

# FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

SCIENCE FICTION

MAR.  
35c



## LONE STAR PLANET

A New Astounding Novel

By H. BEAM PIPER

shapes  
in  
the  
sky

by . . . CIVILIAN SAUCER  
INTELLIGENCE

The first of a series of authoritative columns on UFO sightings and reports, written specially for this magazine.

IN LAST month's *Fantastic Universe*, Ivan Sanderson remarked on the puzzling large number of shapes for unidentified flying objects. That there are recorded a wide variety of "types" can no longer be disputed, and this feature is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the reported phenomena.

Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York, a non-profit organization of persons interested in a serious and careful study of reported aerial phenomena, has devoted a great deal of time to making a comprehensive collection of published and unpublished reports of UFOs; and from the study of over 2000 cases we conclude that only one generalization holds true concerning such objects; namely, that it is not possible to generalize about them at all. They are so bewilderingly diverse in appearance and behavior that there is an exception for every would-be rule. For example; UFOs are reported in an extraordinary variety of shapes.

Nevertheless we can dis-

---

*The article which follows is the work of Alexander D. Mebane and Ted Bloecher, of the Research Section of Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York. CSI is one of the "UFO research" groups described by Ivan T. Sanderson in last month's *Fantastic Universe*. The group maintains an extensive file of pertinent material on UFOs, has a program of meetings and public lectures, and publishes a small News Letter for its members.*

---

tinguish several definite classes. First, "Saucer" reports can be roughly divided into daytime sightings and observations made by night. The latter considerably outnumber the former, which is unfortunate, as they are generally less satisfactory than daytime sightings. Usually all that is seen by night is a moving light or lights of some sort. Unless such "night lights" are seen performing in a manner impossible to a plane, blimp, balloon, planet, meteor or searchlight beam, it can seldom be definitely established that it was really of an "unconventional" nature. This is a difficult test to pass, and many of the "night light" sightings published in newspapers and UFO periodicals fail to pass it. There are, however, a number of nighttime sightings of apparently structured objects, which have a *prima facie* claim to be considered as genuine unknowns. Two of these will be cited in this article. But, as one would expect, observations of some type of solid object or construction are usually made by daylight.

The types of structured objects reported can be usefully classified as follows: (1) elongated cigars, spindles and cylinders; (2) flattened discs and lens-shaped objects; (3) spherical, or egg-shaped. Each of these three general classifications of course can be further subdivided. These

three classes by no means cover *all* the shapes reported, but a large majority of solid-object reports fall into one of the three groups.

We give here some illustrations. These are not chosen because of any outstanding importance, but they do have the merit of being first-hand accounts obtained directly from the observer. Thus they offer a more detailed and clear-cut description of what was seen than can be found in most published reports, and we can be fairly sure that the picture is not being distorted by a reporter's misunderstanding or error.

#### Case 1: *The Vanishing Cylinder*

Early in the afternoon of a cloudless day in May, 1946, two young men were driving northward in an open convertible toward Syracuse, New York. When they were passing near La Fayette (some twelve miles south of Syracuse) their attention was suddenly drawn to a large bright silvery object hovering motionless in the sky somewhat to the left and ahead of them, in the general direction of Syracuse. The object was at an approximate elevation of 30-35 degrees. It was cylindrical, with sharply-pointed, conical ends, and hung horizontal to the ground, with the axis in a north-south direction. The length of the object was about three times its width and it

was perfectly smooth, with no protrusions or markings. The edges were clear and sharply-defined; the sunlight was reflected from its shiny metallic surface. The apparent length exceeded the diameter of a quarter held at arm's length.

The driver, Richard R. Hill, kept glancing back and forth from the road to the cylinder; his passenger never took his eyes off the object. It did not change its appearance in any way, simply hanging motionless in the sky. But suddenly, while Hill took his eyes off it momentarily to watch the road, his companion exclaimed, "Hey! It's not there!" It had disappeared *instantaneously* as he was watching it not by going up or down, or by receding into the distance, but by simply vanishing. Until that instant, both observers had thought they were watching some type of dirigible or similar device; it was the abrupt disappearance that impressed them with a realization of the inexplicable. The sighting had lasted about two minutes—long enough for them to be sure of what they saw. Both observers were quite certain that the object could not have been a disc seen edgewise. They were also certain that it could not have moved out of sight even at a very high speed; there were a few small clouds in the sky, but none close enough or large

enough to hide the object; and it was too high to have dropped down behind the hills.

#### Case 2: *The Luminous Cigar with Chopped-off Ends*

At 6 a.m. (E.S.T.) on October 21, 1955, not quite an hour before sunrise, Mr. and Mrs. William Steig, of Cream Ridge, New Jersey, were awakened by their dog. They immediately noticed a bright light illuminating the bedroom window pane. Getting up quickly and going to the window, they observed an enormous glowing object moving horizontally over the house in a westerly direction. The object, far greater in apparent size than the full moon, had the general shape of an elongated barrel, or a rather fat cigar with both ends chopped off. It was bright white, similar in color to the full moon. Although the outline was clear, it was not as sharp-edged as the moon appears to be. They both perceived the suggestion of a dark line running from the top to the bottom, forward of the center of the object. They could not be certain of the height of the object, but their impression was that it was moving quite close to the ground; it disappeared quickly from view over the treetops west of the house.

As the object passed, both the observers experienced definite physical discomfort.

An effect of this sort has been reported in a considerable number of cases, but seldom by observers of such unchallengeable integrity and intelligence.

### Case 3: *Knobbed Lens Over Manhattan*

One evening shortly after 9 o'clock during the last week of July, 1952, Mr. A. C. B. Havens, who lives on West 76th Street in New York City, saw through the open frame of his large studio window a bright red dot of light to the north. The apartment is on the eighth floor, and the buildings to the north are not higher than five stories, affording an unobstructed view in that direction.

The light appeared to be approaching, and Mr. Havens called his wife Frances to the window. Moving in roughly a southerly direction, the object increased in size as it approached until they could easily make out its shape: flat-bottomed, it had a rounded, nearly hemispherical top. There were three "knobs" on the underside. Apart from these three protrusions, they could see nothing suggesting wings, fins, or other external features. The whole object glowed bright red. It passed directly over the building at what the Havens estimated as normal commercial-aircraft altitude, though Mr. Havens (who has a private pilot's license) added that this was only a guess. As it disap-

peared from view directly overhead, the object appeared circular, and its apparent size was somewhat larger than the full moon. It had been in view approximately a minute, though no exact time check had been made.

Although this is a nighttime observation, the object presented itself under conditions giving a clear indication of its shape. Seen first in profile at a distance, it was definitely lenticular in shape; seen from directly underneath, it was a disc. As a pilot, Mr. Havens is hardly likely to describe any sort of conventional aircraft in these terms.

### Case 4: *An Oblate Spheroid With A Base*

On June 15, 1950, a large number of residents of Paramaribo, Surinam (Dutch Guiana) observed the passage of a strange object in the skies over that city. A firsthand report was obtained from Mr. Wilfred Coronel, who at that time lived with his family at 48 Water Street. At about 9 a.m., he was called from the house by his father, and from his back yard saw in the sky a peculiar flattened spheroidal object with a flat-bottomed ridge around the bottom. The oblate body, which overhung this base, was of a silvery metallic color, "like aluminum"; the underpart was somewhat darker. Its apparent size against the background of a clear

blue sky was equal to that of a full moon, and it was estimated to be moving at an altitude of 6,000 meters (19,000 feet), although no basis for this estimate could be given. No sound was heard. The flat base of the object remained parallel to the ground at all times as the object "drifted" slowly to the northeast over the eastern part of the city. Four or five times it "dipped" abruptly, losing altitude in a straight vertical descent, then proceeding horizontally at this lower altitude for a short distance and rising suddenly again to its original height. After ascending from its final descent, the object continued to rise at an angle into the northeastern sky until it was finally lost to view. The witness watched this performance for almost ten minutes.

According to Mr. Coronel, the object was seen by a large proportion of the city's residents (pop. 80,000), some of whom were much alarmed by its unaccountable behavior. No photographs were taken.

These five cases furnish illustrations of the three major shape categories; but, as we mentioned before, by no means all of the objects reported fall into these categories. There are conical, pear-shaped, arrowhead-shaped, rectangular, and doughnut-shaped objects; there are objects equipped with propellers, wings, and

less comprehensible appendages. Indeed, it is hard to think of any form that has not been seen in the sky.

#### Case 5: *The UFO Swarm*

On June 10, 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Todd, then of Houston, Texas, were driving east between South Houston and Galveston on a clear and sunny day at 10 a.m. Their attention was attracted to a top-shaped object in the sky to the east of them, and they stopped their car and got out to get a better view of it. The object was then seen to be a swarm composed of a large number of smaller units, which looked merely like big dots; no further detail could be made out. These small objects, whose number was estimated as 100 to 200, moved continuously within the frame of the overall object, in the manner of a swarm of bees. However, it was plain to the observers that this was no bee swarm. The outline of the mass remained the same as seen silhouetted against a clear blue sky. The apparent size of the swarm was about equal to the diameter of a half-dollar at arm's length. (The full moon is the size of a pea at arm's length.) Mr. Todd, a pilot during World War II, estimated that it was 75-100 feet wide and 50-75 feet deep.

The swarm, retaining its tight top-shaped configura-

tion, hovered and moved over and around the Pasadena and Texas City area for ten minutes. During this time the mass made at least three swings from the northeast to the south and back in broad arcs with minor changes in altitude, and with spurts of high speed which Todd estimated exceeded 1000 miles an hour. There was no sound. The last time the objects swung to the south, they continued on in a southerly direction and soon disappeared from view.

Fifteen minutes later, after proceeding toward Galveston, the Todds observed an extremely bright, steady white light moving due south, east of their position, and heading toward the Gulf of Mexico. It was so exceedingly bright that it was seen even when passing through some cumulus clouds. Moving at what Todd estimated was 2000 feet, it gained altitude gradually as it proceeded and was lost to sight after a number of minutes. Its speed had been equal to that of conventional aircraft.

Even from these few examples it is obvious that the term "UFO" or "flying saucer" covers a wide variety of different things, a circumstance which makes it clear that no simple explanation is going to be adequate. You will find the same point made, but a different conclusion drawn, in the U.S. Air Force's Project Blue Book Special Report No.14, completed in 1953 and released to the press October 25, 1955. This Report describes and illustrates (not very accurately) a dozen well-attested cases ("good Unknowns"). As would be expected, the objects seen differed widely among themselves. The Air Force investigators' remarkable conclusion from this fact was accurately summarized by *Life*, Dec. 5, 1955: "Because they all differed, the Air Force concludes that it is highly unlikely that flying saucers like these do exist."

This bit of wishful thinking is a good illustration of the logical fallacy traditionally known of course, as *non sequitur*.

---

NEXT MONTH—in *your* FANTASTIC UNIVERSE:

ROBERT SILVERBERG's unusual story—

THE ARTIFACT BUSINESS

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP's provocative article—

PFUI ON PSI

JOHN BRUNNER's haunting fantasy—

WHEN GABRIEL..

EDMUND COOPER's thrilling adventure story—

INTRUDERS ON THE MOON

---