

JET "EXPLODES" CHASING UFO NEAR UTICA, N. Y.: The gamy but saucer-phobic press tried pitting wits with its readership. They handed the unsuspecting reader a front page story without the facts, then (see July 3 New York Times) presented the facts in a separate story buried in the back pages. Reason: They feared public reaction to saucer tragedy, viz: Capt. Mantell. But, wits didn't pit right with Ted Bloecher and others such as Lester S. Parker of Topeka, Kansas. They correlated the loose ends:

Let's review one "end" -- the front page story: A jet fighter returning from a "scramble" to investigate an "unidentified aircraft", plunged into tiny Walesville eleven miles southwest of Utica, about 12:30 P.M., July 2, 1954. The plane crashed into an auto and two buildings killing four persons.

The Air Force in Washington announced the F-94-C Starfire had been sent up on "an active air defense intercept mission." According to the U. P. release of July 3, "Air Force spokesmen said the cockpit of the plane . . . became unbearably hot during the flight and that the pilot ordered his radar observer to bail out . . . then bailed out himself at 7000 ft. "

According to the A. P. release in New York Times July 3, "The air base (Griffis AFB) said, ' that fuel in the burning plane apparently had exploded when the jet crashed.' They said it had not been determined whether an explosion occurred while the jet was in the air."

"Later," according to A. P., "an AF spokesman in Washington said the intercepted plane was one that had failed to file a flight plan with C. A. A. or, one that drifted off its announced flight path. "

The U. P. and A. P. stories of disaster were essentially true, but because of the "disaster" angle they designated the pursued object as a "plane" rather than a UFO. Ted Bloecher, who did some checking, told me that his friend, Ed Wilkenson, listened to a broadcast which described the incident, thus: "The jet had successfully contacted the UFO but still could not identify it. "

But Ted Bloecher's real find was in the small item buried in the New York Times' (July 3) back pages. It reads:

"A silvery, balloon-like object floating high over the Utica area sent residents rushing to their telephones to make inquiries of newspapers, police and radio stations.

"The Utica Press estimated that more than 1000 calls about the object jammed its switchboard between 6 and 10:00 P.M. It was reported sighted by residents in a twenty-five mile radius extending from Rome on the west to Frankfort, east of Utica.

"Col. Milton F. Summerfelt commandant of the Air Force Depot at Rome said the object appeared to be a plastic balloon about 40 ft. long and partially deflated. He theorized that it was making a gradual descent and said that if it still were in the area tomorrow morning a plane would be sent to investigate.

"A Mohawk Airlines pilot estimated the altitude of the object at about 20,000 ft. He said he saw a light apparently shining from it. "