

a significant number of fairly complete reports by reliable observers remained unexplained. Although no evidence existed that unexplained reports of sightings constituted a physical threat to the security of the U. S., in March, 1951, the Air Force decided that all reports of unidentified aerial objects should be investigated and evaluated to determine if "flying saucers" represented technological developments not known to this country.

Originally, the problem involved the preparation and analysis of about 1,100 reports accumulated by the Air Force between 1947 and the end of March, 1951. During the course of the work, the number of reports submitted for analysis and evaluation more than tripled, the results of the unprecedented increase in observations during 1951. Accordingly, this study is based on a number of reports considered to be large enough for a preliminary statistical analysis, approximately 4,000 reports.

This study was undertaken primarily to categorize the available reports of sightings and to determine the probability that any of the reports of unidentified aerial objects represented observations of "flying saucers". With full cognizance of the quality of the data available for study, yet with an awareness of the proportions this subject had assumed at times in the public mind, this work was undertaken with all the seriousness accorded to a straightforward scientific investigation. In order to establish the probability that any of the reports of unidentified aerial objects represented observations of "flying saucers", it was necessary to make an attempt to answer the question "What is 'flying saucer'?" However, it must be preface that this was only incidental to the primary purpose of the study, the determination of the probability that any of the reports of unidentified aerial objects represented observations of "flying saucers", as defined on Page 1.

The basic technique for this study consisted of reducing the available data to a form amenable for mechanical manipulation, a prerequisite for the application of preliminary statistical methods. One of the most modern Business Machine Corporation's systems was chosen as the best available mechanical equipment.

The reduction of data contained in sighting reports into a form suitable for transfer to IBM punched cards was extremely difficult and time consuming.

For this study a panel of consultants was formed, consisting of both experts within and outside AFSC. During the course of the work, guidance and advice were received from the panel. The professional experience available from the panel covered major scientific fields and numerous specialized fields.

All records and working papers of this study have been carefully preserved in an orderly fashion suitable for ready reference. These