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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: Kenneth Arnold's Saucer-like Descriptions

From: Peter Brookesmith Mendoza <[DarkSecretPB@compuserve.com](mailto:DarkSecretPB@compuserve.com)>  
Date: Fri, 26 Mar 1999 23:26:34 -0500  
Fwd Date: Sat, 27 Mar 1999 21:08:56 -0500  
Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold's Saucer-like Descriptions

With the compliments of the Duke of Mendoza:

>From: David Rudiak <[DRudiak@aol.com](mailto:DRudiak@aol.com)>  
>Date: Mon, 22 Mar 1999 11:04:30 EST  
>To: [updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)  
>Subject: Re: Kenneth Arnold's Saucer-like Descriptions

I have a sort of vacant fondness, rather like that I feel for moss piglets, for anyone who can turn a few paragraphs' musing into the occasion for a 17K rant sorry reply, and am considering instituting a Max Burns Trophy - a gilded pig's ear set in burnished dinosaur coprolite, with plaque in EPNS - for the best example (shortest comment and longest response) in any calendar year. So far Max is winning by an insult, but would it be right to award a person a prize named after himself? Would this lead to accusations of prejudice on the part of the judges? Suppose Max rejected the award? Would its existence corrupt the notoriously erudite, puritanical and highly-focussed "ufological community" (aka King Lear's devoted family) into trying to compose very short sentences calculated only to provoke reactions comparable in verbal fallout to the results of nuclear fusion?

These are weighty questions and will probably be the occasion of deep thought and little action, itself possibly a sign that Mendoza is catching some kind of ufological disease, and should spend more time studying Aeschylus and steam engine blueprints instead of laughing at the MJ-12 SOM, whose 'hot lead' settings can be reproduced by any clown with a working knowledge of Quark or Pagemaker and enough time and triviality to spare.

No, I don't digress. Replying to such a screed calls occasionally for lengthy quotation. All that was by way of apologizing for the length of this post. But you reap what you sow.

>>I am at loss to reconcile Arnold's various descriptions of what >>he saw, and the two illustrations he endorsed -

>What's so difficult to reconcile? All his initial descriptions >were of a thin, flat, disc-like objects, rounded in front, but >not in back. \_Later\_ he added that the lead object was >differently shaped, being wider and crescent- like, or something >like a flying wing. That's the source of the two different >descriptions. He was describing two different shapes: 8 objects >were of one shape, 1 was of another.

Yes, thankyou. <-----this is an example of IRONY.

A bit later on Rude Yak gets a little flecky round the mandibles with this--

>What's the matter with you Brits anyway? Are you  
>speaking something other than English these days?

--which has a passing interest of its own as a bit of ethnocentric myopia. But. While I admit to an occasional difficulty in speaking English - depends what I'm doing when addressed - I can certainly read it, and what I read in that little rave above about reconciliation demonstrates Rudiak's incapacity to absorb even a simple sentence.

Read this very slowly. I find it difficult to reconcile 1a) Arnold's descriptions and 1b) the pictures he endorsed (it isn't certain, I understand, whether the sketch on the USAF report was by him or by one of the investigating officers) with 2) saucers. In other words 1a + 1b do not add up to 2.

I have no difficulty reconciling 1a and 1b. The sentence I wrote doesn't suggest I did. Anyone, of whatever ethnic origin, who can read English, can surely see that. Apart from Bruce Maccabee, endorser of the Carp fraud and other ufological achievements, who admires Rudiak's patience here, to no avail, but revealing his own impatience with a plain enough sentence. What, I may also ask, are David Rudiak's ethnic credentials, and do they qualify him to understand English? Is such a question irrelevant? Very likely. We are talking "ufologist" here, with whom anything is possible, and most things probable.

Somewhere else in his post Rudiak gestures (waves arm, hand, tentacle, claw, or whatever) at Mendozian word games. Mmm hmm. Well, what (apart from an invitation to merriment) is this?--

>That's why Arnold said like a saucer or like a disk or  
>like a piepan, i.e., thin, flat, and rounded, words he also  
>used. But Arnold also emphasized that they didn't appear to be  
>completely round, but were chopped in the back and seemed to  
>come to something like a point. He also used the term somewhat  
>batshaped to describe the same thing. That's what the trailing  
>edge in my text drawing is trying to depict.

I can't speak for anyone else, least of all ufologists, but when a person says something is like a saucer or like a disk, a certain image arises in my mind, spontaneously and unbidden. And that image is symmetrical and circular. It does not resemble a bat. It bears no relation to a crescent moon. It is not "chopped in the back". It's round. Like an O. Or a bicycle wheel. Or the ridge made by a condom still in its packet or the soundhole in my Spanish guitar.

I will digress a little - word games being in question - into the character of Jesse Marcel Sr - Rudiak's hero, as I recall - and the curious defense made somewhere once by Kevin Randle of Marcel's unsavory collation of lies, fantasies and falsehoods about his military career. Marcel said he flew "as" a bombardier, co-pilot, and gunner in WW2. To any simple one-celled organism that means he sat in the appropriate seat and performed the appropriate actions. Randle maintained Marcel could fly - apparently, on combat missions - "as" any of those things without actually having to do the job. Bit tricky if you run into trouble, or have to drop the odd bomb, and I wouldn't trust a man in the air with a Browning .50MG who couldn't get a decent small-arms score on the range, but I suppose someone might be stupid enough to take the risk. Common sense would tell you Marcel was, um, exaggerating for the sake of effect, however - if he wasn't actually telling whoppers, which in the context seems rather likely. If I told you I have flown as a co-pilot of a Lincoln bomber, you might just believe me until you found out I know about as much about flying planes as I do about surveying for oil deposits. However, I have once sat in the front right-hand cockpit seat of a Lincoln in the air and even tugged at the steering column a bit. I was about 10 years old at the time. Still, I did fly "as" the co-pilot, and I can tell everyone that too if I feel like it, which is about as meaningful in truth as maintaining that something "like" a saucer isn't necessarily the same shape as a saucer, in fact it could even be bat shaped, which is what I would tend to call "like a bat", but perhaps I am just picky, or maybe don't know a pie-pan from a bain marie.

Arnold, we all agree, also said what he saw was FLAT like a pie pan. Which is also a circular object but it is flat. Saucers are not flat. Looking through the wrong end of the cultural telescope, they look like upside-down UFOs, actually, and why the public mind flipped the saucer to create the UFO image is anyone's guess. There is no question but that everyone latched on to the saucer, disk, and pan similes and ignored the chopped-off half of what Arnold saw, and lo and behold strange round flying things have been reported ever since. Sometime in the 1960s flying triangles began to "appear", and have been notably fashionable since the late 1970s, but the classic UFO is round, just as shown in those unimpeachable photographs by Messrs Trent, Meier, Darbyshire, Adamski, Heflin, Walters, &c.

Without direct quotes, Arnold was also reported (note that word, reported) as saying

>Pendleton East Oregonian and Portland Oregon Journal, June 26:  
>"He also described the objects as 'saucer-like' and their motion  
>'like fish flipping in the sun.'"

and, directly

>Norman Oklahoma Transcript, June 26: "They were shaped like  
>saucers and were so thin I could barely see them..."

which last does indeed dispose of my hypothesis of a media-influenced feedback loop into Arnold's perception, and I apologize for wasting everyone's time with that.

Nonetheless. He says says "shaped like saucers", and a saucer is not the same shape as a bat, or a half a saucer, or a semi-circle, or a half-moon, or a share of a pizza sliced by two strict egalitarians. A saucer is round.

Has anyone seen a saucer that isn't round? This enquiring mind would like to know. Just for the record.

But

>Arnold also emphasized that they didn't appear to be  
>completely round

and

>>"Flat like a pie-pan" is not the same as "saucer-shaped".

>Good grief! So Brookesmith is playing word games. How about  
>where Arnold said in Chicago Tribune, June 25: "They were  
>silvery and shiny and seemed to be shaped like a pie plate."

>"\_Shaped\_ like a pie plate." Get it?

Yes. A pie pan is round, archetypally. No doubt some are not. But say "pie pan" and a round shape conjures itself in the mind, if you have one. Arnold knew that, too, or else this

>Or how about his radio interview of June 25? "They looked  
>something like a pie plate that was cut in half with a sort of a  
>convex triangle in the rear."

makes no sense at all, or conjures some altogether strange shape not amenable to analogy - such as that of a bat, perhaps, or a cat sitting in a marmite, or the hatchet on my coat of arms - who knows?

Rudiak plays word games:

>Arnold very clearly was describing the shape as  
>saucer-like, or disk-like, or pie-pan-like: thin, flat, and  
>rounded, except from the rear end which wasn't rounded.

And I look like a human being, except for the long red tail, the horns on my head, the scales on the backs of my hands, and the fact that my feet are cloven hoofs. David Rudiak can see that as plain as flickering torchlight, but he insists I'm human really, and so do most other people, except those who've seen me asleep (when I look like a bat hanging on a wall), but they kind-of overlook that because of my impeccable table manners and extraordinary effect on the sommelier.

Fact is, either I am a goddam demon, or I am a human, and likewise Arnold either saw a set of saucer-like objects (round objects) or something else (half-moon, bat shape, &c). There is no in between in either case. Nor any two ways. But Rudiak insists there are two ways; have cake: eat it. Yum.

To some extent Arnold was playing word games too, although unconsciously, because he was struggling to describe something that was entirely unfamiliar to him. In the process he threw out a lot of potentially confusing images, as anyone might, and possibly confused his auditors too. But you don't have to be Frank Raymond Leavis to work out that what he saw wasn't actually round, though he likened them to a whole bunch of other round things in striving to draw some kind of simple analogy.

>>Either way, I'll be glad to see the record set straight. Either >>way, too, it does seem >as if the saucer image came from the >>media,

>How long are you going to play that silly skepti-bunker game >Peter? First you say you'll be glad to set the record straight. >Setting the record straight would mean that you acknowledge >Arnold described the shape as saucer-like or disc-like right >from the beginning and the media was merely quoting him.

>Then you contradict yourself by saying the "saucer image came >from the media," meaning you think the media invented the >description. Therefore you have no intention of "setting the >record straight."

I'm duly grateful, as already said, for your quotes from newspapers both from Arnold and in showing that the term "flying saucer" emerged somewhere around the 4 July holiday in 1947. There's no contradiction in what I said, or what I'm saying now. It's true I had no intention of setting the record straight, having no records to adjust. But I welcome the information you've provided. Your interpretation otherwise looks like - oh, dear - a species of literary criticism, and of rather an inferior kind. This is supposedly the exclusive sin of psychosocialists. Are you a librarian or an English major, by any chance?

Arnold saw what he saw, whatever they were. He reported them. The press reported his words, or versions of them. It is as plain as a pie pan in a skivvy's fist or a black bat against the sunset that the "saucer image came from the media," insofar as what other people then reported were like pie pans and saucers, but whole ones, not ones "chopped at the back" or like bats and even not like bats. In very plain English, the quirky details of Arnold's sighting weren't reflected in what was later reported, photographs from Arizona notwithstanding. So: either Arnold did not see what we might loosely call "flying saucers", or the sorcery of the public mind picked up and digested the sauceriness of Arnold's accounts, and regurgitated it in reports of odd objects in the sky.

That is the media influence. It isn't the only influence. As FR Leavis did say, a text exists in a "Third Realm" between the writer and the reader. The public supplied something of its own, it seems to me, if only by selective reading, aka unconscious editing. Thus the flying saucer was born. Make of that what you will, but that was the point I was originally making. Rudiak's book of quotations passes muster as satisfactory evidence of that wicked psychosocial hypothesis.

In passing:

I have no idea what the Trent photos were of, but Rudiak is welcome to the estate's glebe farm, the horses, the truck, and the entire contents of the wine cellars except the d'Yquem if he can show the world the Trents snapped ET craft.

Perhaps characteristically, he missed the smiley after the comment about geese. I don't think Arnold saw geese. I think it's quite possible he saw pelicans, but that's another story and we've been through it before on this List. Too bad I can't resist the temptation to push another chap's buttons, I guess.

And I'd be delighted to add Jean van G's 3D rendition of the sketch in the USAF report to my archive of funny pictures. Fire it down the line whenever you like.

best wishes  
Purplehaze D. Mushroom  
Platform Heel

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