

fore. "I... off," he said, "the Russians have nothing to do with the so-called saucers; I'll swear to you a stack of Bibles, if you like. Second, we don't have any secret new types of aircraft that could have started all this commotion. Third, nobody, in our opinion, has spotted space ships from some other planet. Fourth, everything our investigators learned has been made available to the public."

THE first saucer incident occurred on the afternoon of June 24, 1947, when Kenneth Arnold, on a business trip for a Boise, Idaho, firm that makes fire-control equipment, was flying his private plane from Chehalis, Washington, to Yakima, Washington. The reflection of a bright flash on one wing caught his eye. He turned and, at a distance he thought was about twenty miles, saw what he took to be nine tailless aircraft heading toward Mount Rainier. "I could see their outlines quite plainly against the snow," Air Force Intelligence quoted him as saying. "They flew very close to the mountaintops, directly south to southeast, down the hog's-back of the range, flying like geese, in a diagonal, chainlike line, as if they were linked together... a chain of saucerlike things at least five miles long, swerving in and out of the high mountain peaks. They were flat... and so shiny that they reflected the sun like a mirror." Arnold said he watched the saucers for three minutes and estimated their speed at about twelve hundred miles an hour.

Air Force technicians, consulted by newspapermen, said that any object moving that fast would be invisible to the naked eye at Arnold's estimated distance. The press scoffed at Arnold's story, and he was resentful. "Even if I see a ten-story building flying through the air, I won't say a word about it," he declared, and when he got back to Boise he wrote a series of articles about his experience for a magazine called *Fate*.

No sooner were the skeptical newspaper accounts printed than dozens of people turned up with similar reports. Another resident of Boise spotted a disc over that city, "a half circle in shape, clinging to a cloud and just as bright and silvery-looking as a mirror caught in the rays of the sun." Lieu-

tenant Governor Donalt of Idaho, disclosed that he had seen a comet-shaped object sailing over the western part of the state. It finally dipped below the horizon, he said. (Later on, the personnel of Project Saucer decided that the Lieutenant Governor had been looking at either Saturn or Mercury.) Four cops in Portland, Oregon, saw a group of discs "wobbling, disappearing, and reappearing."

Reports of other phenomena having been seen in the skies appeared in the papers almost daily. Two Army officers at Fort Richardson, Alaska, reported seeing a spherical object flying through the air at incredible speed and leaving no vapor trail; some fishermen off Newfoundland saw a series of aerial flashes, silver to reddish in color; a lady in Oregon watched a group of saucers spell out "P-E-P-S-I," and alerted her neighbors to the presence of foreign agents practicing a secret code in our skies; an Oklahoma City man saw a saucer "the bulk of six B-29s;" and a prospector in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon saw six saucers in a group, banking in the sun—"round, silent, and not flying in formation." On the Fourth of July, there were twelve reports of saucers in widely separated parts of the United States. One of these saucers, sighted at Trenton, New

Jersey, was traced to a fireworks display. Dr. Paul Fitts, an Ohio State University psychologist who was for a time attached to Project Saucer, considered this crowded condition in the holiday skies the result of mass suggestibility, the same jumpy trait that caused Americans to see Zeppelins overhead during and after the First World War. "Our graphs show that saucer incidents always increase dramatically after publicity," he has since told me. "The sky, you know, has been a source of exciting visions

from time immemorial, and its attraction is particularly strong in our jittery moments."

FROM the beginning, the officers in charge of Project Saucer recognized a peculiar difficulty in their assignment. "If you look out the window and see something, how can I prove or disprove what it was if I didn't see it and you can't tell me much about what you

