

Extract from Verneer von Braun's book From Mars to the Moon,
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"Question: What is your opinion on 'U.F.O.'s'?"

"Answer: There is a rational and rather straightforward explanation for the great majority of 'sightings' of unexplained flying objects, or 'flying saucers', as they are more familiarly called. During the last ten years, official U.S. investigators have tabulated about six thousand 'sightings.' They could account for all but two per cent as belonging to any of the following categories:

- 1. High-flying balloons of various kinds
- 2. High-flying aircraft illuminated by the sun after the sun had set on the ground
- 3. Military 'Felix' Mustang' type formations in the 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. Scattered clouds of dust
- 9. Objects projected by projectiles

Even the most ardent believers in flying objects of extra-terrestrial origin will readily concede that about 98 per cent of 'sightings' can be traced back to one of these sources. But it is that unaccounted two per cent that makes enthusiasts cling tenaciously to their conviction.

I cannot account for the mysterious two per cent, either. But a lifetime spent with making of guided missiles has taught me to be extremely careful with eye-witness accounts on rocket trails, ranging into about 100,000 feet. Of three experienced observers questioned after a typical display, one swore that he clearly saw a part coming off before the rocket burst; a second boldly denied this but claimed that the object vanished violently before it burst off the carrier; while the third bravely swore not only a part coming off, but its composition, size and direction, but the course had indicated that the rocket was flying perfectly steadily until it was abruptly ripped apart by an internal explosion.

Such contradictions in the eye-witness accounts of old rocket men arrive so common an occurrence, we are almost inevitably confronted with this situation. Yet, we are dealing here with experienced observers who not only had seen many things, but who had the great advantage of being immediately prepared for the imminent test.

For this reason, I am highly skeptical about the objective of any 'sighting' report of a flying, mysterious object in the sky observed by an equally surprised and unprepared observer. And these unaccounted two per cent of U.F.O.'s undoubtedly fail to make my blood pressure. By me, ninety-eight per cent is a highly rated batting average. I wish we could account for ninety-eight per cent of what we observe in many other fields of human endeavor! Yet, ever since the Middle Ages it has not been customary for science to call on ghosts or witches - or little green men from Mars - whenever we are confronted with a phenomenon for which we do not yet have a satisfactory answer.

To those who, either through personal observation or through hearsay based on other people's accounts, still insist that objects of extra-terrestrial origin are coming through our atmosphere, I can only say that I have never seen such an object and suspect believe in their existence until I do.

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