

physical matter in any case of a reported unidentified-aerial object, this was not assumed to be prima facie evidence that "flying saucers" did not exist.

In those cases in which an attempt to reduce the information to a factual level failed completely, the report was eliminated from further consideration, and then not included in the statistical analysis. About 800 reports of sightings were eliminated or rejected in this manner. Most of these reports were rejected because they were extremely ambiguous; the rest were rejected because they contained highly conflicting statements.

The second step in evaluation, the rating of the observer and his report, logically followed the first step, the reduction of the data to usable form. Ratings were assigned on the basis of the following factors of information, considered in relation to one another:

- (1) The experience of the observer, deduced from his occupation, age, and training;
- (2) The consistency among the separate portions of the description of the sighting;
- (3) The general quality and completeness of the report;
- (4) Consideration of the observer's fact-reporting ability and attitude, as disclosed by his manner of describing the sighting.

In cases in which insufficient information was available to make a judgment of the observer or report, none was made, but the report was accepted for the statistical study.

The third step in the process of evaluation, the attempted identification of the object or objects sighted, was done twice, first by the individual who made the transcription of the data (the preliminary identification), and later (the final identification) by a conference of four persons, two representatives from AFIC and two from the panel of consultants. Although representatives of AFIC participated in making the final identifications, it must be emphasized that any previous identification of a sighting made by AFIC was not introduced or referred to in any way.

In the coding system, the choices provided for final identifications were based on AFIC's previous experience in analysis of the data. They had found that the majority of sightings could be classified as misinterpretations of common objects or natural phenomena. Accordingly, categories for objects most frequently present in the air were provided. Balloons, aircraft, astronomical bodies (such as meteors), birds, and clouds or dust were recognized as major categories. The less frequent, but common objects, such as fires, fireworks, flares, rockets, contrails, and