared for a few minutes, then reappeared again. This time they were in our view for 15 minutes.

None of our eight passengers saw the discs because they were off our bow, and we didn't think to turn our plane, so intense was our interest.

It was impossible to estimate their speed or if they were moving at all. All I know is that when they did disappear they vanished suddenly.

In all the time Ralph and I were flying during the war, and in my 14 years with United Airlines, I've never seen anything like it.

Up until last night, we all had discounted ninety per cent of the reports we'd read in the papers or heard over the radio, but now —

Frankly, I'm baffled. 18

Smith, his first officer, and his stewardess, found themselves and their startling story prominently displayed in papers throughout the nation. Like Arnold, Smith soon began to chafe under the pressure of questions and a unique fame.

Pictorial fame was also given Yeoman Frank Ryman, coast guard public relations officer at Seattle, who disclosed he had taken a picture of what some residents north of Seattle thought was a "flying disc." The Associated Press wirephoto showed a black impression with an artist's arrow pointing to a white dot. It was suggested that the pinhead spot of white was nothing more than a finger of light against the dark evening sky. 19 But the nation was given the spot to look at and ponder for themselves.

The baffling reports continued at full pace on July 6. And by then newspaper readers of the nation had had time to comprehend Captain Smith's story and also to review the similar first report by Kenneth Arnold. Here was substance, something that seemed above flimsy reports. The whole affair reeked of humor, but the story of Captain Smith and his crew, like a very few other reports, suggested a deeper, more authentic meaning running below the surface of the nation's belly laugh. These were reportedly competent men shaken by their own eyesight. There was a substantial evidence which grew in the atmosphere of mirth.

In this interim, the state of New York entered the skyways competition, with an intrastate controversy between residents in two cities, each of whom claimed they had sighted the "saucers" first. The New York Times rendered a Solomon-wise decision on July 7 by suggesting two firsts: a "first-sighted citation" to the married couple in Rochester who said they had observed a saucer-like object "sipping" eastward the night before; and a first - at least a first so far as the fanciest saucer reported - to the Glens Falls resident who avowed he saw what looked like a "headlight, emitting red fire in front and blue fire in its wake." 20

The eyesight of a 67-year-old gardener in Walter, Oklahoma, was good enough to see two "flying saucers playing in the air - passing each other and going back and forth." C. E. Holman said he watched the saucers fly for about thirty minutes the night of June 25, then went to bed. He said:

I thought about waking up some of my neighbors but decided if it meant the end of the world.

they would be just about as happy sleeping
when the world ended... 21

A real estate dealer in Rogers, Arkansas, put that state on
the saucer roster. He was lounging on the porch of his home watching
the approach of a windstorm when a "disc" appeared out of the northwest
and vanished rapidly across the sky. 22

The "discs" appeared for the first time in the deep South. In
New Orleans, Louisiana, Miss Lillian Lawless sighted a "saucer-like 'pure
silver' object hurtling over Lake Pontchartrain" and "flying...at terri-
fic speed." 23

The club of veteran airline pilots who discerned strange sky-
fellows was increased by two Trans-Western Airline flyers, Captain John L.
Dobberteen and Frank Corwin, both of Washington, D. C. At dusk on July 5,
twenty miles east of Archbold, Ohio, Captain Pilot Dobberteen and Corwin,
his engineer, saw a "disc" below them, at 4,000 feet. They said it had
the appearance of a whirling exhaust-fan blade about the size of a cub
plane, with no sign of a body, fuselage, or motor apparatus." They
noticed just a "propeller and wings without a bird, so to speak" travel-
ing about 200 miles an hour. 24

By July 7, just short of two weeks after Arnold's first re-
port, the strange, evanescent objects had been reported in a majority of
the states, including the District of Columbia and Canada's Atlantic and
Pacific seabords. A breakdown of the states on the "saucer" roster at

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Kansas City Star, Kansas City, Mo., July 6, 1947, p. 2A.
that time follows: Far West; Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah; Middle West; Missouri, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas; Far East; New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Maine, Virginia; South; Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida and Texas. 25

The widespread interest inspired artists at Walt Disney's Hollywood studios to paint a composite picture of a "flying saucer" as they imagine it would actually appear at close range. "Their Jules Verne version" of the mystery, according to the Los Angeles Times, depicted a jet-gyro pursuit plane, circular in shape and powered by jet propulsion. The three-column picture, printed in the July 8 issue of the Times, portrayed the saucer-shaped object with a main unit stabilised by electro-gyroscope; a revolving outer fin powered by jet; a stabilised fin and rudder; forward thrust jets; jet outlets on the revolving fin; an "underslung" bottom observation post, a main transparent glass-enclosed cockpit and a bombbay. 26

In Elizabeth, New Jersey, a patrolman soon decided the publicity found with his keen eyesight was a boomerang. Patrolman Frederick Schlauch told of seeing "two shiny objects" over the city the night of July 6. They were not moving "very fast but diving in a fluttering fashion, like pursuit planes." The following day, he indicated the skeptics had gone to work on him by a different point of view: "I know I saw two objects in the air...but I don't know what they were. And this ribbing is getting hard to take." 27

25. See appendix for descriptions of other reports.
In the wee morning hours of that same troublesome day for the New Jersey patrolman, United Press reported that out in California many residents of Acampo, a residential community one mile north of Lodi, divorced their warm beds in sudden flight to escape an alleged "flying saucer" attack. Through sleep-dimmed, startled eyes, citizens of the little community heard a great roar, saw a glow in the sky - and all the lights went out!

Later, after the din and consternation had passed, they regrouped and commented. An air-minded housewife considered the noise "like a four-motored bomber with its props feathered for take-off."

The most conclusive suggestion came from the manager of the Gas & Electric company who said that a low-flying crop-dusting plane probably had struck a power line and burned out a transformer. The citizenry nodded in agreement - temporarily.

But when no one was able to locate any crop-dusting plane in the air on that Sunday morning, the people clung to the "flying saucer" idea - they had been attacked! 28

In two incidents, it was generally agreed that an explanation for the mystery had been found. It was reported that the switchboard operator at a radio station in Birmingham, Alabama, was deluged with 400 calls from persons who wanted an explanation of "fluorescent balls" over the city. An investigation conceded them to be searchlights from a carnival at near-by Alabaster playing on cloudwhisps. 29

A similar mystery was solved in the Detroit, Michigan, area when "discs" of light were traced to Jefferson Beach, at the St. Clair Shores concessions, where powerful searchlights were "coaxing kiddies to drop in with a dime or two for a thrilling ride on a Martian spaceship." 30

Two other bizarre reports deepened the puzzle on July 7. An attorney in Darlington, South Carolina, reported he saw an army pursuit plane chasing a "V-formation of 'flying saucers' at 250 miles an hour at 3,000 feet." Later reports indicated that no pilot in the area reported any such chase. A Temple, Arizona, man reported that he had not only seen a "disc" land, but that he saw it take off. He said that a "flat, thin object disappeared behind a row of trees 600 yards away" from him. When he reached the spot, the "discs soared off at a 'high rate of speed'... but he noticed that the object was too small to carry a pilot." 31

The nation's cuisine gentry, the housewife, recorded as much vocal applause as any other group, perhaps more per head, in exalting and extending the contents of the "flying saucers." They found a fame that went beyond their fried chicken or chocolate cake. It took a shifty eye to scan the skies and not miss a quick flash or a brief movement. But many of them did it. Between preparing the dinner to cook, cleaning the house, there were brief runs to look out; added trips were made to shake the dust mop, and perhaps, in the jerk of her arm, an object, as infinitesimal as a dust particle, would turn over in the sky, and newspaper fame, per se, was hers.

Perhaps the most eminent case of such double duty was reported on July 7 by Mrs. Walter Johnson of Dishman, Washington. She related that it all happened the Thursday evening of July 5 while she and three of her children were outside about dusk, as were six other neighbors. In the subdued light, above a hillside about six miles away, she caught sight of the "objects" that were "saucer-like, but thicker than she had expected, resembling washtubs more than discs." Later, she described them "as about the size of a five-room house." At the time, she recalled that she signaled her children and the neighbors. With that battery of eyes chronicling the event, Mrs. Johnson and nine other persons counted eight "flying saucers" that "seemed to flutter toward the ground like leaves." They watched them make a "landing" on the hillside. 32

Thus did one housewife enhance the incredible story by adding another sobriquet, "the flying bathtubs," to an already gaudy list.

Observed the New York Times:

Perhaps prophetic of any investigation was the result of a search near St. Maries, Idaho, where, according to the Associated Press, nearly a dozen 'flying saucers' were said to have crashed. Fliers circling the area said the view was lovely. Land parties said they were tired. No one found anything worth talking about. 33

In Chicago, another unidentified member of the kitchen kingdom, expressed believe they were man-like creations from another planet. She backed her assertion with a very convincing story which was relayed to the Associated Press on July 7, the same day it occurred. She said she

was standing on her porch, enjoying a leisurely spell, when she saw "a saucer with legs" that seemed to crawl down over the porch. "I thought for sure it was coming right down and slap me in the face." 34

Another housewife-mother in Cambridge, Mass., was first to arrest the flight of "flying saucers" across that state. She attributed her blue-ribbon eyesight to the fact that her baby started to cry early in the morning and she crawled out of bed to administer the tendings. While soothing the infant tears, she inadvertently caught sight of a "group of white flying saucers whirling around and going at a tremendous speed, like low-hanging clouds before a hurricane." She watched them, cared for her baby, and later in the day reported Arnold's objects had invaded Massachusetts. 35 Like it or not, America's historic state had been put in the saucer derby because of cries from a crib.

The Cambridge housewife's report soared the total to forty-four states listed on "I Have Seen A Saucer" roster of states by July 8. The hold-out states included Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island and New Hampshire, according to an Associated Press tabulation. Kansas - a dry state - apparently wanted to be scratched from the list because it boasted that none of its residents had reported seeing "flying saucers." 36

The voice of the sky phenomenon were the newspapers and radios. Both spoke freely of the episode, juggling the details to fit their peculiar ends. Where the medium of radio is spontaneous it is also fleeting; while the newspaper is slower in revealing information it has a

35. Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Georgia, July 8, 1947, p. 2.
36. Los Angeles Times, July 8, 1947, p. 1. This apparently was oblique humor because two Kansas men were among the first observers in June.
longer life. It has detail - the printed word - spiced with illustration and varied in presentation, so that the emptiest of heads may linger until they learn. The vagaries of editors were clearly shown in the case of the "flying saucers" epidemic. Variables of working editorial thought in the "saucer" headlines and stories ranged from the serially joking format of the Milwaukee Journal to the single four-paragraph editorial mention in the Christian Science Monitor. Yarns in the sober Monitor type were in the minority. Tongue-in-the-cheek levity was the story's natural play and the newspaper majority, explicity or implicitly, lent a chuckle to each installment. The scoffers press had a field day.

Before long it was noticed that all the sky reports had come from laymen. The elite orbs of the scientists, especially astronomers, had not been allegedly hoodwinked by the malady of spots before the eyes of the nation. Then one of their fraternity gave the skeptics a shocking setback. From New Mexico, the land where the saucers played havoc first and last, came a story that a high-ranking naval scientist, Dr. C. J. Zohn, reportedly a rocket expert, and two fellow scientists, "thought" they had observed the "flying saucers" the night of June 29 at White Sands Proving Grounds. Dr. Zohn, the man who knew the secrets of the rocket, was baffled but "almost positive" he and his friends spotted a "bright, silvery disc" traveling north at 10,000 feet. 37

The story of Dr. Zohn's "disc," like Arnold's and Captain Smith's and a handful of other probable authentic reports, tilted the

mask of hilarity that covered the saucers' stories. Underneath there was a conscientious effort to untangle the astral puzzle. It's camouflage was wit and the laughter of an almost national pastime, but there were newspapers, professional people, and scientists as well as laymen, eagerly looking for clues and giving opinions and explanations. The humor was bold but fragile in the face of a mystery that arose out of the atomic age.

The overtones notwithstanding many accepted the mystery as an unknown invention. There was the man in Kingsport, Tennessee, who said the "saucers" were old stuff to him. In fact, he spoke up to say he had observed them over his house on several occasions two years before July, 1947, but had kept mum because of all the "rumors going around then about what they were doing down at Oak Ridge." His assertions were blase and implied there was nothing to worry about.

Many cities over the country tensed themselves at the coming of night and anticipated battle, capture, or at least positive identification of the fleet sky objects. The city of Louisville, Kentucky, had a welcome trap set the night of July 7. A newspaper photographer was out, camera ready. Many watched the skies, many watched the watchers and laughed, and many found sleep more heavenly.

And something did happen! They heard a swishing sound and high above them two luminous lights flashed across the dark sky, momentarily

38. The Army's so-called Manhattan project where the atomic bomb was perfected. The bomb was still a war secret then.
stilled in a brilliant flush, and vanished. Only the bright light was visible but that was enough. The reaction was tremendous. Many termed the lights "flying saucers." Proof was forthcoming because the newspaper photographer had made a picture of those blazing sky tracks. The photo showed two white streaks in a flat arch, like chalk marks on a blackboard, one stretching nearly across the length of the picture, and the other lower and about half the length. There was no explanation accompanying the picture which was immediately distributed over the Associated Press Wirephoto service. Again the nation was given a little substance to look at and wonder. The watchers in Louisville said they were the real things.

Any American fan in the "flying saucer" club smug enough to believe the oblong sky boundaries of his country sufficient to satisfy the zooming objects must have cocked a green eye at the reports that rebounded from far-flung places on July 9. Then begun the transoceanic crossings of America's ghosts of the skies. The exodus came off in fairness to all, with the reports cropping out from the Orient to insular England. And the foreign press began to have its days of fun, for the reports were no less extravagant. The fabulous little flyers roamed over the globe as colorful, as swift, as moot, as in their mother country.

Pearl Harbor, the famous American naval base in Hawaii which had been the ignition point for war, was remembered by the traveling "saucers." At least naval intelligence officers there were faced with the problem of investigating the claims of a reported one hundred navy men who said they saw a saucer-shaped object over the base in the late
afternoon of July 8. Their descriptions correlated in that the object was "silvery-colored, like aluminum, with no wings or tail, sort of round and oblong-shaped, and moving in alternating bursts of speed and slowly sig-sagging." The description fit the appearance of a weather balloon but five navy men, who had observed the flight and were familiar with balloon devices, refuted the explanation. Their stand was reportedly supported by the United States Weather bureau office at Honolulu where it was explained a weather balloon had been released at 4:35 P.M. and the sightings were not made until 5:30 P.M. The weather bureau spokesman contended the balloon would not stay in sight more than ten minutes, let alone fifty-five minutes.

The saucers made fast time over the southern seas. The same day the beautiful Australian port city of Sydney played host to the mysterious globe-flyers, particularly its suburban section of Kensington. A man and wife there caught glimpses of "two white, shiny discs speeding toward Parramatta," another suburb town. Another Kensington householder that night saw "seven bright, round objects spinning at great height and traveling at high speed in the direction of Parramatta." Residents of suburban Camperdown reported a "mysterious white object at about 10,000 feet, traveling at terrific speed. It was brighter than the moon and left no trail." A woman living in Concord saw the objects of a world search in South Wales's noonday sun as merely "two silver objects."

But in downtown Sydney that night, by far the fanciest Anzac saucer was discerned in the moon-bright sky. It was a Sydney man who said he saw an object about the size of a "tennis ball and yellowish, dipping up and down in a curve." About a half-hour later he saw another one — "It was larger, oval in shape, and white in colour." 43

Thousands of miles away from their colonial brothers, war-harried Englishmen who sought another laugh from the new American fancy, were surprised to learn that one of their own had been investigating their insular skies. They read that Mrs. Marjorie Hyde thought "I saw a flying saucer at Sandwich" the day before (July 8). She was the wife of the Rector of St. Andrews, in Deal, Kent. She went on to describe it as "more of a ring than a saucer, and it was moving inland, like a grey shadow against the clouds. I think it was revolving..." 44 The American sensation was within eyesight.

The following day the touring saucers had extended their visit to another point in the empire. Britain's Reuters News Service reported that residents in Johannesburg, South Africa, had watched objects they said were "flying saucers" scoot past. "The objects were about as big as gramophone records," and were revolving at great speed in a V-formation," the dispatch disclosed. "They disappeared in a cloud of smoke." 45

Back in the United States, the saucer reports began to dwindle. Intense excitement centered around a little army airbase at Roswell Field, New Mexico, where the sensational career of the saucers reached its peak.

Meanwhile, the world was becoming more interested in their home­land skies. Across the sands of Iran sped the nomadic saucers as press reports from Zabool, Shosef and Sarbisheh, near the Afghan frontier, told how inhabitants had observed strange "star-like bodies" in the sky which exploded loudly, leaving a cloud of smoke. But the land in the orbit of the Arabian Nights would have no more fancy tales. Their press dully pointed out that the objects apparently had something to do with a secret weapon which it dubbed, "V-20." This was on July 10. 46

The "flying saucers" lived a full, short life. Their death was as sudden as their birth. After the incident at Roswell Field, New Mexico, the favorite of sky stories suddenly began to disappear from the newspapers of the world. In the United States, Life Magazine issue of July 21 printed a last satire on the episode, a compact, witty review. As much as ten days before, newspapers and other communicative mediums the world over had ceased to exploit the mystery. An unaccountable phenomenon was re­tired to the newspaper Valhalla - the morgue.

So far as is known, the last original reports of "flying saucers" came out of China and France on July 14. The Associated Press relayed a dispatch from the Chinese Central News Agency which reported that a man in Mukden, Manchuria, counted eighty flying "disks" in one hour over that city the night of July 10. He pictured them as "about one foot in diameter, milk-colored, and tinted blue." The Occidental story came from the French town of LeMan, one hundred miles southwest of Paris, where a mademoiselle was said to have sighted two "strongly-shaped things" that were "greenish­gray." 47

Chapter III

THE SAUCER HUNT

Something rushed up into the sky and out of the greyness, rushed slantingly upward and very swiftly into the luminous clearness above the clouds in the western sky; something flat and broad, and very large, that swept round in a vast curve, grew smaller, sank slowly, and vanished again into the gray mystery of the night.

- H. G. Wells, War of The Worlds

At first a nation and then the world emanated reports of queer shapes moving through the global skies. They were all mysterious assertions, each with its peculiar adaptation and mood. To some, the flying wonders were bleak and mystic, harbingers of doomsday; to others, they were threatening but not imminent, more the results of experimentation by the secret scientists or a foreign nation throwing their ultra-weapon at the mightiest nation on earth. A great many sensed an admixture of a lot of things: literally a sty in the eye that had grown to a whale in the sky. These were the borderline cases where a kind of mental probe was conducted in an honest effort to learn if there was real body to the saucers. They found many answers.

To a nation steeped in the idealism of its own history, and particularly an extant generation which had known the same diet in the 1920's, there was perhaps every reason for some to rationalize the episode into romantic lore. Their modern knight in armour had come to guard over his favorite nation - America. But the legendary gent didn't ride
his white steed. Instead, he had a super-sonic saucer that could be everywhere at once. From all the reports, he accomplished that feat as well as Santa Claus.

What indeed must the scoffers and skeptics have done to those people. Maybe, on the other hand, there weren't any real romanticists. Consider another fact: romance as a part of mystery. Whatever each person's private reason for the phenomenon, anyone of many from drunkenness to the searching eyes of Mars, he was first, last or sometime caught up in an event whose stage was one of the great mysteries to all peoples—the infinite heavens. What could it have been up there skipping along as insolent and swift as an elf aboard a wind current? Maybe the horse laugh that went up was hollower than it sounded.

Brief glimpses of the "flying saucers" were seen in a lot of places. There was a thread of unanimity and similarity running through all the reports, particularly as concerned the speed and the saucer-like appearance of the objects. But one staring fault showed up in every report: no one could be absolutely sure of what he saw! The saucers could not be given to definite shape or put in an exact place. Everybody was looking for them but nobody had reported finding any on the ground. The great need was for someone to capture a saucer.

Paul R. Leach, chief of the Chicago Daily News' Washington bureau, related the dilemma after a press conference with General Carl Spaatz, the Army Air Forces commandant. Spaatz, he told, had followed all the reports "seriously telling about persons seeing the objects skittering at 1200 miles per hour." At the news conference, his curiosity
and patience reached a climax and he telephoned Lt. General Twining, head of the AAF's research center at Wright Field, near Dayton, Ohio.

"'What the Sam Hill are those things?' Spaatz asked.

"'Difficult,' Twining replied. "'I never saw any of them.'" 1

It became evident that the Army Air Forces officials, particularly, sought a saucer to examine. Their inquiries into the first reports had produced nothing worthwhile to investigate. Meanwhile, they had watched the stories spread like wild fire. Their position became one of master Houdinis of the airways who were beaten at their own game. Perhaps they were even embarrassed at these reported speedsters that left their best in the dust. It was time something had to be done; it was either that or, as one skeptic suggested, the AAF should drop their feigned ignorance and let the public know if they had let loose strange objects in the skies. Something seemed fishy.

In Columbus, Ohio, on July 5, Louis E. Starr, national commander-in-chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, told the VFW Ohio encampment that he believed information was being suppressed. A native of Portland, Oregon, homeland of the saucers, Starr told the assembly that "too little is being told the people of this country." 2 He said that he expected information from a valid source in Washington, D. C., about the "fleets of flying saucers." Asked if he thought the anticipated information would solve the mystery, he replied:

"I wouldn't want to say, but it should bring enlightenment to some people who are wondering."

2. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 6, 1947, p. 3A.
The "enlightenment," if it was ever received, was never revealed. The country went on being told too little.

During June and until July 4, the saucer reports stirred merely superficial interest among the scientific brains of the Pentagon. Air Forces spokesmen brushed aside the reports with the explanation that the AAF had no new experimental planes or guided missiles which would fit the descriptions of the "flying saucers." They were inclined to believe that people just imagined they saw such objects, or that, as a last resort, perhaps there was some meteorological explanation. The latter suggestion was given considerable attention over the country.

From Wright Field, mecca for the AAF's experimental research, public relations officials reported the air material command was sufficiently interested as to conduct further investigation into the "saucer-shaped missiles" seen over the country. It became clear that the incident could no longer be lightly regarded; it had a wide acquaintance, had defied explanation, yet its nature demanded a reasonable explanation. There also was a growing belief that the coast-to-coast mystery would have to be solved in the air, if it were to be solved at all.

Probers all along thought they had found the answer in the sky when they sighted the Navy's V-173, the "Flying Pancake," a wingless plane which had been in the news since June. Navy officials in Washington quickly disappointed them. The wingless plane, they said, had never been in the west; in fact, it had never left Bridgeport, Connecticut, the only place it had flown. 3

Every plausible explanation failed to hold up. Counter state-
ments and refutations followed on the heels of every enthusiastic answer
up to this time. There remained one general necessity: a saucer hunt.

The first activated response to the assumption that the saucers
intended to avoid capture on the ground was begun by the Portland police
on July 5. The day before, reliable members of the department had re-
ported saucers in flight over the city. Their sharp eyes established
much favor in support of the belief that there actually existed such
strange, whizsing objects. Whereupon, the department asked the Oregon
National Guard flying units to send out planes to investigate the reports.

The same day the Portland policemen saw the flying objects,
editors of the Portland Oregonian had anticipated a sky-borne saucer
hunt. They acted upon their own initiative and sent a staff writer,
Paul F. Ewing, to head a flying expedition to track down the saucers in
their own lair. His dateline read "AT 10,600 FEET OVER PORTLAND, WITH
THE OREGONIAN'S 'FLYING SAUCER' HUNTING EXPEDITION." He reported that
"There's nobody up here but us and the birds. On second thought, there
are no birds, either." 4 The Oregonian's action came in the wake of
widespread reports of "flying saucers" over the city and north toward
the Vancouver area on Independence Day. Ewing and his photographer in-
tended to at least photographically capture a saucer. They found only a
wide expanse of sky, replete with scenery.

Whether or not the result of the police request, the aerial hunt
for a "flying saucer" was launched the day following. The announcement
came from headquarters of the Oregon National Guard's 123rd air squadron.

It revealed that a flight of six P-51 fighter planes, equipped with gun and telescopic cameras, would be alerted to take off upon report every weekday afternoon and evening. On weekends they would be alerted to fly from dawn to dusk. Speedy planes and photography were ready to combine in pursuit of the mystery. 5

For obvious reasons the saucer hunt began in the Pacific Northwest, the homeland of the phenomenon. But the same day efforts were launched in other areas. Also on the Pacific coast, it was reported that the Army Air Forces had alerted jet fighter planes at Muroc Army Airfield to join the hunt.

So the planes and crews flew in search of the saucers. They accomplished little more than "log" time for the pilots and crewmen. On Monday, July 7, the number of planes sent into the sky by the Oregon National Guard air army was reduced to four. A more cautious attitude marked their operations. Whereas, the day before it was an open announcement, the flights came to be described as "routine" but the pilots still carried instructions to look for the saucers.

At Denver, Colorado, an air crew of the Colorado National Guard joined the search. A fast attack plane at Buckley Field was alerted to give chase to any "disks" sighted in the Denver area. Photographic equipment again would make the capture possible. 6 The same action was taken

5. Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24. The United Press reported that eight P-51 fighter planes and three A-26 bombers made the initial northwest search flight. The more conservative figure is used in the text since there was no adequate substantiation for either report.
by the air squadron of the South Dakota National Guard at Sioux Falls. A plane already in the air was ordered to investigate a silvery "disk" reported shooting across the heavens near Sioux Falls. The pilot returned and said he had flown an extensive course and had found nothing. Five camera-equipped Navy fighter planes were made available at the Glenview Airport in Chicago, Illinois, to track down any saucers in that section. Captain Cecil B. Gill, commander of the Glenview naval air reserve station, directed the Chicago operations.

Co-incidentally, AAF Commander General Carl Spaatz turned up at Seattle, ostensibly for the purpose of a speech at a meeting in that city and for an airfield inspection tour at Tacoma. He denied any knowledge that would lead to identification of the saucers or of further plans to use air force planes to search for the objects. If anxiety of the mysterious objects had impelled the leader of the world's greatest airforce to their birthplace, he concealed it admirably, because when his announced commitments were completed he left Seattle and headed for the hills - on a vacation fishing trip.

A cautious attitude continued to characterize official and scientific comments. In Washington, D. C., Captain Tom Brown of the AAF's public relation's staff acknowledged his organization had decided "There's something to this" and had been checking reports for ten days. "We still haven't the slightest idea what they (saucers) could be," he said. Other Army and Navy officials entered positive disclaimers. David Lilienthal,

chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, said the saucers had nothing "to do with atomic experiments." 

The sky search was further organized in the Northwest when air squadrons of National Guard units in Oregon, Washington and Idaho kept constant surveillance "until the mystery of the 'flying saucers' is solved." The air arm leaders were Colonel G. R. Dodson, commander of Oregon's 123rd fighter squadron, Colonel Tom Lamphier, 190th squadron at Boise, Idaho, and Colonel Frank Frost of the Spokane, Washington, squadron. These air officers plotted areas in which the saucers had been reported and made plans for "regular patrols by fast, camera-equipped warplanes on 'flyways' established along the Columbia river from Walla Walla to the sea and from Puget Sound south to headwaters of the Williamette river."

But the first report of results in the sky search did not come from any organized group. It came from a pilot on a mapping mission in western Montana and proved to be the most startling story of the entire episode. A United Press report on July 7 said that "a pilot reported today that his plane knocked down a 'flying saucer' which he described as a 'pearl gray, clam-shaped airplane with a plexiglass dome on top.'" The pilot also called it a "'flying yo-yo'" and said it crashed into the Tobacco Root mountains in western Montana "after being torn to pieces by the propwash of his airplane."

11. Ibid.
The pilot, Vern Baird of Los Angeles, an employee for the Fairchild Photogrammetric Engineers company, gave the following report which, he said, occurred when he tangled with the "Yo-yo" while flying a P-38:

"Baird said he and his photographer, George Suttin, also of Los Angeles, were flying at 360 miles per hour at 32,400 feet, when he turned to check an oil distribution mechanism.

'There about 100 yards behind me was the "Yo-yo"... It was about fifteen feet in diameter and about four feet thick.'

'The curious craft overhauled the P-38 and I took evasive action.'

'The yo-yo got caught in my propwash and the thing came apart like a clamshell. The two pieces spiralled down some place in the Edison range.'

Baird said that after the "Yo-yo" exploded he looked around and saw several of them darting around "like a batch of molecules doing the rhumba." Neither the photographer nor himself thought to get a picture until it was too late, they said.

Reportedly, the first successful meeting with the flying objects had been completed and had proven that the mysterious strangers were fragile and not invincible, as supposed. But Baird's boss, J. J. Archer, plagued beyond endurance by people interested in the story, had this to explain:

"Three or four of us were sitting around the hanger gassing, and we just made it up. Somebody must have heard it, and spread the word. I've been so busy on that phone since it got out that I haven't been able to do any flying all day. I'm flabbergasted that anyone believed it." 13

Baird also admitted the hoax. He said he and some others were sitting around the hanger "gassing" and somebody must have told the newspapers.

Meanwhile, two of the tri-state air squadrons reported unsuccessful search flights the same day Baird's imagination provided copy for a nation. Two P-51's of the Oregon guard conducted a fruitless search over Portland for an unidentified object reported in the skies. Colonel Frost, of the Washington group, himself led two search missions over the St. Maries, Idaho, area where a housewife reported she and several others saw eight saucers that looked like bathtubs and were big as a house in the wooded hills. Colonel Frost reported the searchers found nothing.

Press reports on July 7 also revealed another important development in the efforts to get hold of a saucer. E. J. Culligan, president of a Northbrook, Illinois, company offered $1,000 reward "for the capture of a flying disc, if tangible, or a true explanation of the phenomena." He announced the offer "solely through an interest in science." The next day, similar rewards were offered by two other organizations, with slightly different terms. The World Inventors Congress posted a $1,000 reward for the delivery of a saucer to their exposition which was scheduled to open in Los Angeles, California, on July 11. This group placed a five day limit on their offer, sufficient to cover their convention tenure. The third $1,000 reward was made by the Spokane Athletic Round Table, "a group of gagsters," in Spokane, Washington. Whereas the

first reward was based on two alternatives, the latter two could be won only by producing a saucer. The chance for gold was added for the argonauts after a saucer—a pot which totaled $3,000.

Pilot Baird's hoax story of combat with a flying "yo-yo," the one nobody was expected to believe, was not the first hoax perpetrated in connection with the flying saucers, but it led a list of major ones which appeared across the nation. Not one American newspaper used in this study failed to make mention of Baird's imaginative tale. Across the world in Cairo, Egypt, the Egyptian Gazette printed Vernon Baird's tale. Its tongue-in-the-cheek story started: "United States pilots telling stories as they sat round the airfield was responsible for the latest 'flying saucer' hoax in the United States. 16

Another popular hoax during the heyday of the saucers was the circular saw blade, thought to be a grounded saucer, found by Father Joseph Brasky on the grounds of St. Joseph's church in Grafton, Wisconsin. Father Brasky made the discovery while taking a walk at dawn on July 6. The story was reported by the news services the following day. It was reported he found a circular blade with wires attached to it. The "disk" was made of steel, with a one and three-eighths inch hole in the center. Through it ran wires to which were attached small condenser-like objects, about three inches long, wrapped in black tape. Father Brasky reported he heard a "whinning noise followed by an explosion and thud before he found the object." A weather spire on top the church roof had been broken, he said, which indicated the saw blade descended from an altitude. 17 Father Brasky

offered his find to Federal Bureau of Investigation agents who, according to conflicting reports, indicated they were either not interested or considered the incident a juvenile prank.

Police in Shreveport, Louisiana, had a busy night on July 8 when they were kept busy investigating calls from the business district where a saucer was reported found. One call produced a sixteen-inch aluminum disk equipped with two radio condensers, a fluorescent light switch and copper tubing. The police pronounced it "obviously the work of a prankster." 18

Norman Hargrove, a jeweler in Houston, Texas, reported on July 8 that he had found an aluminum "disk" floating in the tide water near a beach. The story suggested intrigue since he told about the mysterious army nomenclature written on the "disk." When he observed the widespread reception that story received he apparently decided he had gone too far and declared it was a joke. But the Houston Chronicle kept the story running and pointed out facts that "lend credence to the tale."

The foremost credence was Hargrove's description of the inscription the "disk" bore. It reportedly said, "military secret of USA, army air forces, M4339658. Anyone damaging or revealing description or whereabouts of this missile subject to prosecution by the U. S. government. Call collect at once, LD446, AAF depot, Spokane, Washington." The words "non-explosive" were printed in big letters on one side. The collect call was made, but the commanding officer at the AAF depot in Spokane knew nothing about the wayward "disk." 19 Except for the Chronicle's support, the incident was

considered a joke because no one but Hargrove saw the "disk" and he gave
the story to the Chronicle.

A conscientious claim to obtain the saucer reward money was made
on July 8. Lloyd Bennett, a wholesale tobacco salesman of Celwein, Iowa,
had retired the night of July 6 when he heard something "come crashing
through the trees." When he awoke the next morning, he said he found a
"disk" in his yard. He had actual evidence to exhibit: a shiny "disk"
made of die-cast metal about six and one-half inches in diameter and one-
eighth inch thick. 20 When he announced the discovery to newsmen, he
said, "I intend to notify Army authorities and I'll file a claim for the
rewards being offered." 21 No later success was reported from Bennett,
nor did the reward backers report the acquisition of a saucer.

Action by air patrols spread to Wisconsin by July 8. Two pilots
came back from a flight on which they had crossed paths with "flying discs." 22
The report caused an estimated 150 Civil Air Patrol planes to be alerted
over the state in preparation for an air search. Lt. Colonel Harry W.
Schaefer, who announced the preparations, said the flights would start on
July 14. When the flights were begun it was not indicated if they were
carried out in the proportions as first announced, but later reports indi­
cated the search had been fruitless.

As the search spread and became more energetic, it moved many
editors to believe that perhaps more official cognizance would be given
the saucers. But reporters who confronted Presidential Press Secretary
Ross were told that President Truman had not ordered an investigation in­
to the matter of the "disks." 23

At least one official hoped the flying saucers were more than fancy. He was Senator Glen Taylor, of Idaho, who advocated a United States of the World. He feared the continued tension from the saucer stories would turn the world into a "global nuthouse," but he said he almost hoped the saucers would turn out to be space ships from another planet. They would "unify the peoples of earth as nothing else could... You'd have world government so quick it would make your head swim." 24

More than two weeks had passed since the first report of the flying saucers had appealed to the news taste of a nation. The stories had provided such a variety of reactions that many readers forgot the originator, the man who saw them first. But all the while, Kenneth Arnold, the father of the saucers, watched with wonderment the spread of his story. On July 10 a correspondent of International News Service approached him as to the possibility that he might have changed his mind. But Arnold stood staunch on his original declaration.

He said he had made no wild guesses. "I only told what I saw," he said.

He also said that in his opinion only three other people had given authentic reports of the objects he witnessed. They were Captain E. J. Smith, the veteran United Airlines pilot, and his crew. Arnold implied that he thought the other "eye witnesses" of the mysterious aircraft were reporting "something else - or nothing at all." 25

He denied flatly that they could have been weather balloons.

"I've seen weather balloons and a lot of other things floating around in the sky. I got a good look at what I saw."

Arnold then filled in other details. "I actually saw a type of aircraft slightly longer than it was wide, with a thickness about one twentieth as great as its width." He said he observed the flight while taking time from a business flight to look for a marine transport lost in the Mt. Rainier area since December. He said he watched them in the air for more than three minutes and that it took 1:42 minutes for them to fly from the southern crest of Mt. Rainier to the southern crest of Mt. Adams. He reiterated that he reported their speed at 1200 miles an hour while actually, he said, "it figures out at 1382 miles an hour."

He also revealed that he had sent a complete description and drawings of the objects to army scientists at Wright Field, Ohio. A moving picture camera which he had bought to stalk the strange craft had not been used, he said. "I haven't seen anything unusual since then - not even a weather balloon."
Chapter IV
BALLOON AT BAY

Kenneth Arnold said he had seen a weather balloon in flight and was sure the flying objects he had sighted on June 24 had not been balloons. But many other people had seen weather balloons that were proven to be the provocation for many flying saucer reports. The weather balloon, in fact, was a common explanation of the puzzle.

The systematic air search, coupled with the stimulus of a reward for the capture of a flying saucer, failed to produce one object that could legitimately have been called an answer to the mystery. The topic of the day centered around the "flying saucers." A nation desperately sought an explanation; many were given without a decline in the reports. The explanations apparently did not appeal to the highly motivated imagination of saucer sighters across the country. It was as if they wanted a fabulous explanation for a fabulous event; anything practical was out of the question.

The flights of "flying saucers" before July 4th were given the proper attention of a rare event, but explanations were few, which might indicate the incident was considered quite ephemeral when compared with the deluge of explanations after that date. Most of the serious explanations which attempted to strip the glamor of the saucers came after the flood of saucer reports on July 4th. That was the demarcation line; Independence Day gave maturity and absolute lionization to the saucers.
It was inevitable that the story should find a climax, although when it came it was neither fabulous nor well accepted. In fact, many scoffers wondered why their pet yarn reached the importance of large, Gothic headlines in such papers as the Chicago Tribune and Sun. Both of those papers, for example, like many others, displayed big, black headlines announcing that the army had gotten their hands on a flying saucer in New Mexico.

That the climax should have come in the west seemed apropos, but even more appropriate would have been its capture in the Pacific Northwest, where it was first found. Comment, mostly non-official, to the effect that authorities should center their search for a saucer in the northwest was often given. The pitch of interest was high; it seemed almost that something had to break. Readers interested in the episode were in every nation of the world; and editors, wise to the content of universal news, scanned press reports incessantly to feed the global appetite.

While the plot mounted to fever pitch, a man on horseback in New Mexico, ignorant of the sky mystery that plagued the populated points of civilization, inadvertently prepared the finish of the flying saucers. Of course neither editors nor readers could have known about W. W. Brazell, a rancher who lived about 85 miles northwest of Roswell. Farmer Brazell was to give the flying saucers their grandest glory and cause them to be precipitately forgotten.

Brazell was owner of a large ranch; it was often necessary that he patrol its fence boundaries by horseback. About July 3 he made
a survey of his fences and was galloping along when his horse shied and stopped suddenly. He himself was surprised at the scene ahead.

Scattered over a wide swath of his land for about 200 yards was a shiny mass of broken materials that resembled a sheet of brittle tinfoil that had been ripped and slashed as it settled down over the stubble and vegetation in the field. He dismounted and made an examination. He found much material like tinfoil; small, wooden beams that might have come from a kite and many small pieces of thin rubber. He took time to gather much of the material and put it under some brush. Then he went home. He took along a sample of the materials to show his family. No one showed much concern; farmers often find foreign objects in their fields.

The Brasell family worked on their remote ranch during the siege of the flying saucers, oblivious to the phenomenon. They had no radio and the nearest telephone was thirty miles away, in Corona. Then a relative mentioned the reports of flying objects to them, and a trip to Corona the night of July 5 confirmed the puzzle for the Brasells.

The next day, Sunday, July 6, Brasell, his wife and two children, Vernon, 8, and Bessie, 14, went back to the field and gathered a good sample of the broken materials. Then they got in their car and headed for Roswell to ask Sheriff George Milcox if their find had any connection with the flying saucers.

When he recounted the incident later, Brasell said he was

"a little bit ashamed to mention it, because I didn't know what it was. I asked the sheriff to keep it kinda quiet...I thought folks would kid me."

Sheriff Wilcox, however, immediately relayed notice of the find to air force authorities at Roswell Army Airfield. At once Major Jesse A. Marcel, intelligence officer, was assigned to investigate the objects at Brazell's ranch. Major Marcel contacted Brazell and they went back to the ranch where a sample of the pieces were taken into custody.

Later, Colonel William H. Blanchard, commanding officer at Roswell Airfield, reported the find to Major General Roger M. Ramsey, commanding general of the Eighth Air Force, with headquarters at Ft. Worth, Texas, and was told to dispatch the evidence to the Ft. Worth command immediately.

By that time, word of Brazell's find, thought to be evidence of the mysterious flying saucers, began to encompass the area about Roswell. Probably about the time the evidence was in transit to Ft. Worth, Colonel Blanchard and his public relations officer, Lieutenant Warren Haught, decided on the need of an official statement to alleviate the tension of the saucer stories. Endorsed by Colonel Blanchard, PRO Lieutenant Haught released the following statement on July 8:

The many rumors regarding the flying disks became a reality yesterday when the intelligence officer of the 509th (Atomic) Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, Roswell Army Airfield, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disk through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff of Chaves county.

2. Chicago Sun, July 9, 1947, p. 1. This is the first paragraph of this statement, the rest being a summary of the events leading up to the announcement of discovery.
Tension and speculation about the nature and nativity of the flying objects which had mounted for several weeks seemed to crystallize. Newspapers played the story as the light after a long dark search in mystery. The discovery in New Mexico dominated conversations and gatherings in convivial quarters. The sheriff’s office at Ft. Worth was suddenly impossibly clogged with telephone calls. Three transoceanic calls were reported from England, one from the London Daily Mail. There was a great audience which chewed its nails while the evidence was being identified. Some of world’s press reported the discovery as the initial installment to an eye-opener finish. The majority — in London, Stockholm, Cairo, Calcutta, Shanghai, Sydney, Honolulu — waited and combined the suspense and the answer in one story.

The drama during the identification procedure in Ft. Worth was not recorded in newsprint, but the results were announced that evening on a radio broadcast from Ft. Worth.

Radio listeners heard Major General Ramey drily disclose that the alleged captured flying saucer was only a weather balloon used by army weather stations throughout the United States.

Newspapers the following morning recounted General Ramey’s scoops, with display headlines conspicuously small. General Ramey’s disclosure had been the climax; only residue and old facts were left to be given newspaper circulation. The tension subsided, a nation acted almost disappointed; the story had burst, its accustomed gusto a deep sigh or an I-told-you-so shrug of the shoulders.

5. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 9, 1947, p. 6A.
While higher officials stewed, it was Warrant Officer Irving Newton, a forecaster at the Eighth Air Force weather station (whom the New York Times called a "lowly warrant officer"), who identified the objects found on the New Mexico ranch. WO Newton explained that the assembled parts were known as a "weather radar target" or a "ray wind target" and were used to determine the direction and velocity of winds at high altitudes. He said there were eighty weather stations in the United States which used the same type of balloon and it could have come from any one of them. When rigged up, he said, the object floated by means of a 100-gram balloon. Suspended from the balloon were kites, or six-sided stars, covered with a shiny material, like tinfoil. The outfit was traced by radar and computations made from the radar-revealing air currents, Newton explained. The identification was positive, he averred.

Army weather experts in Washington, D. C., however, discounted any idea that weather balloon targets might have been the basis for the sources of flying saucers stories. One of them, Brigadier General Donald W. Yeates, said only a few of them were used daily for "highly accurate wind information from extreme altitudes." He was inclined to doubt their flying saucer connections.

Ivan R. Tannehill, U. S. weather bureau chief forecaster, pointed out the fact that the balloons had been in use for many years and was of the opinion that "they were unlikely to have been mistaken

5. Sun, op. cit.
'all over the country and all in one week' for mysterious objects traveling through the skies at supersonic speeds." 6

In retrospect, the original statement from Roswell Army Airfield appeared naive and presumptuous. Using the authority of his station, Colonel Blanchard had brazenly told a nation that men of his organization had been the first to obtain a celebrated flying saucer for examination. The authority of his statement carried far in newsprint. His action turned into an indiscretion. He boldly put a name to evidence highly circumstantial in nature.

Later efforts by newsmen to see him revealed that his superiors also probably thought it a blunder. Colonel Blanchard, the newsmen learned, "is now on leave." His junior public relations officer, Lieutenant Haught, was also included in the rebuke for a military faux pas. He told reporters he had been "'shut up by two blistering phone calls from Washington.'" 7

One man at least was free to add an epilogue to the incident. He was the man who started it, Rancher Brazell. He could only shake his head in wonderment at the way news of his find got around. "'I didn't hear any more about it until things started popping. How that story has traveled!'"

As if by magic, as soon as the New Mexico saucer was exposed, the story was almost dropped from the newspapers of the nation. If it were used at all it was relegated to inside pages. Continued flights

7. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 9, 1947, p. 6A.
of flying saucers immediately dwindled to a few cursory reports, then nothing. Thereafter, if the saucers flew, they flew in silence, because the nation's press was through with them. Their news appeal had burst in some vague manner after their dramatic appearance in New Mexico. Their swan song was a short one and faded quickly.
Aside from their novelty and a certain fearful prospect in mystery, the "flying saucers" generated a stir in minds around the world that provided their followers with one of the greatest guessing games in many years. Particularly in the United States, they were the riddle of the day, and the participants in the deluge of explanations were inescapable. Moreover, it seemed that as many had an answer for the phenomenon—if not original, one that fell in a category already exploited.

A mystery as amazing as the mystery itself was the stockpile of explanations that were left to accumulate without one apparently appealing to the popular mind. It was as if no explanation was wanted, as if the drama in the heavens was a sparkling success and was urged into longevity. The saucers challenged the best brains of man; they overcame theretofore known obstacles in aerodynamics. If they were fact they were fabulous; if they were not, they were a fantasy worth encouragement.

For every action there is a motivation, or reason, the rational mind would say. Soon after Arnold's first discovery, explanations were given that doubtless were meant to instantly clarify his bewilderment. One such explanation had plausible texture and lived to become a foremost answer to the puzzle, though often refuted. Another one was summarily executed by the Navy, this being the "Flying Flapjack" theory in which it was proposed that the Navy's radically designed new plane by

1. See Chapter I.
that name - also known as the V-173 - was the "flying saucer." Navy officials were quick to disclose that only one such plane had ever been assembled and had never left Bridgeport, Connecticut. Furthermore, they said, even if it had, its range of operation was not sufficient to carry it to the state of Washington.

The former explanation concerned meteorites which were often thought to be the answer to the bright objects seen streaking through the stratosphere. It was also quite often discounted. Before the deluge of reports on July 4th, many scientists suggested meteorites as the objects reported seen by so many across the country. The explanation came near being generally accepted as what people "thought" they saw in the heavens, except that it did not seem to fit the nature of the objects Arnold saw over western Washington. After all, they, the first ones, were the real ones.

On July 4th an Associated Press correspondent delved into the matter further with "various scientific brains around the Pentagon" who discussed these "meteorological maybes":

1. "That solar reflections on low-hanging clouds produced spectral 'flashes' which might have appeared like moving objects."

(An anonymous Washington, D. C., scientist said he did not think it possible for solar radiation to produce such a reaction. "'Otherwise,'" he said, "'we'd be hearing of such cloud reflections all the time. The state of Washington has no monopoly on clouds.'")
2. "That a small meteor might have broken up, producing
crystals of silica that caught the rays of the sun."

(An unidentified air forces scientist said that had this
happened, meteoric fragments undoubtedly would have been found.)

3. "That icing conditions in high clouds produced
large hailstones which might have flattened out and
glided a bit, giving the impression of horizontal
movement even though they were falling vertically." 2

The entire episode was accentuated by a cross-fire of explana-
tions and refutations. Scientists, scholars, and famous men were sought
out and asked to give private opinions. This galaxy, like the great body
of less technical followers, reportedly were unable collectively to agree.
Many agreed, but as many refuted statements of their co-workers. The
only unanimity was variety.

The Army and Navy Air Forces, the organizations closest to
startling innovations in aviation, displayed an intense but cautious
interest in the flying objects. Army Air Forces officials admitted they
were puzzled and were hesitant to discount any reports. Even after a
preliminary investigation had failed to produce concrete evidence, Captain
Tom Brown, the AAF's Public Relations spokesman in Washington, D. C., said
that all reports of the flying phenomena were "being correlated in an
effort to identify the objects." 3 Also Rear Admiral Paul F. Lee, direc-
tor of the naval research laboratory, stated "We concur in the army

Neither organization could denounce the preponderance of reports as fantasy, or at least they didn’t.

The AAF did break their code of caution long enough to tell newsmen they were sure the "flying saucers" were not three things often said to be: (1) they were not secret bacteriological weapons designed by some foreign government; (2) nor new type army rockets, nor (3) space ships.

The mass of reports on July 4th injected story sinew in the columns describing the flights. A grandiloquent example was that by Robert W. Fenwick, Rocky Mountain Empire Editor for the Denver Post, who on July 5, reviewing past flights and the remarkable echelons on Independence Day, wrote: "Whatever the speculation or ultimate explanation, this fact stood out in hair-raising irrefutability:

"Inhabitants of North America have seen flying above the surface of this planet something never before seen by human eyes nor known to have existed in the history of the earth."

But one man, Ole J. Sneide, a resident of San Francisco, California, was not abashed. If the world wanted a mystic explanation, he had one. In a letter to the San Francisco Chronicle, he said the flying objects were "'oblate spheroid space ships from the older planets.'"

He totally ignored the AAF statement that the saucers were not space ships and went on to give the following recount of "flying saucer" history:

Usually they travel in outer space with speed approximating that of light by use

of antigravity devices and hyperspace. In our space they travel much slower, and... become visible either by intent or by accident, for in their travels they use the invisibility screen...

This space navigation has been going on for millions of millions of years, these 'Navo' having come into our galaxy originally from the greater Magellanic cloud via the lesser Magellanic cloud, 47 Tucanae, Omega and Alpha Centauri Clusters.

Their masters planted the original humanities here which did not develop sui-generis... They have been absent from our planet since before the fall of the Roman Empire when the Great Master left Earth for the outer galaxy by fohatic teleportation.

He is now back and what is going to be done depends upon mankind, but my advice is that physical man set up no beligerance, for a small concentration of those discs just beyond the range of our atmosphere could clean the surface of our planet completely in a matter of less than 24 hours.

Their present local headquarters is on the unseen side of our moon. I discovered this by teleportation visits hither and yon in and beyond our galaxy.

Mankind... will just have to learn their physics all over again, someday, if they live. Ah! If they live! 5

Interplanetary visitors, less mundane than the Sneide travelers, were suggested by The Reverend A. M. Drake of Progressive Spiritualists in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Reverend Drake thought the saucers might be spirits from another world, and said he hadn't "made any effort to contact them." Asked what reason they would have to approach the earth,

he replied that "people on the other side, like those on this side, have their own reasons for doing things and nobody else knows why." 6

Whether or not it was the same group of flyers, Mead Layne, publisher of an occult magazine, said he had contacted a "space ship" seen over San Diego in November 1946 and had received a message from passengers aboard the "saucer." He said they were "etheric," becoming visible only after entering the dense atmosphere around the earth. He dispelled any anxiety, adding, "they come with good intent." 7

A Detroit meteorologist decided it was not "farfetched" to believe the saucers were emissaries from Mars contacting or reconnoitering our earth. 8 In Chicago, R. L. Farnsworth, president of U. S. Rocket Society who believes that trips to the moon are in the offing, said, "I wouldn't be surprised if the saucers were remote-control electronic eyes from Mars." 9 After all, both men contended people of this globe have long speculated about life on Mars, so why shouldn't they be curious about us.

While others expounded celestial explanations, a 34-year-old watchmaker in Chattanooga, Tennessee, got down to earth with self-contained brainwork. He maintained he had invented the "flying saucer" and submitted it to the War Department in 1943, but his idea was rejected as impractical at the time. After a good deal of study of the saucer reports, he became convinced that the War Department had elaborated on

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
his plan, using atomic power instead of his rubber-band propelled
model. 10

Such tongue-in-the-cheek explanations were given adequate play
in news columns, a fact which might account for the great success of the
story. The Los Angeles Times' "Ambercrombie," an impish, omniscient
commentator of the news, divulged to readers the contents of an inter-
view with "Professor Heatus Snodgrass of the Paouina Interplanetary
Cosmic Gravitational U-239 Institute, who advanced these theories of
the nature of the flying objects:

1. A gooseberry pie factory blew up in Pocatello (Idaho).
2. A squadron of flat pelicans buzzed Pismo Beach.
3. What people have been seeing is light reflected from a mass flight of hysteria." 11

That a successor to a national craze like games for popular
entertainment promoted by flying military skeptics, was suggested by the
Chicago Daily News. The paper thought the saucers a practical joke
started by sassy young pilots who were not above "playing practical
jokes, on the ground or aloft."

"Maybe somebody started it by sailing saucers from a plane.
And then others took it up as a good idea." But then, the item sadly
concluded, somebody surely would have found such evidence on the ground -
but nobody did. 12

A sensational scoop, revealing the origin of the "flying saucer," was published July 5 by the Evening Herald and Express of

Los Angeles. The article declared the saucers were the outgrowth of "experiments in transmutation of atomic energy." It was based on quoted statements from a noted scientist in nuclear physics affiliated with the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena who asked specifically that his name be withheld.

He said the "transmutation" tests were being conducted at Muroc Lake, California, White Sands, New Mexico, and Portland, Oregon atom experimental plants.

Described as a researcher on the Manhattan Project, the scientist reportedly said: "'These so-called saucers are capable of high speeds, but can be controlled from the ground. They are 20 feet in width in the center and are partially rocket propelled on takeoff.'" 13

"'People are not seeing things,'" he declared. "'Such flying discs actually are in experimental existence.'" 14 Thus, he solidly backed flying saucer witnesses, but met with rebuke from fellow scientists.

In Chicago, Dr. Harold Urey, atom scientist at the University of Chicago, called the transmutation process "'gibberish.'" He commented: "'Transmutation of atomic energy sounds like gibberish. You can transmute metals, not energy.'" 15

Norris Sills, a Louisiana college physicist and member of the navy staff at the Bikini test of atomic bombs, said there was "no

plausible connection" between nuclear fission in bombs and bomb plants
and the flying saucers. 16

Although the anonymous scientist who proposed nuclear fission
as the saucers did not mention the Hanford atomic works in South Central
Washington, a correspondent of International News Service pressed a
security office spokesman at the plant for a possible explanation. The
spokesman, J. R. Parcell, said: "'So far as we know, they have no con­
nection with our work here.'" 17 When it was pointed out to him that
the first saucers were reported seventy-five miles from the Hanford
plant and that subsequent reports had been largely from the Pacific
Northwest, he answered:

"'We've been reading and hearing stories about the discs and
have been wondering as much as anybody. There is nothing more we can
say.'"

A telling blow which reduced the brilliance of the scoop was
dealt by Dr. C. C. Lauritzen, head of the California Institute's physics
department, when he denied the source of the story was a member of his
staff. His denial was the coup de grace because subsequent investiga­
tion failed to produce further allied information or the talkative
scientist.

Associated Press science editor, Howard W. Blakeslee, con­tended that the flying saucers could be explained by certain laws of
eyesight. He supported his views, all but the speed of the objects,
in a dispatch given widespread attention, dated July 7:

17. Ibid.
All objects appear round or nearly so at any distance that is close to the limit of vision. If the objects are seen by reflected light...they are almost certain to be round, and if the reflections are sunlight then the sizes reported are those that would be expected from distant light reflections.

Descriptions of practically all the saucers as round and flat fit exactly with the tricks that eyes play. This trickiness varies with differences in weather and lighting.

I have seen flying saucers over Long Island Sound near my home...They were round, bright, and moving fast. They were no mystery...because they were light reflected from the bodies of airplanes that soon were identifiable when they changed course and came near enough to be seen distinctly.

Last week I saw one oval flying form which for a moment looked exactly like the photograph of the oval object taken by Yeoman Frank Ryman north of Seattle, Washington. The one I saw over Long Island came closer and proved to be an airplane.

Many descriptions of movements of the flying saucers fit with the common maneuvers of airplanes, singly or in groups. Some of the maneuvering reported...resembled what can be seen while watching distant airplanes.

Whether planes are guided, pilotless or jet, they all would look the same at great distance.

The one strangest fact is that no one has seen a flying saucer close up. In so many experiences an occasional closeup would be almost inevitable.

There is no explanation of reported speeds of 1,000 or more miles an hour. Meteors, although they go much faster than that, do not explain it because the saucers mostly appeared in daytime and there are not enough daylight meteors. 18
While the entire countryside was stalking the elusive saucers, Bob Johnson, operator of a flying service at Missoula, Montana, was reported to have captured a saucer and uncovered perhaps the most practical explanation given news play. Johnson maintained the saucers were floating milkweed seeds borne upwards thousands of feet by thermals and updrafts during the summer months. He described them as flat, circular, "about the size of a dollar and composed of silvered, fuzz-colored spikes radiating from a common hub." He said that a neutral-colored shaft stemmed from the hub and when held up to the light became almost invisible, leaving the round hub to gleam as though made of aluminum.

Dr. Joseph Kramer, associate professor of botany at the State University at Missoula, said Johnson's theory "could be."

A somewhat similar idea suggested the saucers were large masses of spider webs floating from the western and northwestern parts of the country. William C. (Tex) Reynolds, an amateur flier of Racine, Wisconsin, said that several years before he had flown his plane through a spider web 300 yards in diameter and had seen many smaller similar webs since.

Of all the opinions on the nature and origin of the "flying saucers" there was one which gained a considerable following. Its authenticity was reported experimentally substantiated by Dr. F. S. Cotton, well-known professor of physiology at the University of Sydney, Australia. Dr. Cotton had privately arrived at an explanation of the flying objects and decided to verify it. He asked 450 students of a lecture class to participate by going to the outside where he suggested that they look at

the sky about a mile away, and concentrate their gaze on a fixed point while standing perfectly still.

"Within 10 minutes," the Sydney Morning Herald reported, "22 students reported they had seen the objects" described by the press. The students' descriptions indicated that they had seen "objects which appeared to be oval; that they were bright; that they moved rapidly; that they tended to move in the direction of the long axis; and there was a tendency for the path of motion to be curbed." Along with the oral explanations, he asked for drawings of the visionary objects from the students. A composite of the drawings showed a "silvery disc with a short tail; discs swinging in an arc; and discs resembling a string of flying pearls."

Dr. Cotton nodded knowingly. "'I thought so,'" he said.

Wartime inventor of the aerodynamics suit to overcome blackouts of fighter pilots, Dr. Cotton contended he expected the numerous similar answers. The reports were "all due to the 'effect of red corpuscles of blood passing in front of the retina,'" he said. The eyes, fixed on a distant spot, particularly the sun or bright sky, become the bed over which pass shadows of the corpuscles that are round and seemingly projected into the distant sky. The phenomenon, he said, "is well recognized."

Dr. Cotton's explanation made sense to a lot of other scientists. Professor William T. Heron, University of Minnesota, called the phenomenon "entoptic," or "within the eye," which "combined with the
power of suggestion, has resulted in the imaginative manufacture of the rollicking 'pancakes..." 21

In Chicago, Dr. Leo Manas, expert in psychological optics, simultaneously with the Cotton experiment, advanced the theory that the flying objects were only corpuscles in the eye retina projected into space. "This condition can present itself after looking at surfaces, particularly colored surfaces like the open sky, for long periods of time," he stated. 22

The theory was further encouraged by Dr. Dennis E. Jackson, professor of pharmacology at the University of Cincinnati, Cleveland, who said the phenomenon of vision could be witnessed by anyone who looked into the sky long enough and saw the shadow of his own red or white corpuscles.

However, Nat Finney of the Des Moines Register's Washington bureau, reported that scientists there looked down their noses at the "after-image" theory. They thought it unlikely the images would appear bright and shiny to an observer, since they are usually black and white. They also doubted the illusion of floating spots in the air caused by coming into bright light out of the dark, because the spots float erratically and do not travel at high speeds. 23

The same scientists also rejected the meteorite explanation, as did many others. Among the dissenters, Dr. Gerard Kuiper, director of the University of Chicago's Yerkes observatory at William Bay, and Dr. Thornton Page, a fellow worker, both excluded the possibility of meteorites close to the earth's surface. Dr. Kuiper said, "Only exceptionally

large meteors could reach the earth's atmosphere and still be burning... and in that case they would look like streaks - not discs - because of their high speed... They would be traveling at seven to 30 miles a second (seven miles a second is 25,200 miles an hour). Dr. Page said they might be luminous clouds - clouds that glow because they contain electrical charges - and "just might look as though they were disks." 24

Wagner Schlesinger, director of the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, agreed with Dr. Kuiper that the meteors' high speed would make them appear as streaks. He was quoted: "I think a lot of the reports are phony... To judge height and speed, even trained observers must know the size of an object." 25

The saucers were described as a "mild case of meteorological jitters," with some "mass hypnosis" thrown in by Gordon A. Atwater, curator of astronomy of the Hayden Planetarium, New York City. Certain that the saucers were neither meteorological nor astronomical in origin, Curator Atwater said, "Ice crystals, formed by nature high in the sky, could be as good an explanation as any... A mass of such crystals, .003 to .004 inches thick, could reflect the sun's rays like a small mirror and make the phenomena visible." 26 Dr. Jan Schilt, professor of astronomy at Columbia University, New York City, believed the saucers were speeding airplanes that churned up the atmosphere and caused distortion of light rays... largely electrical in nature due to the turmoil of the propeller and wings, causing something like "smoke rings." He declared that

25. Ibid.
flying birds, headlights against mist or clouds as passed going up a steep hill could produce the same effect. He was inclined to be censorious of those who gave profound and strange explanations and thought they would "be more careful in the future about spreading half truths or badly observed things of nature." 27

The unique explanation that the saucers were the result of experimentation designed to create artificial satellites for scientific purposes came from Professor A. M. Low of London, England. The prominent British physicist stated that prior to the war, American, British and German scientists seriously were considering "the creation of an artificial satellite - a miniature planet - which would serve many purposes, such as deflecting television rays." He told an International News Service correspondent that if a nation was working on the project, it would easily result in the appearance of strange flying objects like saucers. 28

Most saucer sighters were looked upon as harboring a touch of insanity or an awful talent for mystic revelation, yet novel statements to the effect that people who did not see flying saucers were more likely to be the abnormal were attributed to Dr. Donald A. Laird, former director of Colgate University's psychological laboratory and expert on mass psychology. He declared there was nothing wrong with people who claimed to have seen flying saucers. In fact, he said there was something wrong with people who didn't see them or something similar.

"People have been seeing them for years...They are nothing more than particles...inside the eyeball...(They) float around in a

A common method and perhaps the easiest way to understand a new and strange event is to give it a name, preferably an established name whose background is well-known. In the case of the "flying saucers," they were soon cited as an extraordinary example of mass hysteria, a term of psychoneurosis depicting a kind of wild emotionalism common with great masses of people. The psychology of crowds, the behavior of people in detached groups influenced by a common stimulus were reactions not unfamiliar to students of psychology. Many psychologists and psychiatrists particularly were prone to find, in most cases not a pure culture, symptoms of hysteria spread by the admixture of fear and fun resulting from the flights of the celestial speeders. That the people who observed hysteria in the episode, and called it that, were more than casual is quite doubtful. Yet a few of these scientific observers were brave enough to call the event an instance of mass hysteria. In both cases, however, it seemed inferential that the phrase "mass hysteria" was used loosely, more the result of habit picking a quick name than the result of any exceptional research. This can also be attributed to the fact that many observers considered
the flights a temporary craze, and when they were asked for opinions gave cooperatively, perhaps even amusedly, basing their opinions upon ready indices, never thinking the event might persist as a phenomenon deserving indulgent research.

The range of attitudes among readers of the saucer flights were revealed in a picture and comments column conducted by the Los Angeles Times. The "man-on-the-street" answers to how they accounted for the "flying saucers" were:

Adult man: "Radio-controlled projectiles"; unmarried file clerk: "A Russian secret weapon"; male printer: "A navy experimental plane"; a boy: "Russian weapons sent to start war"; woman laboratory worker: "Some sort of military experimentation"; sailor: "An army or navy secret development"; young woman: "U. S. scientists sending projectiles high enough to take pictures of the earth, or maybe Martian scientists doing the same"; retired aviator of World War I: "It's a farce! Only the result of atmospheric conditions."

It was necessary many times for the Army Air Forces to discredit any general thought that the saucers might be secret weapons dispatched from Russia. An official disclaimer also came from Eugene Tunantzev, Russian vice-consul at Los Angeles, who scoffed at the idea and said that by no "stretch of the imagination would Russia use another country for a proving ground." The idea was seriously agreeable to the opinions of many people.

A prevalent commentary of the day, which by many was believed to account for the eerie objects streaking through the heavens, stated the episode was the result of a post-war period of "repression or deprivation, when people subconsciously want their minds to remain excited." Thus, it was believed that a true explanation would be a psychological one. One of many to set forth the idea was Dr. Jesse Sprowls, professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, who said he believed it just the beginning of a series of such phenomena to follow World War II. He said: "People actually enjoy being frightened and subconsciously are attracted by any mass suggestion." Particularly, he said, if they have been suspended and lived in excitement and vicarious danger for so long, as during the years of war. 32

To Dr. Winifred Overholser, nationally known psychiatrist and superintendent of St. Elizabeth's hospital, Washington, D. C., the saucer flights bore the "earmarks of being national hysteria." He continued: "Every time someone comes up with a sea-serpent story...others with vivid imaginations are sure they have seen the same thing...The critical faculty in man, the last one he received, is still not well developed. Scratch the surface and you find the same hysteria which predominated during the witchcraft scare..." 33

Dr. Overholser said that when he made his rounds of the mental patients not a one commented on the saucers. "'I think they may be a little skeptical,'" he said.

32. Chicago Daily News
In Philadelphia, Dr. Roy K. Marshall, director of the Feis planetarium, Franklin Institute, called the situation "plain hysteria." 34 At the University of Oregon, a professor of physics called it "mass hysteria" and victimized "optical illusions," while a faculty worker in psychology believed "the whole thing could be the result of a general semi-hysteria due to the nervousness of the public over reports of atomic warfare and guided projectiles." 35

But other scientists didn't agree. Dr. Harry A. Steckel, psychiatric consultant to the Veterans Administration, Syracuse, New York, discounted the element of mass hysteria, as did a professor emeritus of psychiatry at Syracuse University. They concurred that too many people, in too many places, had seen the saucers to dismiss them lightly. The answer, they thought, might possibly be the result of experiments by some unknown government or agencies, "unwilling or unable to reveal their activities at this time." 36

Still others took a less profound view of the affair. Professor C. C. Wylie, astronomer at the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, said the stories sounded like "summer sickness" to him. 37 Dr. J. S. Nassau, director of the Warner & Swasey observatory, Case Institute, Cleveland, Ohio, said the reports were "fancies." 38

The explanation which killed the saucer saga was committed by a forecaster for the Eighth Air Force. When W/O Irving Newton pronounced

the saucers weather balloons, it seemed there was no more to be said. But Lieutenant Commander Thomas H. Rent and aides at the Naval Air Station in Atlanta, Georgia, afforded clinical support. A less publicized event occurred the day following Newton's expose. Lieutenant Bell Zelle Moore, aerology officer, launched for the first time a "ray wind" target over Atlanta. Immediately "flying saucer" reports were received on the city desk at the Atlanta Constitution.

The "ray wind," or weather target borne aloft by balloons, was reported to be the same type discovered mutilated by Rancher Brazell in New Mexico and thought to be a "flying saucer." Observed Commander Rentz: "People are just beginning to see these things and that's probably why they are all excited about them now." They were invented only a few years before and their use became general only a short time before the saucers.

Another officer on the staff, Chief Petty Officer Frank F. Roberts, went so far as to blame every "flying saucer" report on "raywinds." He said he had checked newspaper reports of persons who said they had spotted saucers, and in every case they were near a radar unit using the new-type weather balloons. 39

Orville Wright, co-inventor of the airplane, said the whole affair was "propaganda started by the government to support the current state department campaign to get us into another war." 40 A veteran pilot of the Delta Airlines, Atlanta, Georgia, with twenty years' experience and two million miles of flying, said "America...is doing some light and fancy day dreaming. Flying saucers? The only thing in the sky

similar is the sun and the moon.\footnote{Atlanta Constitution, July 8, 1947, p. 2.}
The English were reported to have called the event "America's reply to the Loch Ness Monster" which is seen romping in Scotland's northern waters "every time the tourist trade needs a shot in the arm."\footnote{Baltimore Sun, July 7, 1947, p. 1., from London Sunday Dispatch.}

The London Communist Daily Worker said: "Citizens of a country which possess the atom bomb ought not to be afraid of anything..."\footnote{Ibid.}

The Christian Science Monitor summed up the event editorially on July 9 in its only reference to the flying objects made during their tenure:

With eyes as big as saucers, the public is scanning the skies for signs and portents. Greek mythology had its winged griffins, but the age of Superman prefers flying discs. Even the pink elephants which some reprehensible old characters used to tell of seeing are hopelessly outdated. For the advantage of these flying saucers, hurtling through the sky at dizzy speeds, is that they can be seen by presumably sober people.

If the whole flying-saucer fever seems like an absurd sequel to Orson Welles' invasion from Mars, there is this to be said. Since the Welles radio hoax the world has moved into a jet-propelled atomic age in which the fairy tales of yesterday have become the grim problems of today. It is not surprising that the merest suggestion in the news should make multitudes of jittery people see spots in front of their eyes.

There is, of course, a bare margin of possibility that behind the overheated imaginings that have multiplied the 'saucers' into all colors and sizes is a genuine freak of nature,
or a top-secret military experiment, or something else. But the real danger to be faced in finding the proper controls for nature and for mankind's manipulation of it is the contagion of hysteria. If the saucers make this danger clearer, they will not have flown in vain. 44

Since no explanation was received with general satisfaction, there were two important organizations, the Army and the Navy, who, perhaps, later, would divulge information applicable to solving the saucer puzzle. Approximately three months after the story of the "flying saucers" disappeared from news columns, the Army's Public Information division was contacted in the hope of some significant answer. The answer, written by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Virden, said:

"There are possibly as many opinions as to what these 'flying discs' or 'saucers' actually were among the people of the Army as you would find among a like number of people in civil life. The facts seem to be that nobody really knows. They were not experimental type of aircraft nor were they guided missiles of any sort which had been launched by the Army or the Air Force.

"This division has no information about these reported 'flying saucers' except what was printed in the newspapers and magazines at that time." 45

The Navy's Office of Public Information was equally reticent. Commander Robert C. Jackson, in his answer, declared that "this department has no information relative to an official explanation of the 'flying saucer' episode." 46

What were the "flying saucers?"

44. Christian Science Monitor, July 9, 1947, p. 16C.
45. Pertinent paragraphs from private correspondence between the Army's public information division and the author.
46. Ibid., from the Navy.
Chapter VI

LEVITY

A featured question of the saucer fair was why their pilots never trusted a landing on earth. One wag believed it was impossible for a saucer pilot to come in against the cross-currents of guffaws which arose from all the open mouths on earth.

Everybody got a boot out of the "flying saucers." It is entirely improbable that an updraft from collective bellylaughs kept the saucers afloat, but it is entirely probable that in a figurative sense those belly-blown winds kept the stories circulating to the delight of a post-war world. For a time, serial sallies like comic strips and radio "whodunits" gave way to a real life diversion. Real mirth and mystery were alive in the skies.

From all reports, an aura of bewilderment fell over the nation when Arnold came back with his tall tale. It was something to seriously think about. Apparently nobody thought about it too long before they worked up a good laugh. It was a story with a punch; you could fear its implications or laugh it into gleeful greatness. Both tributaries were used, but the latter, levity, being the lost child in a world shocked by war crimes, became the greater body of the episode. After the war, fun was on the wing.

Editors of the New York Herald-Tribune decided there was one person who would know the home of the saucers, the father of such
invasions, Hollywood's Orson Welles, who, a few years before, had been mixed up in a similar affair. But Actor Welles was envious of whoever started the whole thing. "I feel like a piker after hearing of the flying discs," he told the Herald-Tribune. "This thing is out of control. Fantastic! Hollywood should have thought this one up."

Two of the first wits to consider the matter were Oxie and Torchie, the Chicago Daily News' curbstone commentators. On June 27 they had the following discussion:

'What do you make of that Idaho businessman who seen nine big somethings barreling through the air?' asked Torchie...

'I have given this phenomenon some deep study,' said Oxie...

'Meaning you went to the basement,' said Torchie.

'Meaning I make vigorously with the brains,' said Oxie.

'At first I am inclined to think it is Uncle Joe Stalin arriving from Moscow to take over at Washington. Then I think quick that Senator Taft does not go for this.'

'After all, Senator Taft is the new champ. He has klunk John L. Lewis.

'After licking the man with the Awning Eyebrows, the senator would find Uncle Joe a soft touch... so that leave Stalin out.'

'So I think some more and it dawn on me they is a very simple solution for this mystery.'

'What is it?' asked Torchie.

What the man see," said Oxie, "was just the cost of living playing tag with the income tax, the price of corn and Lou Boudreau's batting average."

A motorist near Corona, California, got the scare of his life when, he said, he was attacked by a saucer. With a stick in hand he approached the object as it lay in the road. It had identification painted on it which said, "No Hunting Allowed." A game warden had lost a sign.

In Detroit, Michigan, a man swore the saucers were manhole covers blown from sewers during a storm. Another man told Detroit police he had seen the saucers and that "'a little man was sitting on the first one, steering.'" In Denver, Colorado, a resident saw a "flying disk" with an American flag painted on it.

As enjoyable as a new toy, the saucers were everybody's playthings. Even savants like Dr. Ernest A. Hooton, Harvard University's famous anthropologist, found them pegs for fun. He called them "'spare or misplaced halos waiting for all the people who were killed over the Fourth of July week end.'"

Governor Jimmie H. Davis, of Louisiana, commented that the saucers were nothing new to him. He had been seeing them ever since he was inaugurated. But he had a friend, an elderly Negro man he met in

north Louisiana, to whom they were part of a prophecy. He said the Negro
told him that "the time was not far distant when the world would know no
seasons - winter will come in summer, summer in winter, spring in the fall
and fall in the spring - men will walk before they crawl, cotton will open
before it blooms, the watermelon will come before the vine," and, in fact,
his friend said, "I look for it to be kinda spooky from here on in." 6

They invaded the realm of matrimony. A Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,
husband told the judge in divorce court there was no mystery about the fly­
ing saucers in his home - they were wife-propelled. 7 Down in Shreveport,
Louisiana, a new wrinkle in sky wanderlust was added by James C. Dotson,
veteran pilot and manager of the municipal airport, who reported he had
seen "three flying teacups" pass over the airport. He figured they were
hurrying to keep company with "three flying saucers." 8

Doubtlessly the only mortal man to experience the lunacy of
breaking all the speed laws of one globe and returning to tell about it
was Hal Boyle, the Associated Press' capable feature writer. The veteran
correspondent, with the memory of war's demolition and ruin still in his
mind, was aghast to find himself launched on his most harrowing adventure
from a bar stool. He told about the strange interlude in two install­
ments. The first, with the dateline "Aboard A Flying Saucer Over Pitcher,
Oklahoma," follows:

Don't tell me these flying disks are imaginary.
Here I am in the middle of one, zooming around
the American Landscape like a boomerang.

These things aren't disks or saucers at all. They're built like a cowboy hat seven-stories tall.

The reason you folks down below have been disagreeing about the size is you haven't seen the whole thing. All you have seen is the reflection of the sides where patches of the infra-invisible paint were burned off these huge space ships as they passed too close to the sun on their way here from Mars.

Yes, Mars! I am a prisoner aboard a 1947 model "Flying Saucer" from another planet. Let me explain:

I left the New York public library at dusk the other day and dropped into a quiet bar to wash down a warm vitamin pill with a cold bottle of beer.

Finishing it, I turned to a silent figure sitting next to me - the only other customer at the bar - and all but fainted. I saw a thing some eight feet tall, covered with thick green hair, with one eye like a hard-boiled egg in the center of his forehead, and no visible mouth at all. He was naked, his hands were three-clawed and big enough for a Brooklyn center fielder.

The Green Man's yolk-yellow eye burned menacing red. One hand twisted one of a series of knobs on his chest marked "slang, American," and noiseless words drifted to me:

'Scream, Mac. But take along some beer. You're going on a long ride.'

Then I found myself lifted and tossed sprawling. There was the sound of a door closing and a sense of lifting rapidly into space.

I scrambled to my feet and looked out the window - its infra-invisible paint is only invisible when you look at it from the outside. Manhattan was falling away beneath us like a toy town.

"Well, how do you like your first ride in a flying saucer, Orson Welles?" leered the Green Man.
'You're on the way to a place where there are more Martians than there ever were in New Jersey. 9

'Look, this may be a flying saucer,' I complained, 'but I'm not Orson Welles. I got this high forehead from wearing a tight hat.'

'Then who are you?'

'I'm his cousin, Artesian Welles,' I countered, 'and who or what are you?'

'I'm Balmiston X-Ray O'Rune from Mars,' said the Green Man, 'and you have probably ruined my chance to win the sweepstakes.'

'What sweepstakes?'

'Why the Sixty Thousandth Centennial running of the Universal Martian Treasure Hunt Sweepstakes!' crossly grunted the Green Man. 'This time there are 500 space ships competing. To win I have to bring back twelve rare objects, including Orson Welles. Now somebody will beat me. It's all your fault for looking like somebody else.'

'I'll keep you as a hostage,' he said, 'You steer while I catch a little sleep.'

So here I am wheeling this blasted flying saucer back and forth between the Bronx, Santa Fe and Seattle. I have scribbled down this story to smuggle it out in a bottle through the gravity exhaust tube.

'Look out below, Peoria!' 10

The next day Boyle, the mistaken Welles and reluctant traveller, told his climactic chapter from New York City, safe in the slow traffic of Manhattan:

9. New Jersey was the landing point from which the Martians of Orson Welles' mock radio invasion deployed to destroy life on earth.
10. Reproduced from a dispatch in possession of the author taken directly from an AP teletype machine on July 8, 1947.
Safe after 48 hours and 57,000 miles in a flying saucer from Mars!

And now I can tell the world the full story of what happened after Balmiston X-Ray O'Rune, the eight-foot, green-haired Martian pilot, snatched me off a bar stool and took me riding in a spaceship.

You will remember that Balmiston - I got to calling him 'Balmy' - and 499 other Martian pilots came here in flying saucers on a universe-wide 'treasure hunt' sweepstakes. The game was to find and take to Mars Orson Welles and eleven other different objects - such as a whale-bone stay from Queen Victoria's corset.

'Let's go look for the lost gold tooth of Magellan,' said Balmiston, after a few warming up trips across the continent. 'We can pick up Orson Welles later.'

He poured in a fresh bottle of anti-gravity fuel, wound up the atmospheric friction-repeller, and our seven-story-high invisible flying disk whipped over the Atlantic at twenty miles a minute.

'Air trips bore me - you miss so much of the scenery,' yawned Balmiston, scratching at a hangnail on his three-clawed hand.

Suddenly he grabbed the wheel and spun it wildly.

'You almost ran over a jet plane, you earth dope!' he said.

The flying saucer handled beautifully. One-eyed Balmy leaned back dreamily and began to whistle through the top of his head.

'I think I'll take you up to Mars and introduce you to my sister, Violet Ray O'Rune,' he said.

'Does she have an eye in her forehead and green hair like you, Balmy?' I shuddered.
'Sure,' he said, 'do you think she's a freak like you. She's a cutie - got long eyelashes thin as a rope. She makes a good living, too, pulling a boat on one of the canals. Not that I think you're mercenary.'

Appalled at the prospect, I began throwing bottles of anti-gravity fuel out the exhaust every time Balmy's attention wandered.

We found Magellan's gold tooth in a Cairo curio shop. On the way back our flying saucer began to lose altitude.

'We're running low on fuel,' said the startled Green Man. 'I'll have to contact one of the other saucers from Mars and borrow some.'

He put the headphones on the flying disc's interstellar mental telepathy radio - which I had already thoughtfully jammed.

'All I get is a broadcast from the United Nations,' complained the Martian. 'A man with a Russian accent keeps saying, No! No! No!'

As we settled invisibly down over Brooklyn, I took over:

'Listen, Balmy, this is my stop. Here is a bottle of anti-gravity fuel I hid from you. It won't take you to Mars, but it will take you to Hollywood.'

Balmy's forlorn voice drifted down to me as the flying saucer spun westward:

'I'll look up Orson Welles. He'll recognize me.'

At least the saucer stories didn't get boring; they had infinite variety. California's sunny skysways harbored some curious fliers. Out there the climate apparently brought out the motherhood in one batch.

Mrs. Amy Herdliska, of Palmdale, made an excited telephone call to the sheriff's office at nearby Lancaster to announce she had seen a "mama 1 1.

disk with three to five little baby disks flying around her" over the mountains south of Palmsdale. She said the baby saucers would jump around awhile, then they would come back and seemed "to fly into the mama disk's pouch." 12

Another Californian, Ralph Dinsmore, of Port Costa, said he was sober when he saw a formation of "flying saucers" carrying coffee cups in the vicinity of Mt. Diablo. The middle saucer in the group, he said, trailed a sign that said five cents. As he watched the five-cent sign become a ten-cent figure and the amount of the coffee decreased, "The sugar shrank noticeably and the cream disappeared entirely," he recalled. 13

Sobriety was an important question of the day. Unquestionably many social reformers thought the nation had gone to pot. Anything so exaggerated could only have come from the wild imagination of those one columnist calls the "Booze Who." The pink elephant in the atomic age had slimmed down and moved quick as an eyewink.

Headline-conscious bartenders concocted "flying saucer" drinks using their best tricks of lighting, colored liqueurs and effervescent mixtures. A "flying disc frappe" was offered by a bar proprietor in Juarez, Mexico. He called it a "jet-propelled" mixture to keep his customers seeing double. 14

Even the Russians, who were doing a lot of "No-ing" in those days, nodded in amusement at the possible tipsy connotations in the saucer stories. Andrei A. Gromyko, mouthpiece of the Russian veto in the United

13. Ibid.
Nations' assembly, was "hep" to the occasion. He told reporters between sessions at Lake Success that "some attribute them (saucers) to the British exporting too much of their Scotch whiskey into the United States." With a flair for exaggerated comedy, he continued: "'Some say it is a Russian discus thrower training for the Olympic games who does not realize his own strength. I do not think these versions are correct.'" He added that he should like to see a saucer "'in technicolor.'" 15

There was some indication that Russian delegates in this country were vexed with repeated accusations by saucer fans who believed Russia to be the source of the objects. Apparently after these officials felt they had duly exonerated their country of blame, they went on to enjoy the episode with comments wacky as any.

But officialdom in Russia itself - if the reaction of one private secretary is let speak for all - was not so enthusiastic. Marshall Stross, reporter for the Herald in Dayton, Ohio, not satisfied with contacting Russian emissaries here, put through a call to Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov, to learn if he had heard of the saucers sipping over North America.

Molotov wasn't available so Stross spoke to his personal secretary, Peter Seminov, and asked him if any saucers had been reported over Moscow.

"'No!''' said Seminov. 16

Merchandising houses adopted the saucer sallies with avid vigor. To some concerns, whose stock belonged to the saucer-type family, it was

a neat turn to pull advertising copy out of the sky. A Philadelphia department store, in its newspaper advertisements, raised the total reward money for an authentic saucer to $8,000. It would give $6,000 for a "disk" to add to "the most complete assortment of saucers in Philadelphia." 17

A retail hat store in Kansas City placed an ad in the STAR showing an echelon of straw hats spinning through the heavens, with the underline: "We wouldn't be surprised if those 'discs' have Knox labels like other good sky pieces." 18

Another ad in the Chicago DAILY NEWS promised patrons "You can see and hear flying disks" at a record shop. "There are literally hundreds of them...come in...and discover the 'music of the spheres,'" proclaimed the proprietors. 19

It was a normal day and his recent life had been nothing but temperate and exemplary, recalled a reporter for the Milwaukee Journal, when he was assigned to interview Edward F. Rammer, 39-year-old brick mason and self-acknowledged inventor of a cosmic ray gun. The reporter learned that Rammer knew the secret of the "flying saucers." They were merely bolts from Rammer's cosmic ray gun that had flattened themselves, probably on some mountain. The inventor confessed he was sure that he had, merely by pointing his gun and shooting it in some direction, incited the forces of nature to expend themselves in tremendous fury.

Among his marksmanship accomplishments, Rammer noted: causing artificial

rain storms and thunder from a clear sky, and terrible sun spots; bringing down a solar vapor cloud from the sun; he acknowledged blame for causing the dust bowl storm several years before; produced snow on a bright, sunny Fourth of July; he was responsible for a volcano born right under man’s eyes in Mexico, set off volcanoes in Japan and East Indies. He admitted downing Japanese planes in battle areas, causing the earthquake and subsequent tidal wave that swept the Japanese coastline during the war, and ray-shooting Milwaukee’s biggest snowstorm in years in January 1947.

Asked how he determined his gun started the saucers flying, he said he decided to have some fun with friends in Pasco, Washington, and aimed the gun in a northwesterly direction. His first shot was too high, he said. Nothing happened. "The next time I shot lower," he said, "and then the reports started coming in about flying saucers..." 20

Caution was the rule in two incidents of administrative control of the "flying saucers." In Chicago, Alderman Clarence P. Wagner cast a suspicious eye upon the saucer antics and introduced a resolution to civilize them before the City Council committee on railway terminals. His resolution specified that such "thingamajigs" should be prohibited over the city unless they have tail lights and vehicle licenses. He further recommended that license application forms be sent to "our neighbors on Venus and Mars." 21 The committee declined to act on his recommendations.

The Peninsula Airport, Inc., at Newport News, Virginia, posted the following notice for pilots: "Two thousand feet vertical and horizontal clearance required between aircraft operating from this field and any flying saucers." 22

A telegram from a West Coast juggler won a presidential smile, according to Charles Ross, White House press secretary. He said the juggler explained to President Truman that he had been working out a new act with some saucers and they got out of hand. 23

The flights of saucers gave inspiration for a play. Sterling Sherwin, playwright and composer, announced he had copyrighted the first play written about the "flying saucers," turning it out complete with dialogue, a movie version and ten songs. The play, he said, dealt with the whimsical adventures of a young crooner kidnapped by the female crew of a saucer and taken to another planet. The feature song in the play he called "The Skies May be Full of Flying Saucers (But You're My Favorite Dish)." 24

Correspondents for the wire services in England wired back that anyone who mentioned the flying saucers on that side of the Atlantic had to be prepared for an argument about his sanity. An Associated Press reporter cabled: "Maybe they have been seen by sober citizens over a vast area of the United States, but Europe won't believe in them until somebody lassoes one and had it autographed by Frank Sinatra, the British ambassador and five supreme court justices." 25

Europeans, according to comment attributed to the London DAILY WORKER, took the position that the saucers would go away if everybody took a good stiff bicarbonate of soda and the pledge, in that order. Frenchmen shrugged; Scandinavians grinned; but the English were thoroughly disturbed.

"What is it, mass hallucination, or one of those American hoaxes?" asked a Fleet street subeditor.* 26

"You Americans do have a lot of fun playing games like that, don't you?" suggested a school teacher. 27

"When one of our British G. I. brides writes home to say she's seen it, then I'll believe it," said a grocer. 28

The MANCHESTER GUARDIAN summed up its attitude toward the episode in a wry article which began: "Americans have a new sensation for dinner-table conversation." 29

A satirical "pocket cartoon" showing a workman and white-collar worker watching the sky occupied a prominent place on the front page of the London DAILY EXPRESS on July 9. The caption suggested that each man was trying to best the other's saucer story, reading: "Nevertheless, Hamilear, I'm telling you the one I saw most certainly had snow on its boots." 30

The CAPE TIMES, of Capetown, South Africa, gave front-page picture space to the saucers on July 9. It displayed a picture of the "flying dinner-plate," a fragile-appearing apparatus that looked much like extended bedsprings with paper streamers, reportedly built in Italy in 1935. Part of the underline asked: "Is this the grandmother of America's flying saucers?" 31

Several calls were received at the Mexican National Defense Ministry in Mexico City to the effect that saucers had been sighted flying

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
over that area. A ministry spokesman, however, said he didn't believe them. But a cartoon in EL UNIVERSAL, published in Mexico City, showed a farm couple watching saucers in the clouds and the husband saying: "They're just tortillas (round, plate-like Mexican bread). You know their price is sky high." 32

The usually sedate New York TIMES displayed a lively interest in the saucers. When they became a staple news product after July 4th, the TIMES layout carried the saucer story in a prominent position on the front page, with two-column leads. In the midst of the episode, the TIMES ran a piece of editorial satire entitled "Those Flying Saucers," part of which read:

The annual sea serpent has been taking a much-needed rest along our coasts this summer. But while Old Reliable has been lying low, those sky-skimming saucers have been flying high. Their natural habitat appears to be the Pacific Northwest, but they have now been 'observed' from California to Nova Scotia. For weeks the incredible disks have been zooming across the horizon at three times the speed of sound. That is fast going on anybody's speedometer.

We have no disposition, however, to laugh this phenomenon off. A lot of people have seen disks, and one and all dismiss the thought that they were sunspots - not the whirling spots on the sun itself but the after-images of light on the human eye. The flying saucers could be real. They may be pieplates for that 'pie in the sky by-and-by' once immortalized in song by the INW. They may be visitants from another planet launched from space ships anchored above the stratosphere. Maybe they are atoms escaping from an overwrought bomb. They could even be something as prosaic as an Army experiment in anti-radar devices. During the war we managed to gum up the German radar with silvery streamers

dropped from our planes. The flying saucers are silvery, too. Who knows? No Republican congressman has yet come forward to claim that high-riding government officials have been scattering quarters and half-dollars around, not in a sincere effort to reduce the overhead, but just to see if anybody noticed. 33

Perhaps the last well-known publication to take a crack at a humorous explanation of the saucers was LIFE magazine. The editors of LIFE commissioned Artist Boris Artsybasheff to caricature an explanation. His canvas was reproduced in the July 21 issue of LIFE, with his written explanation. The drawing, which occupied nearly a full page, pictured the grotesque, gremlin-like residents of the planet Neptune. Hideous lookers, four-legged, with noses like the tentacles of an octopus, they were "gleefully bombarding the universe with stacks of crockery fired by an atomic saucer-launcher." The saucer gun was equipped apparently with springs charged with atomic energy that catapulted the crockery-ammunition out into space from a long, half-barrelled gun. "Neptunians thus far have aimed only saucers at the earth," the caption stated, "but more favored planets have been shelled with teapots and dinner plates."

The reason and correct explanation, according to the artist:

"...obviously the residents of the planet Neptune, having attained a civilization far in advance of that now enjoyed on earth, are shelling the universe with crockery. Nothing else remains for them to do. Furthermore, it may take another 10,000 years before the people of the earth,

33. New York Times, July 6, 1947, Editorial Section, p. 6E.
at their present rate of progress, will join Neptunians on this last pinnacle of culture." 34
Chapter VII
COMPARATIVE STUDY

This thesis does not pretend to be a digest of the "flying saucer" episode as presented in the thousands of newspapers over the world. It can boast of an acquaintance with thirty-five newspapers and a few periodicals. It can only attempt to portray the fundamental theme that carried the episode to fame. This chapter is devoted to a comparative study of the episode as presented in six major daily newspapers published in Chicago, Illinois. Such a study reveals trends universally characteristic of episode as published in papers around the globe.

It is doubtful that any newspaper of popular circulation in the world missed a mention of the "flying saucers" sometime during their heyday. Typical of the avid interest in the stories were the newspapers published in Chicago, Illinois. It was found, after adequate study, that the newspapers published in Chicago provided a reasonably typical range in journalistic presentation of the stories - a range represented between the Journal of Commerce, at the conservative extreme, and the Times' sensationalistic flair. The papers chosen comprise the six major daily newspapers published in Chicago. They are: Sun, Tribune, Daily News, Times, Herald-American, and the Journal of Commerce.

Among the many contributions the saucer stories made for study is the tremendous influence of the printed word as presented in newspapers.

1. Published daily with the exception of the Daily News, afternoon daily, and the Journal of Commerce, a morning daily, which are printed Monday through Saturday.
Radio and the spoken word, and newspapers with their indelible print, can be directly accused of sponsoring the "flying saucers." True, it was a good story, a circulation booster, but just to add a point aside from such considerations, would the saucers have gained world fame without the modern media of communications or the perspicuity of editors? It was a story that could have been ignored or used. The editors' wisdom told them to use it. The results will be read, studied, and laughed over in history. The editors of Chicago newspapers used the story with a typical gusto, mediocrity, or restraint, as did editors over the world.

Kenneth Arnold saw his saucer-like objects on the morning of June 24. The story did not receive currency until the three major wire services distributed it on June 26. Editors in the western United States, particularly in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast regions, in the majority printed the story. But editors outside of these areas were prone to dismiss the first story. Many picked it up the next day; others followed with a summary story about June 29. After the mass reports on July 4th, the saucer story became a "must" on every editor's layout sheet. Many delayed it until the Independence Day deluge.

Only one paper in the bibliography used for this thesis failed to publish at least one story of the "flying saucers" between June 26 and July 4th. The Chicago papers aptly reflect this attitude. The tabloid TIMES printed the story on page 8 of its July 26 issue. In 36-point type spread over four columns, the story headline proclaimed: "Doubt Pilot's Story of Flying 'Pie Pans.'" The story reviewed the current skepticism
of Civil Aeronautics and Army officials over the purported objects sighted by Arnold. The TIMES followed on June 27 with a local story mostly about sightings in the Chicago area. Again, in 36-point type, the headline on a three-column story sought to attract reader interest, reading: "Pie (Pans) In The Sky." The TIMES did not print any mention of the saucer flights again until July 5.

The TRIBUNE picked up the story on June 27, summarizing Arnold's discovery, official comment, and the growing list of sightings. The one-column story, on page 5 in 18-point type, started: "2 Others Tell Of Mysterious 'Aerial Train.'" A second story was printed June 28 on page 9. The lead - one-column, 18-point - read: "Mystery Disks In Sky Sighted By Joliet Man." The TRIBUNE'S next story was on July 7.

The reputedly blatant HERALD-AMERICAN did not bid for saucer story interest until June 29. The story first appeared in its Sunday edition, page 30, a two-column, 30-point lead, with the story pegged on an army announcement that the saucers were not jet planes. The story also reviewed the facts of the episode to that date. Not until July 5 did another saucer story appear in the HERALD-AMERICAN.

Chicago's youngest newspaper - the SUN (then full-sized, now a tabloid) - carried its first saucer story on July 4th and followed with consecutive stories from July 5 through 11, and a final story about a mock radio invasion by flying saucers on July 15. The conservative JOURNAL OF COMMERCE delayed any mention of the phenomenon until July 8th when it printed three columnar inches disclosing bewilderment in the army general staff in its special section entitled, "Leveling Off The Day's
News," gleanings of the most significant news outside the financial field. Its only other saucer story was printed the next day, in the same section, declaring, in one-column, 18-point headline, "Flying Disk Deflated." It was the story of the saucer finale at Ft. Worth, Texas.

The real fever pitch of the "flying saucer" episode can be laid between July 5 and 10. Before this period, the episode was building, uncertain of absolute attention; after this period it had been implicitly exposed as a kind of mass hallucination and was a dud so far as its news value. During this time it equaled or topped such stories as preparations for Princess Elizabeth's wedding, a John L. Lewis strike threat, Petrillo's proposed ban on recorded music, President Truman's pledge of food to the world and the marriage of former King Carol of Romania to his red-haired mistress, Magda Lupescu, as she lay gravely ill.

The newspapers carrying these stories, and the saucer comments, reached nearly one and one-half million people each morning and evening in the Chicago area, and more than three and one-half million on Sunday. The following roster indicates the exact figures of circulation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Evening Distribution</th>
<th>Morning Distribution</th>
<th>Sunday Distribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herald-American</td>
<td>519,593</td>
<td>34,564</td>
<td>1,085,695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Commerce</td>
<td>359,461</td>
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<td>527,665</td>
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<td>Sun</td>
<td>469,065</td>
<td>1,051,861</td>
<td>1,544,770</td>
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<td>Times*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribune News</td>
<td>493,576</td>
<td>1,425,676</td>
<td>3,885,875</td>
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Total - 1,481,234 1,425,676 3,885,875

1948 International Year Book Number, Illinois Section, p. 42.
* This represents the Times evening circulation daily Monday through Friday. The paper's reported circulation for Saturday was somewhat lower - 355,784 - thereby lowering the total Saturday evening circulation to 1,568,953.
Thus each day a total of 2,907,110 newspaper readers in Chicago - and circulation areas outside the area and perhaps outside the state - were given daily treatments of the saucer puzzle. On Sundays a total of 3,585,875 people were exposed by these six papers alone. These figures include only paid circulation and do not indicate total readership.

These papers, too, represent a fairly balanced picture in circulation. Three papers are published as morning papers, and three as afternoon sheets. Total circulation between the two groups was approximately equal during the saucer flights.

Only on Sunday publication was there a significant disparity. Two papers - Daily News and the Journal of Commerce - were not published on Sunday. The four papers issued fall into two separate Sunday circulation categories: the TRIBUNE and HERALD-AMERICAN in the lead category and the SUN and TIMES approximately equal in a smaller category.

Placing the Sunday distribution in separate categories is entirely a critical breakdown to point up the circulation figures. Actually, the importance of Sunday distribution to this work was the total distribution - the number of people reached.

It is a highly inaccurate effort to estimate total readership of the "flying saucer" stories. However, a circulation estimate might be made based upon known considerations: (1) the saucer stories were highly entertaining and readable; (2) they were the butt of a temporary national craze as well as a mystery; (3) their prowess and description were well-known to everyone. Based upon these considerations, it might be presumed that generally...
every literate being receiving a Chicago paper read the daily accounts of the saucer shenanigans.

Where a saucer story received a columnar inch play or more, the following table shows the daily grist of saucer news, listing the number of separate "flying saucer" stories in each paper: 3

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SUN</th>
<th>TIMES</th>
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<th>NEWS</th>
<th>HERALD-AMERICAN</th>
<th>JOURNAL OF COMMERCE</th>
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By substituting the circulation figure for each paper each place a figure indicates a saucer account was presented, an approximate

3. This table in no way reflects the influence of any one paper in promoting the saucer stories. It does not show headline play, columnar inches, etc. A newspaper with the most individual stories may have had less columnar-inch display than the paper with the least separate stories - or vice versa.
estimate of total circulation is obtainable. The following table shows the results:

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<th>TIMES</th>
<th>TRIBUNE</th>
<th>NEWS</th>
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</table>

Grand Total: 21,465,155

During the life of the "flying saucer" stories - from the first story in the TIMES June 26 to the last mention in the SUN on July 15 - an estimate of the number of people who read Chicago newspapers containing the story, based upon paid circulation tabulations, amounts to 2,578,436 readers. This figure, obtained from only six papers in one metropolitan area, provides a striking example of the sweep and power of the press.

*Sunday
An inimitable presentation of the day's news, of course, is the business of every newspaper. It is as well the purpose of the major press associations, particularly Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service, the three wire services which carried the bulk of the saucer accounts to this nation and the world. In addition there were special services sponsored by individual newspapers, such as the TRIBUNE and DAILY NEWS services.

Chicago editors, particularly during the period between June 26 and July 4, were inclined to use summary stories in covering the saucer phenomenon. It was a device which can be contributed to the lack of paper and consequently news space, and to the fact that the first stories were fairly general and fanciful. It was the kind of a story that couldn't be passed up, but it could be left to ride for a few days and caught in summary if its news stature remained constant - which it did. And too, there were local stories about local reactions to the saucer stories, about local sightings, discoveries, and efforts to locate the sky missiles.

After July 4th considerably more space was allocated to the stories in each paper. The same services and the same trend in local stories applied but with more intensity. Also, a good many more pictures were used, a medium which enhanced the fascination of the saucer stories.

The following series of tables, taking each paper in turn, reveal the exact content in total columnar inches each day, in both print and picture:

5. Figures include headline columnar-inch space given to each story, and also editorial comment.
In a time sequence of nine days (the number of days the SUN carried the saucer stories), the SUN allocated a grand total of 294 columnar inches to covering the story of the "flying saucers," in both print and pictures. Of this total it is significant to note that approximately half - 136 columnar inches - was appropriated for picture presentation while about 159 inches was written story material.

Also it is apparent in this first table that if any one wire service could have been accused of promoting the saucer stories more than another it was the Associated Press. The SUN'S total of 89½ inches given to AP stories is nearly three times greater than UP with 31½ inches. Combined with its total of 98½ inches of photo space, the Associated Press services provided the lion's share of the SUN'S print and picture copy in covering the saucer episode. AP's total coverage in the SUN, both print and pictures, totaled 188 inches.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>UP</th>
<th>INS</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>SPECIAL</th>
<th>AP</th>
<th>WIREPHOTO</th>
<th>STAFF PHOTO OR ILLUSTRATION</th>
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</table>

Herewith, the Chicago TRIBUNE, largest of Chicago newspapers, showed an inclination to be more frugal than the SUN in assigning space to saucer accounts. A total of 168½ columnar inches was used for the stories in six days in the TRIBUNE. A comparison of tables between the TRIBUNE and SUN points up the following differences: neither paper used an INS story; the TRIBUNE did not use a single UP story; the TRIBUNE'S local coverage was greater than the SUN'S; it avoided wire summary stories; its pictorial display was only one-fifth that of the SUN, using AP wirephoto only. Based upon average per day columnar inches, both papers relied upon AP written coverage almost equally. The TRIBUNE, however, relied almost as much upon its own special press services.

Again it should be noted the top heavy predominance of the Associated Press' coverage of the "flying saucer" episode.
Comparatively, there is one very significant difference in the DAILY NEWS publication of the saucer episode. The paper printed not one line of copy about the saucers with an AP logotype. And the paper was listed at the time as subscribing to the AP service. This was an extreme reversal from the other two papers studied. The DAILY NEWS' editors apparently relied entirely upon their special DAILY NEWS Wire Service and UP stories. The paper printed 40 columnar inches of UP stories and 26½ inches of their own wire service materials.

The DAILY NEWS did, however, make considerable use of AP's wire-photo service, using 105½ columnar inches for photographs, more than either of the other papers. Out of a print-and-picture total of 251 columnar inches, nearly half of the space was used in pictorially running the saucer incident; 146 inches was allocated to print.

In the case of the DAILY NEWS local stories were not entirely concerned with local sightings and reactions. They were often a featured summary of the "flying saucer" stories, or an incident, written by a staff member from information taken from its wire services. They are included in this category because no wire service credit was given.
The one obvious factor in a comparative study of the HERALD-AMERICAN and the preceding papers is the different facilities serving the Hearst paper. Specifically, these facilities were International News Service and INS Soundphoto, both exclusive services for all Hearst papers. Because INS is one of the three major news-gathering agencies in operation in the United States, it is not included under special services in this work.

The HERALD-AMERICAN provided space for 260 columnar inches of "flying saucer" description, in both pictures and print. The large part of this total was written stories gathered by INS, some 123 inches. It is interesting to note that the paper used 27\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches of AP copy; in fact, it would appear that AP scooped INS on the first saucer story since the HERALD-AMERICAN printed eight and one-half of AP copy as its first story. Moreover, its local coverage was greatest, although some of that copy can be attributed to national summary stories with local tie-ins.

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<th>SOUNDPHOTO</th>
<th>ILLUSTRATION</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
<td>14</td>
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TIMES

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<th>LOCAL</th>
<th>WIRE SUMMARY</th>
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<th>AP WIREPHOTO</th>
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<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
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The TIMES, the Chicago paper which most sensationaly presented the saga of the saucers, allocated 33\(\frac{1}{2}\) columnar inches of space to the stories in eight days, the most newspaper attention given the saucers among the six papers. In a comparative analysis it can claim two first place positions so far as providing news space: it used considerably more the device of the summary story taken from wire service accounts; and by far used more staff photos, cartoons, and artists' drawings than the five other papers combined - a total of 77 inches.

Tabloid size, the TIMES, in the incidence of the "flying saucers," conformed to the popular opinion that tabloids favor sensationalism in news make-up. The heavy use of pictures points up that fact in this table. It should also be noted again the heavy allotment of AP copy and pictures.

The Journal of Commerce published a total of six columnar inches of copy pertaining to the "flying saucers," three inches on both July 8 and 9. Both were condensed AP stories, presented in the Journal's special section donated to a general round-up of the day's most important news.
A preliminary examination of the papers reveals a likelihood that Associated Press copy was favored more than any other. The table below supports this premise, despite the fact that local stories were given a total columnar space greater than other copy. This can be attributed to the fact that many local stories were composite summary stories, describing national as well as local reaction to the event. Thus much of the copy would be rewritten from the wire service stories.

The following table shows totals in columnar-inch print for the listed types of stories:

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<th>LOCAL</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>SPECIAL</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>123</td>
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<td>97</td>
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</table>

The following table is produced to show totals in columnar-inch picture display for the listed services:

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<th>AP WIREPHOTO</th>
<th>INS SOUNDPHOTO</th>
<th>STAFF PHOTO OR ILLUSTRATION</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>96 1/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribune</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herald-American</td>
<td>43 1/2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times</td>
<td>267 1/2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>122</td>
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</table>

It is proven in the above tables that AP copy was printed most in the coverage of the saucer stories. AP printed copy plus columnar
inches given to AP wirephotos, totaling 467 1/2 inches, outstrips its nearest competitor by nearly 300 inches. Obviously the Associated Press' reportorial and pictorial services predominated in coverage during the entire episode.

It is significant to note, however, that local stories received more columnar-inch space than AP stories. The fact is somewhat misleading since such stories were often conglomerate summaries about national, regional and local response to the saucers gleaned from all the wire services. Thus, AP copy still maintained an overwhelming lead.

To determine the rank of the six newspapers as to their relative generosity in allowing columnar-inch space to the saucer accounts, the following table was prepared:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TIMES</th>
<th>SUN</th>
<th>HERALD-AMERICAN</th>
<th>DAILY NEWS</th>
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<td>106 1/2</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
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<td>295</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>168 1/2</td>
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</table>

As shown, the Chicago Times commanded a substantial lead in space given to publishing stories about the freak phenomenon, a total of 332 1/2 columnar inches and 26 1/2 inches more than its closest competitor, the Sun. The other five newspapers followed in this order: Sun, 295; Herald-American, 280; Daily News, 251; Tribune, 168 1/2, and the Journal of Commerce, six.

It is significant here to note the position of the Herald-American, reputedly a perennial and copious chronicler of the bizarre.
Banked behind the Sun, its saucer presentation was quite subdued. The Sun and Daily News leaned toward featurized stories, while the other papers favored straight news stories. The Journal of Commerce's two brief stories were printed at the climax of the saucer episode.

An aggregate total of print-and-picture space given to coverage of the saucer affair by all six papers amounts to 1,306 columnar inches. This represents approximately eight and one-fifth pages of newsprint the size of a standard page of newsprint eight columns wide and twenty inches in length. A breakdown of the overall figure shows that 898\(\frac{1}{2}\) columnar inches was allocated to printed copy and 407\(\frac{1}{2}\) columnar inches to picture presentation. On standard news pages, the printed material would occupy 5.162 pages and the pictures 2.55 pages.
EPILOGUE

The bizarre personality of the "flying saucers" pre-ordained that they should not remain dead. They were left unrevived for approximately six months, except for sporadic mentions, until their re-appearance on January 8, 1948. Then they flew again to the bewilderment of several areas of Kentucky and adjoining states, and allegedly added tragedy to their remarkable career.

On that date a pilot of the Kentucky national guard was killed in chase after what was reported a "flying saucer" near Franklin, Kentucky. The victim, Captain Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., 25, was killed when his plane apparently exploded in the air at an extremely high altitude, according to the Associated Press.

It was never absolutely determined what caused Mantell's plane to explode. But calculations connecting the mishap with swift, unidentified objects in the skies were immediately seized upon.

Continued reports in the Louisville, Kentucky, area prompted the aerial search which, like similar flights many months before, reportedly proved fruitless. Two other members of the national guard, also assigned to the flying investigation with Mantell, returned to their Louisville base without success.

A "flaming red cone" was observed near the army air base at Wilmington, in southern Ohio. Army spokesmen said they had no information on the object or its origin. An eyewitness to the saucer flight
was Colonel Guy F. Hix, commanding officer at Godman Field, adjoining Ft. Knox, who said he observed the "saucer" in flight for some time. At this time, he said, three national guard planes were contacted by radio and told to investigate. It was apparently during this assignment that Mantell, pilot of one of the planes, was killed.

On the afternoon of January 7, astronomers at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, reported they sighted some object in the sky which they believed to be a weather balloon. Yet the Nashville weather bureau declared it knew of no balloons in that vicinity.

It was a sequel that might have been anticipated, suggesting that the saucers shall fly when and where they please, unidentified. The mystery was repeated in this latest story in a series of sightings similar to those during the peak of the "flying saucer" excitement. No doubt the saucers will appear again, and, based upon past notations, more probably when strange fliers start sipping through the skies.
APPENDIX*

The following is a supplemental roster of "flying saucer" reports by states as compiled from newspapers in the various states, from both local and press service stories:

Arkansas: At Little Rock on July 6, a male resident reported that he saw a "disc" that "appeared to be about four feet in diameter at an altitude of 5,000 feet and flying rather slow." (Times-Picayune, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

At Lonoke on July 6, a suburban man said he saw a "flying missile" that "looked like a kite to me...It looked to be about as big as my hat." (Times-Picayune, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

Near Fayetteville about dusk on July 7, a rancher who was driving a herd of cattle said they became scared and scattered when an object appeared which he described as "'yellow, about the size of a pancake, and whirling around.'" He said it was "'flying at about 500 to 1,000 feet...and dropped sparks which were like dust.'" (Kansas City Times, July 8, 1947, p. 1)

*This is not an attempt at compilation, rather it is representation, signifying the type and tone of the reports. A compilation would mount into thousands of sightings. This appendix includes what the author considered the more interesting ones.
At Los Angeles on June 27, Pilot Dan J. Whelan and his companion-passenger, Duncan Underhill, said they were "scared silly" by what they thought was a "flying saucer" about twenty-five miles south of Los Angeles. "It was at 7,000 feet...traveling at an estimated 450 to 500 miles an hour. It was not spinning, but looked exactly like a skeet (a disc used on the shooting range)...it was 40 to 50 feet in diameter." (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24)

At San Jose on June 28, Sgt. Charles R. Sigala of the Army Air Forces and three others saw a "silvery, flying disc over his home at near-by Mountain View. He estimated the object was as big as an automobile." (Portland Oregonian; July 6, 1947, p. 24)

At Montebello on July 4, an unnamed woman reported she saw "flying saucers" the week before that "were quite rounded, but not circular, with a red glow on the edge." (Washington Post, July 4, 1947, p. 1)

At Glendale on July 6, an unnamed salesman said he saw four saucers "changing shape as they flew" over the city. (Los Angeles Times, July 6, 1947, p. 1)

At Alturas on July 5, District Attorney Charles Lederer and Dale Williams, secretary of the Alturas Chamber of Commerce, said they sighted seven "discs" while driving
through the Warner mountains near the Oregon border. They estimated the "discs" were 2,000 feet in the air and traveling at tremendous speed. (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24)

At San Diego on July 5, Chief Petty Officers Robert L. Jackson and William Baker, saw three "discs" traveling about 400 miles an hour, coming in from the west, circling and heading back to sea. (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24)

At North Hollywood on July 10, Russell Long, construction engineer, found a "twenty-five inch metal disk with radio tubes flashing and smoking in his flower garden." Battalion Chief Wallace E. Newcombe of the Los Angeles fire department said it looked like someone had gone to a "great deal of trouble for a joke." (Los Angeles Times, July 10, 1947, p. 1)

Canada: At Ottawa, Ontario, on July 9, something that "looked like a white-hat stovepipe flashed wickedly over the heads of three men in a boat." (Time Magazine, July 14, 1947, p. 18)

Colorado: At Denver on July 3, two men (unidentified) caught a brief glimpse of "bright objects" at about 5,000 feet that "looked like coffee can tops." (Washington Post, July 4, 1947, p. 1)

At Denver on July 7, Mrs. Terry Cagley, a Belgium war bride, revealed that she saw "them" in Belgium last February. She
reported a number of them appeared over Belgium and that their identity still was concealed in mystery. *(Denver Post, July 1, 1947, p. 24)*

At Lowry Army Airfield near Denver on July 7, three soldiers saw a "flying disk" about 7:45 A.M. The observers were Technical Sergeants John Todd and Richard S. Walker, and Corporal Bermude Sanchez, all three attached to a military police squadron. T/Sgt. Walker reported:

"At first it looked like sunlight reflected from an airplane... It appeared to be traveling at about the cruising speed of an AT-6 (120 to 130 miles an hour)... It was just a bright spot and seemed about the size of a dishpan. It made no noise. It circled to the south, back to the north and then went out of sight toward the east." T/Sgt. Todd agreed with the interpretation and added: "Although I have never seen anything like it, I believe because of the way it looked and the fact that it made no sound that it was a reflection from something on the ground - something like the windshield of an automobile." *(Denver Post, July 7, 1947, p. 24)*

Also at Denver on July 7, George Kuger, 21, said he observed a "disk" accompanied "by what sounded like thunder in the distance." *(Denver Post, July 7, 1947, p. 24)*
At Grand Junction on July 5, H. E. Soule of Appleton reported he saw a "disc" which narrowly missed his house had a northwest to southeast trajectory. "The disc appeared about two feet in diameter, traveled at amazing speed and had no motor sound or vapor trail." (Portland Oregonian, July 5, 1947, p. 24)

At Colorado Springs on July 9, three members of a hunting expedition returned to Colorado Springs and reported they saw scores of "disks" crash to the ground near Wild Horse Park, 60 miles to the South. They found only flat plates of burned-out matter where the objects fell. They also described the objects as "golden-brown in color, ranging in size from a saucer to a soup plate." (Denver Post, July 9, 1947, p. 32)

District of Columbia: At Washington, D.C., on July 6, an Army Air Corps student pilot sighted a "saucer" traveling at "well over 1,000 miles an hour at an altitude between 1200 and 1500 feet. It looked like an orange lamp bulb without the socket." (Washington Post, July 7, 1947, p. 2)

Florida: At Miami on July 7, a fisherman said he sighted "several round silver objects, ten or fifteen feet in diameter, flying at about 6,000 feet." (Times-Picayune, July 7, 1947, p. 1)
At Clearwater on July 8, an unnamed woman saw "things" that resembled "pie pans." (Portland Oregonian, July 8, 1947, p. 1)

Georgia: At Augusta on July 6, Dr. Golden R. Battey said he spotted the "discs" six weeks before their northwest announcement. They circled over him in the middle of the day while he was fishing in St. Helena sound near Beaufort, South Carolina. They were "silver," traveling at a high rate of speed at 20,000 feet. (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24, and Washington Post, July 5, 1947, p. 10B)

Idaho: It was gone in the time it took him to turn his head, but John C. Corlett, Idaho manager for the United Press at Boise, saw a "tiny disc soued across the sky at terrific speed" on July 3. (Portland Oregonian, July 5, 1947, p. 22)

At Idaho Springs on July 7, a married couple saw "saucers" accompanied by "thunder." (The Denver Post, July 7, attributed this incident to eleven-year-old Pat Price of Idaho Springs.) (Portland Oregonian, July 5, 1947, p. 22)

Illinois: Near Decatur the night of July 3, Claude Price, superintendent of concessions at the Illinois State Fair, reported cars parked all along route 36 outside Decatur "to watch discs" that looked about as "big as airplanes." (Chicago Times, July 5, 1947, p. 2, and St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 5, 1947, p. 1)
Near Rockford on July 7, Farmer Wilbur Lucky said he saw a "saucer" that looked "all the world" like a "large electric clock." (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 8, 1947, p. 5, and Chicago Daily News, July 7, 1947, p. 3)

At Glasgow on July 8, a restaurant owner, "with the aid of a telescope...saw a concially-shaped, highly-polished object with a round base about 25 or 30 feet in diameter. He said it oscillated slowly...then moved at 300 miles per hour." (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 8, 1947, p. 5, and Chicago Daily News, July 7, 1947, p. 3)

At Joliet on July 8, an unidentified railroad man reported objects in the sky on June 26. He said he saw "nine in formation...They were flat, circular objects, like dishes...going faster than any plane I ever saw...very high...weaving slightly in flight, and occasionally reflected sunlight. They seemed to be being towed, but I couldn't see anything ahead." (Chicago Tribune, July 8, 1947, p. 3)

At Maywood on July 8, another delayed report from an unnamed woman who declared she saw the "objects" the night of June 18. They were objects that "seemed to be several moons moving through the sky." (Chicago Tribune, July 8, 1947, p. 3)
At Chicago on July 8, eight unnamed citizens gave the following descriptions of the "flying saucers": "two oval objects, emitting brilliant light and moving at 10,000 to 20,000 feet" by two people; "a silvery, egg-shaped disk that sped across the sky and vanished within five seconds..." was seen by three people; a married couple sighted a "disk" that was "oval with a jelly fish-like tail attached"; and a real estate salesman viewed "a dark dish that danced up, down, and sideways at cloud level!" (Chicago Tribune, July 8, 1947, p. 3)

At Chicago on July 9, three more Chicagoans reported saucers over that city. One man saw a "disk" at 600 feet and bouncing; another man viewed one at 1,000 feet moving fast, and a girl reported she saw "brilliant objects in the sky three or four times as bright as the largest stars." (Chicago Tribune, July 10, 1947, p. 7)

At Chicago on July 10, an Arlington Heights home owner said he found a "saucer" on his lawn the previous morning. It proved to be a "dud," the work of a prankster. It was identified as a transcription record - "the remains of an acetate or vinglute transcription used for broadcasting recorded matter." Various articles used in amateur radio construction were also attached. (Chicago Tribune, July 10, 1947, p. 7)
At Des Moines on July 8, a woman reported she saw flying objects at night and called about six others to verify the flight. Also, a man, wife, and daughter said they sighted a "saucer" over the Veterans Hospital that afternoon.

(Des Moines Register, July 9, 1947, p. 1)

At Waterloo between July 5 and 9, six persons reported "objects about twelve feet in diameter, traveling at a tremendous rate of speed about 25 feet in the air and making a swishing sound" as they passed overhead.

(Des Moines Register, July 9, 1947, p. 1)

At Waterloo, on July 5, J. E. Johnston said he saw a saucer about the "size of a dinner plate, and only some 25 feet above ground." (Portland Oregonian, July 7, 1947, p. 24)

At Clinton on July 7, Mrs. Louis E. Seevers, wife of the city electrician, reported she saw a "strange object, bright and oblong, traveling fast" over the city. (Clinton Herald, July 7, 1947, p. 2)

At Cedar Rapids on July 8, a man reported that on the previous June 19 he had seen ten saucers. He estimated their size as three or four times as big as the moon as it appears from the earth...Saucers seemed "to be lighted from within which 'gave the entire shape radiance.'"

(Des Moines Register, July 8, 1947, p. 1)
At Iowa City on July 7, a man reported the discovery of a "saucer" on his lawn. It was found to be the work of pranksters. "Two aluminum cake pans sealed together at the rims with a type of gold solder. Inside was an interesting array of electrical apparatus, including a gold-painted radio tube, a large cork, wires and miscellaneous gadgets."

(Iowa City Press-Citizen, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

At Iowa City on July 7, the news was soon rife that "saucers" were floating just beyond the city's sky boundaries at twilight. On July 9, a dental and engineering student of the State University of Iowa came forward to admit they had released helium-filled balloons attached to cardboard plates.

(Des Moines Register, July 9, 1947, p. 1)

Louisiana: At Shreveport on July 6, a truck driver from nearby Keithville reported that he saw two objects that "looked just like plates you'd eat out of" sailing through the skies. (Times-Picayune, July 6, 1947, p. 4)

Also Shreveport on July 6, the night watchman at Centenary college said he saw a "saucer" at night. "It couldn't have been an airplane. It was lit up, three or four different colors, like a neon sign. I didn't know what to think."

(Times-Picayune, July 6, 1947, p. 4)
At New Orleans on July 7, an eighteen-year-old lad and his companion reported they sighted "saucer-like" objects over Lake Pontchartrain Beach "traveling at a terrific rate of speed" that were "visible for forty seconds." (Times-Picayune, July 8, 1947, p. 10)

At Crowley on July 8, there appeared a "disc so fast that I didn't see it, except a kind of white slip-stream, but only heard the terrific trail of speed it left," according to a male resident. (Times-Picayune, July 9, 1947, p. 2)

Maine: In Augusta on July 6, the Civil Aeronautics Administration office reported a dozen discs seen over that city by Dan Kelly, program director at radio station WRDO. (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24)

Maryland: At Hagerstown on July 7, a 30-year-old married woman, a sheet-metal worker at the Fairchild Aircraft Corporation, saw "five skimming saucers, racing in formation at 'terrific speed'. They roared with a sound like a faraway train...
They were about the size of airplanes...but they were definitely not planes." (Baltimore Sun, July 7, 1947, p. 3)

Michigan: At Port Huron on July 5, Mrs. John R. Warner, a 34-year-old housewife, told International News Service that she and
several neighbors saw "fast-moving objects criss-crossing across the sky the night of July Fourth. Story discounted by near-by Armanda celebration officials who said they had focused a powerful searchlight on the clouds: swirling beams of light...appeared as saucer-like forms as described by Mrs. Warner. (Detroit Free Press, July 5, 1947, p. 5)

At Oshkosh on July 7, a married couple said they saw an object "flying very high and fast" that "loomed larger and larger until it 'appeared as big as the sun.'" (Detroit Free Press, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

Minneapolis: At Minneapolis on July 7, a housewife saw the "'what-is-its'" over her house at about tree-top height that made a noise like "'click-click, phht-phht.'" (Minneapolis Star, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

Mississippi: Fifteen miles east of St. Joseph on the night of July 6, five persons riding in an automobile said they saw a "stray disk, traveling solo and going somewhere in a hurry."
(Kansas City Times, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

Missouri: At St. Louis on July 5, a locomotive engineer and his fireman, employees of the Terminal Railroad (unnamed), saw a "dozen discs fall near the relay station in East St. Louis."
He reported they "picked up several of them...They were about 10 inches in diameter with a two-inch hole in the center, and about double the thickness of a phonograph record. They were white and might have been made of asbestos, except I was able to ignite one..." (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 5, 1947, p. 6)

Nebraska: A northern Nebraska farmer on July 9 added a bucolic touch to the stories when he reported the colorful picture of "heavenly bodies like 'flaming straw hats,' that careened through the night, sometimes pausing for a rest." (New York Times, July 9, 1947, p. 1)

At Omaha on July 5, Mrs. Fred C. Nelson reported she saw "three (discs) - two round and the other oval-shaped as if tilted - in the northern sky" over that city early July 3. She said they "glowed like the moon." (Portland Oregonian, July 5, 1947, p. 24)

New Jersey: At Essex Falls, a Denver woman visiting her sister (both unidentified) reported "'balls of fire darting silently at high speed through the air!' the afternoon of July Fourth. (New York Herald-Tribune, July 5, 1947, p. 2)

New York: At Port Washington on July 6, John J. Floherty, author of juvenile books, reported he saw saucer-like objects from a
dock several nights before. They appeared through an upper cloud layer, almost perfect ovals spinning across the clouds. "'But,'" Floherty added, "'it was just the searchlights at LaGuardia Field, 12 miles away, playing tricks in the sky.'" (Baltimore Sun, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

At Astoria on June 30, Jack Hayes, patient in St. Mary's hospital, reported "discs flying southwest at a rapid speed and they vanished behind the hills." (Portland Oregonian, July 3, 1947, p. 4)

At Portland on July 5, Viva Anderson and Betty Mackanneman, attorneys, sighted objects that "looked like half-inflated footballs and appeared to be faceted on top like rought out diamonds." (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24)

Other July 5 reports from Portland-Vancouver area are:

Thomas, Berry, his wife and a friend saw what they thought was a star traveling in a northeasterly direction over Troutdale. They examined it through binoculars and glimpsed it flashing in the sun. It appeared to be V-shaped and was flying level, although dipping a bit...

M. A. Deaton, Portland, saw a "disc" going east and traveling "faster than an airplane."
Staff members of International News Service reported they saw "discs" from the bureau's office windows. "At first they appeared to be high flying birds as the motion undulated and it appeared some kind of wings propelled them...They banked sharply and without system of direction. Two objects were so high that reports of their disc-like appearance could not be verified but they seemed to move with high speed. They were last seen heading south after circling sharply over the west side area."

A Portlander, Burl Nollsch, corroborated the story of E. F. Smith of Eugene, who, three days before, said he saw "discs" dropped out of a plane over that city. Nollsch, in Portland, said he observed a plane going east in the early afternoon and that he saw "foil and aluminum pieces nearby, swirling away on air currents, and it appeared they had been thrown from the plane."

(Portland Oregonian, July 5, 1947, p. 24)

Pennsylvania: At Philadelphia on June 27, Dr. M. K. Leisy, a junior interne at the Pennsylvania hospital for mental diseases and other persons in the western section of Philadelphia, reported strange craft in the sky at night. "It was something round with a luminous halo...It was not shiny itself,
but dark in color and seemed to be propelled by whirling wings...and was moving at approximately the speed of the wind, below the clouds." (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 5, 1947, p. 1)

At Philadelphia on July 5, Paul Moss, 14, said he saw a saucer about forty inches in diameter following a transport plane crossing the Delaware river. It was "orange in color" and at one time outdistanced the plane. (Portland Oregonian, July 6, 1947, p. 24)

At Popular Grove on July 7, an unnamed resident sighted saucers that looked like "breakfast plates." (Chicago Daily News, July 7, 1947, p. 3)

South Carolina: At Charleston on July 7, a staff writer for The Charleston News and Courier, and his wife, reported that they watched a "circular object traveling eastward at a high altitude. They watched it for two minutes until it disappeared over the ocean, following a steady course, without deviation. It was at a height at which he could have distinguished it if an airplane. Also a group of boys near-by saw them. If it was a plane it acted mighty queer." (New York Herald-Tribune, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

South Dakota: Thirty-two miles west of Mitchell on July 9, a farmer was awakened by an aerial explosion, "then two others...then a
'bright red object big as a bushel basket hovered over his farm.' (Minneapolis Star, July 9, 1947, p. 1)

Tennessee: At Chattanooga on July 8, a man said he saw three "disks" while hunting turtles. All were bigger than a "house and had smoke and fire shooting from an exhaust." (New York Herald-Tribune, July 8, 1947, p. 1)

Utah: At Salt Lake City on July 7, a father and son, residents of the city, disclosed they had seen a group of "luminous discs" that "behaved as if radio-controlled, hovering in groups, then suddenly forming and swiftly whirling in an horizontal, circular pattern." (Salt Lake Telegram, July 5, 1947, p. 3)

Virginia: At Arlington on July 4, an unnamed woman sighted a "disc" in the afternoon "...about the size of the sun and did not seem to be moving. It appeared in the southwest sky...and had a fiery appearance." (Washington Post, July 5, 1947, p. 10B)

Washington: At Centralia on June 29, Sidney B. Gallagher said he saw "nine aluminum-hued objects flying north at 3 P.M. He was working eleven miles southwest of Mineral, Washington, at the time. The report coincides in matter of approximate time with Arnold's." (Denver Post, June 30, 1947, p. 3)
At Seattle on July 5, Mrs. Florence Frye, a librarian at the Post-Intelligencer, reported that her son, Carl, pointed out to her a "brilliant" object - "so brilliant in fact that it hurt my eyes to watch and I had to blink and turn away." (Portland Oregonian, July 5, 1947, p. 10)

At Richland on July 5, L. G. Bernier stated that he saw three objects flying "almost edgewise in the direction of Mt. Rainier" on the same day the first report was made by Arnold. (Times-Picayune, July 5, 1947, p. 1)

Wisconsin: At Milton on July 7, three college students reported they sighted "strange looking discs" late at night. (Milwaukee Journal, July 7, 1947, p. 1)

At Madison, Professor E. B. McGilvary, professor emeritus of the University of Wisconsin, revealed he had observed an object that may have been a "saucer" several days before Arnold's report from the northwest. (Milwaukee Journal, July 8, 1947, p. 1)

Wyoming: At Cody on July 6, Mrs. Frank Walters said she was watching the "cotton from trees blowing across the sky when she spotted four of the disks moving in the sky...They appeared to be bronze or copper colored..." (Denver Post, July 6, 1947, p. 1)
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