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CIVILIAN SAUCER INTELLIGENCE OF NEW YORK

Public Meeting, March 30, 1956
Adelphi Hall, 74 Fifth Ave., NYC

"NATURE AND ORIGIN OF UFOs;
A SYNOPSIS OF POSSIBILITIES"

Speaker: Ivan T. Sanderson

The meeting was opened by A.D. Mebane, Secretary-Treasurer, who gave a brief description of the organisation, and expressed regret that because of unexpectedly slow mail delivery, many people had not received the announcement in time to attend the meeting.

He described a recent episode that indicates that the absence of UFO news from the papers may be due as much to editorial policy as to a paucity of sightings. The Long Island Press published on March 18th some photographs, ostensibly of flying saucers, taken by a youth in Ozone Park, Long Island. When Ted Bloecher telephoned the paper to get more details, he found that the editor was totally uninterested in the whole subject. The paper receives three or four calls every week reporting sightings of strange objects, but this editor "just refers them all to Mitchel Field." He himself had seen such an object, but simply "thought it had something to do with Mitchel Field", and thought no more of it. The address of the alleged UFO photographer had not even been taken down, since the whole matter was regarded as a joke.

John Du Barry, writer on aviation and other subjects, then introduced the speaker of the evening, Ivan T. Sanderson. Mr. Du Barry reviewed Dr. Sanderson's brilliant and colorful career as an exploring naturalist, a collector of rare animals, and an author of fascinating books and magazine articles. His early Animal Treasure and Caribbean Treasure will be remembered with affection and admiration by many; his two current books, both encyclopedic and definitive works, are Follow The Whale and Living Mammals Of The World.

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Dr. Sanderson began by saying that ever since he was sixteen years old he has systematically collected "borderline-of-science" material; and during the last war, when he lost virtually all he possessed in the London bombings, all that escaped was six tin trunks containing these files. A collection like this makes it obvious that there is a fringe of unaccepted data around, and between, all the accepted fields of science. Gradually this fringe tends to be accepted and assimilated; but the process can take a very long time, because of the narrow minds of the orthodox specialists, who view with a jaundiced eye all explorations outside their familiar preserves. Consider, for example, the vicissitudes of that extraordinary fish, the coelacanth, which until 1938 was known only as a 60-million-year-old fossil. In that year, a living one was caught in the Mozambique Channel. The curator of the Port Elizabeth museum, Dr. Latimer, wrote a scientific paper about the discovery; but she was unable to get it published. An eminent ichthyologist of the Smithsonian said it was "impossible." Ten years later, another living coelacanth turned up. This time, the same ichthyologist said there was nothing especially remarkable about the finding; it was "expected."

The UFO today is in the same position as the coelacanth in 1938. Charles Fort, who died nearly twenty-five years ago, collected thousands of reports of

unidentified flying objects (his term for them was OSF, "objects seen floating"); and thousands more have accumulated in the past decade. Yet most of the scientists are still content to brush all the evidence aside with that asinine and most unscientific word, "impossible." These men don't realize that they are merely revealing their own mental limitations by such a reaction. In science-fiction--the modern fairy-tale--nothing is impossible, and anything may happen. If scientists had the untrammelled minds of science-fiction writers, they would be better scientists than they are. Most important discoveries look rather preposterous before they are made--and obvious afterwards. Let us stretch our own minds a bit, by considering how many alternative possibilities there are that might be true of UFOs.

Of course, Dr. Sanderson pointed out, a consideration of possibilities shouldn't be confused with a scientific study; for the scientific study of UFOs, it would be essential to have one, and (so far as is publicly known, at least) we haven't any. But consideration of all possibilities is a necessary preliminary, because everyone tends to underestimate the diversity of the world, and to try to squeeze it into too few categories. For example, to most of us "animal" means a mammalian quadruped--but in reality these are enormously outnumbered by such animals as protozoa, sponges, worms, and insects.

UFOs--or some of them--could be a kind of animal too. They might live naturally in the gulfs of intergalactic space--an idea first proposed by Fort many years ago. They might even be visitors from other space-time continua altogether, though it is hard for us to attach a meaning to such a concept. They--or, if they are machines, their occupants--need not be dwellers on cold, stratified bodies like our local planets; they might live on stars. As stars go, our sun is not very hot. (Recall the dazzling light that shone from the windows of the Chiles--hit "spaceship." There may have been beings inside so fiercely incandescent that they would find the sun's surface comfortably cool.) If they do inhabit cold bodies, these still need not be planets--dead stars, and the dark "rogue bodies" that wander through the galaxies, also come into consideration. Closer to home, all the bodies of our solar system must be considered as possible UFO habitats; the frigid giant planets, the miniature planets Pluto and Mercury, the airless asteroids, the tenuous comets, none can be excluded on a priori grounds. Right in our own back yard is the mysterious orb we call the Moon, one side of which has never been seen by man. It may be, and quite likely is, as full of holes as the proverbial green cheese. UFOs might live in those burrows. (There is no reason to limit our thoughts to the surfaces of planets, simply because we happen to live on a surface.)

UFOs might inhabit space near the earth, or even the upper reaches of our own atmosphere. There's no real certainty that the gravitic field falls off regularly with distance, as it's supposed to do: there may be gravitational "inversions", at which things--certain things, at least--would float without falling. This is another idea first suggested by Fort, who recorded many examples of falls of angular blocks of ice, apparently from aerial icefloes; sometimes these bear icicles, which evidently formed on the bottom surface where it was exposed to gravitation, and sometimes one can find little frogs frozen in the ice. In England, these icefalls happen pretty frequently, and the R.A.F. is worried by them: the C.I.D. there immediately confiscates every specimen they can get hold of. Now, if there are frogs and ice in the sky, there may well be other things.

The objection that we'd be able to see any large bodies floating in the sky isn't valid--if a few miles up, they'd be concealed by the blue haze of air. Planes close enough to be clearly audible are frequently invisible. There could be enormous masses of stuff up there and we would never notice it. As for astronomers and their telescopes, the fact is that they do often see unknown bodies passing across the moon and the sun; but since they can't identify them, they don't report them as a rule.

Conceivably, UFOs could even originate on the earth itself. Only one state in the United States (Kentucky) has as yet been adequately mapped; during the war it was discovered that all existing maps of so "familiar" a place as Corsica were in error by 26 miles; and large tracts of interior South America are still today totally unknown. Still, it must be admitted that it seems quite improbable that there could be an unknown civilisation, capable of building spaceships, anywhere on the surface of this planet. If UFOs are machines, the earth's land surface is about the least likely possibility as a place of origin.

However, three-quarters of the earth's surface is covered with water, and the ocean bottoms are as yet virtually terra incognita to us land-dwellers. As Fort pointed out, the oceans would be an excellent hiding-place for UFOs--and to a spacecraft or space-navigating animal, water and the thick gaseous soup we call "air" would not seem very different. In point of fact, UFOs have often been reported by sea captains as rising from, and entering, the ocean. Possibly it is only their refuge; possibly, their home.

Lastly, UFOs might come from inside the earth. The widely-publicised tales of Shaver about diabolical cave-dwellers are pure fiction--Dr. Sanderson, as a former secretary of the American Speleological Society, can affirm positively that cave explorers never find any evidence of such troglodytes. But the UFOs wouldn't necessarily have to make their way through cavern passageways in order to reach the surface; for it's known that, in some cases, matter can pass directly through matter. (See the poltergeist "flows" of water, oil, gasoline, stones, etc., reported by Fort and others.)

As for the entities or intelligences that control UFOs, a wide range of possibilities is open there too. Remembering the bizarre forms in which life is already known to manifest itself, we would do well to be prepared for something extraordinary. It's not impossible that the controlling intelligences could be pure disembodied intellects--which need not necessarily be of an "occult" or "supernatural" kind. Nor need they be of high intelligence; it's said that morons make the best truck-drivers. Poltergeists are perhaps examples of disembodied intellects of low intelligence; they seem to exhibit the "lowest" features of human behaviour. (Before calling a disembodied or "force-field" entity impossible, it's well to reflect that we are substantially force-field entities ourselves; ordinary matter actually contains very little solid substance.)

An alternative possibility is that the controlling entity might be partly embodied in the UFO itself; a member of a group intellect. A. M. Low in England has suggested that life on Mars might consist of intelligent bacterial colonies. One might add that there seems to be no compelling reason why a sponge-like type of "colonial" entity could not develop intelligence, although we have hitherto encountered intellectual development only in "composite" entities (Metazoa, i.e., multi-celled animals.)

Although every shape imaginable has been seen in the sky, axially-symmetrical forms do seem to predominate; cylinders, spindles, prolate ellipsoids (cigars), oblate ellipsoids (lenses), discs, and spheres. As to the functions of all these varied sorts of UFOs, on the spaceship hypothesis it seems reasonable to suppose (as others have done) that the cigars are self-contained vessels, the discs manned auxiliaries, and the spherical "foofighters" robots. If they're animals rather than spaceships, the big cigars would probably be females and the smaller discs and spheres could be the males.

(Dr. Sanderson tabulated numerous other logical possibilities for the nature and source of UFOs and their controlling intelligences; only a selection of these have been cited in this summary.)

Turning now from what is possible to what is actually observed, three characteristics of UFOs are particularly striking. The first is their ability to

neutralise gravity; the second is the abrupt accelerations they can apply (angular turns, instantaneous reversals, sudden appearances and disappearances); and the third is their habit of "pulsing", not only in colour and luminosity, but even in visibility. This mysterious behaviour may be seen in the films taken by Tex Zeigler (see 1955 Sanderson summary) and in those taken in Tremonton, Utah by Delbert Newhouse, and it is reliably reported to perplex the Air Force more than anything else they do.

The overcoming of gravity is made a good deal easier by the existence of an atmosphere on our planet. If the UFOs can reduce their density to that of the air, they will float in it, just as a fish floats in water or a balloon in air. Of course, to do this, they have to be able to decrease their mass or at least their weight.

In the current Science Digest (March, 1956) there is a thoughtful article on interstellar space travel that may cast some light on the mystery of sudden appearances and disappearances by UFOs. Trips between stars, over distances of many light-years, could not be accomplished within one individual's lifetime without resorting either to suspended animation, or to speeds so close to that of light that the relativistic time-compression effect becomes very significant. If the speed of light itself could be attained, trips of any length whatever would appear instantaneous. Now it's interesting to speculate that travel at the speed of light may be identical with the mysterious natural phenomenon known as "teleportation", which causes inexplicable appearances and disappearances. Unaccountable appearances of exotic animals are one of its typical manifestations; Dr. Sanderson cited the case of three lynxes killed near Inverness in Scotland in 1927 (Fort, p. 600) and added that six more turned up in 1947, several being found freshly killed on railway lines. The lynx does not live in Scotland.

If UFOs have a power source that can produce teleportation at will, it would explain much that is mysterious about them. The well-known angular turns would be accomplished by stopping and instantly starting off in the new direction; and instantaneous disappearances would be normal. Undoubtedly this thought has occurred to others; a friend of Sanderson's, in the U.S. government, confided to him that "the power source is what we really want to get our hands on."

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Dr. Sanderson's talk was followed by a discussion period, in which he replied to many questions from the audience.

Asked whether "suspended animation" is really possible, Dr. Sanderson cited the following authentic examples. The tiny water animals called tardigrades, or "water bears", which are related to the spiders, can be completely dehydrated to dry shells that will fall to dust if rubbed; yet these desiccated residues, after years of dry storage in a jar, when placed in water will return to life unharmed. Still more incredible; dried palm seeds collected by Captain Cook in 1778, when moistened for the first time in 1938, released innumerable live threadworms, which had survived for 160 years in a completely desiccated condition. Certain crustacea have eggs that can survive for years without water; this explains the "appearance" of shrimp-like phyllopod after a heavy rain, in Sept., 1955, in a California lake-bed that had been dry for a century. Higher animals can't be preserved by drying, but they can be preserved by freezing; goldfish can be frozen solid in liquid air, so that they are as brittle as glass, yet will revive on warming. In all far-northern countries there is a legend that the old folks of the household used to be frozen in snow at the onset of winter and preserved in a frozen condition until spring, to economise on groceries during the long winter. A condition which approaches suspended animation, but must be distinguished from it, is hibernation (or aestivation), as in the lungfish. There is an Australian frog that is capable of aestivating in dried mud for twenty or thirty years, waiting for rain to fall.

The speaker, as an expert on animals, was asked whether he thinks animals can see things invisible to us. This is known to be true in many cases, he said. European (though not American) great horned owls can see infrared, and find mice at night by the glow of their heat radiation. Moths do something far more extraordinary: the females radiate infrared modulated in characteristic pulse patterns, and the intricate antennae of the males are able to detect these feeble heat signals at a distance of several miles. (It used to be thought that this was done by odour, but then it was found that the supposed "scent" passed through glass.) Many creatures, among them the horseshoe crab, are now known to perceive the polarisation of sky light and to use this as a "compass"--the U.S. military have taken a tip from this, and they are now trying to find out the nature of the "altimeter" used by locusts. We all know of the electric eel, and it has just been discovered that another fish, Gymnarchus niloticus, sends out electrical pulses and senses their reflections--a true underwater radar system. Of course animals' hearing differs from ours too--it's recently been found that rats and mice "talk" a great deal, but at ultrasonic frequencies too high for our coarse ears. We can hear what we call "singing" mice, but it's now realised that these are actually only mouse bassos--we can't hear their tenors and sopranos.

But it does seem too that animals can "see" things that we can't pick up even with instruments. On two occasions one night in Dr. Sanderson's animal house, every animal in the room suddenly fell silent and followed with its eyes something invisible that entered the door, circumnavigated the room--apparently passing right through Sanderson--and left by the door again. Whatever this was, it seriously alarmed the animals, and it was some time before their behaviour was normal again. According to mystics, there is an invisible envelope called the "aura" around each of us, which can be seen by sensitives, and it is said that it can be photographed under proper conditions. Dr. Sanderson once saw a photograph supposed to show the aura of the then Prince of Wales--"a horrible-looking thing."

Asked about his personal experiences with flying saucers, Dr. Sanderson mentioned the green fireballs that were common in the Caribbean, where he was on anti-submarine duty, during World War II. One moonlight night off Nicaragua, he saw a green light that dropped down, "bounced" a few times, and disappeared in a fierce flash. Another of these, about the same time, landed in the middle of the main road at Curaçao, where it was chased back and forth across the road by some five hundred British naval officers and men. It was about the size of a baseball, and was obviously under intelligent control. After a couple of minutes it suddenly went out, leaving no residue. The U.S. Navy finally issued orders that green lights were not to be reported, since whatever they were, they were certainly not enemy devices.

Dr. Sanderson also told of his personal investigation of the "Flatwoods Monster", which landed near Sutton, West Virginia shortly after sunset on Sept. 12, 1952. In the course of this investigation, he interviewed nearly 400 people. The picture that finally emerged was that no less than six meteor-like bodies must have passed over, on parallel paths five miles apart. One reached Texas before exploding; another was seen to explode, throwing down a rain of ashes, by observers in Charleston, W. Va.; a third was seen to crash into a mountainside a few miles from Sutton, and at the spot indicated by witnesses Sanderson found a peculiar white membranaceous substance, unlike anything he had seen before. Only one of these ill-fated "meteors"--which were evidently spacecraft of some sort--came down without accident, at the village of Flatwoods. Some boys there saw a luminous pear-shaped object lower itself vertically to the ground on a nearby ridge. A party of seven hastened to the place--and there they found a "huge" object, pear-shaped with the pointed end upward, which they described as black in colour, yet luminescent--pulsating between dull red and brilliant orange. (It was not, however, hot.) On the ground around it, a low mist was spreading. They approached within fifty feet of this thing, when their attention was caught by a sinister-looking shape apparently "floating" under a nearby tree. It had a red-luminous

round "face" framed in a dark, pointed monk's hood, and two eye-like headlights emitting brilliant bluish beams--similar in appearance, Dr. Sanderson remarked, to some modern diving suits. This terrifying apparition, about ten feet tall and broad in proportion, was evidently the saucer pilot, perhaps looking for his lost companions. The weird being floated momentarily toward the party, which broke and ran in wild panic, then back toward his glowing machine.

As the expedition fled, one of its members, a youth named Gene Lemon, dropped his flashlight; bending down to pick it up, he inhaled some of the mist that lay on the ground. Its odour was suffocating--"like molten metal" (probably in earlier times it would have been described as "fire and brimstone"), and although he was able to reach the village at the bottom of the hill, later he became so ill that it was feared he might die. A dog that had accompanied the party, and had entered the mist, did die. Dr. Sanderson suggested that this poisonous vapour may have been produced by the rapid disintegration of the saucer, to which our atmosphere was evidently highly corrosive. A nearby farmer, whose house on a hilltop gave him a view of the luminous object, said that it rapidly became dimmer, seemed to "melt down", and within half an hour had disappeared altogether. Very probably the same fate overtook the unfortunate occupant of the craft.

When Dr. Sanderson went over the site a few days later, nothing remained but an enormous flattened area, in which he found three equally-spaced holes, "resembling the footprints of a gigantic carthorse."

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