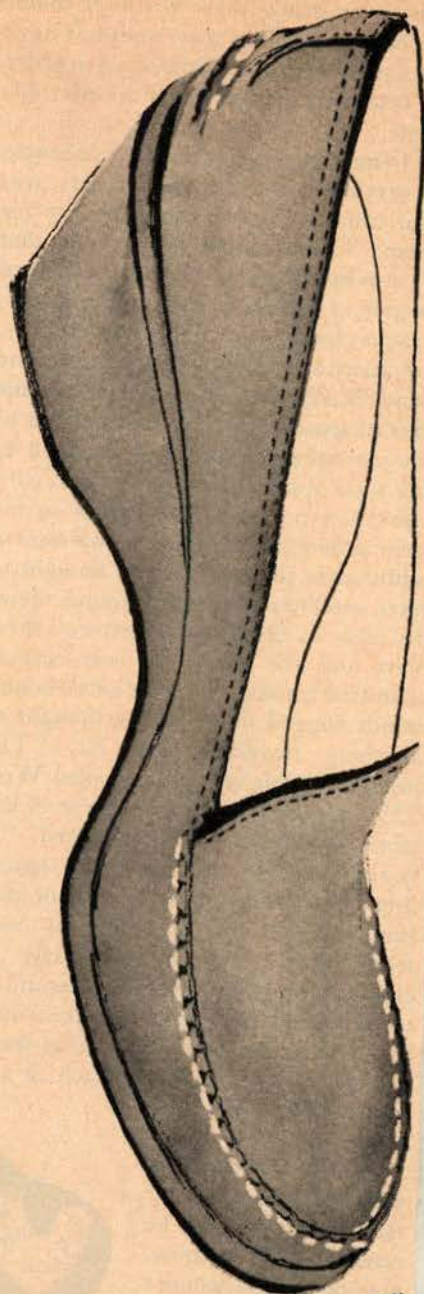


on the retina and moving as the eye moves.

Other elements of the saucer problem were studied by such men as Dr. George Valley, a nuclear physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; staff members of the research firm of Rand Corporation; an assortment of physicists and aerodynamicists who specialize in the study of the stratosphere and the space beyond it; and the electronics experts attached to the Cambridge Field Station. These men were all searching for physical rather than psychological explanations, and some fairly strange theories occurred to them—the possibility that extraterrestrial animals were flying into our atmosphere, for example. (No data turned up to support that arresting idea.) The theory that the saucers were hostile aircraft was carefully studied and rejected. "The performances of these saucers not only surpass the development of present science but the development of present fiction-science writers," one scientist noted. The specialists also considered and rejected the concept of discs capable of riding the air on beams or rays of some kind. They even speculated on whether the anti-gravity shield that H. G. Wells thought up for his novel "The First Men in the Moon" would work; it wouldn't, they decided. The supposition that interplanetary craft were whizzing in at us was also discredited, despite its popularity with laymen. Space ships, the scientists thought, would have to be so large and unwieldy that they couldn't possibly zig-zag as frivolously as the reported saucers did. Besides, a space ship, regardless of its size, could not, in the opinion of these men, carry sufficient fuel to remain for any length of time in the earth's dense atmosphere. The scientists noted, too, that the supposed spacemen showed a remarkable lack of interest in the rest of the world, being, it would seem, almost unanimous in their desire to see America first. "The small area covered by the disc barrage points strongly to the belief that the flying objects are of earthly origin, be they physical or psychological," one of the scientists reported.

From the report turned in by the astronomers, I learned that they, in addition to seining out comets, meteors, bolides, and achondrites from the stream of objects people were seeing in the skies, had also thoughtfully considered our planetary neighbors. The old question of the possibility of life on Mars took on a new urgency, and a new corollary: If there *are* living creatures on Mars, would they be capable of building space ships? The astronomers



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