

Excerpt from Webster van Nostrand's book *First Man to the Moon*, Copyright 1970, 1976, 1980 by Dr. Webster van Nostrand, published by MIT, Webster, and Spence of Canada, Ltd.

Question: What is your opinion on U.S. & U.S.S.R.?

Answer: There is a national and rather straight-forward explanation for the great majority of sightings of unidentified flying objects, or "flying saucers", as they are more frequently called. During the last two years, official U.S. investigators have located about 20,000 reported sightings. They could account for all but two per cent as belonging to any of the following categories:

- 1) Light-flying balloons of various kinds
- 2) Light-flying aircraft, illustrated by the one after the sun had set on the ground
- 3) Nightly "Santa Barbara" type reflections in our atmosphere of distant light sources in the ground
- 4) Artificial satellites of U.S. or Soviet origin
- 5) Meteorites and fireballs
- 6) Birds
- 7) The Planets Venus or Jupiter
- 8) Spacecraft illuminating cloud layers

None perpetrated by psychopaths.

From the most serious witnesses in flying objects of extra-terrestrial origin will usually concede that most reported sightings can be traced back to one of these sources. But it is that unaccounted two per cent that cause enthusiasts doing tentatively to their conviction.

I cannot account for the mysterious two per cent, either. One a lifetime spent with training of guided missiles has taught me to be extremely careful with eyewitness accounts on rocket firings passing into some in-flight trouble. Of three experienced observers questioned after a typical mishap, one swore that he clearly saw a part coming off before the rocket faltered; a second swore he'd decided this but claimed that the already oscillated violently before it veered off the course; while the third trained observer saw neither a part coming off, nor an oscillation, nor any veering off the course but declared that the rocket was flying perfectly steadily until it was abruptly ripped apart by an internal explosion.

Such contradictions in the eyewitness accounts of old rocket men are by no means an exception; we are almost invariably confronted with this situation. Tell me I am dealing here with experienced observers who not only had seen many firings, but who had the great advantage of being actually prepared for the imminent test.

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