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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Kenneth Arnold's Saucer-like Descriptions

From: David Rudiak <DRudiak@aol.com>
Date: Fri, 19 Mar 1999 22:00:59 EST
Fwd Date: Sat, 20 Mar 1999 21:48:03 -0500
Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold's Saucer-like Descriptions

>From: Royce J. Myers III <rjm3@sprintmail.com>
>Date: Fri, 19 Mar 1999 13:32:50 -0800
>Fwd Date: Fri, 19 Mar 1999 17:22:42 -0500
>Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold's Saucer-like Descriptions

>Had to mention something here, forgive me if this has already
>been said: Arnold described the flight characteristics of the
>craft he saw as those of a saucer being skipped across water. I
>don't recall Arnold saying that the craft he observed were
>actually disc shaped. Please correct me if I am mistaken on this.

Royce,

Please read my original post that started this thread where I cover these points in great detail by quoting directly from Arnold. Immediately after his sighting, Arnold indisputably described the objects' shape as resembling thin, flat saucers, disks, or pie-pans. As to motion, he spoke repeatedly of how they weaved around in a line like "the tail of a kite," and also how they flipped and flashed in the sunlight (in one quote comparing it to the motion of fish). At all times, Arnold clearly distinguished between the shape and the motion.

In none of these original newspaper stories, or his radio interview, or in his letter to air intelligence soon afterwards is there a mention of saucers being skipped across water. In a book he wrote years later, he also compared the motion to a speedboat skimming the water and claimed he also originally told newsmen that the motion was like if you skipped a saucer across water. But in all the times that Arnold was quoted in 1947, there isn't a single quote to that effect.

Arnold was obviously trying to describe the unusual motion by making use of vivid metaphor: "like the tail of a kite," "like fish flipping," "like a speedboat skimming the water." These metaphors conjure up familiar visual imagery that people can relate to.

But "like a saucer skipping on water?" Does that make sense? Children don't normally skip their mothers' chinaware across water; they skip rocks. It's a strange metaphor to use under the circumstances.

Yet the metaphor still works because we know that the best skipping rocks are those disk-shaped ones -- thin, flat, and rounded. The metaphor wouldn't work unless the shape that Arnold

described also matched those familiar skipping rocks of our childhood.

So maybe Arnold also said something like, "They were shaped like saucers and moved just like you would expect a saucer to if you skipped it across the water." That makes sense regardless of the unusual usage.

Despite what one makes of the metaphor, there is no question that Arnold originally used the terms "saucer" and "disk" to describe the shape, not motion, of the objects he saw.

David Rudiak

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