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UFO 'pioneer' recalls 1935 sightings

by Patrick Connolly
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Thirty-five years after he reported seeing the first modern-day "flying saucers," Kenneth Arnold continues to be visited by new theories of what he saw and where it was coming from.

Arnold, 67, speculates that the nine shiny, pulsating objects he saw bounding through the daylight sky on June 24, 1947, might have been life forms from another planet paying a call to Earth. Another possibility, he says, is that the visitors are links between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

It was near Mount Rainier that Arnold says he sighted the pulsating objects 35 years ago.

His report to the Civil Aeronautics Board on the crescent-shaped,

100-foot-wide objects launched the modern era of flying-saucer sightings.

"They were all individual but they were following each other and the formation had a funny diagonal line, like geese or the tail of a Chinese kite," Arnold said yesterday in a telephone interview from the Meridian, Idaho, home he shares with his wife. "Some would gain on the others, some would lose a bit. But they were going someplace. They weren't interested in me."

Formerly of Minot, N.D., Arnold is a retired private pilot and runs his own engineering business.

"It was no optical illusion," he said. "I'm positive any pilot in the same place at the same time would have observed the same thing. As far as I'm concerned, I just told things the way they

were."

A year later, he saw a group of about 24 UFOs when landing his plane at LaGrande, Ore., "clustered together like a bunch of blackbirds, going fast, little ones only 3 feet in diameter."

He said he doesn't know what the objects were.

"We've gone to the moon and that's just a stepping-stone to other planets," he said. "If there is life out there, maybe there are people or life as we recognize it and maybe they'd make the journey here."

"Then there might be two worlds connecting the living and the dead. Maybe you continue living when you die. I can't envision myself on the steps of God, playing a harp with 10 million other souls ... Maybe it has something to do with that."

Arnold has reported seeing UFOs at least eight times, the last in 1952 when he was over the Nevada desert and "they were below me at treetop level."

Arnold has been grilled by hundreds of reporters and military officers. Airline pilots and others have seen dozens of similar shapes fleeting through the sky. All of Arnold's sightings have been in daylight.

"There is one thing I'd like to straighten out," he said.

"I didn't create the word 'flying saucer.' This young reporter from Pendleton, Ore., asked me how they flew and I said they flew very erratically, they flipped and flashed, like if you took a saucer and threw it across the water. So from that, everybody wrongly assumed they were round instead of crescent-shaped."