

# BLIPS ON THE SCOPES

*Special to WEEK  
from TIME*

**N**EW YORK.—Air traffic was light at Washington Airport one midnight two weeks ago, and the radar scope of the Civil Aeronautics Authority was almost clear.

At 12.40 a.m., a group of bright blips (points of light) showed. The operator estimated that they were about 15 miles southwest of Washington.

Then the blips disappeared abruptly and reappeared a few seconds later over northeast Washington.

The operator called his boss, Senior Controller Harry Barnes, 39, a graduate of the Buffalo Technical Institute who has worked for the C.A.A. as an electronics expert since 1941.

1941.  
The operator told Barnes: "Here are some flying saucers for you."

## **Radar check**

BARNES laughed at first, but the blips kept popping up all over the scope. The objects (if objects they were) sometimes hovered, sometimes flew slowly and sometimes incredibly fast.

The radar room by this time was a buzz of excitement, operators crowding around the blip-infested scopes. Technicians checked the radar; it was in good working order.

Barnes began to get worried when he saw the blips apparently flying over the White House and other prohibited areas.

He called the airport control tower. Sure enough, its radar showed the strange blips, too. When the tower-men measured the speed of a fast blip, they found that it had flown for eight miles at 2000 m.p.h.

Now the blips on Barnes' scope were moving toward Andrews Air Force Base, about 20 miles to the east.

Barnes called the Andrews tower. Nothing strange showed on its radar, but both tower-men and an enlisted man on the field saw a single, round, strange light drifting in the southern sky.

## **'White light'**

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... was enough for Barnes. He called the Air Defence Command and reported an unidentified object over the Washington area.

Then he told an airline pilot, C. S. Pierman, of Capital Airlines, who was about to take off for Pittsburgh, to watch for mysterious objects. Pierman climbed to 6000ft. and headed north-west.

Barnes and Co. saw a group of strange blips cluster around the blip made by Pierman's plane, and Pierman spotted a white light "like a falling star." It sped away, and its blip disappeared from Barnes' scope.

Over from a Delaware base came a flight of radar-equipped F-94 jet fighters. Before they reached Washington, all the blips vanished.

The jets departed. The blips reappeared playing all over the scope, Barnes said, "like a bunch of kids."

He called all airliners fly-

ing near Washington, asked their pilots to report any strange objects. One pilot saw a white light, moving fast.

**But during all this uproar, other radars near Washington (e.g., Quantico and Fort Meade) saw nothing unusual.**

All the rest of the week, a few strange blips appeared now and then. Then on Saturday night they broke out all over, criss-crossing the capital as they had the week before.

before.

## **Blips vanish**

**T**HIS time, the radar at Andrews was seeing the things, too. One blip hung over Bolling Field, across the Potomac from the airport, but observers at Bolling saw nothing in the sky.

Some airline pilots saw mysterious lights; others saw nothing.

**Down from Delaware roared another flight of night fighters. This time the blips did not vanish.**

They stayed on the ground scopes while the jets screamed among them. But only one pilot saw a light; another saw a doubtful blip on his scope, but it vanished before he could shoot.

What were the mysterious blips? The Air Force, unless it was trying to conceal some mysterious gadget of its own (e.g., a radar counter-measure), was as baffled as everyone else.

## **Strange story**

**A**S might be expected, the phantom invasion touched off a whole new rash of flying-saucer stories.

But if the men from Mars were really overhead, the oddest part of the whole strange story was the fact that among all the conflicting reports, no radar outside of a 10-mile radius in Washington reported seeing anything unusual at any time.