

# U.S. Navy Report On Flying Saucers Stuns Americans

*This Is A  
"Flying  
Saucer"*

## **CLINGING TO SPACE SHIPS MYTH**

From Our Staff Correspondent

**NEW YORK, Feb. 17.—**The American public was stunned this week, when the United States Navy exploded the most fantastic myth of modern times.

The Nuclear Physics Division of the Navy disclosed in a 10-page report that the

**disclosed in a 10-page report that the "flying saucers" which had worried the world for four years were only plastic balloons, used by the Navy in the study of cosmic rays.**

The first public reaction was incredulity. The public had liked its conjecture about interplanetary travel, iridescent bees from Mars, and red-headed dwarfs whose bodies were supposed to have been found in the wreckage of space ships. The space visitors were too interesting to be given up easily.

Then, as the Navy produced proof after proof that the saucers were only part of its "Operation Skyhook," the public got angry. Newspapers and public men attacked the Government and the Navy for having allowed the myth to continue so long.

Navy scientists retorted indignantly that they had given the facts many times, but that their statements had received little attention, had been ignored, or had been disbelieved. The scientists implied that the public had preferred myth to fact.

But the Navy still had little to say about the real purpose of "Operation Skyhook," possibly because it is stranger than the myth, possibly because it is tied with top defence secrets. This purpose is research into the physical forces of the universe, to which atomic energy has given only a clue.

The Navy said nothing about hints given previously that the Russians have been busy in cosmic research for years, and at one stage were thought to be more advanced than the Americans.

A spokesman for the Navy explained last week that it had compiled a list of 2,000 reports about flying saucers, eliminating those which seemed "overwhimsical," and added:

"This left a solid basis of reports from aeroplane pilots, scientific observers, and reliable laymen which could not be brushed aside.

"After investigation, we find there is not a single reliable report of an observation which is not attributable to the cosmic balloons."

But the Navy still had little

# Eyes In The Sky

Naval and other high scientific sources yesterday gave "The Sunday Herald" these facts about the cosmic ray balloons:—

They are made from a plastic material and when fully inflated measure 100 feet across. Some of the later types are bigger.

The balloons are able to rise to great heights. With impending improvements, some will go up to 120,000 feet (about 23 miles above the earth's surface).

They are loaded with instruments and are controlled by a clock, which at a set number of hours deflates them, causing them to descend to earth.

Even if the clock fails, the helium gas used contracts at sunset, and usually has insufficient lifting power to keep the balloons up at night.

## AUTOMATIC SIGNALS

The saucers are "set" to remain up eight hours (although some have stayed up several days).

They are sent up under favourable weather conditions so that they will not fly too far.

Automatic radio apparatus

Automatic radio apparatus in the balloons sends a series of messages to ground stations, reporting the conditions the balloons have found in flight. This information includes alti

tude, humidity, temperature, drift, and position in relation to the sun. When they have done their job, the instruments are discharged from the parent balloon and return to earth by parachute.

The instruments also gather more complex information on cosmic rays.

These rays (scientists explained yesterday) are composed of the nuclei of the atoms of hydrogen, helium, and several other heavier elements.

## USE IN RESEARCH

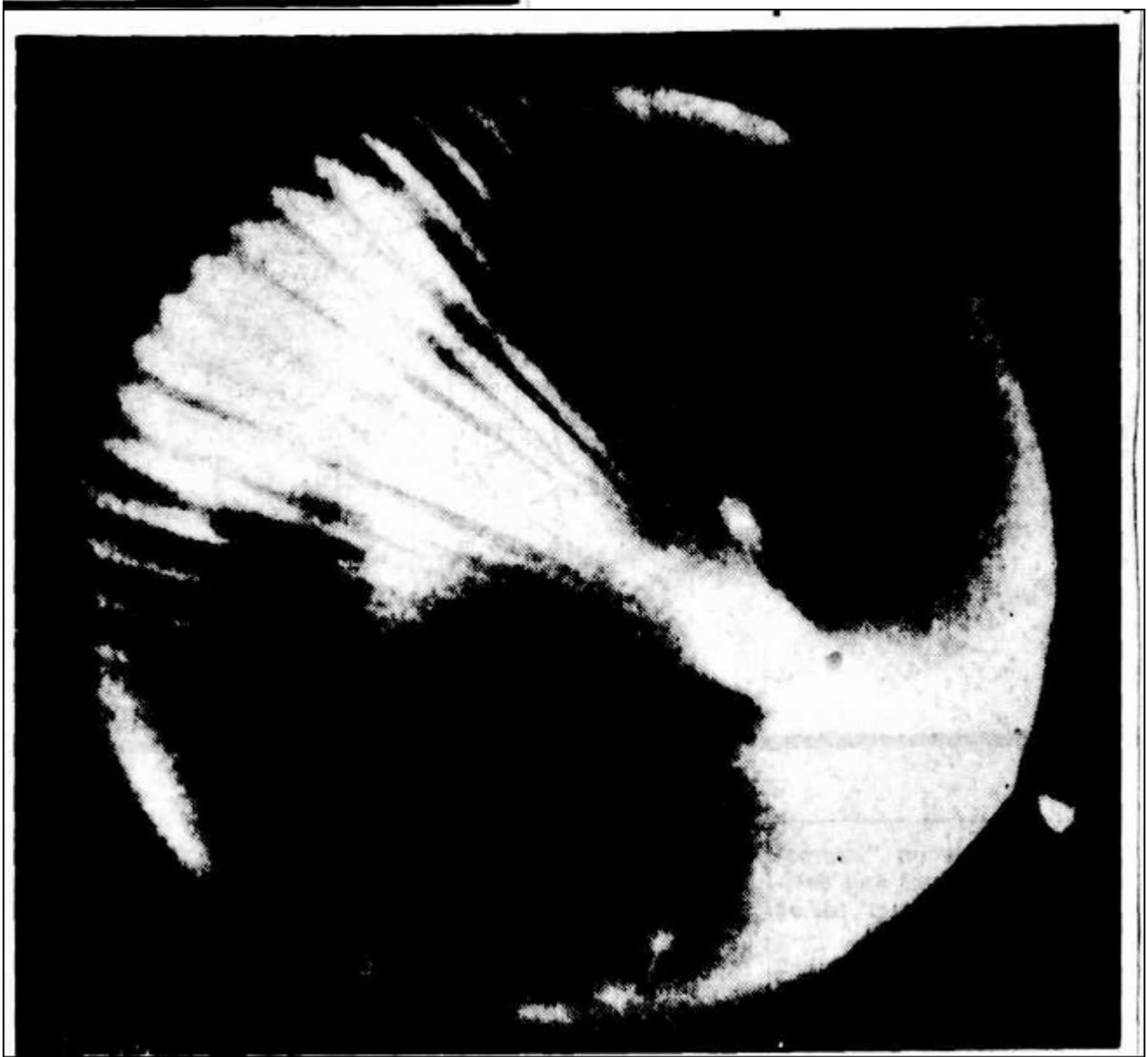
Cosmic rays are constantly bombarding the earth from the stratosphere, possibly from the sun. This is a phenomenon of the disintegration of matter and by studying it scientists hope to gain a better knowledge of how matter is formed and how to release atomic energy as wanted—not in its explosive, destructive form, as in the atomic bomb.

The Navy's original cosmic

The Navy's original cosmic ray researches began in 1945, and one of the practical objects was to determine whether cosmic rays would endanger high altitude aviation. It was found they would not.

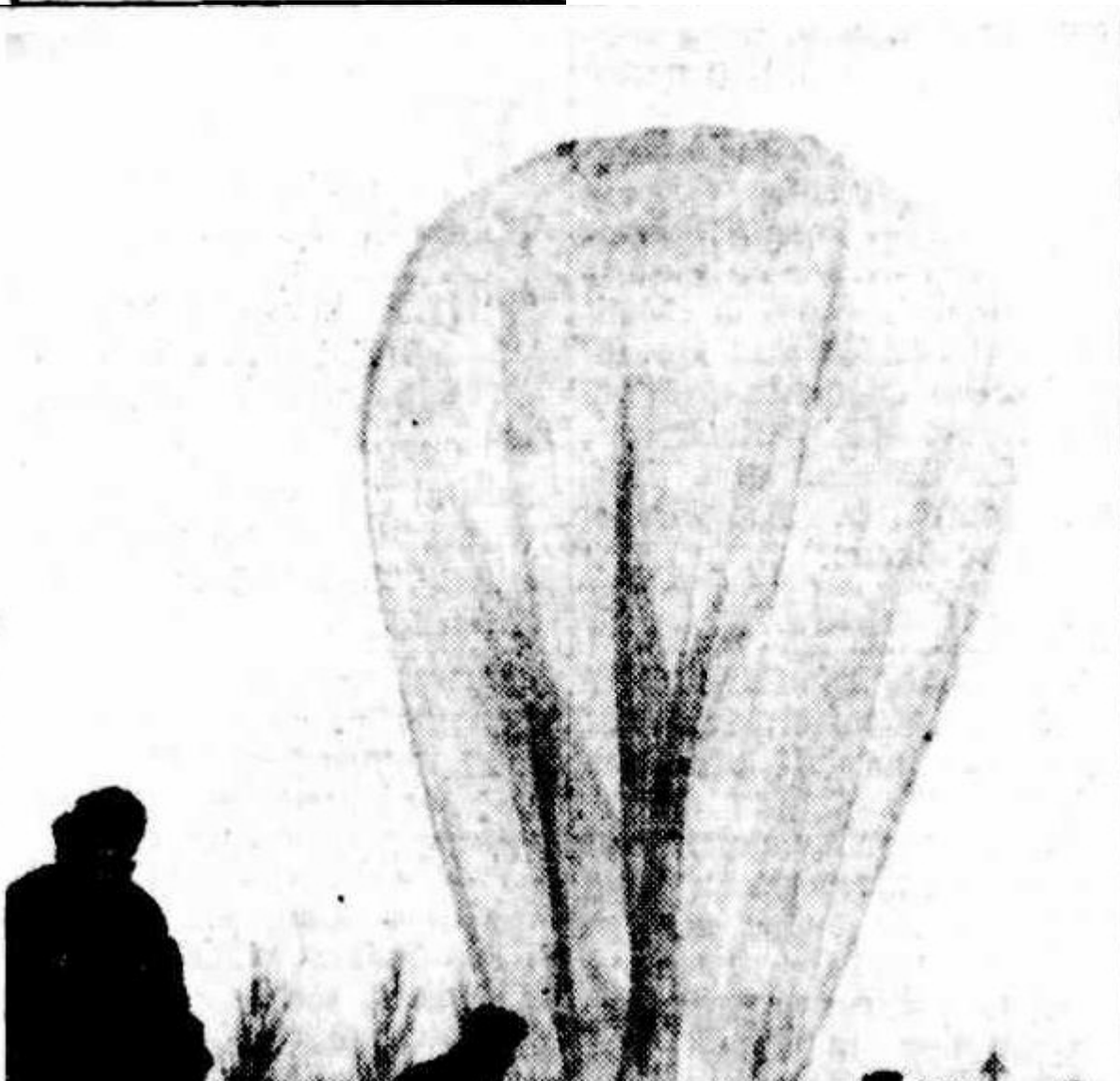
As designed and controlled, the cosmic ray balloons are not believed to be capable of intercontinental flight.

In this they are unlike the



**A**BOVE: This is what thousands of people saw in the United States when they reported "flying saucers." It is a U.S. Navy research balloon, flying at 77,000 feet.

**R**IGHT: Here is the British version of the same device. Physicists of the University of Bristol use this one, which is shown being filled with hydrogen before a 200 mile flight.





Japanese wartime paper balloons which at lower altitudes drifted to the United States Pacific coast and released their loads of explosives designed to start forest fires.

### HOW IT STARTED

Reports of queer-looking objects in the sky have been received all over the world for 175 years, but not one took them seriously until 1947, when the first of the Navy's balloons were released, and when the first flood of "saucer" stories came in.

Dr. Urner Liddell, chief of the Nuclear Physics branch of Naval Research, told "The Sunday Herald" yesterday that shortly after this his office issued a public explanation that these "saucers" were probably

these "saucers" were probably plastic balloons, sent up to make instrumental observations of cosmic rays.

"That statement of ours simply went unheeded," he said. "Nobody seemed to want to believe us."

In following years science writers in some newspapers and journals reiterated the Navy's explanation, but failed to get much attention.

Meantime observations by creditable laymen of more and more flying saucers chiefly in the United States, but also in other parts of the world multiplied enormously.

In one case a Captain Thomas F. Mantell, of the United States Air Force, flew to a height of 30,000 feet in chasing one of the saucers he and a group of his companions

and a group of his companions had seen in Kentucky.

His plane, without oxygen supply, crashed, and Mantell was killed.

### **AIR FORCE WAS TOLD**

"But," said Dr. Liddell, "we had informed the Air Force that we were sending up balloons—as a matter of fact, the Air Force actually was participating in a small degree in these very experiments.

"We cannot understand why, having this information, trained air personnel should have tried to overtake these 'skyhooks.' The balloons can rise far beyond the altitude range of airplanes."

Dr. Serge Korff, of New York University's Physics Department, and one of the world's greatest authorities on cosmic rays, said: "Had anyone chosen to listen to us . . . the truth wasn't sensational enough to hold anyone's interest."

Britain's Astronomer Royal, Sir Harold Jones, issued a scathing statement exposing the fallacies in some of the "space-ship" articles and books. But nobody took much notice of that.

### **SCIENTIST EXPLAINS**

Dr. Robert A. Millikin, America's distinguished 83-year-old physicist, who now lives in retirement in Cali-

lives in retirement in California, had this to say:—

"Everybody with any intelligence knew all along that the flying saucer speculations were hooley.

"I believe that the facts about cosmic ray balloons were available, but the public wanted something sensational and fell for a hoax.

"Cosmic ray balloons are simply large balloons for observing what goes on in the upper atmosphere.

"While this information has not yet led to a satisfactory theory of the origin of cosmic rays, it has demonstrated that some previous theories are untenable.

"The Navy is interested in any fundamental research into properties of the atomic nucleus because of its bearing on atomic knowledge.

"This doesn't mean any present discernible practical application, either military or commercial. Science is that way. The importance of cosmic ray research is that it adds to the knowledge of nuclear process."

## What Writers Had To Say

As time went on the flying saucer, "a natural" for scientific or pseudo-scientific writers, was exploited to the limit in fiction.

By 1950 two books by reputable authors dealing with the saucers and identifying them as interplanetary spaceships were published in England and the United States.

The English book was by Gerald Heard and was entitled "Is Another World Watching Us?"

The American one, by Frank Scully, a well-known journalist, was called "Behind The Flying Saucers."

Those scientists, both in the United States and Britain, who occasionally comment in public on "extra-natural" phenomena had over the years referred to the United States Navy's earlier explanation of flying saucers and insisted that if they were not balloons, then the saucers might be one of a dozen other things in the sky that astronomers can explain but which puzzle the layman.

Authors Scully and Heard, interviewed by "The Sunday Herald," stuck firmly to their

Herald," stuck firmly to their positions, despite Dr. Liddell's documented dismissal of their interplanetary spaceship theories.

Scully at this time is in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was in the nearby desert that the United States Atomic Commission recently carried out tests of what are believed to be atomic artillery weapons.

He believes, he said, that "little men" from other planets may be arriving in the area in

spaceships anytime now to investigate "these loud explosions."

He added: "Why should we believe the Navy this week since they are constantly blowing hot and cold. Liddell's story is innocuous. We checked the observations and eliminated all those attributable to Naval cosmic ray balloons. I believe the Navy is still covering up something they really don't want to tangle with us. I've talked to dozens of Army, Air Force and Naval technicians who have expressed the conviction that the saucers are space ships, but we are not allowed to use their names because of

to use their names because of fear of punishment from their superiors.

"I can, however, quote Commander Robert McLaughlin who was a technician attached to the White Sands guided missile unit.

"In May, 1949, he checked a flying saucer with instruments as it traversed an arc from horizon to horizon in New Mexico.

### **"SPACE SHIPS" TOO**

"He measured its speed at 18,000 m.p.h. and he is convinced it was a space ship. He is a scientist, not a layman."

A spokesman for Gerald Heard, whose home is in Santa Monica, California, first told "The Sunday Herald" he was "in meditation" and could not be disturbed.

Later, however, Heard was contacted through his friend, Aldous Huxley, and made the following statement: "I maintain that the flying saucers observed as recently as January, 1951, must be from another planet or planets.

also used in smaller form in England in 1940. I must say the Navy's report doesn't cut any ice."

Heard said he had dismissed all reports from casual observers, but carefully collated those of competent observers, including transport pilots.

### **"NOT BALLOONS"**

He added: "Not one of the reporters I have quoted in my book saw cosmic ray balloons. We first exhausted the possibility of the use of flying saucers from this planet. They must, therefore, come from another planet or planets. From what planets? That is the riddle of the flying saucers."

And on this, Heard returned to his meditations and to preparation of an hour-long talk he is giving this week-end at the Hollywood Vedanta Society.

**Footnote.**—Heard's American publishers say the Navy's report does not change their plans to issue an American edition of his book, under the title "Is Another World Watching?"

"I have known for some time that balloons were being used to test conditions in the higher atmospheres. They were also used in smaller form in