

MYSTERY OF THE FLYING SAUCER

Since June 24, 1947, when an airman over the State of Washington saw nine "saucerlike things, flying in a diagonal chainlike line," the flying saucers have provided for the public one of the biggest riddles of history.

Within a month after the Washington phenomenon, flying discs were supposedly seen in 42 States, and ever since then strange objects in the skies have been reported by plane pilots and civilian observers all over North America and elsewhere.

Rounding up the data, in an August Reader's Digest article condensed from Life, H. B. Darrach jr. and Robert Gimna cite "some sobering cases," buried in a heap of hysterical reports. The U.S. Air Force takes the flying saucers seriously, the Digest authors state. U.S. Air Force Intelligence maintains constant investigation and study of unidentified aerial objects, military aircraft are alerted to attempt interception; radar and photographic equipment are used in an effort to obtain factual data. Since 1947 dozens of incidents defying simple explanation have occurred.

Five are cited in the Digest article. "They are not psychological phenomena," the authors say. "They are not products of U.S. research. American science has no source of power that could put a flying machine through such paces as the saucers perform. Neither are they distortions of atmosphere resulting from atomic activity. The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and every other government agency deny responsibility for them."

Strange moving lights and fire-rimmed objects occasion-

ally were seen in the skies decades before 1947, when people started seeing "flying saucers."

James R. Aswell reports in the August Reader's Digest instances of these unexplained phenomena. A naval lieutenant at sea on February 28, 1904, sighted three meteors whose "near approach to the surface and subsequent flight away appear to be most remarkable." The leading meteor was egg-shaped, the smaller two seemed round, and they "appeared to be travelling in echelon."

A "strange celestial visitor" was observed by thousands of Britons on the night of November 17, 1882. Described as "a great circular disk of greenish light," it rose in the eastern sky and travelled from horizon to horizon at an estimated height of 133 miles and a speed of ten miles per second.

In April, 1897, U.S. newspapers gave front-page space to a huge, cigar-shaped "airship" supposed to be cruising over Chicago. Previously it had been reported near Sacramento, then Denver, Colorado, then Omaha, Nebraska. Its light, said the New York Sun, was "as great as that produced by 20 stars."

As long ago as March 22, 1870, a mysterious sky object was sighted from a British barque in mid-Atlantic. The captain's sketch of this space traveller, later published, shows a striking resemblance to the drawings of flying saucers made in recent years.

An original saucer enthusiast, the article says, was Charles H. Fort, who died in 1932, 15 years before the term "saucer" came into use. After a lifetime of study in the realms of aerial lore, Fort concluded that supercreatures from other worlds have been visiting our earth for centuries.