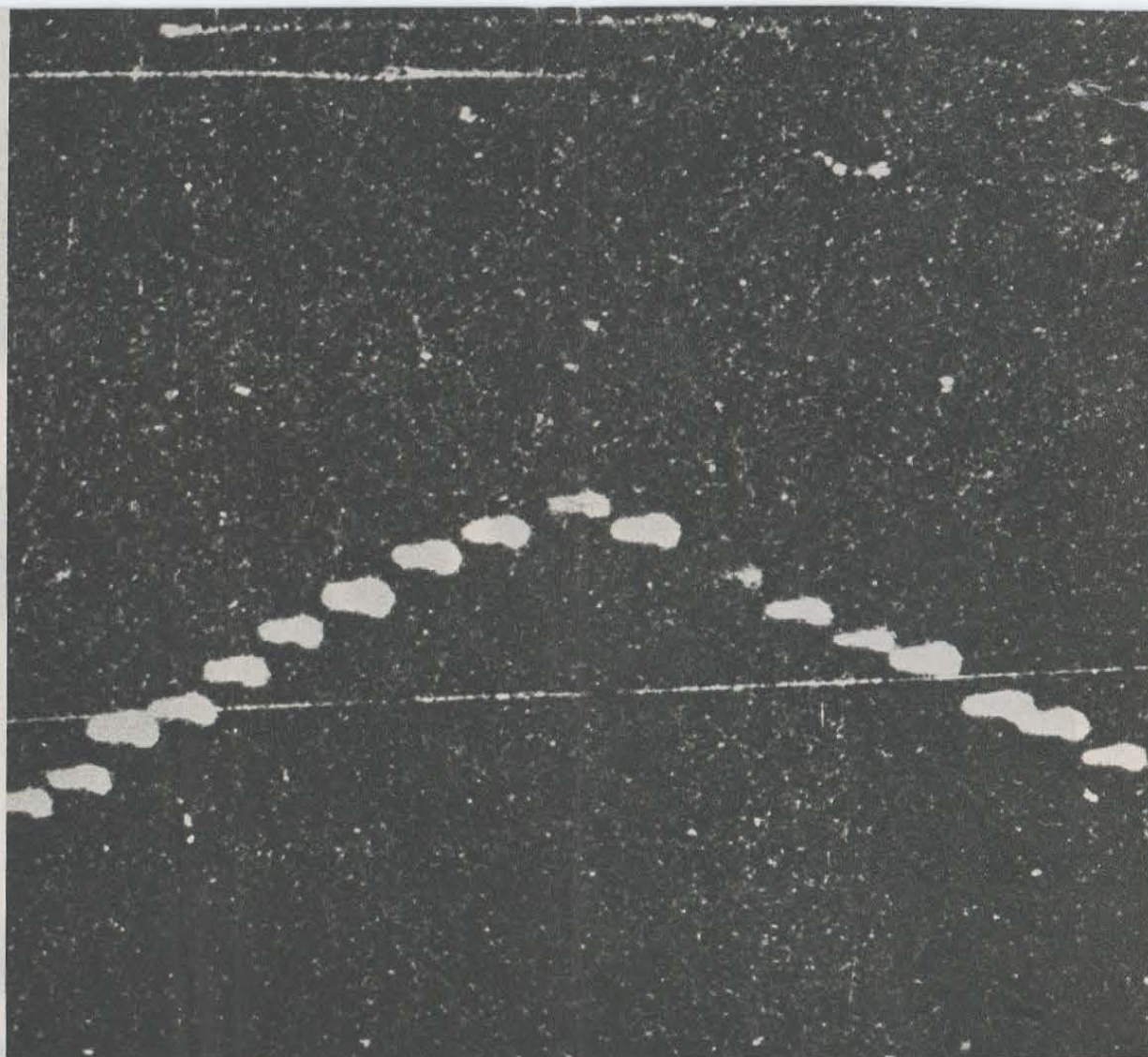




Orderly processes of natural laws explain saucers



These are the Lubbock Lights, as photographed Aug. 30, 1951, over Lubbock, Texas, by 18-year-old Carl Hart, Jr.

Gemini. Then, very suddenly, I realized that Gemini was a winter object; the two stars had to be something else.

Like most astronomers, I am always hopeful of finding a nova (exploding star) which can be seen with the naked eye, so I rapidly opened the window of the car for a better look. I could bring neither of these objects into clear focus, although nearby Antares was sharp. Both hazy disks shone with a slightly bluish light. They were, in a sense, "flying" simply because they were elevated. Suddenly, alive to the fact that I was seeing something unusual, I asked the driver to stop. We climbed out of the car just in time to see the saucers literally fade away as mysteriously as they had appeared. I reported the occurrence in detail to the Air Force.

I later found that an English meteorologist, Edward J. Lowe, had recorded a similar phenomenon as long ago as 1838—similar except for the fact he saw four instead of two ghostly images flying near the moon.

Perhaps you expect me to say, at this point, that I can explain exactly what I saw that evening. I am sorry to disappoint you. I cannot. I have certain ideas on the subject, but they are only hypotheses—reasonable but not yet fully confirmed.

I shall explain those ideas, but first let me say what I do NOT believe. I do NOT believe that what I saw, or anything anyone has reported seeing, were missiles or messengers or vehicles from the moon or Mars or space. I do NOT believe they were missiles or messengers or vehicles from Russia or any other foreign country.

Indeed, how simple science and life would be if every time we encountered some seemingly inexplicable fact, we could blame it on some outside force over which we have no control. Such a mode of thought is as old as man himself. Our prehistoric ancestors personalized

all the forces of nature. Gods blew the winds, threw lightning bolts and stoked the fires that belch forth from volcanic craters.

Brilliant showers of meteors have made men fear that the end of the world was imminent. The ancients have interpreted a solar eclipse as a dragon devouring the sun and rejoiced when their beating drums and weapons frightened the dragon away.

How simple this type of science. No laboratory experiment to prove or test the hypotheses. No complicated mathematics to study the details of the process. Nothing to argue about here. For each new and unexplained fact, we invent a new god—or assume the existence of a superintelligence.

How simple—and how wrong!

Centuries of civilization have taught us the futility of inventing mysterious forces and superhuman beings. You could explain *anything* that way. Such explanations, however, are completely useless and nature falls into chaos, subject to the whim of a pagan deity instead of to the orderly processes of natural laws.

"An Uncivilized Attitude"

As a scientist, I am not bothered if I cannot give a complete, iron-clad explanation for every phenomenon I meet. Unraveling the puzzles of science is my business—as well as my pleasure. I find the world still full of unsolved problems. I look for the explanations, but I do not arbitrarily invent forces that make explanation unnecessary.

Why, then, have so many civilized people chosen to adopt an uncivilized attitude toward flying saucers? I think there are three reasons:

First, flying saucers are unusual. All of us are used to regularity. We naturally attribute mystery to the unusual.

Second, we are all nervous. We live in a world that has suddenly become hostile. We

have unleashed forces we cannot control; many persons fear we are heading toward a war that will end in the destruction of civilization.

Third, people enjoy being frightened a little. They go to Boris Karloff double features.

But such analysis should concern the psychologist rather than the natural scientist, so let me hasten back to our flying saucers.

First of all, we must recognize that "flying saucers," in the public mind, cover a wide variety of objects and phenomena. Some of them, we can almost immediately dispose of, although the mere fact of their misinterpretation has been one of the chief difficulties men have encountered in getting at the basic truth.

A man sitting in the park on a calm summer afternoon scarcely realizes how intense the winds aloft may be. Perhaps real gales exist, with speeds in excess of 60 miles an hour, different layers moving in opposite directions. Light, flat objects such as newspapers or kites can be caught in an occasional whirlwind and lifted to enormous heights, where they may fly for hundreds of miles before they again reach the ground. Weather balloons, which are often released in groups rather than singly, are not at all uncommon. Indeed, most such objects lose their true identity when viewed against the sky. And it is extremely hard to recognize them.

Occasional reflections from distant planes or even from the backs of high-flying birds account for some of the reports. The planet Venus has, on many occasions, produced its own series of sensations. Few people seem to realize that this planet, when at greatest brilliance, can be plainly seen in the daytime. If floating cirrus clouds overlie it, the planet may give the illusion of being in rapid motion. Most people find it difficult to focus their eyes on a distant object; hence, they see a bright blur in the sky and thus give rise to another flying saucer story.