

that—that while the information they give me may be made public, their names never will be.” In most cases, Captain Ruppelt said, investigation has shown that the people he has interviewed had been deceived by things that have been deceiving others all along—balloons, planes, meteors, and so on—but a nettling residue of around twenty per cent of the cases have wound up in that exasperating old pigeonhole labelled “Unidentified.” Nothing, for example, could be found to account for the “something silvery directly overhead” reported by a mystified Civil Aeronautics Administration inspector at Terre Haute. A commercial pilot who, flying near Battle Creek, Michigan, spotted “an oval-shaped silver object” ahead of his ship, posed a similarly unsolved problem, as did a highly respected naval officer, stationed at the dirigible base at Lakehurst, New Jersey, who reported that he had stared through his binoculars at a brilliant image making turns that were far too tight for any known aircraft.

Twenty-five per cent of the observers interrogated by the Aerial Phenomena Officer in the last two and a half years have been military pilots. Eight per cent have been commercial pilots, some with as much as twenty years’ experience in the air, and at one stage in the current phase of the investigation, even a few physicists at Los Alamos, New Mexico, men who make a fetish of objectivity, were interviewed after they reported having seen puzzling lights hovering above their atomic-energy laboratories. “If you took any one of these incidents by itself, it might not mean much,” Captain Ruppelt said. “But in view of the number and calibre of the informants, you couldn’t help taking their claims seriously.”

In February, 1951, Dr. Urner Liddel, a nuclear physicist attached to the Office of Naval Research, at Washington, D.C., declared that at last, thanks to the lifting of certain security restrictions, he could provide the solution to the mystery of the flying saucers: They were “skyhooks,” he said—balloons a hundred feet in diameter, which the Navy had secretly been sending up for the past four years in order to study cosmic rays. Dr. Liddel’s assertion was immediately disputed by Dr. Anthony O. Mirarchi, who, as former head of the Air Force’s Atmospheric Composition Bureau, had assisted in the diagnosis of Project Saucer reports. Dr. Mirarchi said he thought the saucers might be missiles from some foreign



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