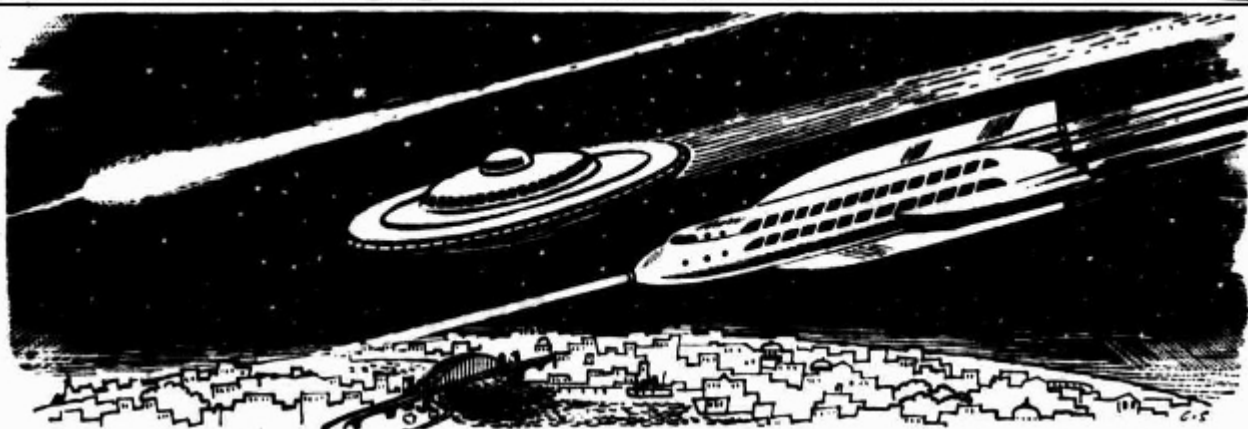


We Like Our Flying Saucers' *Psychologists Say We Won't Give Them Up*

WHICH OF THESE DID THEY SEE?



THE "Flying Saucer" myth (if it is a myth) dies hard. Many people, apparently, still refuse to accept the official explanations for curious objects still often being reported in many parts of the world, including Australia.

Are the psychologists right in suggesting that we like our myth too much to give it up? Or is there any real evidence of something stranger? This article examines the known facts.

— By A Staff Correspondent —

VERY soon after the first reports appeared in the newspapers last week-end that a mysterious object like a rocket had been seen in the sky over Sydney, Mr. William Anderson, of George Street, Enfield, had a visi-

tor.

Mr. Anderson was one of three Post Office workers who saw the strange object, and his name and address had been in the papers. His visitor was dressed in civilian clothes but he told Mr. Anderson he was from the R.A.A.F., and

from the R.A.A.F., and showed him an identity card bearing his photograph.

He explained that he would like to hear everything that Mr. Anderson could tell him about the thing he had seen in the sky.

So Mr. Anderson went over it all again—how he and his colleagues sighted the object at 6.10 a.m. on the morning of Saturday, May 3, while they were in a P.M.G. Dept. truck outside Enfield post-office; how they watched it for a full minute before it disappeared into clouds; how it looked like an airship or a flying submarine three or four times bigger than a Skymaster airliner; how it was all lit up like a ship at sea and how its speed was about 500 miles an hour.

What Did They Make Of It?

The man with the identity card wrote it all down on a form and went away. Now, very likely his report has been carefully studied by somebody, and the question is: What did they make of it?

For five years news of strange objects in the sky has been cropping up in different parts of the world, and people are just as puzzled by them

to-day as they were then. We have come to speak of them—very inaccurately—as flying saucers.

The one seen over Sydney last week-end did not look anything like a saucer. Nearly all the descriptions say it was a long, cigar-shaped thing, flying on a flat trajectory, apparently following a definite course.

Some witnesses got an impression of illuminated windows, like those of an orthodox aircraft. Some said sparks trailed behind it.

But the fact remains that enough reliable people saw the object—people in Victoria as well as in New South Wales—to make it certain that there really was **something** in the sky and that it was not just imagination.

Almost immediately, it was explained by the astronomers. "A meteor," they said. And, strangely, a lot of us felt disappointed that they should be so matter of fact.

You may have shaken your head knowingly and argued: "How can they be so sure it was only a meteor? And even if it were, what about all these other flying saucers that people swear they have seen?"

"I'll bet they weren't all meteors. There's something funny going on that somebody

funny going on that somebody doesn't want us to know about, you mark my words."

And, of course, you may be right. If anyone laughed at you when you said it, you could marshal a whole lot of information to back your opinion.

Flying saucers startled the world first in June, 1947, when Kenneth Arnold, of Boise, Ida-

ho, piloting his own plane near Mount Rainier, Washington, saw "a terrific blue flash," and nine peculiar objects about 23 miles away, travelling, he estimated, at 1,200 miles an hour.

Balloons, Birds, or Hallucinations?

Did anyone laugh at Mr. Arnold? Well, not officially, perhaps. After all, supersonic rockets had fallen on London from a height of 40 miles or so during the war, after being fired from somewhere on the other side of the English Channel or the North Sea.

And, after all, scientific writers had been telling Americans—and us—that interplanetary travel was no longer just a dream and that journeys to the moon might become a fact within our life-

time.

The United States Air Force did not exactly laugh, but it said: "Since the sighting occurred at sunset when light conditions change rapidly and illusory effects are most likely, the objects could have been ordinary aircraft, balloons, birds or pure illusion. Insufficient information."

That, in the American Air Force's unromantic mind, was that. But from that day flying saucers had arrived—so to speak—and they have been with us ever since.

People have reported them in many skies.

They appeared over scattered places in the United States. They were seen over Australia.

They showed up over Eastern mosques and minarets. Thou-

sands of Indians—and some Europeans—saw what they described as a bullet-nosed, cigar-shaped object shoot over New Delhi.

So speculation grew: The objects were an unknown country's secret weapon. They were a new aircraft developed amid great hush-hush by the United States. They were projectiles from another world, piloted by ant-men or bee-men of intelligence far superior to any on earth.

any on earth.

The United States Air Force found itself compelled to take heed of the reports again.

Then, just over a year ago, the Nuclear Physics Division of the United States Navy claimed in a ten-page report that flying saucers were only plastic balloons used by the Navy in the study of cosmic rays.

The first public reaction was incredulity. People did not like to surrender exciting ideas of inter-planetary travel, visions of red-headed dwarfs dead in wrecked space-ships, intriguing thoughts of iridescent bees from Mars. But the Navy produced more information and submitted it as proof.

You might have thought that that would dispose of flying saucer stories for ever. But no. The U.S. Air Force challenged the Navy's claim and said it was still studying reports.

More people sighted flying saucers—over Minnesota, over New Jersey, between Rangoon and Bangkok, over Ontario, over Wisconsin.

And so it went on.

Then came the latest re-

ports last week-end—strange objects in the sky over New South Wales and Victoria: the

South Wales and Victoria: the meteor.

Do you accept the meteor explanation? Before answering that listen to Father O'Connell, head of Riverview Observatory in Sydney: "It is the most natural one but the most commonplace, too, so it is the one people want least to believe.

"A meteor, travelling at between 20 and 40 miles a second, would reach incandescence as it passed through the earth's atmosphere and could easily look like a cigar-shaped object, although in reality it would be quite small.

"The 'lighted window' effect could be explained by interruptions in the meteor's trail."

People Still Like Their Mysteries

Do you incline to the view that some of the people who claim to have witnessed the phenomenon were imagining things? Then listen to Professor F. S. Cotton, Professor of Physiology at Sydney University.

The professor once sent a class of students out to look at the sky, in a flying saucers experiment. He told them to stand perfectly still and gaze at a fixed point.

Within ten minutes, 22 stu-

Within ten minutes, 22 students were reporting silvery saucers moving swiftly across the sky, some singly, some in strings like pearls. "They're nothing but the shadows of red blood corpuscles passing in

front of the retina of the eye," the professor said.

But he explained this idea in more detail yesterday: "When a person sees one object only and someone else sees it—again one only at a time—it cannot possibly be the corpuscle shadows."

You ask: "Why, if it was only a meteor, would anyone from the R.A.A.F. go to the trouble of checking on the reports?" Well, projectile experts in the United States are gathering all the data possible on meteors because they can learn a lot from them on how rockets are likely to behave up in the stratosphere.

And if they are doing that in the United States, our own experts are probably doing it here.

Now, if you still cling to the space-ships-from-Mars theory, listen to the last word—from Mr. R. A. Champion, lecturer in psychology at Sydney University:

"People have a tendency to perpetuate mysteries. It is not

perpetuate mysteries. It is not a matter of living out something you subconsciously want to experience; it is a matter of being intrigued because flying saucers may be something from space that is going to affect your continued existence on earth."

In other words, we all love a mystery. We like to tantalise ourselves with riddles. And when someone gives us an answer before we are tired of guessing, we gently shut our minds to it.

So it seems likely we'll hear more about flying saucers, whatever they are.