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Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

From: James Easton <pulsar@compuserve.com>
Date: Sun, 6 Jun 1999 22:01:40 -0400
Fwd Date: Tue, 08 Jun 1999 00:13:19 -0400
Subject: Re: Voyager Newsletter, Mogul Parchment Parachutes

In the 'Pendleton, Oregon East Oregonian, of 26 June, 1947, it's reported of Kenneth Arnold that, "He said he could estimate the distance of the objects better because an intervening peak once blocked his view of them. He found the peak was 25 miles away, he related".

Perhaps we can still clarify further whether it could have "blocked his view", or, if it's more likely that he simply lost sight of the objects against this intermediate 'peak'.
It's important if his perception that the objects 'vanished' behind a distant peak, was a main reason Arnold believed they were some 25 miles distant.

In 'Resolving Arnold - Part 2: Guess Again', Martin Kottmeyer wrote:

"The absence of a large population of corroborative witnesses near Mount Rainier seems sufficient grounds for wondering if the event was much more localized than Arnold surmised. A critical look at the distance estimate is both warranted and necessary. One must almost certainly accept the objects passed in front of Mount Rainier's snow field as Arnold claimed. The angular velocity of the objects indicated by Arnold's clocking of the objects between Mount Rainier and Mount Adams is .8 degrees per second. At that speed it would take nine seconds to cross the face of Mount Rainier at the 9,200 foot level indicated by Arnold's report. This is too long for a spurious observation related the fleetingness of the phenomenon. This would rule out explanations based on distant sky phenomena like a train of meteors, Campbellian mirages, or density-shifting space animals.

What of distances closer than Mount Rainier's vicinity? It has been pointed out that Arnold spoke of the objects having "swerved in and out of the high mountain peaks." This would seem to put a lower limit to the distance if one could first determine which peaks they swung around and if they were broad enough to have a transit time to regard the observation as secure. Arnold was slightly more specific in later recountings of the event. In The Coming of the Saucers he said they momentarily disappeared "behind a jagged peak that juts out from Mount Rainier proper."

In his memoir for the First International UFO Congress he says, "When they turned length-wise or flat-wise to me they were very thin and they actually disappeared from sight behind a projection on Mount Rainier in the snowfield." These are not exactly the same thing, but they give a fair indication of what

to look for on the geological survey maps.

Arnold estimated the crafts were at an altitude of 9,200 feet plus or minus 1,000. The task at hand is thus to locate some feature extending above the 8,200 foot level. This yields a neat little surprise. There are no such peaks between Mount Rainier and Mount Adams. The closest thing I could find was Pyramid Peak which stands only 6,937 feet tall in front of Mount Rainier's base".

This seems to concur with Bruce Maccabee's assessment:

"These statements about how they flew with respect to the mountain peaks are very important because they provide information on the distance from Mr. Arnold. These mountain peaks lie along a wide north-south line extending southward from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adams. These peaks were about 20 miles east of Arnold at the time. These statements also provide the altitude of the objects. To Arnold they appeared to be approximately at his altitude because they seemed to be "pretty much on the horizon to me." Since he was flying at 9,200 ft, this implies that they were close to that altitude. (Arnold actually stated his letter that they were at 9,500 ft.) However, the mountain peaks south of Rainier generally are 5,000 to 7,000 ft high, with the higher ones being farther away (more to the east) from Arnold. Hence his statement that there were higher peaks on the far side of the pathway indicates that the objects were definitely lower than about 7,000 ft. Furthermore, he stated that they went behind some (or at least one) of the lower, closer peaks. Geological survey maps show that mountain peaks which the objects could have disappeared behind have altitudes of 5,000 to 6,000 ft. Hence it appears that they were lower than 6,000 ft and that Arnold overestimated their altitude".

In the early, detailed radio interview, Arnold states, "I could see them against the snow, of course, on Mt. Rainier and against the snow on Mt. Adams as they were flashing, and against a high ridge that happens to lay in between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams".

If the objects were seen against the snow of Mt. Rainier, Mt. Adams and a high ridge that was between the mountains, what 'peaks' could they have gone behind?

In a related point, the 'Chicago Daily Tribune', of 25 June, quoted Arnold as saying, "I counted nine of them as they disappeared behind the peak of Mount Rainier".

Could the objects have gone behind the mountain, when they were also supposed to be travelling across its slopes, e.g., "low over the slopes of Mt. Rainier" and "not more than 500 feet over the plateau", according to statements attributed to Arnold in the 'Oregon Journal' of 27 June?

Aside from this earliest 'Chicago Daily Tribune' report, did Arnold ever claim the objects "disappeared behind the peak of Mount Rainier"?

Also in that radio interview, Arnold states, "due to the fact that I had Mt. Saint Helens and Mt. Adams to clock them by, I just thought I'd see just how fast they were going".

Did Arnold ever mention again that he used Mt. Saint Helens as a reference point, or was this probably an error and he meant Mt. Rainier?

In his letter to the Air Force, he claimed, "I watched these objects with great interest as I had never before observed airplanes flying so close to the mountain tops, flying directly south to southeast down the hog's back of a mountain range. I would estimate their elevation could have varied a thousand feet one way or the other up or down, but they were pretty much on the horizon to me which would indicate that they were near the same elevation as me. They flew like many times I have observed geese to fly in a rather diagonal chain-like line as if they were linked together. They seemed to hold a definite direction

but rather swerved in and out of the high mountain peaks. I could quite accurately determine their pathway due to the fact that there were several high peaks a little this side of them as well as higher peaks on the other side of their pathway".

This is a much clearer explanation.

There were mountain peaks between Arnold and the nine objects and further, higher, peaks beyond. The objects flew in-between this range of high peaks and ridges.

However, it seems these features weren't nearly so high as Arnold thought and the objects were flying much lower than he perceived, something that Arnold never checked.

In which case, is it agreed Arnold had no idea, not then, not ever, that he was observing from what seems to have been some 4,000, maybe 5,000 feet above the objects?

If it's argued that this *couldn't* have directly affected his subsequent judgement of distances between himself and the objects, plus where they were flying in relation to the peaks, what is the basis of that argument?

The Pendleton newspaper article also states, "The Boise flyer said they flew on the west sides of Rainier and Adams, adding that he believed this would make it more difficult for them to be seen from the ground".

Is this 'west side story' of any relevance in understanding the overall perspective?

James.
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