CIVILIAN SAUCER INTELLIGENCE OF NEW YORK

Meeting June 3, 1955

113 West 57 Street, New York

The meeting was opened by the Secretary-Treasurer, Marty Meyerson, who asked that members going on vacation let Ted Bloecher, of the Research Section, know if they were willing to check on saucer sightings in their vacation area. He also suggested that he would be glad to have donations toward a subscription to a clipping service for the summer months, as had been done in 1954. Mr. Bloecher spoke briefly for the Research Section, acknowledging the receipt of sighting reports from members, and reminding them of the Check List that is available for use in making reports.

Mr. Bloecher then introduced Warren Siegmond, who had taken pictures on May 15 of a UFO seen from the roof of 7 West 15 Street, Manhattan; two of these pictures had been published in the World-Telegram and Sun of May 23. Miss Jeanine Bouiller, the other witness of the sighting, was also present at the meeting.

Mr. Siegmond said that he had made a complete report of the sighting to Air Intelligence, and that he had received letters about the sighting from several people. One was a professor of chemistry at Brooklyn College, and another was from a professor of physics at Defiance College, Defiance, Ohio, Dr. Charles A. Maney. He added that the wire services had carried the story in South America, and that the pictures had also been picked up by the U.P. in this country. He had shown his pictures to LIFE magazine, which found them "very interesting," and to editors of the New York Journal-American, who told him, "You had a spot of water on your lens." In approximately a minute and a half of viewing time, Mr. Siegmond had taken 10 exposures. Unfortunately, five of the negatives were missing - not returned by the company that developed the film - including several that he believed showed the object closer to him than the pictures he has.

With regard to the sighting proper, it was Miss Bouiller who first saw the object itself, while Mr. Siegmond was taking pictures of her. She saw it first as a very brilliant light in the western sky. She called Mr. Siegmond's attention to it and they both watched it dim somewhat, and take the shape of the bright oval shown in the first of the picture sequence. No estimate of size was possible, but the object certainly was not small. (Mr. Siegmond was an anti-aircraft gunner during the war and was familiar with requirements for observing conventional aircraft.)

The object had no landing gear or portholes. It remained hovering for a number of seconds at an altitude of about 45° in the WNW sky. He estimated its distance as 7000 to 8000 feet away, but added that this was, of course, only a guess.

Then the object moved toward the north in a graceful arch (described as a "pingpong ball bounce") and remained motionless in the northern sky at an elevation of 45°. During this first movement the object lost its brightness

and became darker, showing clearly a distinct disk shape. The pictures seem to show either a hollow center on the under side of the object or possibly a light source within the under side; the observers, however, did not see this detail during the actual sighting.

The object remained stationary in the northern sky for a few more seconds and then arched back to its original position. It repeated the movement once more, turning to its previous position in the northern sky, apparently directly above the Empire State building (which can be seen in one of the photographs). From that position it then seemed to move up and away into the north. At no time during the sighting did the object seem to be lower than 45° elevation; and it was estimated later that the object moved through approximately 35° of azimuth in 3 to 4 seconds.

In discussing the absence of any confirming reports of this object, Mr. Siegmond pointed out that there is no central office to which UFO reports are made; therefore if others saw the object, they might have reported it to the airports, to the Ground Observer Corps, to the weather bureau, to the Planetarium, etc. (Note: A later check was made with several of these agencies, but no further reports were found. It should be remembered, however, that the sighting was of very short duration, that the object was silent, and that very few people in the city appear to look at the sky.)

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Mr. Meyerson then introduced J. Gordon Vaeth of the Special Devices Section of the Office of Naval Research, an aeronautical engineer who has been working for a number of years on problems of rockets, Skyhook balloons, and high-altitude flight. His name is associated with one of the most famous of the early UFO sightings, which is described in his book, 200 Miles Up (pp. 113-16).

In beginning his talk, entitled "Space Flight by Man - How Soon?", Mr. Vaeth emphasized that the opinions to be expressed in his speech were his own, and did not necessarily represent in any way the views of the Office of Naval Research.

Mr. Vaeth pointed out that there are two types of "space flight" - orbital flight, and flight into deep space. In the first type an object circles the earth like a small moon. A rocket (for example) will remain in such an orbit because the centrifugal force created by its almost circular path is trying to throw it out, away from the earth, while at the same time gravity is trying to pull it inward toward the earth. This balance or compromise between the rocket's forward motion and the earth's gravitational pull keeps the rocket in place at the same height above the earth. This is true whether the object is a natural satellite such as the moon, or an artificial satellite. A speed of 18,000 mph is required to keep an object in place at a distance of 200 to 300 miles above the earth.

In deep space flight the object goes up and out from the earth and never comes back. It reaches a point where the gravitational pull of the earth has become too weak to make it fall back again. To reach this point a speed of 7 miles per second is needed, or 25,000 mph, called the "escape velocity."

These are the minimum speeds required. The fastest speed achieved so far was 5100 mph, in 1949; we have not made much progress as to speed during the last few years. The highest altitudes achieved were 114 miles, by a V-2 rocket over White Sands in 1946, and 158 miles by a Viking XI in 1954. These were single-stage rockets. The WAC-Corporal, which went to 250 miles altitude on February 24, 1949, was a two-stage rocket. The third section of a three-stage rocket could achieve the 18,000 mph speed required for orbital space flight.

The answer to the problem seems to be to try to achieve orbital space flight first without man. The first such unmanned satellite would probably be very small, about the size of a basketball. The one that is now being discussed is called the MOUSE, a name composed of the initials of its formal title, Minimum Orbital Unmanned Satellite of the Earth. It would be sent up to about 200 or 300 miles, where it would collect data and radio it down to earth. It would not stay up indefinitely; after three to five weeks it would be slowed down by the air resistance that exists even at that altitude, and would eventually destroy the balance of forces mentioned above that is needed to keep the satellite in its orbit. The MOUSE might be made visible if it were made to trail sodium vapor behind it.

(Editors' Note: On July 29, eight weeks after Dr. Vaeth's talk to CSI, President Eisenhower announced that this country would go ahead with the launching of small unmanned earth-circling satellites as part of the United States participation in the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58. CSI members will be interested to compare the details about the MOUSE presented by Mr. Vaeth with the program announced by President Eisenhower.)

This satellite will be the first stage in the conquest of space. And at the same time that the MOUSE is being developed, manned rocket planes will be going higher and higher. They have already gone to more than 85,000 feet, over 16 miles up. There are numerous problems involved in these high-altitude flights by man. For example, what will be the effect of cosmic rays on the pilots? At sea level these rays go through our bodies at the rate of about five every second. Above 70,000 feet the cosmic-ray "primaries" are encountered - the nuclei of hydrogen and helium, and even of iron - which have energies measured in billions of electron volts. There are two schools of thought as to what will happen to pilots under these powerful rays. The first school says that nothing will happen; the second school says that they may suffer pain, hemorrhage, and death.

Another problem will be the effect of ultra-violet radiation above the protecting blanket of the earth's atmosphere. Even at 16 miles the light of the sun begins to be dazzling.

In any event, these two lines of research will meet. The high-flying planes will merge with the unmanned satellites; the planes will put themselves into orbits.

Finally, after a few unsuccessful attempts, we will have a "space station" - an artificial satellite large enough for man to live on. If we have this in about 50 years we will probably be satisfied.

People sometimes argue that construction of this space station should be hurried because of the military advantage that it would give to the nation that gets it up first, because from the station you could completely observe the earth and launch missiles or bombs toward any point. Personally, I do not consider this a good argument. Suppose that large military installations are actually observed, or the movement of troops? This will not tell you what the things mean, so what good will it do you to know about them? Furthermore anything really important may be hidden by camouflage, by a smoke screen, even by clouds - if it is built above ground at all, which it might not be. In addition, the space station is very vulnerable to destruction. It could be shot down with great ease. And the use of countermeasures by an enemy would be a certainty.

In my opinion the space station will become an accomplished fact not for military reasons but for scientific reasons. When space travel is technically, economically, and politically practical we will have it.

After the space station, the next step in manned space travel will be to land on the moon - say in 100 to 150 years. Training the crew for the first moon trip will be important. There will be new physical and technical problems involved, such as the landing itself - the horizon, on the moon, is only two miles away, for example; and there will also be serious psychological problems in preparing men for getting to the moon and coming back again.

A century or two later we will probably get to Venus and Mars. Of course this whole program could be carried out much sooner if we wanted to. If we devoted all our facilities to the problem, beginning tomorrow, we could probably accomplish an unmanned "shot" to the moon in ten years. Of course one important factor causing the delay is that there is not actually any very good reason to work on the program. Suppose we did get to the moon in ten years - what would we have for our efforts? The satisfaction of having done it; but so far as we know now, that would be about all.

As for the final step - flight to the stars themselves - that will come someday; but just when, we cannot estimate at present.

In the question and answer period that followed his main talk, Mr. Vaeth supplied a great deal of other interesting material, particularly about flying saucers. He said that he himself had had a daytime sighting in July or August of 1954: he saw three globular objects in formation, one of which vanished abruptly, another showed a dark outline when it moved in front of a cumulus cloud, and the third was lost to view while he watched the second. Other people were present, but so far as he knew he was the only person to observe the objects.

He also mentioned several other peculiar sky events that had come to his attention. One of these, in 1950, was reported directly to him by a prominent Navy meteorologist: a vertical "cloud" that assumed a horizontal position in 90 seconds. On another occasion, in 1948, two men were testing a radar set at White Sands (the same type of radar set that was used to send a signal to the moon in January 1946). One man was outside the building when he saw a white ellipsoid similar to the one described in Mr. Vaeth's book (pp. 113-16). He called to the man who was indoors at the radar set, and the latter had the object on the radar scope at the same bearing, slant range 1 million feet.

In response to a question about the sighting at White Sands in the Spring of 1949, when two saucers "chased" an ascending Aerobee rocket, Mr. Vaeth said that he himself had not seen the films taken at that time. He had talked, however, to a reputable astronomer who had examined the films, and they showed nothing.

Questions were asked about the "green fireballs" reported frequently in recent years, particularly but not exclusively in the Southwest. Could the White Sands research on artificial meteorites produce green fireballs, or any other kind? What might be the reasons for the three peculiar features of these fireballs - their horizontal path, their silence, and the absence of fragments from them? Mr. Vaeth mentioned the possibility of the existence of "contra-terrene matter" as a possible explanation of these puzzling facts, and added that Dr. Lincoln LaPaz thinks that the famous Siberian "meteorite" of 1908 may have been a contra-terrene explosion.

He added that he himself had seen this type of fireball twice. The first time was over Maryland, several years ago; the second was in October 1954, over New Mexico, when he saw a bright white object flaring into brilliant green, observed for several seconds in a horizontal path.

Mr. Vaeth was asked how far away a balloon of a given size could be seen under the best viewing conditions. He said that a 60-foot balloon might be seen at a slant range of 35 miles maximum, depending on the illumination. However, the first Skyhook balloon, which was launched in 1949 and was as large as a 20-story building, was actually visible at only 17 miles (90,000 feet), in a dead calm.

In conclusion, Mr. Vaeth raised some interesting speculations about the occupants of the saucers, if such occupants exist. Where do they come from - solar planets or other planets? What do they look like? What has been the effect on their structure and appearance of conditions that may be quite different elsewhere in the universe from conditions in the solar system? For example, cosmic rays have been bombarding the earth during the entire time that man has been on it, and he has been affected by this bombardment; but do cosmic rays strike other planets too - and if so, how have they affected possible life on those planets? What would be the effect of a gravity different from earth's on many generations of the inhabitants of other planets?

Mr. Vaeth said that he had suggested to the Navy that they should attempt to answer these and other questions about the biological effects of environment by arranging to have an egg hatched in the first unmanned satellite, to see what might happen to the bird; or by rearing several generations of fruit flies in the satellite, to observe what might happen to an organism and its descendants that had never experienced gravity.

Upon completion of the question and answer period, Mr. Meyerson expressed to Mr. Vaeth the warm thanks of the club members for his very interesting talk and discussion. The meeting then adjourned.