

# Navy Calls Saucers Only Its Big Balloons

NEW YORK, Feb. 12 (AP).—Flying saucers are real—but they're only huge balloons used in cosmic ray studies, Look magazine will say Tuesday, quoting Dr. Urner Liddel, chief of the nuclear physics branch of the Office of Naval Research. He is in charge of the cosmic ray-balloon project.

The balloons are huge plastic bags, 100 feet in diameter, that may rise 19 miles high—about 100,000 feet. Winds may sweep them along at 200 miles an hour. At dusk, the slanting rays of the sun light up their bottoms, giving them a saucer-like appearance, the article says.

They carry instruments aloft to record what happens when cosmic rays hit atoms in the earth's atmosphere. This splitting gives a clue to how atoms are put together, and how to release their energy.

"When this project first began it was kept secret," the magazine quotes Dr. Liddel. "Now there is no longer any need for secrecy on a scientific basis. And certainly, there is no longer any need to keep the public in the dark about what flying saucers are."

Look says "the Liddel report is considered to be the most authoritative scientific explanation of the flying-saucer phenomenon. As far as Dr. Liddel is concerned personally, he considers his answer incontrovertibly right."

The balloons, called skyhooks, were first sent aloft in 1947, and it was then that flying saucer reports began, it adds. There were more balloons in the next two years and more "saucers" seen. There were fewer balloons sent up in 1950, and fewer saucer reports.

A picture, taken by telescope of a balloon at 77,000 feet over Minnesota, convinced Dr. Liddel even more, the magazine says. The photo fits descriptions of flying saucers.

At dusk on a cool summer evening is the best time to see the balloon "saucer," it adds.

"The lateral rays of the sun at dusk illuminate the base of the balloon. There is no chance of your ever seeing the full roundness of it because you are so far below it. You see only the illuminated cup of the bottom. If your imagination soars, the light reflection on the side may impress you as the glow of an atomic engine. The wisp of the balloon's instrument-filled tail may impress you as the exhaust. The sun's rays may suffuse the plastic bag with a fiery glow.

"Even seasoned airmen have no way of estimating the size and speed of an object they see. To peg size and speed, the mind must know the nature of the object."

Look says Dr. Liddel and associates studied 2000 reports of flying saucers, eliminating those "seeming to be the visions of crackpots or psychopaths" or "clearly the result of inaccurate vision."

"This left a solid base of reports from airplane pilots, scientific observers and reliable laymen which could not be brushed aside. After a thorough investigation, Dr. Liddel said: 'There is not a single reliable report of an observation which is not attributable to the cosmic balloons.'"

It quotes Dr. Liddel as saying that Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, air force pilot found dead in his crashed plane after radioing that he was pursuing a strange sky object, was chasing "a balloon of the skyhook type."

There have been several reports of squadrons of flying disks, and "this is explained by Dr. Liddel as clusters of 20 to 30 balloons 10 to 15 feet in diameter, which are sometimes used in place of the huge skyhook."

Dr. Liddel checked other Government agencies and "is satisfied that no other research or experimental project has utilized anything even roughly resembling a flying saucer."

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