

Extract from
West Australian, Perth
27 JAN 1966

The Flying Saucer Reports

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NOT long ago passengers on a trans-oceanic flight were thrown from their seats late one night when their pilot violently swerved to avoid an extremely bright object.

The pilot, a man with many years' flying experience, thought the object was heading directly for his aircraft.

The United States Air Force later made a positive identification of the object, which turned out to be an extremely bright meteor, technically known as a fireball, or bolide.

There is no doubt about the identification. Several other aircraft in the general area, but hundreds of miles or more apart, reported by radio their sighting of the same fireball. From these reports the air force investigators were able to plot the exact position of the meteor at the moment when the pilot took evasive action. He was more than 30 miles away from it.

Unidentified flying objects exist—but in most cases, as in this example, they are later identified.

Some U.F.O. reports have surprising origins. Last November, the U.S. Air Force received reports of an object from separate pairs of witnesses—one pair playing golf in the late afternoon on a golf course near Chicago, and the other pair

A London Times report by Dr ALLEN HYNEK, an American astronomer who is adviser to the U.S. Air Force on reports of unidentified flying objects.

high above them in a helicopter used to report rush-hour traffic conditions on the highways below via a local radio station.

The golfers looked up into the overcast sky and reported seeing a saucer-shaped object, topped with a dome, with lighted portholes around the perimeter of the oval shape, cruising across the still-daylight sky. Then they saw a jet aircraft in pursuit of the U.F.O., whereupon the object rose and disappeared into the clouds.

At the same moment, it was later learnt, the traffic helicopter pilot broke his regular traffic news broadcast to report: "There's something funny up here," and to say that he was going to go after it.

He gave chase, driving his craft "almost into the ground" as he put it, in the attempt.

At this point the brief public traffic broadcast ended, and air force investigators did not learn till later that the helicopter had actually come close enough to the U.F.O. to identify it, or rather, in this case, to allow it to identify itself.

As the helicopter cut across the path of the object its lights flashed on and off to make a readable pattern—an advertising message. The

U.F.O. was in fact an aircraft carrying a flashing electric sign beneath its fuselage. And the jet the golfers had reported, this was merely the helicopter giving chase. People can be poor reporters!

For each truly but temporarily mysterious case there remains one or more equally mysterious unsolved case. A good example, both of the high calibre represented by some of the witnesses and of the mysteriousness of the occurrence, is what might be called the case of the puzzled anthropologist.

Lights Seen

A graduate student in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, his wife and her mother and young sister were driving along a country road. Suddenly, almost directly ahead of them, they saw coming towards them the lights of what they first imagined might be an airliner about to crash. They seemed to be more or less on a direct line with the oncoming lights.

The young girl, sitting in the back seat of the car, became so frightened that she fell to the floor of the car, covering her face with her hands. But as the lights came closer they slowed down to a hovering position almost alongside the car

and seemed to be centred some 100yds to the left.

The lights appeared to be in formation, as though attached to some mechanical structure, but no tangible craft was visible. The apparition was entirely soundless. There were four red lights placed as though at the vertices of a rectangle, and one white light "in front" of the four red lights.

When moving, the lights proceeded in a swinging, gliding motion. The lights appeared to be widely separated, as two were viewed from above the telephone wires alongside the road, and the rest from below. The lower lights seemed to hover just above the ground.

The object then passed to the rear of the moving car. The driver found a convenient spot to stop the car and turn about, turning off his headlights momentarily. The lights now glided farther away, in the direction from which the car had come. The student and his family started after the receding lights, but even though they exceeded the speed limit they were unable to overtake their U.F.O.

The observers were obviously intelligent people who would far prefer to accept a rational, terrestrial explanation for their experience than to be numbered among flying saucers buffs, but the air force has not been able to furnish an adequate explanation for this case.