

# FLYING SAUCERS: MYTH OR MENACE?

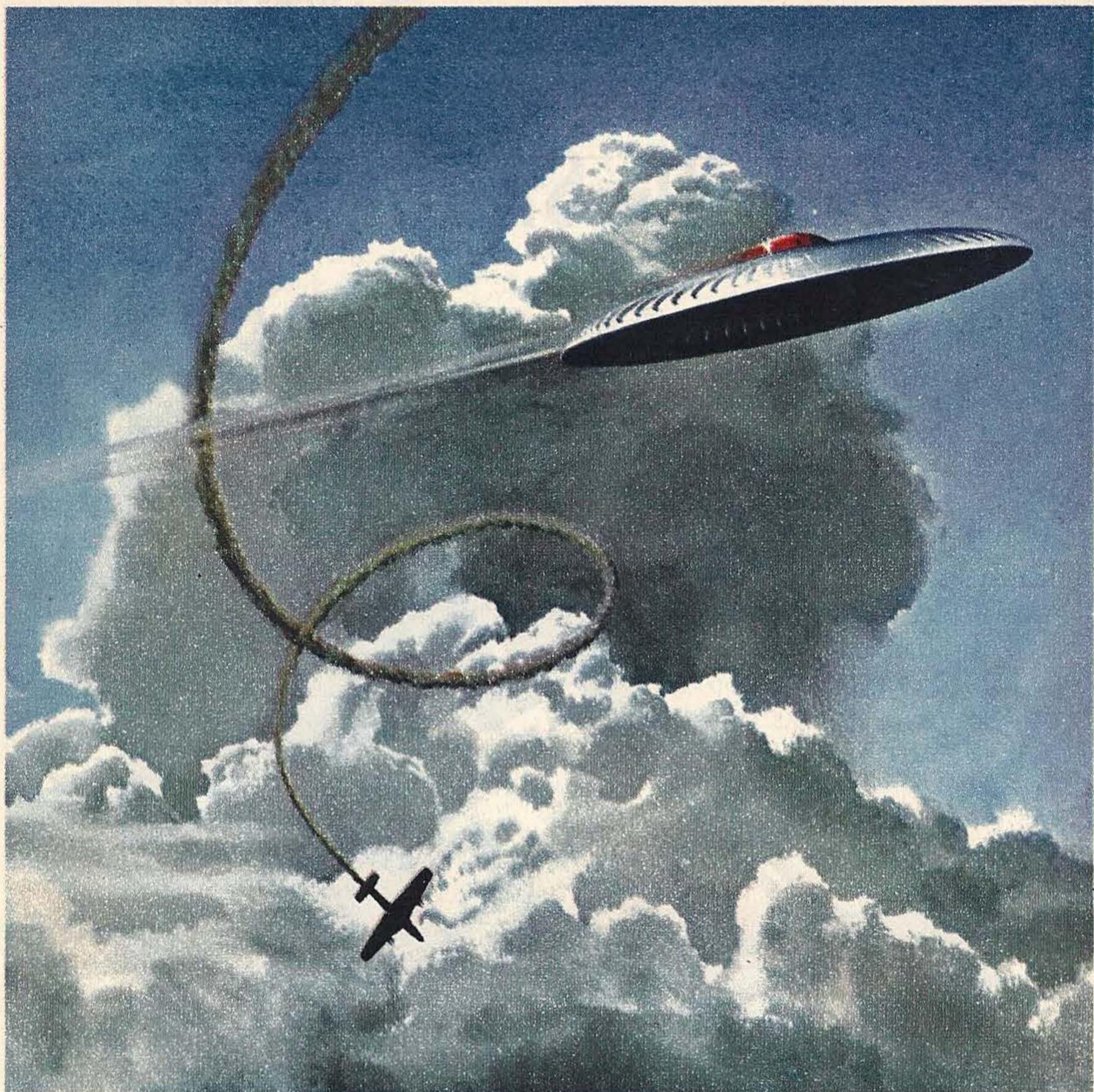
by LAWRENCE ELLIOTT



ILLUSTRATED BY REN WICKS

IT ALL BEGAN on a sparkling day in 1947. Businessman Kenneth Arnold, flying his plane past Mt. Rainier, saw a strange line of disc-like aircraft sweeping by with incredible speed and in perfect formation. They looked like flipped saucers in flight, he said later. Soon,

the nation was deluged with reports of other unaccountable objects in the sky. Some called it mass hallucination. Others were sure the craft came from another world. There has, as yet, been no definitive explanation. So far, the answer lies hidden in the vast, trackless sky above.



It first appeared over Madisonville, Kentucky, in the early afternoon of January 7, 1948. State police called Fort Knox: "One of those flying saucers just flew over, headed in your direction." A few minutes later a lookout at nearby Godman Air Base spotted a red glow in the sky. It was then that Capt. Thomas Mantell got the order that sent him to his doom: "Investigate!" Roaring up to 18,000 feet, the pilot reported: "It looks metallic . . . of tremendous size." Then: "I'm going up to 20,000 feet

. . . ." That was his last message. Later in the day his shattered plane was found near Fort Knox. The Air Force guessed that Mantell had chased the planet Venus into the sky until he blacked out. But what of the other officers at Godman who had seen the "thing"? And wouldn't an experienced flier have recognized the oncoming effects of oxygen blackout, and descended? What was it, then, that killed Mantell? Fifteen months after his death came the official report: "The mysterious object . . . is still unidentified."



On January 22, 1948, the Air Force assigned technicians to probe into some 270 saucer-sightings. On October 1, 1948, Lt. George F. Gorman pursued a light through the skies until it finally eluded him at 14,000 feet. On December 26, 1949, a balloon expert averred that the flying discs bore observers from the planet Venus. On December 27, the Air Force terminated Project Saucer, attributing the sightings to "a mild form of mass hysteria." The very next day, residents of Hamlet, North Carolina, spotted another

odd-shaped craft in the sky. By now, the whole nation was asking: Are the saucers real? Where in the world—or out of it—do they come from? One group insisted that atomic explosions had disturbed a lost race of men who lived in Polar caves. These underground men, flying magnetically controlled craft, were trying to discover what had set the earth a-tremble. And even as people gasped at theories that dwarfed even the most lurid science fiction, new saucer reports poured in—and new theories poured out.



Soon, the inevitable question arose—could it be that the saucers came from Russia? Leo Bentz, a pioneer auto-builder, came forth with an answer: Almost 20 years before, he had witnessed a secret demonstration of crude, saucer-like craft. Their designer? An inventor named George De Bay, who had made detailed blueprints for space ships that would skip through the air like a flat stone. Where was De Bay now? No one knew, but Bentz made an ominous guess: "It is my belief that George De Bay went to

Russia before the war and is still there." Instantly, a storm of controversy arose: "The Russians are using saucers to ferret out our deepest military secrets," said some. "If the Russians did have such a craft," replied others with heat, "they certainly would not be foolish enough to fly it over the U. S. and risk it falling into our hands if it crashed." In the end, the consensus was that the Russians were hardly equipped to have made such radical aeronautical progress, and men of science turned to other theories.



Between Earth and the planet Venus, some now said, seven mysterious "planes" travel through space. One of them, according to the Borderland Sciences Research Associates, is Etheria. Until now its very existence has eluded ordinary scientific investigation. Only when atomic blasts on Earth attracted their attention, did the Etherians evidence interest in us. In space ships whose outer skin was wrought of a metal tougher than steel, they flew along magnetic lines of force into the atmosphere of Earth. We

saw their craft at night as flashing fire balls of red and green. We saw them by day as discs that flew at incredible speeds and executed fantastic maneuvers. Troubled and confused, we dubbed them Flying Saucers and went to weird lengths to explain their existence. We failed utterly to recognize the truth. Such is the elaborately worked-out theory of the Borderlanders. Does it hold up? Until there is a definitive report on the saucers, the Etherians can appeal to our credibility as well as anyone—or anything.



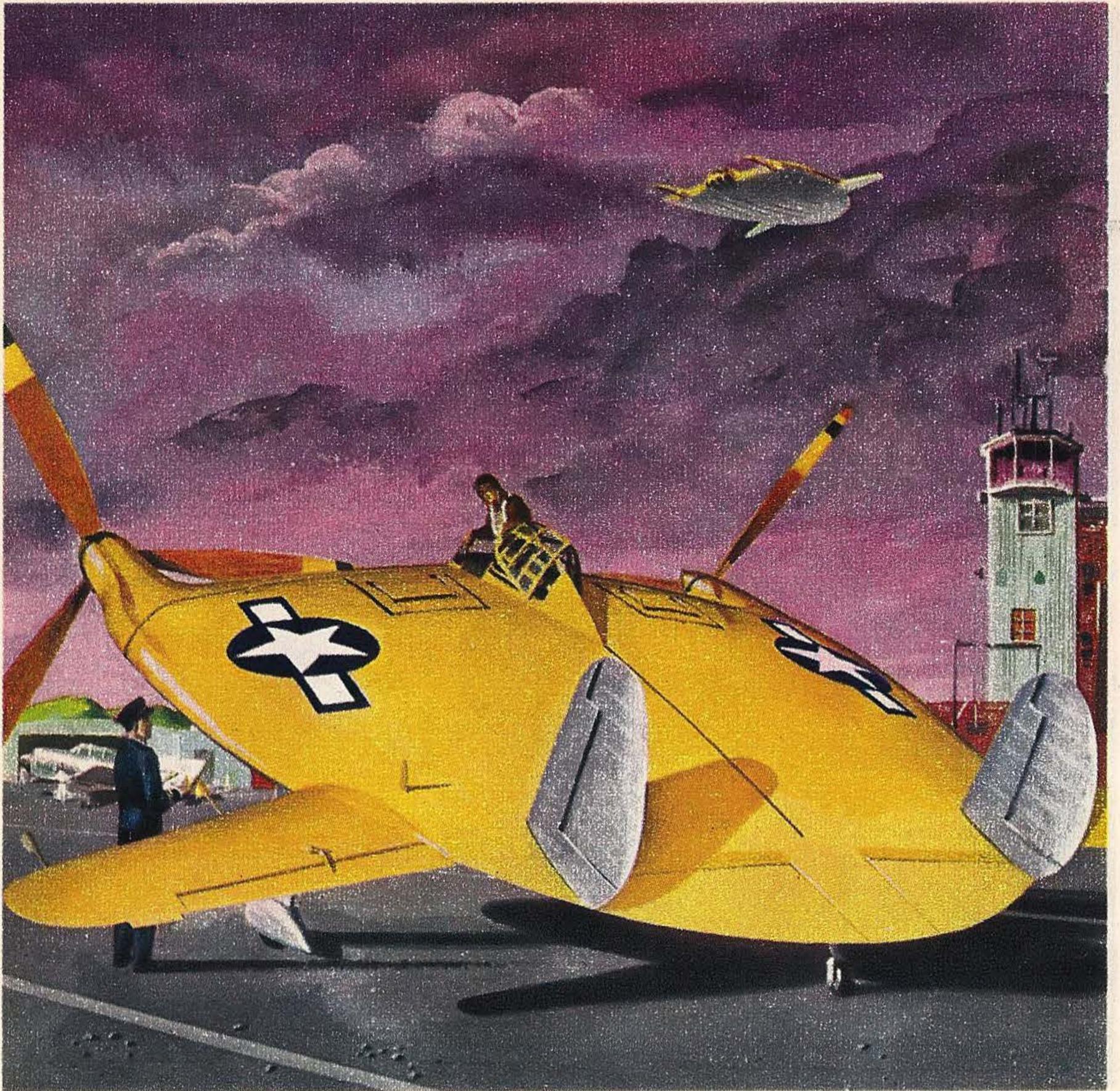
Midway through 1950, new coals were heaped on what had developed into a nationwide debate. In a book called *Behind the Flying Saucers*, author Frank Scully took a stand, not on the shifting sands of theory but on what he claimed to be the hard ground of fact. Quoting an anonymous scientist, Scully described the eye-witnessing of a grounded saucer—as well as its crew of 16—deep in the New Mexican desert. Its occupants were men no taller than 42 inches, who wore dark blue uniforms. They were all

dead. The craft was 99.9 inches in diameter and had a cabin 72 inches high. All other measurements were divisible by nine. It bore radios no larger than a cigarette package, no weapons, and was covered with a tough, heat-resistant metal. Later, the same scientist saw three other such craft. Where did they come from? The unnamed observer was certain that the answer was Venus. Was there any reason to believe that Scully had daydreamed his fantastic story? To date, no one has disproved any part of it.



The sightings continued unabated. On the evening of April 27, 1950, Capt. Robert F. Manning, veteran TWA pilot, spotted a fiery red ball in the sky. Puzzled, he nudged his copilot, Robert Adickes: "What do you make of that?" Adickes looked, reached for his microphone and called Chicago: "Ask ATC if there's any traffic near us?" Back came a negative answer. Quickly Adickes alerted the passengers, while Manning tried to sneak up on the mysterious red craft. It was no use. No matter which way

he turned, the fast-flying disc eluded him and, in the end, simply vanished into the night. When they landed, the fliers made a full report: never before had a saucer-viewer been solidly backed by 21 witnesses. Now the nationwide sightings reached a peak. Fireballs, discs and projectile-like flames were reported over areas as widely separated as New Mexico, Alaska and Korea. And more than one amateur photographer had an enduring pictorial record of what many persisted in referring to as mass hysteria.



Reporters crowded into the summer White House at Key West. A magazine had just revealed that the flying saucers were really a revolutionary Navy aircraft, and word had gotten around that President Truman would make a statement. Was the mystery solved at last? Into the room strode a press secretary: "Gentlemen, the President has asked me to tell you that he knows nothing of any flying saucers being developed by this or any other country. We know nothing to support these rumors." Immediately a new

flood of theories was unleashed: if the saucers weren't ours, that proved they came from another planet; they were really weather balloons; according to a respected astrophysicist, they were "optical ghosts," caused by a displacement of warm air. Whatever they are, sightings are constantly being reported—even on radar screens. Hidden somewhere in the skies from which the saucers come and into which they vanish, lies the answer. Some day soon, the truth may break in the greatest news story of all time.