

Reports of strange lights in sky predate airplanes and helicopters

JUNE 24,
1987

By Catharine Huddle
Journal Writer

To those who think UFOs are 20th century phenomena, consider this report from the Feb. 26, 1897, Nebraska State Journal.

"People of Beatrice, Wymore and Hastings were excited last night over the appearance of a strange light about half a mile above the ground."

This was years before Wilbur and Orville Wright took to the skies over Kitty Hawk, N.C. There were no airplanes or helicopters to be used as convenient explanations for unidentified flying objects then.

"The light was kite-shaped and the color of a lantern . . . It is claimed that fully 100 saw it," the State Journal story said. "It was traveling in a northwesterly direction. At Hastings it seemed to be about half a mile above ground and was moving towards the Kansas line."

Lighted kites?

Yes, there were kites, and a 1978 Nebraska State Historical Society publication indicates that Juniata resident M.R. McLean often flew kites as a hobby. Sometimes, he flew them at night, with lanterns attached.

OK. Maybe it was a kite.

But what about the reports of the early afternoon crash of an "aerolite" northwest of Benkelman in Dundy County on June 6, 1884?

According to a story in the Nebraska Daily State Journal, rancher John W. Ellis was riding herd 35 miles northwest of Benkelman with three ranch hands when a blazing metallic ball fell to the earth.

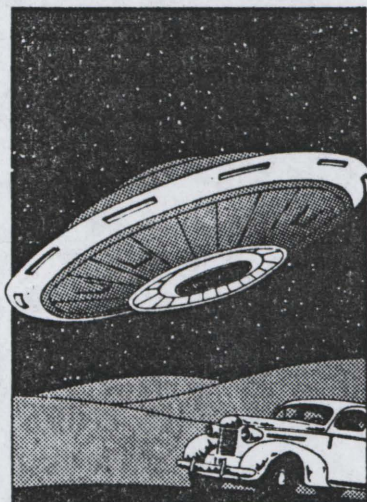
"Galloping towards it with all their speed, they were astounded to see several fragments of cogwheels and other pieces of machinery lying on the ground," the story said.

"The aerolite, or whatever it is, seems to be about 50 or 60 feet long, cylindrical, and about 10 or 12 feet in diameter," the story said.

Vessel dissolved

Thirty minutes later, a driving, blizzardlike rainstorm hit. When it was over, the vessel was gone.

"They were astounded to find that the queer object had melted, dissolved by the water like a spoonful of salt," a se-



FLYING SAUCER ANNIVERSARY June 24

The anniversary of the first reported sighting of a "flying saucer". Kenneth Arnold of Boise, Idaho, claimed to have seen a flying saucer over Mount Rainier in Washington on this day in 1947.

SOURCE: Cheese

© News America Syndicate, 1986

quel to the original story reports. "Scarcely a vestige remained. Small jellylike pools stood here and there on the ground, but under the eyes of the observers these grew thinner and thinner till they were but muddy water joining the rills that led to the current a few feet away. The air was filled with a faint sweetish smell."

Despite these century- and near-century-old reports, the first official reported sighting of a "flying saucer" was 40 years ago Wednesday over Mount Rainier in Washington.

It is fitting, then, that a 35-year-old so-called top-secret government document regarding the activities of Operation Majestic-12 — "a TOP SECRET Research and Development/Intelligence operation responsible directly and only to the President of the United States" — recently was made public by UFO researchers William L. Moore, Jaime H. Shandera and Stanton T. Friedman, who claim that someone "leaked" it to them.

The document, a copy of which was

sent to the Lincoln Journal by Ray Boeche, a local researcher of unexplained phenomena, allegedly was prepared Nov. 18, 1952, for President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower as a preliminary briefing on the activities of Operation Majestic-12. It details the June 24, 1947, sighting by a civilian pilot of nine disc-shaped aircraft over the Cascade Mountains in Washington.

Investigation of the incident revealed little, but the government moved in after a later report that one of the craft had crashed northwest of Roswell Army Base in New Mexico.

"Aerial reconnaissance discovered that four small humanlike beings had apparently ejected from the craft at some point before it exploded. These had fallen to earth about two miles east of the wreckage site," the report says. "All four were dead and badly decomposed due to action by predators and exposure to the elements during the approximately one-week time period which had elapsed before their discovery."

Bodies allegedly removed

The document goes on to say the bodies and the craft were removed from the site, civilian and military witnesses in the area were debriefed and "news reporters were given the effective cover story that the object had been a misguided weather research balloon."

"Since it is virtually certain that these craft do not originate in any country on Earth, considerable speculation has centered around what their point of origin might be and how they get here," the report says. "Mars was and remains a possibility, although some scientists . . . consider it more likely that we are dealing with beings from another solar system entirely."

Although the Moore-Shandera-Friedman team is not certain of the document's authenticity, a release accompanying the document says, its contents appear to be genuine.

"Implications for the National Security are of continuing importance in that the motives and ultimate intentions of these visitors remain completely unknown," the 1952 document says.

Today, the government no longer investigates UFOs, and the visitors' motives and intentions remain unknown.

Lincoln Nebraska Journal

June 24, 1987

SHAWN GARRETT via COUD—I