

SPECIAL REPORT

on

CONFERENCES WITH ASTRONOMERS
ON UNIDENTIFIED AERIAL OBJECTS

to

AIR TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE

by

J. Allen Hynek

August 6, 1952

This special report was prepared to describe the results of a series of conferences with astronomers during and following a meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Victoria, B. C., in June, 1952. It recounts personal opinions of a large number of professionally trained astronomical observers regarding unidentified aerial objects. In addition, it reports sightings by five professional astronomers that were not explainable by them. Representing the opinions of highly trained scientists, these comments should prove particularly helpful in assessing the present status of our knowledge of unknown objects in the skies.

PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWS

The desirability has been established of inquiring of professionally trained astronomers of considerable scientific background as to whether they

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-2-

had ever made sightings of unidentified aerial objects. At the same time, it is felt that it would be profitable to obtain the informal opinions and advice of high-ranking astronomers on the entire subject of unidentified aerial objects, of the manner in which the investigation of these objects was being conducted by the Air Force, and of their own inner feelings about the possibility that such objects were real and might constitute either a threat to national security or a new natural phenomena worthy of scientific investigation.

Accordingly it was planned that a tour would be made of several of the nation's observatories, not in the guise of an official investigator, but rather as an astronomer traveling about to discuss scientific problems. It was felt that this mild deception was necessary, that an artificial barrier to communication might not be set up which would invalidate the assumption that truly representative opinions were being obtained. Therefore, to maintain good faith, the names of the astronomers interviewed are withheld from this report.

In all, 45 astronomers were interviewed, nearly always individually except in a few cases where this was impossible. Eight observatories were visited and the National Meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Victoria, British Columbia, was attended on June 25 to June 28.

Because of the confidential and highly personal manner in which the interviews quoted below were made, and to keep faith with the many astronomers interviewed, who, generally, were not aware that anything more than a personal private talk between astronomers was going on, the names of the astronomers will be withheld. They will be assigned letters, but the code will not be included in this report.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-3-

Table 1 gives an informal evaluation of each astronomer as an observer, and, for some, their rating as a professional astronomer. These ratings are based on my own personal opinion; they do not represent any fixed levels of achievement in the general field of astronomy.

TABLE 1. INFORMAL EVALUATION OF ASTRONOMERS
PROVIDING DATA FOR THIS REPORT

Astronomer	Rating as an observer	Rating as a professional astronomer	Astronomer	Rating as an observer	Rating as a professional astronomer
A	3	-	V	3	2
B	1	-	W	3	-
C	3	-	X	3	1
D	2	-	Y	1	-
E	3	-	Z	-	-
F	3	-	AA	-	-
G	1	-	BB	-	-
H	2	-	CC	-	-
I	1	-	DD	1	1
J	1	-	EE	1	-
K	-	-	FF	-	-
L	1	-	GG	1	1
M	1	-	HH	2	1
N	3	1	II	2	2
O	2	3	JJ	-	-
P	3	3	KK	1	-
Q	1	1	LL	-	-
R	1	-	MM	2	-
S	2	-	NN	-	-
T	-	-	OO	-	-
U	1	-	PP	-	-

Key to ratings: 1 Excellent
2 Above average
3 Average

UNCLASSIFIED

-4-

INTERVIEWS WITH ASTRONOMERS

There follows a simple narrative of the interviews, after which the opinions and advice of the astronomers will be summarized.

Astronomer A has never made any sightings and knows of none in his immediate acquaintance who have.

Astronomer B has made sightings of things which people would call "flying saucers" but hasn't seen anything that he couldn't explain. He has seen birds at night flying in formation illuminated by city lights, but probably not bright enough to have been photographed because they were traveling "pretty fast". Astronomer B wonders if some of the sightings are not due to Navy secret weapons, since only the Navy has officially said nothing about flying saucers. Astronomer B was quite outspoken and feels that past methods of handling the subject have been "stupid". He feels pilots should not be hushed up, and that secrecy only whets the public appetite.

Astronomer C has made no sightings, and is quite reluctant to discuss the subject. It is evident that he regards it as a fairly silly proceeding and subject. Difficult to bring the conversation around to the subject.

Astronomer D has made no such sightings and does not know any associate who has. He is fairly sympathetic in the matter and appears open minded on the subject.

Astronomer E has made no sightings, but heard the great Seattle meteorite of May 11 at 1:30 a.m. Apparently, he is not much interested in the subject.

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-5-

Astronomer F, from England, has made no sightings, but tells of the reports of unidentified objects in England.

Astronomer G has made no sightings, nor have his associates. Reasonably interested in talking about the subject, he clearly does not consider it a topic of any real importance as compared with the problems he is interested in at the moment.

Astronomer H has been associated with systematic meteor observation, but not for any great length of time. He has made no sightings nor have his associates. His meteor cameras have not picked up any objects.

Astronomer I has made no sightings and it was rather difficult to get him to talk about the subject at all. Clearly he does not regard it as a problem of importance.

Astronomer J, who has had long experience at a meteor observatory, has made no sightings but clearly is very interested in the problem. He has promised cooperation should any items come to his attention. He is very much interested in seeing this problem cleared up. His professional rating is excellent.

Astronomer L has made no sightings nor, as far as he knows, have any of his associates.

Astronomer M has made no sightings. Politely interested, but he clearly does not regard it as a major problem.

Astronomer N, with an excellent professional rating, has made no sightings nor does he know of any associates who have. He said that astronomer Whipple thinks the green fireballs observed in New Mexico are small asteroids,

RESTRICTED

SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-6-

whereas the ordinary meteors are cometary fragments. There is a further discussion of this point later with reference to La Paz.

Astronomer O, whose professional rating is only moderate, has seen none.

Astronomer P, whose professional rating also is only moderate, has seen none and does not consider the problem very important. (See footnote.)

Astronomer Q, with an excellent professional rating, has seen no unidentified objects but says that reports come in occasionally from the Fraser River valley northeast of Vancouver. Apparently these sightings have been concerned with lights similar to the Lubbock lights.

Astronomer R has personally sighted an unidentified object, a light which loomed across his range of vision, which was obstructed by an observatory dome, much faster than a plane and much slower than a meteor. If it had been a plane, then its rapid motion could be accounted for only by closeness, but since no motors were heard, this explanation was essentially ruled out. Light was steadier than that of a meteor and was observed for about three seconds. Astronomer R does not ascribe any particular significance to this sighting, except as it constitutes one of the many incomplete and unexplained sightings. Astronomer R was not reluctant to talk about the subject of flying saucers and pointed out that we must not fall into the error of believing that we understand all physical phenomena. As late as the year 1800, it was thought im-

Footnote: The professional ratings given here show that "sightings" and interest in the problem do not run inversely proportional to the professional rating of the astronomer.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-7-

possible that meteorites, "stones from heaven", could fall from the sky. There is no reason to believe that a century and a half later all the physical phenomena that exist have been discovered. Astronomer R is, however, violently opposed to the sensational approach to this problem. He points out that many scientists, or at least some scientists, have approached these sightings for the sake of personal glory and publicity but not for the benefit of the country. He is also opposed to magazines such as Life setting themselves up as scientific arbiters and passing scientific judgment on sightings when not qualified to do so. In short, Astronomer R believes this subject is serious enough to be considered as a scientific problem, and that it should be taken entirely out of the sensational realm. He believes, for instance, that a group of serious scientists should aim to help investigators by starting with a thoroughgoing investigation of the "Lubbock lights". This investigation would comprise not only a rehash of previous sightings, but an intelligent cooperative effort to examine the world of physical phenomena and to see which of those, and which scientific or physical principles, might conceivably have led to these observations. He feels that the Lubbock incident is a particularly propitious one to start with, since the observations were made by reliable observers in a scientific atmosphere, and that, therefore, these qualified observers could discuss with other scientists their sightings in a dispassionate manner. Astronomer R turned over the record of his sighting made at the instant of the sighting, for whatever use it may be. He is interested in the problem and eminently cooperative.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-8-

Astronomer S has seen none and is not particularly interested in the problem.

Astronomer T has personally seen nothing, but recounted the incident at Selfridge Field which occurred early in June, 1952, in which a group of fliers from Selfridge Field was sent out to attack a target over Lake Erie. As they were approaching the target, the shore observers radioed "Why don't you shoot? You are already in the target." This apparently is another example of the fairly frequent radar "sightings".

Astronomer U, Hugh Pruett, who does not mind having his name used, is Northwest Regional Director of the American Meteor Society. Although getting on in years, he has had a great deal of experience with meteor observation. He evinced considerable interest and cooperation in the problem, and I took the liberty of asking him to cooperate with this endeavor in tracking down meteor sightings which might be associated with reports on flying saucers. He is well acquainted with all the officers and members of the American Meteor Society, and he could provide considerable help in assembling a panel of consulting astronomers. Pruett plotted the flight of the great Seattle meteor from hundreds of reports. He is an avid "tracker-downer" of such things, and he can be of considerable assistance in these matters. He himself has not made any unexplained sightings. I checked my knowledge of meteors with him and corroborated the points that there are many meteors that are green, that some drop vertically, that some wobble, some have noise associated with them, and some have been seen as long as 25 seconds. There is one record in the literature of a meteor that lasted 50 seconds, but this seems hardly possible.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-9-

Pruett, although he observed no objects, did hear a very loud noise above the clouds early one morning which he does not believe was aircraft. He asked the local radio station to help; his phone was kept busy for four hours. There is no question that the noise existed, but no one saw anything.

Astronomer V has made no sightings. He was so interested in speaking of his own troubles that it was impossible to bring the conversation around to scientific problems. His professional rating is only intermediate.

Astronomer W was difficult to interest in the subject and did not admit to having seen anything.

Astronomer X, with a high professional rating, has made no sightings and exhibits an extremely negative attitude toward the whole problem. He feels that all sightings except the green fireballs are merely misrepresentations of familiar objects, and he has no patience with the subject. He believes that La Paz should have enough data to get the heights of the green fireballs, and therefore settle the question. La Paz, when questioned later, said he did have sufficient observations and the objects were eight to ten miles high. Astronomer R, who happened to be present when Astronomer X was "sounding off", again reiterated that it would be a good idea for some astronomer to take a responsible attitude toward this problem, and that we will get no place by merely pooh-poohing it.

Astronomer Y has made no sightings but has stated, "If I saw one, I wouldn't say anything about it". This statement led the conversation into the question of what conditions would have to be met before he would report it. The answer from him was the same as from several other astronomers, that if

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-10-

they were promised complete anonymity and if they could report their sightings to a group of serious, respected scientists who would regard the problem as a scientific one, then they would be willing to cooperate to the very fullest extent. Astronomer Y suggested that an article be written in some astronomical journal informing the astronomical world that a reliable clearing house for such information exists. (See footnote.) Astronomer Y, and others, were of the strong opinion that the astronomical world should be informed through reliable channels as to what the Air Force is doing in tracking down these stories, and what is being done to put the investigation of such incidents on a scientific basis.

Astronomer Z, from Germany, has sighted none himself but tells that flying saucer reports also exist in Germany, but he believes that many may have been introduced by the Occupation Forces. He reports that rumors are frequent that the flying saucers might be from Mars, but that these reports are taken by the intelligent simply as American propaganda to cover up the existence of secret weapons. Or, they say, if not the Americans, then the Soviets.

Astronomer AA, from England, has made no sightings himself. He tells that such sightings are talked about in England, however. The only specific case he knows anything about is that of the falling ice which killed the sheep. These very handy "flying saucers" served a very good purpose in getting around meat rationing because when a sheep was killed, obviously for table use, the blame was put to falling ice. The stories ended when a chemical examination of the only authentic case of such a fall showed the ice to have uric acid in it. This led to a change in the sanitation routines aboard the BOAC planes!

Footnote: The writer does not agree with this as it would almost immediately fall into the hands of the press and the ensuing publicity would be a strong deterrent to the receipt of reports.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-11-

Astronomer BB has made no sighting personally, but informed the writer that he would talk to a reputable committee of scientists if he did see anything.

Astronomer CC has made no sightings himself although he has been in a very good position to do so. He was reluctant to discuss the matter to any extent.

Astronomer DD, with a top professional rating, has seen nothing personally, nor does he know of any of his associates who have. Interested in the problem, he feels that a scientific panel could provide the answer.

Astronomer EE has never seen any unexplainable objects. He has seen a phenomenon which most people would have said was a "flying saucer". This turned out to be a beacon light describing a cone of light, part of which intercepted a high cirrus cloud. This led to a series of elliptical lights moving in one direction and never coming back.

Astronomer FF has seen none himself, but recently received a report from a ranger who said he was an amateur astronomer; he reported a bright light but said that it was not a meteor. Astronomer FF said his recitation of the incident was very dramatic. Astronomer FF suggested sending up a control "flying saucer" to see how many reports come back. Apparently he had in mind an extremely bright rocket or perhaps a spectacular balloon. (See footnote.)

Footnote: Again, I do not think much of this astronomer's suggestion. It would serve to tell us how many people will report an unusual incident, which number can be compared with the number of people who report a typical sighting; if the numbers agree then this would be some proof that an actual object had been sighted in the latter cases. The confusion that would be created by this maneuver is hardly worth the while. Recently, the balloon sighting over Columbus gives us, in effect, the same results that Astronomer FF suggested. Certainly in this case hundreds, if not thousands or more people saw the balloons which, incidentally, were not spectacularly (Footnote continued on page 12.)

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-12-

Astronomer GG, with an excellent professional standing, and cooperative and highly respected, has made no sightings personally. He concurs with others that a committee of scientists to approach the problem of flying saucers would be a good idea. Astronomer GG had the suggestion that St. Elmo's fire should be induced artificially to see if this is one of the causes of the numerous sightings of lights by pilots.

Astronomer HH, whose professional rating is excellent, has made no sightings personally. He agreed that the conditions under which he would talk would be complete anonymity in reporting to a committee or even to one reputable astronomer in whom he had full confidence.

Astronomer II, with an adequate professional rating, has made two sightings personally. The sightings were two years apart. The first sighting, which was witnessed also by an astronomer not interviewed on this trip, occurred in this manner: A transport plane travelling west made quite a bit of noise and Astronomer II looked up to watch it. He then noticed, above the transport and going north, a cluster of five ball-bearing-like objects. They moved rapidly and were not in sight very long. Two years after this sighting, he sighted a single such object which disappeared from sight by accelerating, probably by turning but not by going up quickly. Astronomer II is willing to cooperate but does not wish to have notoriety. Nevertheless, he would furnish further details, and Observers Questionnaires should be sent to him.

Footnote Continued: bright and could easily have escaped detection. It is interesting to note that the public at large is becoming more aware of things which might pass for flying saucers and are becoming less gullible and trigger happy. The quality of reports should be going up, and it seems that greater degree of credence can be given to sightings reported by a group of people in each case. It is becoming less likely that any large group of people will be fooled by ordinary or even unusual aircraft, balloons, or meteors. This was not the case before the turn of the half century.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-13-

Astronomer JJ has made no sightings himself, but agrees on the policy of reporting to a duly constituted panel if he should see any.

Astronomer KK has made no sightings and was not particularly interested in the problem.

Astronomer LL, Dr. La Paz, has already had so much publicity in Life magazine that there appears to be no reason for keeping his name secret. He is the Director of the Institute of Meteoritics at the University of New Mexico, and is cooperative in the extreme. One sighting of his has been described in Life magazine and also fully in OSI reports. He has made extensive reports about the green fireball sightings in New Mexico in OSI reports also.

The discussion of green fireballs with many astronomers disclosed that most of them were of the opinion that these were natural objects. However, close questioning revealed that they know nothing of the actual sightings, of their frequency or anything much about them, and therefore cannot be taken seriously. This is characteristic of scientists in general when speaking about subjects which are not in their own immediate field of concern. Dr. La Paz has seen only one green fireball himself, but has been avid in collecting reports on the others. Because his full reports are in the OSI files, only the salient points will be discussed here. It appears that the green fireballs can be characterized by being extremely bright, most of them lighting up the sky in the daytime, estimated magnitude -12, which is extremely bright. They appear to come in bunches and at one time 10 were observed in 13 days. No noise is associated with them despite their brightness. The

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-14-

light appears to be homogeneous, and their light curve resembles a square wave, that is, it comes on abruptly, remains constant while burning, and goes out exceedingly abruptly, as though it is snapped out by a push-button. They leave no trails or trains. As to their color, La Paz is aware of the fact that other meteors have a green color, but he insists that this is a different green, corresponding to the green line in the copper spectrum (5218 Angstrom units). These objects generally move in a preferential north-south, south-north direction.

If these data are correct, that is, if this many objects actually were seen, all extremely bright, all having this particular green color, all exhibiting no noise, all showing a preferential direction, all being homogeneous in light intensity, all snapping out very quickly, and all leaving no trails, then we can say with assurance that these were not astronomical objects. In the first place, any object as bright as this should have been reported from all over the world. This does not mean that any one object could have been seen all over the world, but if the earth in its orbit encountered, for some strange reason, a group of very large meteors, there is no reason that they should all show up in New Mexico. Besides, copper is not a plentiful element in meteors, and the typical fireball goes from dim to bright to very bright to bright and then fades out fairly fast, often breaking into many parts. They frequently leave a trail of smoke in the daytime and of luminescence at night. It is recommended that the OSI reports be obtained, and that the sightings of these fireballs be examined in detail.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-15-

If the data as reported by La Paz are correct, then we do have a strange phenomena here indeed.

Astronomer MM has not seen any. He happened to be with me, however, while I interviewed some laymen who had seen some aluminum-colored discs. He was most impressed by the consistency of their stories.

Astronomer NN is Clyde Tombaugh, who has already been identified in the Life article. He has made two sightings, the first of which is the one reported in Life magazine and the second was reported to me. The details can be obtained by sending him a questionnaire, as he is willing to cooperate. Briefly, while at Telescope No. 3 at White Sands, he observed an object of -6 magnitude (four times brighter than the planet Venus at its brightest) travelling from the zenith to the southern horizon in about three seconds. The object executed the same maneuvers as the nighttime luminous object which was reported in Life magazine. No sound was associated with either of the sightings.

Mr. Tombaugh is in charge of optics design and rocket tracking at White Sands Proving Ground. He said that if he is requested officially, which can be done by a letter to the Commanding General, Flight Determination Laboratory, White Sands Proving Ground, Las Cruces, New Mexico, he will be able to put his telescopes at White Sands at the disposal of the Air Force. He can have observers alerted and ready to take photographs should some object appear. I strongly recommend that this letter be sent.

Astronomer OO is a meteor observer at the Harvard Meteor Station in New Mexico. Although relatively new on the job, he observed two lights while on watch at 1:30 a.m. that moved much too fast for a plane and much too slow

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-16-

for a meteor. The two lights were white and moved in a parallel direction. It is recommended that an Observer's Questionnaire be sent to this observer, as his sighting bears a resemblance to the sighting made by Astronomer R. It was impossible to obtain full details of these sightings because this would have classed me as an official investigator. The details of these sightings should be obtained by official questionnaires.

A meteorologist at the Lowell Observatory is identified here as observer PP. He was not interviewed, but a clipping was obtained from a Flagstaff newspaper covering his observations made on May 27, 1950. The object was observed between 12:15 and 12:20 p.m. on Saturday, May 20, from the grounds of the Lowell Observatory. The object presented a bright visible disc to the naked eye and passed moderately rapidly in front of a fractocumulus cloud in the northwest. Upon passing in front of the cloud its appearance changed from that of a bright object to a dark object, due to the change in contrast. No engine noise was heard, nor was there any exhaust. It seems that this might have been a weather balloon but in this case it would be strange if this meteorologist would become confused by it. He reports that it was not moving with the wind, but across the wind.

Finally, in this survey of astronomers, my associates and I at the Perkins Observatory should be included. There are six of us there, and to the best of my knowledge, none of us has ever seen any unexplainable object in the skies.

While in Albuquerque, I met, through Dr. La Paz, a Dr. Everton Conger, Instructor in Journalism at the University of New Mexico. On July 27, 1948,

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-17-

between 8:35 and 8:45 a.m. he noticed a disc-shaped object in the sky. It was flat and round like a flat plate. It appeared to be made of duraluminum and gave off reflected light very similar to the light reflected from a highly polished airplane wing. The full details of his sighting are in my notes. I obtained his cooperation and he would be very glad to fill out an official questionnaire.

I also interviewed, while in Albuquerque, Mr. Redman and Mr. Morris, the two gentlemen whose picture appeared in Life magazine in the now-famous article on flying saucers. I questioned them separately and found that their stories were remarkably consistent. Indeed, since they viewed the object from widely different parts of the city, there is some possibility that the parallax of the object can be obtained by making theodolite sightings now on where the object appeared to them. The position of the object can be identified now because it was viewed close to a canyon in the mountains. Dr. Le Paz has kindly offered to obtain the parallax of this object for us.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Over 40 astronomers were interviewed of which five had made sightings of one sort or another. This is a higher percentage than among the populace at large. Perhaps this is to be expected, since astronomers do, after all, watch the skies. On the other hand, they will not likely be fooled by balloons, aircraft, and similar objects, as may the general populace.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-18-

It is interesting to remark upon the attitude of the astronomers interviewed. The great majority were neither hostile nor overly interested; they gave one the general feeling that all flying saucer reports could be explained as misrepresentations of well-known objects and that there was nothing intrinsic in the situation to cause concern. I took the time to talk rather seriously with a few of them, and to acquaint them with the fact that some of the sightings were truly puzzling and not at all easily explainable. Their interest was almost immediately aroused, indicating that their general lethargy is due to lack of information on the subject. And certainly another contributing factor to their desire not to talk about these things is their overwhelming fear of publicity. One headline in the nation's papers to the effect that "Astronomer Sees Flying Saucer" would be enough to brand the astronomer as questionable among his colleagues. Since I was able to talk with the men in confidence, I was able to gather very much more of their inner thoughts on the subject than a reporter or an interrogator would have been able to do. Actual hostility is rare; concern with their own immediate scientific problems is too great. There seems to be no convenient method by which to attack this problem, and most astronomers do not wish to become involved, not only because of the danger of publicity but because the data seem tenuous and unreliable.

Therefore, it is my considered recommendation that the following procedure be adopted by the Air Force:

First, the problem of unidentified aerial objects should be given the status of a scientific problem. In any scientific problem, the data are gathered with meticulous care and are weighed and considered, without rush, by

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-19-

entirely competent men. Therefore, it is proposed that some reputable group of scientists be asked to examine recent sightings which have already gone through one or two screenings. If this group becomes convinced that the data are worthy of being treated as a scientific problem, that is, that the sightings are valid and that unexplained phenomena really do exist, then they should be asked to vouch that these data are "worthy of being admitted into court". Armed with this scientific opinion, various scientific societies should be approached. The American Physical Society, the American Astronomical Society, and the Optical Society of America are suggested, in particular. These Societies should be asked, in view of the validity of the data, to appoint one or more members to constitute a panel to advise ATIC and perhaps to direct the necessary researches into the phenomena. This would serve not only to work toward an ultimate solution of the problem, but in the meantime would lend dignity to the project.

In short, either the phenomena which have been observed are worthy of scientific attention or they are not. If they are, then the entire problem should be treated scientifically and without fanfare. It is presumed that the scientific panel would work with the full knowledge and cooperation of the general contractor, but would not be bound by secrecy, which would tend to hamper their work. It is possible that this panel might be a panel in the RDB, similar to those in geodesy, infrared, or upper atmospheric research.

In the meantime, it is recommended that the Air Force approach the Joint Chiefs of Staff for endorsement of a considered statement of philosophy and policy for presentation to the public press. There is much confusion in

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-20-

the public mind as to what is being done about the situation, and a great deal of needless criticism is being directed toward the Air Forces for "trying to cover up" or "dismissing the whole thing". The considered statement to the public press that the problem is being considered as a scientific one and is being referred to competent scientists in various fields should do a very great deal in satisfying the public clamour.

It may be, of course, that this proposal will not get beyond the first step. The scientist, or scientists, who examine the carefully screened evidence may decide there still is not enough evidence to admit the problem into the court of scientific appeal. Personally, I hardly think that this will be the case, since the number of truly puzzling incidents is now impressive.

The second stage may be a long one. The first effort should be to determine with great accuracy what the phenomena to be explained really are and to establish their reality beyond all question.

Third stage would be the eventual publication of the findings of the scientific panel. This might take the form of a progress report. If, for instance, the scientific chase is led into a detailed examination of atmospheric optics, one can envision, perhaps, many years of work. This, however, is the price one pays for a truly scientific investigation.

One final item is that the flying-saucer sightings have not died down, as was confidently predicted some years ago when the first deluge of sightings was regarded as mass hysteria. Unless the problem is attacked scientifically, we can look forward to periodic recurrences of flying-saucer reports. It appears, indeed, that the flying saucer along with the automobile is here to stay, and if we can't shoo it away, we must try to understand it.

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED

-21-

APPENDIX

While in Los Angeles, I was asked to appear in a TV program with Gerald Herd, the BBC science analyst; with Walter Riddel, the rocket expert; and with Aldous Huxley. They were to have a round-table discussion on flying saucers. I declined immediately but was prevailed upon to be in the studio when the program was in progress. I am afraid that my presence as an astronomer "cramped their style" to a great degree, but nonetheless the program had the general effect of convincing the hearers that flying saucers did exist. There was very little constructive about the program. It consisted of a rehash of all the things we have heard so much about already. It might be profitable, for instance, to have a TV program, sponsored by the Air Force, acquainting the public with the problem of flying saucers as a scientific problem. Though suggested jokingly, there might be some point to this, if this investigation ever gets to the scientific panel stage.

JAH:eg

RESTRICTED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED