

The Time Farmington Looked Skyward

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In the middle of March 1950, Farmington residents were looking skyward and seeing strange craft in the spring blue. It was one of the earliest sightings of what have since become known as Unidentified Flying Objects and caused quite a stir in the community at the time.

A story which appeared in the Daily Times on March 18 of that year described the incident: "For the third consecutive day flying saucers have been reported over Farmington. And on each of the three days, their arrival here was reported between 11 a. m. and noon. Three persons called the Daily Times office to report seeing strange objects in the air just before noon. Persons along Main Street once again could be seen looking skyward and pointing."

The news account estimated that "fully half" of Farmington's population said it saw the "strange aircraft — hundreds of them — zooming through the skies."

There were several people interviewed who said they saw the aircraft flying over the area. Many of those people have either moved from the area or have since died.

Johnny Eaton, a real estate and insurance salesman at the time, and Edward Brooks, an employee of the Perry Smoak garage, reported seeing a red object in the sky.

According to the story, Brooks had been a B-29 tail gunner during World War II and "he was positive the objects sighted were not airplanes." Brooks stated that "the very maneuvering of the things couldn't be that of modern aircraft."

John Bloomfield, another employee of Smoak's garage, said the objects he saw traveled at a speed that he said appeared to be about 10 times faster than that of jet planes that time. In addition, he said that the objects frequently made right-angle turns.

"They appeared to be coming at each other head-on," he said. "At the last second, one would veer at right angles upward, the other at right angles downward. One saucer would pass another and immediately the one to the rear would zoom into the lead."

Mario Webb, a former mayor of Farmington, and in 1950 a garage employee, said the objects to the naked eye appeared to be about eight inches in diameter as seen

from the ground. He described them as about the size of a dinner plate.

"They flew sideways, on edge and at every conceivable angle," Webb said in the 1950 interview. "This is what made it easy to determine that they were saucer-shaped."

Clayton Boddy, a Farmington businessman, said in a recent interview that he had seen the objects. "I haven't the faintest idea what the

for sure. I just don't know. Now there were stories going around about it being cotton floating in the air, but this was not cotton. These were some kind of aircraft going at very high speed."

Boddy estimates there were 50 to 100 objects. "We contacted the Air Force and they denied everything. They said it didn't happen."

Boddy, who laughs about the sighting now, said that he takes it all in stride because

rumors about something being developed by the Air Force or visitors from outer space and so on."

Another account came from Harold F. Thatcher, head of the Farmington unit of the Soil Conservation Service in 1950. Thatcher said he made a triangulation of one of a number of flying craft and said if it had been a B-29 it would have been 20,000 feet high and travelling more than 1,000 miles per hour.

Force, which from 1948 to 1969 investigated UFO sightings has no record of the Farmington sightings, strangely enough. That news came from Edwin Coffee, assistant branch chief at the Modern Military Records Branch at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. "Project Bluebook, which should have those sightings, doesn't," he said. "There was a reported sighting near Sandia Base near Albu-

querque at that time, but then there were 210 total sightings in that one year. Out of those, 27 of those sightings were identified." In other words, only that small number were ever disproved.

The spokesman said that Project Bluebook wrote its last page in 1969, when a study by the University of Colorado determined the project had not really proven anything of significance. "One, no UFO reported, investigated and evaluated by the Air Force has ever been proven to give an indication of a threat to our national security," he said. "Two, there has been no evidence submitted to or discovered by the Air Force that the sightings categorized as 'unidentified' represent technological developments or principles beyond the range of present scientific knowledge; and three, no evidence has ever been brought forth indicating that the sightings categorized as 'unidentified' are extraterrestrial vehicles."

Bob Warth, president of the Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained, located in New Jersey, did find some information in his group's files concerning the Farmington sightings.

He said that 3,000 citizens observed groups of discs "flying simultaneously. They (the citizens) watched the formation pass high above the city. The Air Force refused to admit the existence of flying saucers. On March 18, the Air Force flatly denied they (the objects) were there or that they were secret missiles or space exploration devices."

Warth said that his group has theories about what UFOs are. "They possibly could be experiments by various governments to develop propulsion systems that their (alien) craft have. We feel many of the craft are real objects. They have been around for a long time; possibly they are from other worlds and are here for our protection and to observe our progress."

The sightings of the UFOs in Farmington may never be totally understood. And they may never be proven one way or the other. But many citizens of Farmington who lived here at that time believe they saw something and that it was very much out of the ordinary. It will most likely go down in UFO history as just another sighting, along with the thousands of other sightings around the country and around the world since 1948.



things were," he said. "I've always minimized it (the sightings) because it was unusual and no one could say for sure what they were."

Boddy said that he and two friends were walking down the street, going to lunch, when they saw "these unusual things up in the sky. They looked like elongated silver cigars or plates that weren't exactly circular."

Boddy remembers it as being "a very bright day, so we could see very clearly. The sun would reflect off the objects — they were silver in color. They had a leader which had a reddish color to it."

Boddy said that he gets inquiries from around the world about the sighting. "I've gotten letters from all over," he said. "I tell them what I saw, but as far as saying they were spaceships or not, I am not going to say

"if you see something like I did, then people look at you kind of funny. I usually don't talk about it because of that. You see, every kook in the country has seen a UFO. I saw something though, and I'm not a kook. Really, it doesn't matter a great deal to me whether I saw a UFO or some military aircraft. All I'm saying is I saw something pretty strange."

Lincoln O'Brien, founder of the Daily Times, said in a book on his life, which was recently published, that "we finally got the AP to accept the story, phrased in a rather doubting manner, and some national TV program wanted to put on a show and pay my expenses to New York if I would come and testify. If I would had nothing but hearsay as I was in Santa Fe and refused. We never did learn what all this was about although there were all sorts of

"I'm not a professional engineer," he said at the time, but I have engineers working under me and I know how to work out a rough triangulation on an object."

Thatcher said that the objects were not pieces of cotton fuzz floating in the atmosphere. "It was not cotton," he said. "I saw several pieces of cotton fuzz floating around in the air at the time, but I was not sighting on any cotton."

Thatcher has since moved to Las Vegas, N.M., and talked briefly about the 1950 sightings. "It wasn't normal," he said of the aircraft. Thatcher said that some of the townspeople who had seen the UFOs were of the opinion there was nothing to the story. He said it was like "the farmer looking at a zebra and saying there's no such animal."

The United States Air

force at about that time, but nothing reported in Farmington."

The fact that Project Bluebook has no record of the Farmington sightings is rather odd, due to the fact that there was a lot of publicity on the incident. The Associated Press picked up the story, but the Bluebook report has no record of AP stories on the sightings. "That is rather strange," Coffee said. "If there were AP stories on the sightings, then at least that would have made it into the Project Bluebook files. But I haven't found anything on it."

An Air Force spokesman in Washington said that he could not explain why the Farmington sightings were never included in Project Bluebook or even if the Air Force investigated the incident. "The Bluebook was in