

Sept. 6, 1952

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THE NEW YORKER

WITHDRAWN

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Hans Hofmann

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THEATRE

(E. and W. mean East and West of Broadway.)

PLAYS

THE MALE ANIMAL—Elliott Nugent is again the star of this comedy, which he wrote with James Thurber twelve years ago, and his performance is just as fascinating as it ever was. The same thing can be said about the play itself, which is undoubtedly one of the wittiest and most discerning written in our times. With Martha Scott, Robert Preston, and Matt Briggs. (Music Box, 45th St., W. CI 6-4636. Nightly, except Mondays, at 8:40. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

MRS. McTHING—Helen Hayes, Jules Munshin, and a couple of talented children will reopen in this fantasy—which may be a little hard for pragmatic types to take—on Monday, Sept. 8. (Morosco, 45th St., W. CI 6-6230. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:40. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

POINT OF NO RETURN—Paul Osborn has done an excellent adaptation of John P. Marquand's novel about a man who discovers that success isn't really so much. Henry Fonda is magnificent in the leading role and gets fine support from a company that includes Leora Dana, Frank Conroy, Robert Ross, and Colin Keith-Johnston. (Alvin, 52nd St., W. CI 5-5226. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:40. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.)

LONG RUNS—THE FOURPOSTER: Betty Field and Burgess Meredith make up the cast of this play about a fairly placid marriage. (Ethel Barrymore, 47th St., W. CI 6-0390. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:40. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:40.) ... **THE MOON IS BLUE**: How a boy gets a girl in three acts. Donald Cook, Barry Nelson and Janet Riley are in it these days. (Henry Miller, 43rd St., E. BR 9-3970. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:30. Matinées Thursdays, except Sept. 4, and Saturdays at 2:30.)

MUSICALS

NEW FACES OF 1952—This revue, the most recent in a series presented by Leonard Sillman, is full of good things. Ronny Graham and June Carroll, who are in the attractive and youthful cast, also provided a number of the sketches and songs. (Royale, 45th St., W. CI 5-5760. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

PAL JOEY—Vivienne Segal, appearing again in her original role of a predatory Chicago matron, is largely responsible for the success of the revival of this classic history of a gigolo, which John O'Hara, Richard Rodgers, and the late Lorenz Hart turned out in 1940. Robert Alton's choreography is superlative, and there are very helpful performances by Harold Lang, Helen Gallagher, and Lionel Stander. (Broadhurst, 44th St., W. CI 6-6699. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

WISH YOU WERE HERE—Life in a summer resort in the Catskills. The framework is Arthur Kober's comedy of some years back, "Having Wonderful Time," but the new trappings (music by Harold Rome, production by Josh Logan and Leland Hayward), though lively and beguiling, somewhat distort the gentle quality of the original. With Sheila Bond, Jack Cassidy, Patricia Marand, Sidney Armus, and Paul Valentine. (Imperial, 45th St., W. CO 5-2412. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

LONG RUNS—GUYS AND DOLLS: A dash of Damon Runyon with music and lyrics by Frank Loesser and a cast that includes Robert Alda, Sam Levene, Isabel Bigley, and Vivian Blaine. (46th Street Theatre, 46th St., W. CI 6-4271. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays



A CONSCIENTIOUS CALENDAR OF EVENTS OF INTEREST

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through Saturdays at 8:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.) ... **THE KING AND I**: The Rodgers and Hammerstein view of Siam. Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner have the principal roles. (St. James, 44th St., W. LA 4-4664. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:25. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:25.) ... **SOUTH PACIFIC**: Ancient of days and still throned in glory. (Majestic, 44th St., W. CI 6-0730. Mondays at 7, and Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:25. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:25.) ... **TOP BANANA**: Phil Silvers plays the role of an ex-burlesque star now mixed up in television, who might conceivably be Milton Berle. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. CI 5-4878. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8:30. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:30.)

MISCELLANY

ICE SHOW—"Ice Capades of 1953," produced by John H. Harris, and including Scotsmen à la "Brigadoon," cowboys, lollopps, and Lord knows what else, all on skates. Opens Thursday, Sept. 11, and will run through Sunday, Sept. 21. (Madison Square Garden, CO 5-6811. Nightly at 8:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30.)

MASQUE AND LYRE LIGHT OPERA COMPANY—"Trial by Jury" and "H. M. S. Pinafore." (Jan Hus House, 351 E. 74th St. TR 9-6453. Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:15. Matinée Saturday, Sept. 6, at 2:15.)

MARINE STADIUM, JONES BEACH—"A Night in Venice," an adaptation, by Ruth and Thomas Martin, of the Johann Strauss operetta. Thomas Hayward, Nola Fairbanks, and Jack Russell head a cast that may also contain a House of David ball team, for all anyone can tell in the crush. Produced by Michael Todd

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THE NEW YORKER

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and directed by Jack Donohue. (Nightly at 8:30. Closes Saturday, Sept. 6.)

NIGHT LIFE

(Some places at which you will find music or other entertainment. They are open every evening, except as indicated.)

DINNER, SUPPER, AND DANCING

AMBASSADOR, Park Ave. at 51st St. (PL 5-1000)—The subterranean Garden, sunk far from the madding crowd, makes a cheery setting for the music of Jules Lande's orchestra, which is around for dinner and supper except Sundays. The Garden's flowers are the handiwork of man, not God.

ASTOR ROOF, Broadway at 44th St. (JU 6-3000)—One of the most commodious aeries this side of the Catskills, with dance music by Blue Barron's band. Closed Sundays.

BILTMORE, Madison Ave. at 43rd St. (MU 7-7000)—String music "under the clock" at cocktail time (except Sundays) and at dinner-time on the Cascades Roof, which will close for the season on Friday, Sept. 5. Next night the Madison Room, which will offer the same sort of music at dinner, will reopen, and will be in operation every day but Sunday. No dancing anywhere.

EL MOROCCO, 154 E. 54th St. (EL 5-8769)—A famous wayside inn with a palm garden, a small bar, and some interesting old Michael Arlen characters. Chauncey Gray's orchestra and Chiquito's rumba band for dancing.

NEW YORKER, Eighth Ave. at 34th St. (LO 3-1000)—Skating on thin ice has its limitations, but the acrobatics of Phil Romayne and Terry Brent and the juggling of Elimar help improve the situation. The locale is the Terrace Room, where Bernie Cummins' band plays the dance music. Closed Sundays.

PIERRE, Fifth Ave. at 61st St. (TE 8-8000)—Every night except Monday, in the Café Pierre, dancing from cocktails through supper to Stanley Worth's quartet.

PLAZA, Fifth Ave. at 58th St. (LO 9-3000)—The Rendez-Vous Room, a well-appointed retreat from a lot of things, is filled with Maximilian Bergere's and Nicolas Matthey's tinkling dance music after eight-thirty. ... ¶ The Palm Court has Leo LeFleur's music during the cocktail hour. No dancing.

ROOSEVELT, Madison Ave. at 45th St. (MU 6-9200)—In the Grill, Lenny Herman's orchestra looks after the dinner and supper dancing. Closed Sundays.

ST. REGIS, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. (PL 3-4500)—The serene Roof, beautiful despite its years, offers quantities of table talk and waiting, plus the edifying sight of Milt Shaw's and Paul Rickenbacker's orchestras riding their moving handstands like surfboards. Its season swan song will be sung on Wednesday, Sept. 10. ... ¶ The Maisonette will reopen for business Thursday, Sept. 11. Among those present will be Julie Wilson, a tall, cheerful armful with a collection of something-for-the-boys songs, and the bands of Milt Shaw and Horace Diaz.

SAVOY-PLAZA, Fifth Ave. at 59th St. (EL 5-2600)—Every afternoon and evening, Irving Conn's orchestra supplies the clientele of the Café Lounge with music to dance to.

STORK CLUB, 3 E. 53rd St. (PL 3-1940)—Night life as you see it on television, sound effects and all. An orchestra and a rumba band for dancing. Closed Sundays.

TAVERN-ON-THE-GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (SC 4-8100)—After eight on weekdays and seven on Sundays, when the weather is pleasant, there's dancing under the stars (real ones), surrounded by real trees, real shrubbery, and real air.

VERSAILLES, 151 E. 50th St. (PL 8-0310)—There are hints of Broadway in the echoes here, but it's Broadway with a certain style and glitter. Emile Petti's and Panchito's bands play for dancing, and Mary Small sings.

WALDORF-ASTORIA, Park Ave. at 49th St. (EL 5-

THE NEW YORKER, published weekly by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 25 W. 43rd St., New York 36, N. Y. R. H. Fleischmann, president; E. R. Spaulding and R. H. Truax, vice-presidents; S. B. Botsford, treasurer; M. L. Fries, secretary; R. B. Bowen, advertising director. Vol. XXVIII, No. 29, September 6, 1952. Entered as second-class matter, February 10, 1925, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1952, by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., in the United States and Canada. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. Printed in U. S. A. Subscription rates: U. S. and possessions, 1 year \$7.00; Philippines, Latin America, and Spain, \$7.50; Canada, \$8.00. Other Foreign, \$10.00.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

IN midsummer of 1947, the United States Air Force, already concerned with such problems as the development of guided missiles and supersonic craft, the rigging up of radar networks, and its controversy with the Navy over unification, found itself confronted by another, and completely different, headache—the flying saucer. People in every section of the country were seeing strange objects that streaked across the sky at tremendous speeds, and while these people, who included such practiced students of the heavens as airplane pilots, farmers, and the Lieutenant Governor of Idaho, were not able to identify the things they had seen, they were able to describe them vividly and unforgettably. The newspapers called the first of these mysterious objects a flying saucer, taking their cue from the man who reported having seen it and who described it as saucerlike, and the name stuck, although later people reported seeing things that looked like flying chromium hubcaps, flying dimes, flying teardrops, flying gaslights, flying ice-cream cones, and flying pie plates. As more and more curious things were seen in the skies, cautiously quizzical editorials began to appear in the papers, and the President and members of Congress received a deluge of letters demanding an explanation. Many of the letter writers had concluded that the objects, whatever they might be, were manned by Russians, and that as soon as their pilots had reconnoitred sufficiently, they would return loaded with atomic bombs. Others thought the earth was being visited by space ships from another planet. Still others suspected that our own Air Force was secretly testing some new form of aircraft. Everyone agreed, however, that it was up to the Air Force, as the custodian of our welkin, to explain the flying objects and, if necessary, to repel them. The result was the launching by the Air Force, on January 22, 1948, of a special investigation, an investigation that, though it has reached numerous conclusions, is still under way and has yet to put the public mind at rest.

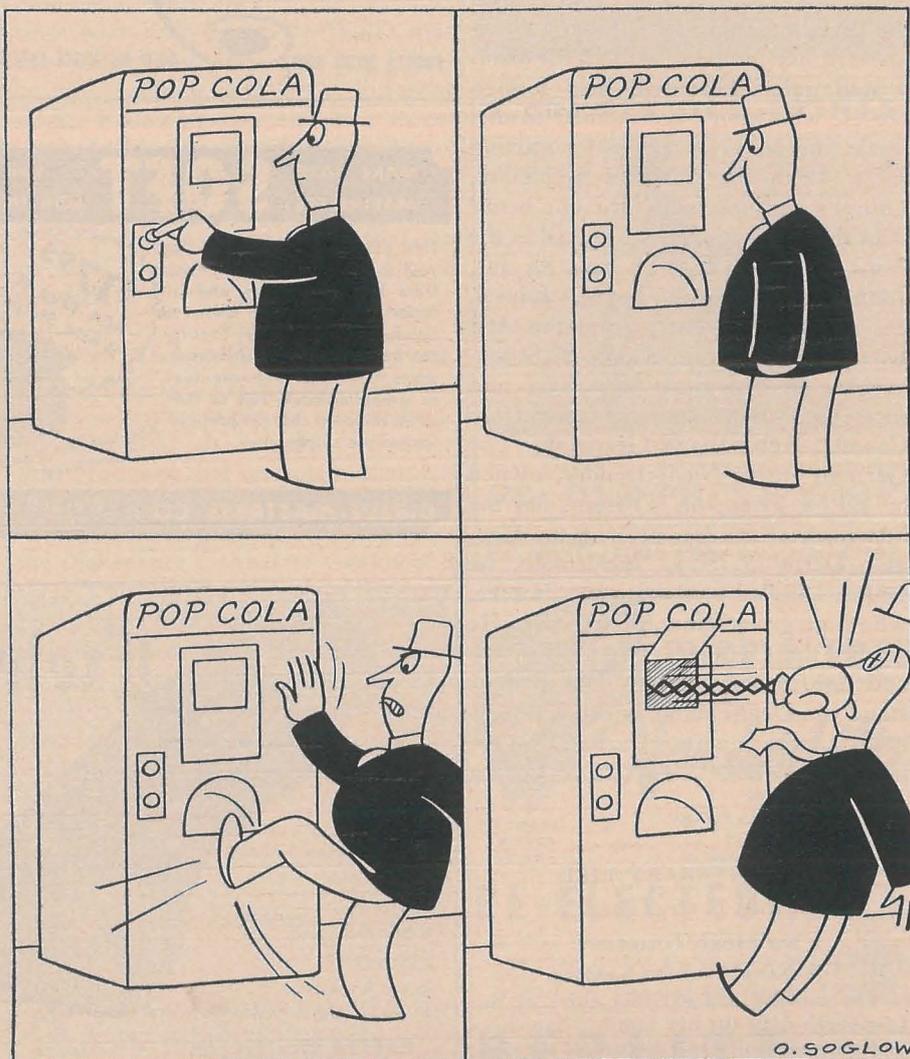
It appears that, aside from the hope of reassuring a jittery populace, the Air Force, in embarking upon this undertaking, had any or all of three things in mind. It may well have shared the civilian concern over what, if anything, the Russians might have to do with the reported phenomena, and it may even have felt that to insure a thoroughgoing

SOMETHING IN THE SKY

investigation there was certainly no harm in assuming for the moment that the era of interplanetary travel had arrived and the earth had become an objective for journeys from elsewhere in the solar system. Or—and this would not necessarily exclude the first two considerations—the Air Force may have been setting up a smoke screen to protect, in the interest of national security, the secret of some experimental flying objects of its own that only a trusted few of its members knew about. Whatever the purpose, the investigation, with which I have been in touch from time to time, has seemingly been exhaustive. The Air Force personnel originally assigned to it was later augmented by astronomers, psychologists, physicists, meteorologists, physicians, and representatives of the F.B.I. The investigation, which soon became popularly known as Project Saucer, was first headed by Lieutenant General Benjamin W. Chidlaw, Commanding Gen-

eral of the Air Matériel Command, and its base was, and is, at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. The project's task turned out to involve a mixture of old-fashioned detection, scientific analysis, public relations, and the study of a widespread state of mind. In December, 1949, after checking, over a period of two years, three hundred and seventy-five reports of intruders in the sky, the Air Force publicly called it quits, but Project Saucer was not actually disbanded. National security, the Air Force announced at the time, was not endangered. The flying saucers were apparitions, it said, all attributable either to a failure to recognize conventional objects, to hoaxes, or to a mild form of mass hysteria. The Air Force, however, did not let the matter rest there.

Not long after the apparent demise of Project Saucer, I had a talk in Washington with Brigadier General Ernest Moore, then chief of Air Force Intelligence, in the course of which he made four categorical statements that I felt sure he had made many times be-



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fore. "First off," he said, "the Russians have nothing to do with these so-called saucers; I'll swear to that on a stack of Bibles, if you like. Second, we don't have any secret new types of aircraft that could have started all this commotion. Third, nobody, in our opinion, has spotted space ships from some other planet. Fourth, everything our investigators learned has been made available to the public."

THE first saucer incident occurred on the afternoon of June 24, 1947, when Kenneth Arnold, on a business trip for a Boise, Idaho, firm that makes fire-control equipment, was flying his private plane from Chehalis, Washington, to Yakima, Washington. The reflection of a bright flash on one wing caught his eye. He turned and, at a distance he thought was about twenty miles, saw what he took to be nine tailless aircraft heading toward Mount Rainier. "I could see their outlines quite plainly against the snow," Air Force Intelligence quoted him as saying. "They flew very close to the mountaintops, directly south to southeast, down the hog's-back of the range, flying like geese, in a diagonal, chainlike line, as if they were linked together . . . a chain of saucerlike things at least five miles long, swerving in and out of the high mountain peaks. They were flat . . . and so shiny that they reflected the sun like a mirror." Arnold said he watched the saucers for three minutes and estimated their speed at about twelve hundred miles an hour.

Air Force technicians, consulted by newspapermen, said that any object moving that fast would be invisible to the naked eye at Arnold's estimated distance. The press scoffed at Arnold's story, and he was resentful. "Even if I see a ten-story building flying through the air, I won't say a word about it," he declared, and when he got back to Boise he wrote a series of articles about his experience for a magazine called *Fate*.

No sooner were the skeptical newspaper accounts printed than dozens of people turned up with similar reports. Another resident of Boise spotted a disc over that city, "a half circle in shape, clinging to a cloud and just as bright and silvery-looking as a mirror caught in the rays of the sun." Lieu-

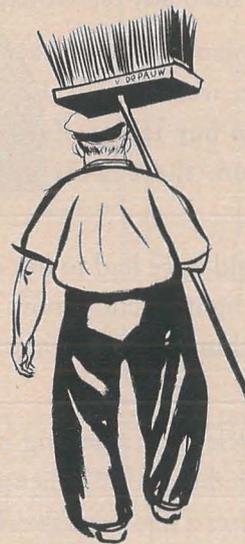
tenant Governor Donald S. Whitehead, of Idaho, disclosed that one evening he had seen a comet-shaped object sailing over the western part of the state. It finally dipped below the horizon, he said. (Later on, the personnel of Project Saucer decided that the Lieutenant Governor had been looking at either Saturn or Mercury.) Four cops in Portland, Oregon, saw a group of discs "wobbling, disappearing, and reappearing."

Reports of other phenomena having been seen in the skies appeared in the papers almost daily. Two Army officers at Fort Richardson, Alaska, reported seeing a spherical object flying through the air at incredible speed and leaving no vapor trail; some fishermen off Newfoundland saw a series of aerial flashes, silver to reddish in color; a lady in Oregon watched a group of saucers spell out "P-E-P-S-I," and alerted her neighbors to the presence of foreign agents practicing a secret code in our skies; an Oklahoma City man saw a saucer "the bulk of six B-29s;" and a prospector in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon saw six saucers in a group, banking in the sun—"round, silent, and not flying in formation." On the Fourth of July, there were twelve reports of saucers in widely separated parts of the United States. One of these saucers, sighted at Trenton, New

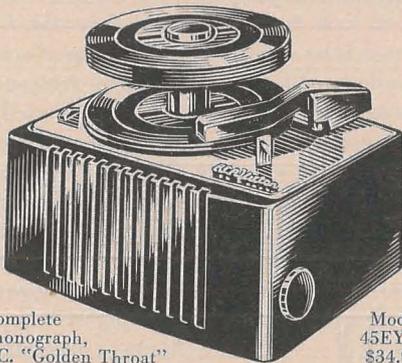
Jersey, was traced to a fireworks display. Dr. Paul Fitts, an Ohio State University psychologist who was for a time attached to Project Saucer, considered this crowded condition in the holiday skies the result of mass suggestibility, the same jumpy trait that caused Americans to see Zeppelins overhead during and after the First World War. "Our graphs show that saucer incidents always increase dramatically after publicity," he has since told me. "The sky, you know, has been a source of exciting visions

from time immemorial, and its attraction is particularly strong in our jittery moments."

FROM the beginning, the officers in charge of Project Saucer recognized a peculiar difficulty in their assignment. "If you look out the window and see something, how can I prove or disprove what it was if I didn't see it and you can't tell me much about what you



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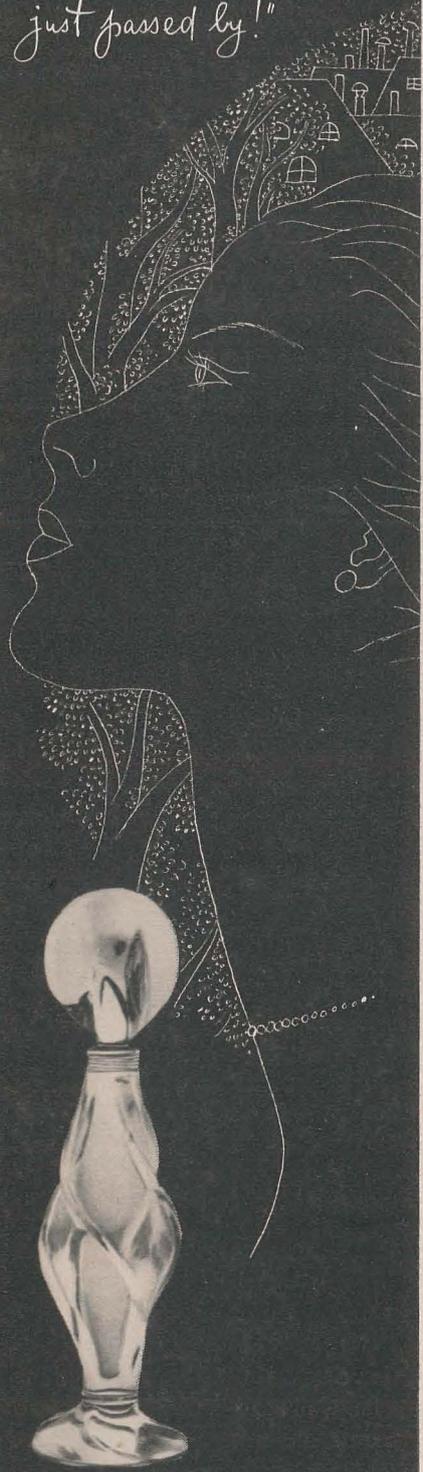
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saw?" Major Jerre Boggs, who was then the chief liaison officer between Wright Field and the high command in Washington, said to me one day shortly after Project Saucer had presumably become a thing of the past. "It would be different if flying saucers were known to exist. Then we could have collected evidence indicating the degrees of probability that such things were sighted and the reason for their appearance at a given place. But it is impossible to prove, logically and with finality, a double negative—that is, that there are no flying saucers and that people have not seen flying saucers. The best we could do under the circumstances was to deduce, first, from the fact that it had not been proved, that saucers *had* been seen and, second, from the fact that reasonable theories could be advanced to explain away all the reports of seeing them, that probably nobody had seen them at all. The fewer the theoretical explanations and the less plausible they were, the more reason there was for suspecting people *had* seen saucers." The Major shook his head, and continued, "It's a difficult concept to grasp, but so was the job we were tackling."

I asked Major Boggs whether there was any way to account for the epidemic of reports of strange celestial objects. "Of course there is," he replied. "If you look up at the sky long enough, you can almost always make out something there that appears strange. And more people are looking up now than ever before. Kids don't count freight cars any more; they count airplanes. People who were trained in air observation during the war have gone right on observing. Also, the public hasn't forgotten that the atomic bomb was kept secret from it for three years. This time, people want to know what's cooking, so they look up." Major Boggs sighed. "Time was when people used to make a wish if they saw a shooting star. Now they telephone the Air Force."

Major Boggs and I pondered this unromantic age in silence for a moment. Then he returned briskly to the problems that had confronted the investigators. "The one tangible thing we had to work on was the fact that the sky is full of things," he said. "I can't even come close to estimating the number of commercial and military aircraft up there at any given moment. Then, there are more than five hundred outfits of one kind or another that release balloons from time to time. These range from simple weather balloons, no larger than

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a volleyball, to complicated clusters of balloons, as big as a house, for radar soundings or cosmic-ray research. At night, balloons always have trailing lights. In addition to all those balloons, there are advertising blimps, the sweeping beams of searchlights and air-lane beacons, clouds that reflect the sun and other sources of light, clouds scudding by the moon, and pieces of paper that are swirled aloft from the street by the wind. And, of course, birds, kites, St. Elmo's fire, meteors, comets, lightning, and fireballs—or, if you prefer, bolides, which are bits of interplanetary matter, with trajectories that sometimes seem to parallel the surface of the earth, trail a wisp of flame, and disintegrate with a flash when they hit the earth's dense atmosphere."

The officers in command of Project Saucer began by breaking this aerial hodgepodge down into its principal divisions, Major Boggs told me. Then they started looking for clues to what people had actually seen when they thought they were seeing flying saucers. Dr. J. Allen Hynek, the head of the Emerson McMillin Observatory, at Ohio State University, was called in to consider objects that might be of astral origin. The United States Weather Bureau, the Air Weather Service, and various other scientific setups, among them the Electronics Laboratory of the Cambridge Field Station, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, were asked to study the reports of sightings to determine whether any of their balloons were responsible. Airline schedules and flight charts of military aircraft were studied. In this work, Project Saucer had the assistance of the personnel attached to the Air Matériel Command laboratories at Wright Field. These included specialists in aerodynamics and propulsion—men who might be able to ascertain whether what were described as the maneuverings of a saucer might not really be the movements of an airplane or balloon. Wright Field physicians who had had experience with the limitations and idiosyncrasies of human beings in the air were also available for consultation, as were all kinds of engineers, in case any material evidence turned up. All told, at one time or another some two hundred people were engaged on Project Saucer. It was agreed among them that they would not pool their

ideas. "We didn't want them influencing each other," one officer explained to me. "We had enough suggestibility on our hands as it was."

PRACTICAL jokers, precocious children, publicity seekers, and mentally unbalanced people were among those who saw saucers, or said they did, but those who reported seeing them also included men whose reliability was such that if they had claimed to have seen flying gorillas, Project Saucer would have taken them seriously. Two of these were

Captain C. S. Chiles and Pilot John B. Whitted, experienced Eastern Air Lines pilots. At 3 A.M. on July 24, 1948, these men, flying a passenger plane at five thousand feet near Montgomery, Alabama, saw something that the newspapers later called a "space ship." Chiles and Whitted didn't call it that. They said it was a "wingless aircraft," a hundred feet long, cigar-shaped, with a



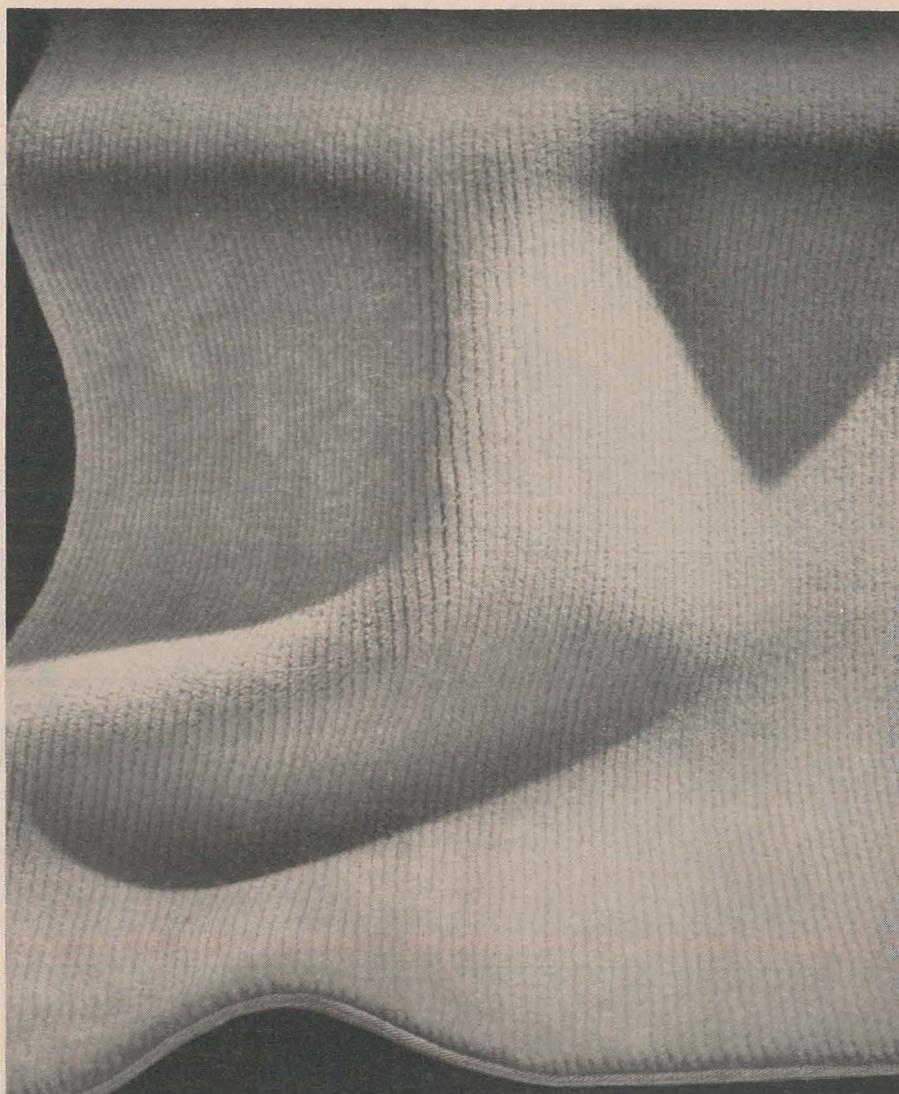
diameter about twice that of the fuselage of a B-29, and was moving a third faster than a jet plane. It seemed to have a row of windows above a globular cabin that suggested a pilot's compartment. The interior of the cabin was extraordinarily bright—as bright as a magnesium flare—and along its sides was a less brilliant glow, which looked like "a blue fluorescent factory light." The exhaust of the object seemed to be an orange-red flame. "We saw no occupants," Chiles said. "We saw it at the same time and asked each other, 'What in the world is this?'" Whatever it was, it flashed down toward us and we veered to the left. It veered to its left and passed us about seven hundred feet to our right, and above us. Then, as if the pilot had seen us and wanted to avoid us, it pulled up with a tremendous burst of flame from the rear and zoomed into the clouds, its prop wash or jet wash rocking our DC-3." The only passenger in the plane who was not asleep at the time said he had seen the same thing the two pilots saw.

An hour before the two pilots and the wakeful passenger saw whatever they saw, ground observers at the Robins Air Force Base, at Macon, Georgia, nearly two hundred miles to the northeast, also saw something peculiar in the sky. They reported that it had been flying faster than a jet plane, that it had trailed varicolored flames, that it was heading toward Montgomery, and that

it had behaved like a normal aircraft in the way it disappeared from the line of sight.

Here, the experts professed to hope, was something Project Saucer could get its teeth into. The whole flying-saucer mystery might be explained. The first step was to determine whether the object was an aircraft that had been partially obscured by a cloud or whose appearance had been distorted by a rain-storm. Two hundred and twenty-five civilian and military flight schedules were analyzed, and it was found that one other plane, an Air Force C-47, had been near the Eastern airliner at the time the mysterious object was sighted. Conjecture about the C-47 began to appear irrelevant, however, when the Macon ground crews agreed with Chiles and Whitted that the thing they had seen was going much faster than two hundred miles an hour, and so, unless it dawdled around somewhere, wouldn't have taken anything like an hour to get from Macon to Montgomery.

Astronomers went to work on the problem. Dr. Hynek considered the possibility that a brilliant, slow-moving meteor might be the explanation. Various bits of the apparition's description encouraged this notion—"orange-red flame," "cigar-shaped," "a tremendous burst of flame." Unfortunately, the flight schedules of meteors are not available, and Dr. Hynek had no means of testing his hypothesis. "It will have to be left to the psychologists to tell us whether the immediate trail of a bright meteor could produce the subjective impression of a ship with lighted windows," he wrote in a report on his findings. The psychologists expressed the opinion that a meteor could indeed be mistaken for a space ship. Dr. Fitts, the Ohio State psychologist, observed that both Chiles and Whitted were human and therefore as likely to be victims of mass suggestibility as anyone else. Dr. Fitts told me during a talk I had with him that psychologists are used to the fact that even people of high mental calibre often make mistakes about what they see. "Also, I would like to make the point that pilots are trained to instruments," he said. "They grow very dependent on those instruments, and I don't know whether they are necessarily superior observers without them. I do know that during the war, when I was in the Air Force, pilots frequently gave some pretty odd reports of what they'd seen while flying their missions." Chiles and Whitted readily agreed that their report might



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be thought odd, but they were still certain that they saw what they saw.

AT three o'clock in the afternoon of January 7, 1948, something that looked like "an ice-cream cone topped with red" was sighted over the Godman Air Force Base, at Fort Knox, Kentucky, by several military men and civilians. The Godman Base tower requested a flight of four National Guard F-51s that happened to be aloft in the vicinity to investigate the object. The flight leader, Captain Thomas F. Mantell, a veteran with a splendid combat record, reported sighting the object, saying that it was then flying at half his speed. At three-fifteen, he broke away from his formation to go in pursuit, and within minutes radioed the tower, "I'm closing in now to take a good look. It's directly ahead and above . . . and still moving at about half my speed. . . . The thing looks metallic and of tremendous size. . . . It's going up now, and forward as fast

as I am—that's three hundred and sixty miles an hour. I'm going up to twenty thousand feet, and if I'm no closer, I'll abandon chase." Those were the last words ever heard from Mantell. His body was found later that day in the wreckage of his plane. The Air Force officially expressed the belief that he had blacked out from lack of oxygen and had suffocated before his plane hit the ground.

Five minutes after Mantell broke away from his formation, the other planes put down at Godman Field. One of them was refueled and sent up again. It flew a hundred miles south at heights up to thirty-three thousand feet. The pilot saw nothing. The Project Saucer people at first said they believed that Mantell had chased Venus. Later, they dropped this notion, and still later, influenced by Dr. Hynek, returned to it. Dr. Hynek favored the Venus theory after he learned that a peculiar object had been seen not only over Godman Field that evening but, earlier, at three other scattered points, all of them hundreds of miles away—at the Lockbourne Air Force Base, near Columbus, Ohio; at the Clinton County Air Field, in Wilmington, Ohio; and by a pilot approaching Washington, D. C. These three sightings were made at about the time Venus set, and the object was reported to have been near the point on the horizon where the planet disap-

peared. "In summing up the evidence presented," Dr. Hynek reported, in part, "we are forced to the conclusion that the object observed in the early evening hours of January 7th at these widely separated localities was the planet Venus. To assume that a terrestrial object located so high as to be visible simultaneously over a wide area could be of such intrinsic brightness and would be placed essentially at the very position of Venus would be incredible. The stellar magnitude of Venus that day made it twenty-nine times brighter than the bright star Arcturus.



Venus, when as bright as this, shining through interstices in a host of clouds, could very easily give the [reported] effect . . . of 'a flaming object with a tail.' "The object Mantell pursued had been sighted during the day; the other observers had seen objects in the early evening. Dr. Hynek conceded that one's eye would be less likely to

be caught by the planet in daylight than in darkness, but, he wrote in his report, "Once caught, the sighter might wonder why he had never noticed it before; Venus that day was six times brighter than an equivalent area of sky." Dr. Hynek made another point: "The one piece of evidence that leads this investigator to believe that at the time of Captain Mantell's death he was actually trying to reach Venus is that the object appeared essentially stationary (or moving steadily away from him) and he could not seem to gain on it."

A year and a half later, a similar object presented itself over Godman Field. This time, investigators ascertained the coordinates of its position and sent them to Walter L. Moore, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Louisville, and he identified it as Venus.

ON the night of October 1, 1948, a twenty-seven-minute dogfight took place between another man of unquestioned ability at finding his way around in the air and a puzzling light in the sky. The man was Lieutenant George F. Gorman, during the Second World War a pilot instructor who trained French cadets, and at the time of the dogfight the manager of a construction company in Fargo, North Dakota. He was flying an F-51, complet-

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ing a routine patrol for the North Dakota National Guard, and had just asked the tower at the Fargo Municipal Airport for clearance to land when he saw what seemed to be another plane's tail-light a thousand yards away. He queried the tower, and the men there reported that the only other aircraft over the field was a Piper Cub. Gorman could see the Cub plainly outlined below him. Curious, he flew toward the light. "It was about six to eight inches in diameter, clear white, and completely round, with a sort of fuzz at the edges," Gorman later told investigators, adding that he saw "no outline of anything" around the edges. "It was blinking on and off. As I approached, however, the light suddenly became steady and pulled into a sharp left bank. . . . I dived after it and brought my manifold pressure up to sixty inches, but I couldn't catch up with the thing. It started gaining altitude and again made a left bank. I put my F-51 into a sharp turn and tried to cut the light off in its turn. By then, we were at about seven thousand feet. Suddenly it made a sharp right turn and we headed straight at each other. Just when we were about to collide, I guess I got scared. I went into a dive and the light passed over my canopy at about five hundred feet. Then it made a left circle about a thousand feet above, and I gave chase again." Gorman followed the light up to fourteen thousand feet, where, after another near collision, his ship went into a power stall and the light disappeared to the northwest. Gorman noticed no sounds or exhaust-trail odors. He had gunned his plane up to four hundred miles an hour without gaining on the light. It was able to maintain an extremely steep angle of ascent, far greater than that of his Air Force fighter. "When I attempted to turn with [the light], I blacked out temporarily, due to excessive speed," he said. "I am in fairly good physical condition and I do not believe there are many, if any, pilots who could withstand the turn and speed effected by that light and remain conscious."

Project Saucer suspected that Gorman was tilting with a weather balloon. For one thing, it learned that the Fargo weather station had released a lighted balloon only ten minutes before Gorman's patrol stopped being routine. The object's steady, practically vertical climb suggested the behavior of a balloon. A technician who once worked on Project Saucer told me recently that chasing a weather balloon with an airplane is comparable to diving to the bottom of a pool after a hollow rubber

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"Unidentified" is a designation that Project Saucer, which has often had occasion to use it, has always loathed. "As long as anything is called that," Major Boggs said to me, "people can continue to indulge their fantasies." "Unidentified" is a charitable word for some of the will-o'-the-wisps the Project was called upon to explain. In Hamel, Minnesota, two children told of seeing a strange object fall into a backyard where they were playing. It had "spun around once, made a whistling noise, and then shot straight up into the sky about twenty feet, where it stopped again and made more whistling noises." Unidentified. One evening, four residents of Logan, Utah, saw twelve flying objects that looked like birds but were moving awfully fast for birds. Unidentified. Two elderly gentlemen of San Pablo, California, gazing up at a hazy sky, spotted a large, translucent object, which they estimated to be a mile

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above the earth. An investigator for Project Saucer was sent to interview them. One of the men thought the object resembled an immense amoeba covered with canvas; the other said it looked to him like a vegetable crate. One said it had been going east; the other said it had been going northwest. Both usually wore glasses but hadn't happened to have them on at the time. Unidentified.

IN the few instances in which bits and pieces of suspect objects were picked up and turned over to the experts of Project Saucer during the two publicized years of its existence, the fragments were quickly identified. For example, soon after Kenneth Arnold sighted those nine tailless aircraft near Mount Rainier, residents of Jackson, Ohio, excitedly reported the discovery of a fallen disc. Examination showed it was the remains of a Signal Corps weather balloon. Early in 1948, residents of Kansas, southern Nebraska, and northern Oklahoma reported a violent explosion, high in the sky, that shook buildings and broke windows. Project Saucer was, of course, immediately involved. The likeliest clue came from a farmer who lived near Stockton, Kansas. He said that he and his wife had seen a fire in the sky and then a large cloud, after which they heard the big explosion. Two months later, an astronomer, following a hunch, found embedded in the soil forty miles from Stockton the presumed explanation of the mystery—a thousand-pound chunk of an achondrite, an unusual type of meteorite. Smaller pieces were found nearby. Some citizens of Bellefontaine, Ohio, thought they had witnessed the disintegration of a flying saucer when a flaming "wheel" fell in their vicinity. Upon analysis at a Wright Field laboratory, what remained of it was found to contain zinc, magnesium, sodium, and lead—standard components of various types of military flares.

For a time in the spring of 1949, it looked as though a Colorado rancher had been harboring a piece of a flying saucer for three years. Back in April, 1946, the rancher, riding his horse on a high, rocky mesa, had come across a bit of tattered rigging attached to a steel ring. He took it back to his house, tossed it into a closet, and forgot about it. Then, belatedly reflecting on the wave of saucer sightings, he recalled the contraption in his closet. He showed it to two friends, one of whom, an omniscient type, stated definitely that it was part of a flying saucer. "I've seen too



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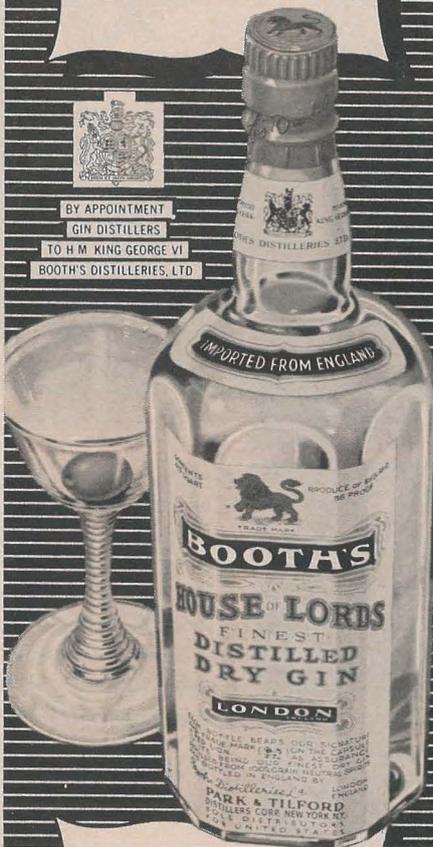
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many saucers not to know one when I'm holding one in my own hand," he said. The rancher forwarded his find to Wright Field, where it was identified as a remnant of one of the incendiary balloons the hopeful Japanese dispatched across the Pacific during the war in an effort to start forest fires.

Even pictures taken of supposed saucers failed to impress the experts. There was the case of a man in Phoenix, Arizona, who spotted a flat gray object spiralling up and down in the sky at a speed that he estimated at between four and five hundred miles an hour. He snapped two pictures of it with his Brownie. Prints were rushed to Project Saucer, and Dr. Irving Langmuir, the physicist and a Nobel Prize winner, was asked to study them. The distinguished scientist learned that a thunderstorm had occurred just before the picture-taking, and concluded that he was looking at a couple of rather poor shots of a piece of paper being buffeted by the wind.

As time went on and the skies, apparently, continued to teem with flying saucers, the generals in the Pentagon, warming to their task, decided to enlarge the scope of the investigation. Commanders of all Air Force installations in the country were ordered to assign Intelligence officers to look into sightings reported in their areas. The officers were instructed to solicit the assistance of municipal police officials, who might be familiar with the personalities of the saucer observers. The F.B.I. was also called upon for assistance, and assigned agents to help interview people who reported that they had seen discs. The agents used a standard questionnaire, drawn up by Air Force Intelligence, which called for such information as the saucer's size, speed, color, and maneuvers. The information was usually transmitted to Wright Field, but some stories were so obviously false and some "evidence" so obviously trifling that the F.B.I. men didn't even bother to fill out the questionnaire. In Seattle, for instance, an alarmed woman called the police to inform them that a flaming disc had landed on her roof. The object turned out to be a hollow, drum-shaped affair made of plywood, with "USSR" crudely daubed on it in paint. An F.B.I. man found that a turpentine-soaked cloth had caused the flame. A practical joke, he decided. A farmer near Danforth, Illinois, reported that a saucer had crash-landed in one of his fields and burned up a patch of weeds. The F.B.I.



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man there concluded that someone had been playing a prank when he found that the disc was an amateurish assembly of some old radio parts. When Louella Parsons wrote in her column that a Hollywood producer had taken some pictures of flying saucers in Alaska, two worldly F.B.I. agents quickly ascertained that a movie company was making a picture about flying saucers in Alaska.

It became common practice among F.B.I. agents, in their efforts to establish the reliability of someone who claimed he had seen a space ship or a flying saucer, to talk with the person's neighbors, business associates, friends, and enemies. For instance, after Dale Stevens, a sportswriter on the Richmond, Indiana, *Palladium-Item*, reported simply, and with a restraint uncommon in such matters, that he had seen a hovering light in the eastern sky that looked five or ten times larger than a star, an agent interviewed his publisher and noted, "Employer considers Mr. S. honest and sincere. Mr. S. is a member of the local Junior Chamber of Commerce." (Stevens' credibility received another endorsement some time later, when Dr. Hynek informed Project Saucer that it was quite possible that Stevens, and not a Sydney, Australia, astronomer, was the discoverer of Comet L. 1949—a recent visitor from space.)

The investigation of one flying-saucer report, which proved to be a hoax, resulted in the death of two Air Force Intelligence officers. Two residents of Tacoma got in touch with the editor of a Chicago adventure magazine and tried to sell him a story about six flying discs they claimed to have seen while they were in a boat off Maury Island; they had been showered with fragments from one of the discs, they said, and a pet dog who was with them had been killed. The editor asked Kenneth Arnold, who, as the first to report seeing a saucer, had by this time become known as the Man Who Saw the Men from Mars, to check on the details of the story. Arnold talked to the men and then asked the Air Force to help him investigate their statements. Two Air Force officers were sent to Tacoma to question the men. The Tacoma men turned over what they said were some of the fragments of the disc. The next day, the investigators took off in a B-25 for Hamilton Field, at San Rafael, California, where they planned to have the fragments analyzed by mineralogists. The plane crashed, and the investigators were killed; the pilot and the only other man aboard parachuted to safety. Soon

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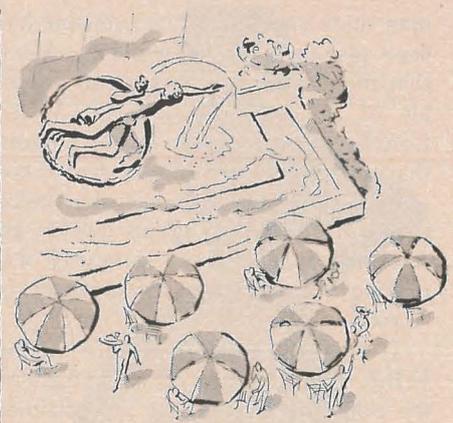
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afterward, newspapers and wire services in Tacoma received anonymous telephone calls telling them that saboteurs had shot down the plane with a 20-mm. cannon, because of the strategic value of its cargo. Actually, flames from a burned-out exhaust had set fire to the left wing of the plane. A few days later, the Tacoma pair, under further questioning, confessed that they had taken the fragments from an unusual rock formation they found on Maury Island. They had simply made up the flying-disc story.

On one occasion, an F.B.I. agent stationed in Denver himself descried a strange object in the sky. After a hard day at the office, he was driving home when he spotted an unaccountable light over the city's airport. He got out of his car and collected a group of witnesses, all of whom agreed that the light was about five miles above the earth and travelling eastward. He made a report to the Air Force, and it assigned him to investigate his own story. He started by visiting the airport the next evening. He was standing around describing his experience to some local fliers when he suddenly pointed up to the sky and shouted, "There it is!" What he saw was the night light on a weather balloon. The Weather Bureau station at the airport sent one up at the same time every evening.

THE scientists attached to Project Saucer examined the results of all investigations that seemed to contain clues that belonged in their respective fields. The reports they made on them were filed in the Pentagon, and Major Boggs let me read a number of them. The first one I read was by Dr. Fitts, who pointed out that one of the first tenets of psychology is that human perception is fallible. He outlined the mechanics of optical illusion and told of the irrationalizing effects of vertigo, a kind of blacking-out to which any of us is subject. Asserting that every saucer report that had not been proved to be a hoax or a case of mistaken identity could be explained on psychological grounds, he challenged practically all the data that had been submitted by observers. How, he asked, could anyone tell how far away a saucer was if he didn't know its size? How could anyone presume to estimate an object's speed without knowing its distance from himself? He suggested that some of the sightings might be blamed on *muscae volitantes* (flitting flies), the medical term for small solid particles that float about in the fluid of the eye, casting a shadow



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Other elements of the saucer problem were studied by such men as Dr. George Valley, a nuclear physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; staff members of the research firm of Rand Corporation; an assortment of physicists and aerodynamicists who specialize in the study of the stratosphere and the space beyond it; and the electronics experts attached to the Cambridge Field Station. These men were all searching for physical rather than psychological explanations, and some fairly strange theories occurred to them—the possibility that extraterrestrial animals were flying into our atmosphere, for example. (No data turned up to support that arresting idea.) The theory that the saucers were hostile aircraft was carefully studied and rejected. “The performances of these saucers not only surpass the development of present science but the development of present fiction-science writers,” one scientist noted. The specialists also considered and rejected the concept of discs capable of riding the air on beams or rays of some kind. They even speculated on whether the anti-gravity shield that H. G. Wells thought up for his novel “The First Men in the Moon” would work; it wouldn’t, they decided. The supposition that interplanetary craft were whizzing in at us was also discredited, despite its popularity with laymen. Space ships, the scientists thought, would have to be so large and unwieldy that they couldn’t possibly zig-zag as frivolously as the reported saucers did. Besides, a space ship, regardless of its size, could not, in the opinion of these men, carry sufficient fuel to remain for any length of time in the earth’s dense atmosphere. The scientists noted, too, that the supposed spacemen showed a remarkable lack of interest in the rest of the world, being, it would seem, almost unanimous in their desire to see America first. “The small area covered by the disc barrage points strongly to the belief that the flying objects are of earthly origin, be they physical or psychological,” one of the scientists reported.

From the report turned in by the astronomers, I learned that they, in addition to seining out comets, meteors, bolides, and achondrites from the stream of objects people were seeing in the skies, had also thoughtfully considered our planetary neighbors. The old question of the possibility of life on Mars took on a new urgency, and a new corollary: If there *are* living creatures on Mars, would they be capable of building space ships? The astronomers



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thought not. Their perhaps slightly anthropomorphic conclusion was that Mars is so desolate and inhospitable that any living beings there would be intent on merely existing; they wouldn't have time to think of space ships, even in order to transport themselves to a better climate.

Venus, regarded as the innocent cause of several reports of flying saucers, was also considered as a launching site for them. The astronomers concluded that its atmosphere, believed to be composed largely of carbon dioxide and immense, opaque clouds of formaldehyde droplets, precluded the practice of astronomy, and hence the concept of a universe and the idea of space ships. The speculations of the astronomers were not confined to the solar system. They took into consideration not only the planets in the solar system but the twenty-two stars in addition to the sun that are thought to have satellites revolving around them. In view of the distance between these stars and the earth, the astronomers admitted frankly that their earth-bound minds bogged down at the thought of anything travelling that far. "The nearest eligible star is one called Wolf 359," an astronomer prominent in this phase of the investigation noted. "It is eight light-years away. A spaceship pilot taking off from one of that sun's planets and travelling at one-tenth the speed of light—say, at eighteen thousand miles per second—would need eighty years to make a one-way trip to the earth. And that speed is completely beyond the reach of any predicted level of rocket propulsion."

When I had a talk with Major Boggs after reading the reports, he remarked, "You know, not one of these wonder saucers has ever malfunctioned. My God, we have our hands full with conventional planes, but these saucers never seem to get in trouble and have to make forced landings."

AFTER two years of operation, Project Saucer had not accomplished one of its principal objectives—that of satisfying the public that our air was free of unexplainable things. Nevertheless, on December 27, 1949, the Air Force issued a public announcement that Project Saucer was about to be disbanded. Perhaps the Air Force felt that silence was the best antidote for the contagion of mass susceptibility;

whatever its reasons, the fact is that Project Saucer, while it did cease to exist as an agency working hand in hand with the general public, merely underwent an organizational change and then kept right on tracking down, in a considerably more quiet manner, reports of "aerial phenomena," to use its official term. Just one man, stationed at Wright Field and bearing the title of Aerial Phenomena Officer, was assigned to it on a full-time basis, and his orders were to limit his investigations to observations reported by pilots, scientists, engineers, and others who could presumably be considered qualified observers. Whatever information of value he picked up he was to turn over to the authorities at Wright Field. "We changed the study of unidentified flying objects from a special project to a general operation," an Air Force colonel recently told me. "Analyses of the sightings went through normal staff channels, so that our experts found them in their "in" baskets along with their regular work. Of course, if the Aerial Phenomena Officer needed a kind of expert we didn't have on the payroll at Dayton, we'd put him in touch with the right fellow. Over a year ago, I remember, the officer suspected that a formation of lights seen over a Southern state might be ducks, so we arranged for him to consult an ornithologist who was an authority on the migratory habits of waterfowl. Well, all we know is they weren't ducks."

The immediate effect of the Air Force's announcement that Project Saucer was about to fold was a decrease in the number of crackpot sightings, but seemingly reliable reports of objects seen in the sky continued to come in. "Not a month has gone by without our receiving reports that seem worth investigating,"

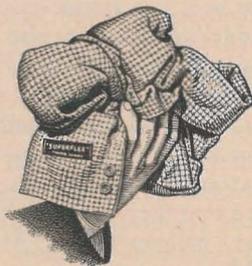
Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, who is now in charge of the investigation, told me the other day. "I've flown all over the country interviewing people who are as intelligent as any I've ever met. They've been entirely cooperative in talking with me. Some of them say they regret having seen what they saw, because up till then they'd always thought that all this talk of flying saucers was just so much foolishness. They don't want their names publicized, for fear of being ridiculed by their friends and professional colleagues. I always promise them there's no danger of



that—that while the information they give me may be made public, their names never will be.” In most cases, Captain Ruppelt said, investigation has shown that the people he has interviewed had been deceived by things that have been deceiving others all along—balloons, planes, meteors, and so on—but a nettling residue of around twenty per cent of the cases have wound up in that exasperating old pigeonhole labelled “Unidentified.” Nothing, for example, could be found to account for the “something silvery directly overhead” reported by a mystified Civil Aeronautics Administration inspector at Terre Haute. A commercial pilot who, flying near Battle Creek, Michigan, spotted “an oval-shaped silver object” ahead of his ship, posed a similarly unsolved problem, as did a highly respected naval officer, stationed at the dirigible base at Lakehurst, New Jersey, who reported that he had stared through his binoculars at a brilliant image making turns that were far too tight for any known aircraft.

Twenty-five per cent of the observers interrogated by the Aerial Phenomena Officer in the last two and a half years have been military pilots. Eight per cent have been commercial pilots, some with as much as twenty years’ experience in the air, and at one stage in the current phase of the investigation, even a few physicists at Los Alamos, New Mexico, men who make a fetish of objectivity, were interviewed after they reported having seen puzzling lights hovering above their atomic-energy laboratories. “If you took any one of these incidents by itself, it might not mean much,” Captain Ruppelt said. “But in view of the number and calibre of the informants, you couldn’t help taking their claims seriously.”

In February, 1951, Dr. Urner Liddel, a nuclear physicist attached to the Office of Naval Research, at Washington, D.C., declared that at last, thanks to the lifting of certain security restrictions, he could provide the solution to the mystery of the flying saucers: They were “skyhooks,” he said—balloons a hundred feet in diameter, which the Navy had secretly been sending up for the past four years in order to study cosmic rays. Dr. Liddel’s assertion was immediately disputed by Dr. Anthony O. Mirarchi, who, as former head of the Air Force’s Atmospheric Composition Bureau, had assisted in the diagnosis of Project Saucer reports. Dr. Mirarchi said he thought the saucers might be missiles from some foreign



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country carrying out reconnaissance missions over our atomic-energy plants. Dr. Liddel's explanation also made little impression on two Wright Field pilots, Captains E. W. Spradley and J. E. Cocker, who had seen a baffling something in the sky at a time when they were extremely balloon-conscious. They reported that they were tracking a large weather balloon over Alamogordo, New Mexico, not far from where the first atomic bomb was detonated, when they saw a flat "milky" object near the balloon. They estimated its altitude at between fifty and sixty thousand feet. Suddenly, they said, it gave off "three brilliant flashes, like photo flashes," and disappeared. Nor did Dr. Liddel's statement put a stop to the steady flow of reports of sightings—a "propelled bluish-white star" seen by an American Airlines pilot near Phoenix; "three circles of light spinning counterclockwise" that a Pennsylvania control-tower operator saw above his airport; "globe-shaped orange objects" that airmen over Korea said they saw. "In recent months, our informants have stressed light and color to us," Captain Ruppelt told me. "They rarely talk about discs any more, or anything else that might indicate solidity. That's pretty near the only generalization we've been able to draw from our data. We've tried every possible way to establish patterns for these—well, things. We've plotted them out on maps in an effort to find out if they're concentrated in any particular part of the country. They do seem to be more or less grouped around certain atomic installations, but that point isn't really worth much if you take into account the fact that people in such vital areas are liable to be more watchful of the sky than, say, a taxi-driver in New York. We've plotted frequency of sightings by the hour of the day, the day of the week, and the month of the year. We've tried to determine if there isn't at least some common denominator to their shapes and colors. We've done our best to find out if they've been moving in any general direction. We've got nowhere."

DURING March of this year, Captain Ruppelt's records show, seventeen sightings were reported. In April, the figure rose sharply to ninety, a development that some Air Force people attribute to the publication in *Life*

that month of an article entitled "Have We Visitors from Space?" In May, the reports of sightings dropped to seventy, but in June, when *Life* ran a sequel to its April article, they went up to a hundred and eleven. By July, the daily press, which had been fairly restrained about the matter for the past two years, stepped up its number of saucer stories, for the most part of the one-paragraph variety. On July 21st, however, saucers again became front-page news. That was the day a Senior Air Traffic Controller for the Civil Aeronautics Administration at the National Airport's Air Route Traffic Control Center, in Washington, informed the Air Force, and the public, that early that morning his radarscope had picked up ten unidentifiable objects flying over various parts of the capital, including the prohibited area around the White House.

Shortly after midnight, the controller, Harry G. Barnes, related in a newspaper article that appeared under his signature, one of his crew of eight had asked him to look at the radarscope, jocularly remarking, "Here's a fleet of flying saucers for you." Barnes looked and saw seven "pips"—pale-violet spots that are supposed to represent aircraft but in this case were behaving like no plane pips Barnes had ever observed. They followed no set course, kept no formation, and could be tracked for only about three miles at a time, instead of the



orthodox twenty-five or thirty, before disappearing from the screen. They seemed to be moving at a speed of between a hundred and a hundred and thirty miles an hour. At times, they moved together in a cluster, at other times wandered about singly. Barnes had two radar controllers look at the screen and they saw

what he did. He had technicians check his radar equipment and they found it in perfect order. He called the airport control tower and the radar operator there said that the same curious pips were showing up on his screen.

One of Barnes' men then radioed Captain S. C. Pierman, who has been a Capital Airlines pilot for seventeen years and who had just taken off from the Washington airport, asking him to look for the objects. In a short while, Pierman radioed back, "There's one, and there it goes." During the next

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fourteen minutes, Pierman saw six bright lights that resembled tailless shooting stars, but three of them were moving horizontally, unlike any shooting star he had ever seen. Another commercial pilot who was reached in flight nearby said that he saw a light off his left wing; Barnes found a corresponding pip on the radarscope. Other pilots in the vicinity reported, however, that they could see nothing unusual. Toward daybreak, ten peculiar pips were counted simultaneously on Barnes' screen. "There is no other conclusion I can reach but that for six hours on the morning of the twentieth of July there were at least ten unidentifiable objects moving above Washington," Barnes wrote. "They were not ordinary aircraft. . . . Nor in my opinion could any natural phenomena account for these spots on our radar. Neither shooting stars, electrical disturbances, nor clouds could, either. Exactly what they are, I don't know. Now you know as much about them as I do. And your guess is as good as mine."

A week later, at 9:08 P.M. on July 26th, the Air Route Traffic Control Center's radarscope again showed unidentifiable objects over Washington. So did the screen at the Andrews Air Force Base, just outside the capital. Two jet interceptors, capable of doing six hundred miles an hour, were dispatched from a base near New Castle, Delaware, to investigate. When the interceptors appeared on the radarscopes, they were guided toward the objects. One of the pilots sighted four lights approximately ten miles in front of his plane and slightly above it, but they vanished while he was trying to overtake them. Twenty minutes later, he saw "a steady white light," but within a minute it, too, disappeared. "We have no evidence they were flying saucers," an Air Force representative said later. "Conversely, we have no evidence they were not flying saucers. We don't know what they were."

As a result of these two incidents, particularly the one involving the interceptors, public agitation reached a new height. The Air Force was bombarded with hundreds of letters, telephone calls, and telegrams demanding information and offering advice. One of the smaller airlines supplied its crews with cameras and ordered them to photograph any saucers they encountered. A civilian wrote to the Air Force that he would let it in on "the secret" in return for a colonelcy. A Los Angeles pastor wrote to Einstein, beseeching him to clear up

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Cleveland	Statler	Sept. 24-25
Dallas	Adolphus	Sept. 29-30
Denver	Albany	Sept. 25-26-27
Detroit	Sheraton-Cadillac	Sept. 30 Oct. 1
Evansville	McCurdy	Sept. 11
Houston	Rice	Sept. 18-19-20
Indianapolis	Lincoln	Sept. 29
Memphis	Peabody Hotel	Sept. 15
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New Orleans	Roosevelt	Sept. 16-17
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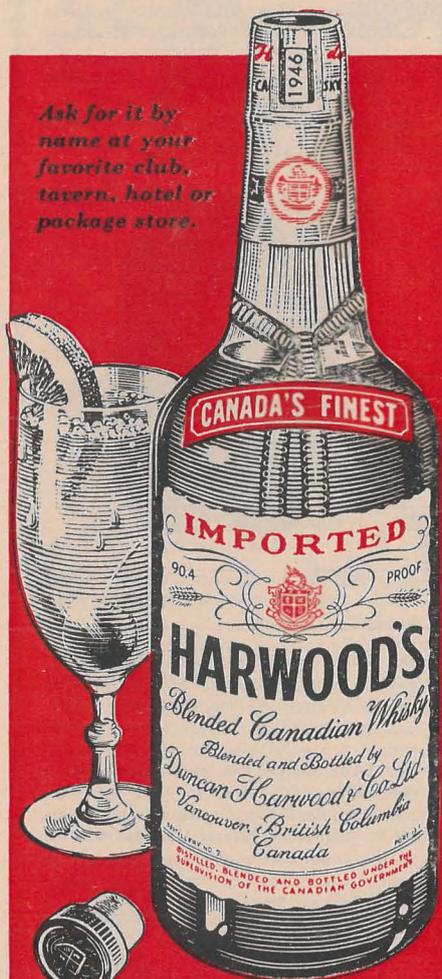
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the mystery, and Einstein wrote back, "Dear Sir: Those people have seen something. What it is I do not know and I am not curious to know." The Civil Defense director of Nassau County tried to recruit members for his Ground Observer Corps by announcing, "Here is a chance for everyone to get first-hand knowledge of the flying-saucer hokum. All observers will be able to discern the difference between or among the sun, moon, stars, meteorites, searchlight beams, weather balloons, propeller and jet aircraft." Two Wisconsin disc jockeys, who apparently had never heard of Orson Welles, told their audience that they had found a saucer with a two-foot man inside; the management of the station spent the next day or so broadcasting assurances that it had all been just a gag.

Many communications received by the Air Force have dealt with the question of whether or not the saucers should be shot down. Some letter writers urged the Air Force to knock the lights out of the sky—assuming, of course, that the lights weren't United States property. The majority, however, were for making friends with the visitors. "Why should we be the first to kill?" one correspondent inquired plaintively. A twelve-year-old girl implored the Air Force to spare "the Saucerians," and a Unitarian minister in Massachusetts asked, "Why not entice them to land? The attitude of our people (and the Air Force) seems to me to be outwardly very immature with reference to these visitors to our planet. It seems to me that a very little publicity with a friendly slant to it would entirely change the picture. . . . Isn't it worth a try?" The possibility that the visitors might not consider it an unmitigated blessing to be invited to land here was suggested by a distinguished theologian. In an article written for the National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service, the Very Reverend Francis J. Connell, Dean of the School of Sacred Theology at Catholic University, in Washington, D.C., declared that if rational beings do exist on other worlds, and if they have supernatural and preternatural gifts and have never sinned, they may be living in a state of paradise. "With their preternatural gifts, it would be reasonable to suppose they would be far ahead of us technically," Father Connell wrote. "With their superior intellect they might well have mastered interplanetary travel. If these supposed rational beings should possess the immortality of body once enjoyed by Adam and Eve, it would be foolish for our super-jet or rocket pilots to at-



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tempt to shoot them. They would be unkillable."

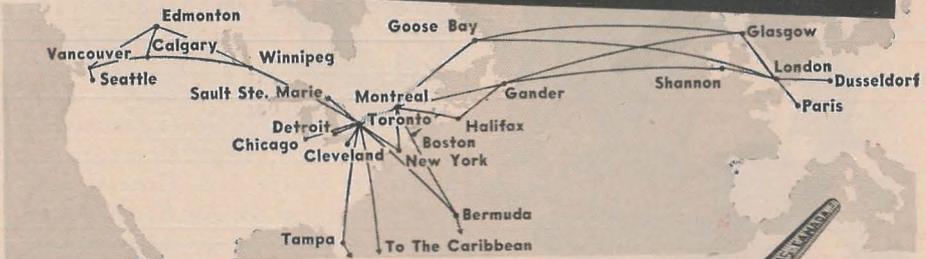
IN an effort to quiet the gathering tumult, Major General John A. Samford, the present head of Air Force Intelligence, submitted to a press conference a few days after the jet chase over Washington. Major General Roger M. Ramey, the Air Force's Operations Director, was present, as were several Intelligence officers, including Captain Ruppelt. General Samford was by turn grave, skeptical, defensive, and informative. He didn't consider the radar incidents unusual. He said that over the past few years Air Force interceptors had made hundreds of fruitless responses to radar pips. Birds, balloons, ionized clouds, and light civilian planes had been their usual harvest. Radar had been designed for dealing primarily with aircraft, he said, but as more and more is learned about the device, perhaps it may offer possibilities for scientific observation of a nature for which it was never intended.

General Samford suggested that "temperature inversion" might have been responsible for the radar pips, especially since for quite a while there had been hot, humid air over Washington. As a result of temperature inversion, the General explained, with the help of an aide who was an electronics expert, radar sometimes makes objects that are actually on the ground look as if they were in the air; inversion takes place when a warm layer of air comes in over a cool one, increasing the density of the cool one so that it will bend light rays. In the region where the two layers meet, an atmospheric reflector, or "overhead mirror," is formed, creating some curious mirages. The General recalled the experience of the pilot of a night fighter who, while using his radar to follow an object apparently in flight, suddenly found himself heading straight for the ground. The pilot had pulled out barely in time.

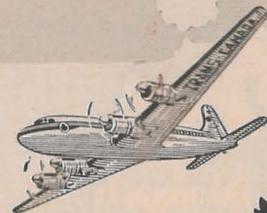
The "highest probability" concerning the saucers, General Samford stated, is that they are phenomena associated with "intellectual and scientific interests that we are on the road to learn more about." The real difficulty in disposing of the reports about them has been that none of the reports to date have contained measurements made by standard devices that could "convert the thing or the idea or the phenomenon into something that becomes manageable as material for any kind of analysis that we know." Incidentally, the General pointed out, as-

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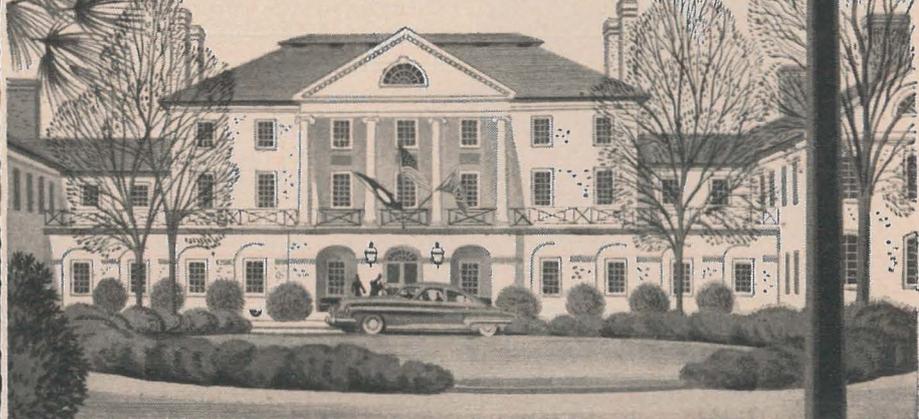
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tronomers, whom he called "our best advisers . . . in this business of visitors from elsewhere," photograph the sky continuously, but they had reported no saucers. The General was reminded that many of the people who had told of seeing the most spectacular things were considered the most reliable. He replied that he had no intention of discrediting them, but the fact remained that none of them had offered data of the kind a scientist would find useful. An Air Force officer whom General Samford personally knew to be a competent witness had told him of seeing a saucer in the Middle East. This man, too, had been unable to obtain accurate measurements. "We have many reports from credible observers of incredible things," the General remarked.

Like General Moore, his predecessor in Project Saucer days, General Samford denied that the Air Force was attempting to cover up secret experiments. When he was asked if the saucers might be the guided missiles of a foreign country, he replied that he didn't see how, on the basis of their weird performances, they could be unless "someone" had achieved a means of developing unlimited power—"power of such fantastic higher limits that it is a theoretical unlimited; it's not anything that we can understand"—and utilizing it under conditions in which no mass is involved. As for the latter, the General told the press, drawing a laugh, "You know, what 'no mass' means is that there's nothing there."

WHILE General Samford's interview probably reassured the public as evidence that the Air Force was still on the job, it did nothing to lessen the nation's saucer-consciousness. The reporters had hardly thanked the General for his comments when, on August 1st, a Coast Guard photographer produced a picture showing four bizarre lights burning brilliantly in a daylight sky. He said he had taken it over Salem, Massachusetts. The next day, a Harvard astrophysicist called the photograph worthless because it was accompanied by no scientific data, such as temperature distribution and altitude. On August 6th, an Army physicist at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, created the equivalent of flying saucers in his laboratory by introducing molecules of ionized air into a partial vacuum in a bell jar, and three days later an internationally known authority on atmospheric conditions said of the physicist's experiment, "I know of no conditions of the earth's atmosphere, high or low, which would duplicate

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those needed to make the laboratory models." On July 29th, a number of newspapers printed rumors that an Air Force plane had shot down a flying saucer, and the next day the United Press, quoting a Cleveland paper, said that the plane had been "repeatedly attacked" by the saucer. An Omaha man wrote the Air Force that the saucers were God's way of tormenting us for having deified science; a man in Kansas City, Kansas, saw their visitation as an occasion for rejoicing. He cited Ezekiel 10:4: "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory."

As of August 25th, Captain Ruppelt told me, more competent observers than ever before have been reporting saucers. The Captain, who started as a one-man agency, now has eight full-time assistants. The Air Force is buying a hundred special cameras, which it hopes will help determine what the provocative objects are made of, and it is considering buying several photographic telescopes of a new type, costing as much as five thousand dollars apiece, with which a continuous photographic record can be made nightly of the sky over the whole hemisphere. After four and a half years and nearly two thousand reported sightings of a serious nature, there is no discussion in Air Force circles of abandoning the pursuit of the elusive saucers. Too many people are waiting for the answer.

—DANIEL LANG

MOST FASCINATING NEWS STORY OF THE WEEK

[The following item, reprinted in its entirety, is from the *Mexico City Excelsior*]

LIBERTY, N. Y. (AP)—Mrs. Fred White, of Cochection Center, a nearby Sullivan County hamlet, was picking blueberries on her property which she has posted against trespassers when she was disturbed by sounds she thought were made by another picker behind the berry bushes. Indignantly, Mrs. White exclaimed: "Can't you read? Get away from those bushes and off my property!"

It was about time somebody came along who can write lines—in flexible verse or in prose—that will make an audience aware again there is an abstract beauty in language well assembled and well spoke that is an end of itself and that the theatrical devices for offering it are of no greater consequence in THEMSELVES than are the classic forms of music.—*Harvey Taylor in the Detroit Times.*

Yes, sir, it was about time.

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