

His last report

FOR 25 minutes Mantell and the two other pilots tried vainly to close in. Mantell reported the object was climbing and moving at a speed equal to his own, which he gave as 360 m.p.h.

In broken cloud at 18,000ft. the other two pilots lost sight of him, later broke off and landed.

Mantell called once more to say that if he were no closer at 20,000ft. he'd abandon the chase as he hadn't the oxygen.

That was the last heard from him.

His body was later found near Fort Knox and the wreckage of his machine scattered over half a mile around. Obviously his plane had disintegrated in mid-air.

Official Air Force version was that Mantell had probably "blacked out" from lack of oxygen and had not regained consciousness before he crashed, out of control.

Still a mystery

BUT one of his fellow-pilots later commented: "I think that was a cover-up. Mantell was too experienced a pilot for that. He was quite familiar with signs of approaching anoxia [lack of oxygen], and would have taken steps to prevent it.

"Some of us think he may have collided with whatever he saw and that it knocked him out in the air."

Engineers later added that the type of machine Mantell was flying, starting a dive at 20,000ft. would not have disintegrated so thoroughly.

During the past two and three

quarter years a multitude of people on the ground claim to have seen these "flying saucers," nor have they always been seen with the naked eye; many saw them through binoculars.

But the fact that first started the U.S. Air Force to sit up, take notice, and then institute "Project Saucer" was the large number of apparently responsible pilots and aircrew members who sent in startling reports of what they claimed to have seen.

One of the theories along which "P.S." investigators worked was evident from the fact that every plane whose pilot reported close encounters with "flying saucers" was checked with Geiger counters for possible radio-activity.

Head-on meeting

TAKE the case, for instance, of Captain Clarence Chiles, former Air Transport Command pilot, and John B. Whitted, who flew B.29 Superforts during the war. Both are happily married men with families, good jobs and no need of apparent desire for publicity.

They were flying a scheduled airline service near Montgomery, Alabama, one night last summer,

when a brilliant, fast-moving object suddenly appeared ahead of them.

"We saw it at the same time," Chiles told investigators later. "Whatever it was flashed down towards us and we veered to the left. It veered sharply too and passed about 700 feet to our right and above us."

"The thing was about 100 feet long, cigar-shaped and wingless, about twice the diameter of a B.29 without protruding fins," said Whitted.

"There was a tremendous burst of orange flame from the rear. It zoomed into clouds, its jet or prop wash rocking our DC3."

Seeing's believing?

MORE recently, two weeks ago, two other airline pilots, Captain Jack Adams, with some 8,000 hours' flying time, and co-pilot G. W. Anderson reported a "flying saucer" with windows on the bottom and a blinking light near the top as they passed over Arkansas.

"It was flying almost due north and we crossed its path at about a 45 degree angle," said Adams. "It was about 1,000ft. above us and travelling at a tremendous rate. It had a peculiarly coloured and very intense light near the top which blinked very rapidly.

"We kept the object in sight for about 45 seconds.

"I've been a sceptic all my life about such things, but what can you do when you see a thing like that?" he concluded. "We were both flabbergasted."