

THE LUBBOCK LIGHTS, shown here in one of five photographs taken in 1951 by Carl Hart, 18, of Lubbock, Tex., mystify our foremost

scientists. In 1886, a young man in Wales reported a similar, smaller group of what he called meteors that traveled together.

Flying Saucers Are Old Stuff



Robert L. Unger

They've been sighted and reported in pretty much the same terms for centuries, says writer who has found 300 ancient accounts.

IN 1872, long before there were any airplanes or plastic weather balloons, the Royal Meteorological Society of Britain received a strange report from the captain of the sailing ship *Lady of the Lake*.

While homeward bound for England from tropic ports, the vessel's crewmen had called Capt. Frederick William Banner's attention to an amazing sight in the sunset-stained sky.

Captain Banner later described it in his log as "a most curious-shaped cloud." It was circular, light gray, and luminous. It looked, he wrote, "like the sun or moon with a halo around it." Furthermore, it was behaving most unlike a cloud. It was moving against the wind, rising from a point in the southeast where no other clouds were at the time until it was nearly overhead. There it briefly hovered, and the astonished sailors saw that it had strange markings and a dis-

ting tail, like a comet's. Captain Banner noted that "patches of cirro-cumulus seemed to squirt from the back." Then the frightening object headed downward toward the horizon, still against the wind, and disappeared into the northeast as darkness shut in.

Captain Banner sent a copy of his log to the Royal Meteorological Society. At the society's next meeting, January 15, 1873, the report was read, discussed, and dismissed as unexplainable.

Similar sights still baffle scientists. Many of the flying saucers seen in recent years have turned out to be weather balloons. But, an Air Force spokesman admitted this spring, "a number of reported sightings cannot be thus explained, and as long as this is true, the Air Force will continue to study the problem."

While pondering this problem, Robert

L. Unger, who is now a technical writer for the Republic Aviation Corp., of Farmingdale, L. I., began to wonder how long such strange things had been appearing in our sky. Unger flew B-25s in the Pacific theater of operations during the war, and later did graduate work at Yale. While there, he began prowling through the long history of "saucer stories."

He reports now that he has found evidence that men have been seeing things which resemble saucers for at least 355 years. He has collected, he says, 300 such reports as the one from Captain Banner that mystified the Royal Meteorological Society 80 years ago.

Mystic's Work Started It

The books of a man named Charles Fort, half scientific writer, half mystic, who died in 1932, inspired Unger to continue this fascinating research. Fort had paged through hundreds of scientific journals, some of them dating from the sixteenth century, and extracted accounts of strange happenings in the sky that science had never been able satisfactorily to explain.

Unger, beginning in 1948, followed in Fort's path, eagerly picking out the reports that sounded like current newspaper accounts of flying-saucer sightings. He carefully tracked down every source, and found at least half again as many new ones. The 300 accounts he has gathered date from 1907 back to the late eighteenth century.

Of all the baffling reports that the Air Force has received since 1947, when "flying saucer" entered the language, some of the hardest to explain have been those concerning the Lubbock Lights. That is the name that has been given to mysterious groups of luminous spots which several responsible citizens of Lubbock, Tex., repeatedly saw travel noiselessly across the night sky in 1951 at tremendous speed and in distinct flying formation, usually V-shaped.

Seen by Navy in 1904

When Unger read the first reports from Lubbock, he immediately remembered an experience reported to the *U. S. Monthly Weather Review* in 1904 by Lieut. F. H. Schofield, aboard a Navy supply vessel at sea.

Shortly after six o'clock on the morning of February 28, the lieutenant and two members of his crew were staggered to see

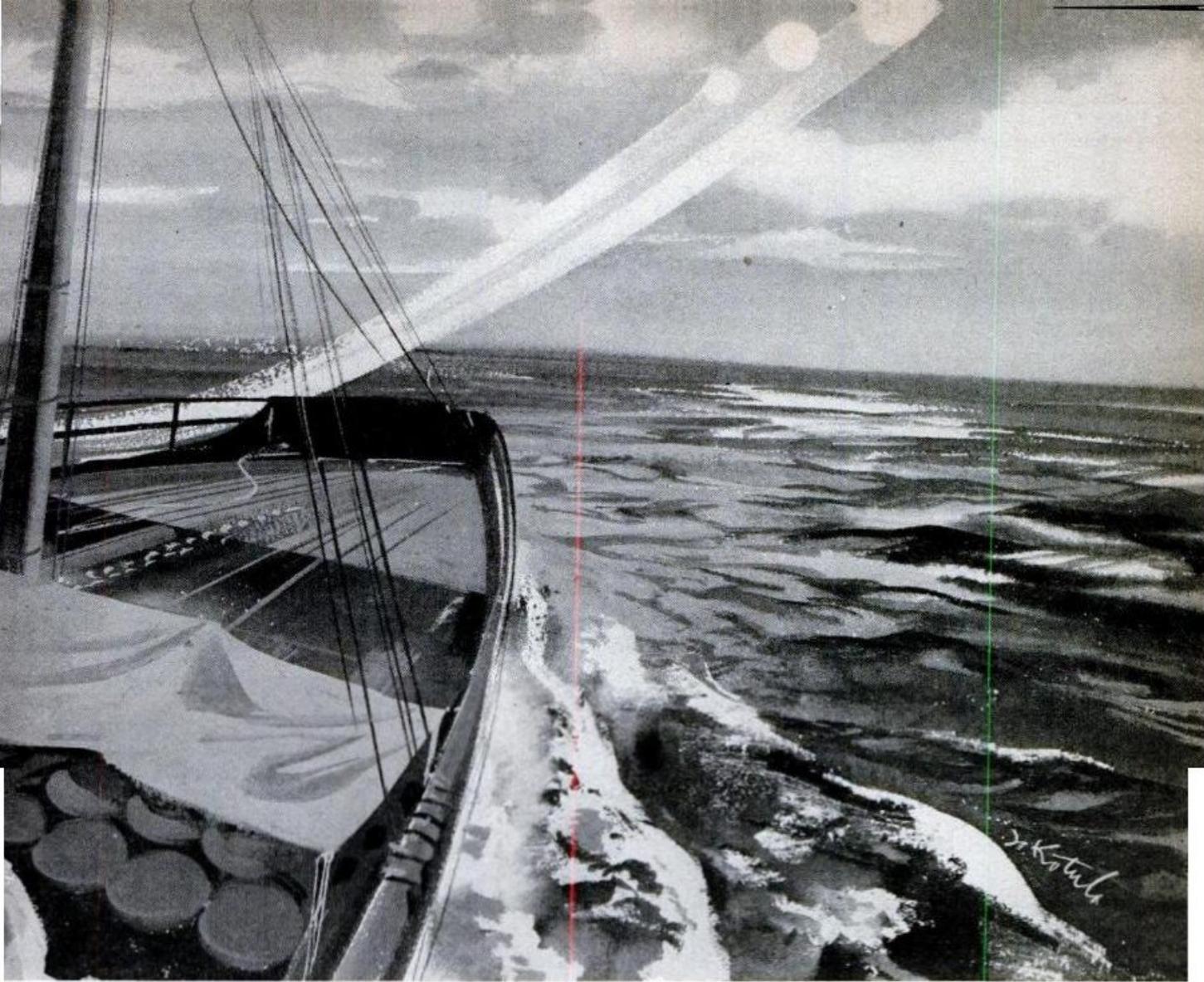


"METEORS" FLYING IN FORMATION and behaving most eccentrically were seen at sea in

what appeared to be three meteors hurtling towards the ship in a tight little group from the northwest.

"At first," Schofield reported, "their angular downward motion was very rapid and their color a rather bright, glowing red. But as they approached the ship they suddenly soared upward at an angle of 45 degrees and passed through the clouds. After rising above the clouds their angular motion became less and less until it ceased, when they appeared to be moving directly away from the earth at an elevation of 75 degrees and in a west-northwest direction."

The largest meteor, which Schofield said looked as large as six suns, was egg-shaped and led the formation. The two others were perfectly round, one appearing to be the size of two suns, the other the size of the sun itself. When they shot away from the ship in the direction from which they had



1904. Unger has found that nineteenth- and twentieth-century reports of "saucers" all

fall into three categories; disks, cigar-shaped objects and fast-moving, inexplicable lights.

come, "there was no change in their relative positions."

When the newspapers, beginning in 1948, told of terrifyingly bright green fireballs that hundreds of people in the Southwest had seen flash across the bare hills in straight, silent, horizontal flight, Unger recalled a strikingly similar account that he had come across in an old issue of a magazine called *The Observatory*. The writer, a professional British astronomer, said the most remarkable experience he had ever had took place one clear evening in the autumn of 1882.

"A Disk of Greenish Light"

"A great circular disk of greenish light suddenly appeared low down in the east-northeast, as though it had just risen, and moved across the sky, as smoothly and steadily as the sun, moon, stars, and planets move, but nearly a thousand times as quick-

ly," he wrote. As it moved, in "a steady, uniform progress from east to west," it lengthened out. "When it crossed the meridian and passed just above the moon, its form was that almost of a very elongated ellipse, and various observers spoke of it as 'cigar-shaped,' 'like a torpedo,' or a spindle or shuttle."

Like the distinguished German rocket designer, Dr. Walther Riedel, and Dr. Maurice A. Biot, a top U. S. aerodynamicist, Unger is convinced that flying saucers, "cigars," and unexplainable lights in the sky at night are all evidence of visitations from some other world. The objects may not be manned; they may be radio-controlled, pilotless craft rigged up with some other world's notion of television to record what we are up to. Judging by the similarity of the reports since 1597, they may have been watching us a good, long time. END