

The Greatest Flap Yet?—Part IV

by Jerome Clark

WHEN I COMPLETED Part III of this series (FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, May/June 1966), I assumed that the fantastic UFO flap which began in August 1965 had concluded. There was a definite lag in reports during October, and at the time of writing I was unaware of what would transpire in the following two months. The wave, it developed, had not reached its incredible climax, which would come with a series of mysterious, unexplained electric power black-outs.

John G. Fuller, a *Saturday Review* columnist who until a year ago was a UFO sceptic, points out in his recent *Incidents at Exeter* (Putnam's) that many of the New England sightings which he investigated described saucers flying low over—and sometimes touching—transmission lines. His theory, a reasonable one in my opinion, is that the “operators” were observing electrical power sources before causing the huge Northeastern “blackout” of November 9.¹ Other blackouts followed, in both North and South America, creating a pattern that has begun to disturb even jaded ufologists.

The flap subsided in early January but was followed less than three months later by yet another wave, beginning in Michigan and soon spreading across the entire United States.² But this is another matter. These more recent events threaten to obscure what happened in November and December 1965, and so it is with these latter incidents we now deal.

Over the border

Mr. and Mrs. George McLean of Arnprior, Ontario, saw an odd looking UFO on their lawn on the night of October 21. They described it as “an all-white cloud right in our yard, dancing and moving all the time.” They said it was “the size of a good-sized kitchen table, but not completely round.” McLean approached the object as it hovered over the ground but heard no sound and felt nothing.

Barb Fraser and Marg Baker of Pembroke, also in Ontario, were followed down the street the same night by “a whirling massive illuminated ball.” When they stepped out of their car, the UFO hovered above them and then passed on to the house next door. Another Pembroke resident, Robbie McCraig, was approached by a strange object as he crossed Memorial Bridge.: “It seemed close enough for me to touch it with my hand,” he said

and it trailed him home.

That same night a large egg-shaped object, about 20 feet in length, crossed over Ottawa. One witness, Mrs. Mike Scissons, watched it “hover over the house for about 10 minutes going around and around.” Barry Lemoine, who observed it while lying in bed, remarked, “It was five to ten times the size of the moon as seen from the ground. In fact, it looked like the moon on a foggy evening.”

Earlier in the evening—at 6.10—Silby County Deputy Sheriff Arthur A. Strauch, in the company of four others, took a colour photograph of a disc-shaped UFO flying north-west of St. George Minnesota. Mr. Strauch's description is interesting because it is unusually detailed :

“The rounded top of the dome was a metallic silver grey that reflected the rays of the setting sun, turning it (the object) into a large orange ball. Surrounding the dome were four small port-holes that emitted a bright yellow light. Just below the windows or ports was an area that glowed a light blue. This light seemed to be a reflection of some inner light or perhaps exhaust. From the edge of the blue light's reflection to the edge of the flat saucer surface (outer edge), the outer ring was rotating counter-clockwise, causing it to throw off an aurora or halo of light that changed from orange to white with an overall tinge of blue and green. The extreme outer edge of the saucer glowed a bright orange and this part did not move or rotate. To my left, or I assumed, the front of the machine, was a black spot or perhaps an intake port for air.”³

Landing

A week later, on the night of the 28th, six Upham, North Dakota, school students reported seeing a round object resting on tripod legs in a field. Under the UFO, they claimed, was a centre shaft ; on top a ball-shaped antenna. Lights flashed from “windows” on the craft. Investigating police officers found three impressions in the ground, spread in triangle-shape and each about a foot in diameter. In the centre was a hole about eight inches across.

These sightings (as well as that of James Townsend near Long prairie, Minnesota, on October 23) were part of a large concentration of reports in the Upper Mid-western area of the United States, lasting through December, almost until the end of the nation-wide flap. This “wave within a wave,” like

the New England concentration of September and October, led to a power blackout — this time in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Near Grafton, North Dakota, at 11 p.m. November 3, a large UFO, with two "headlights", approached a car driven by Diane Dymowski. Miss Dymowski and a companion said the object seemed to be floating, swaying from side to side until it split in two. One section disappeared in a field; the other went south on the road across Highway 17, turned around, and stayed there for half an hour before disappearing.

About eleven hours before the New York blackout, witnesses in central Minnesota observed a huge UFO. LeRoy Hattery, controller at an airport in Eden Prairie, told reporters that he estimated the object to be about 80 feet in diameter and between 3000 and 4000 feet in the air. He said it resembled a burning airplane, "with a tail about 200 feet long." Patrolman John DuBois of the Shakopee police force reported, "I saw it coming from west to east, about over the Minnesota River . . . About a thousand feet up, [it] was a bright greenish-white with a bright red-orange trail. It was moving faster than a plane. Then, after about 30 seconds, it disappeared. At first I thought it was a meteor, but a meteor would fall down, while this was moving parallel to the earth."

William Bohn of Winona, leaving for work at 6 a.m., spotted the UFO and compared it to "a big ball of intense white light." He continued, "Behind the white light was a tail of red objects that looked like pieces of molten metal. It was moving at high speed toward the north-east and passed directly over the centre of Winona. It seemed low in altitude and very huge in size. It appeared to be about one-fourth the size of the moon."

The Stuart Whitman contact claim

There is no point in rehashing the sightings made in the North-east during the Great Power Blackout, since these have been dealt with adequately in other places. However, the oddest story of all—told by a prominent individual—has received practically no attention. Although a fairly "typical" contact claim, its unusual feature is that the purported witness, noted actor Stuart Whitman, presumably had more to lose than to gain by revealing it. That is not to say, of course, that we should accept his report with anything other than healthy scepticism.

Whitman was staying in a New York hotel when the blackout occurred. "I heard a sound, like a whippoorwill whistling outside my 12th floor window", he claimed. Investigating, he was startled to find two UFOs hovering nearby.

"One of them was orange and the other was

blue. They gave off a strange luminescent light, so I couldn't see if there were portholes or who was in them.

"Then I heard them speaking to me as if they were on a loud speaker. They spoke to me in English. It may not have been audible to anyone else. They said they wanted to talk to me because I appeared to have no malice or hate. They said they were fearful of Earth because Earthlings were messing around with unknown quantities and might disrupt the balance of the universe or their planet. The people in the UFO said the blackout was just a little demonstration of their power and that they could do a lot more with almost no effort. It served as a warning. They said they could stop our whole planet from functioning. They asked me to do what I could to fight malice, prejudice and hate on Earth, and then they took off.

"I couldn't say how big the objects were, but when they took off I felt elated. I wasn't even shocked. And I know I wasn't asleep because I was standing by the window and wide awake the entire time. I don't know why they picked me as a contact. But I'll swear on a Bible that I saw them out there and that they talked to me."

The alleged incident took place about dawn. Whitman insisted that he had not been drinking.

Multiple sightings

In the meantime, sightings continued over other parts of the United States. On November 16 David Faidley, Alan Handley, and their wives, Carol and Marjorie, watched about 150 green UFOs streaking across the skies of Wichita, Kansas, at 4 a.m. The objects glowed brilliantly before disappearing, they said, leaving in their wake "a vapour trail [that] would be left hanging down like a ribbon in the sky." No more than one would appear at a time, and the UFOs would fly in any direction except north.

"I never saw one go below tree level on the horizon" Faidley stated. "One got down that low, levelled off and went on a horizontal flight. It was no comet or anything like that—the way some were on level flight, just like an airplane, but a lot faster, until they went out of sight."

"We saw the first one while we were driving home from work," Handley added. "It streaked east to west on a horizontal plane. It was going very fast. They'd go from one side to another in three or four seconds. The bigger they were, the slower they were going."

Most of the objects were small, the witnesses reported, but every fifteen minutes a large brilliant one would appear. One of these was sighted after 5 a.m., when Handley had retired. David Faidley said, "I was standing out there alone. One

came straight down. It was so big it just practically knocked me over."

A Braniff Airlines pilot on a flight from Chicago to Wichita reported seeing close to 100 of the strange phenomena.

November 15 and 16 also saw a number of sightings, most of them fairly routine, in the state of Minnesota. Witnesses reportedly sighted UFOs near Luverne and Windom on the first date. On the 16th, at 3.34 a.m., Ervin Smith, turning off Highway 27, heard his car radio go dead and his motor begin to cough. At that moment he saw a strange object, with streams of light shooting toward the ground, flying several hundred feet above him. Two police officers and a housewife observed UFOs, variously described as "elongated triangles" and "basketballs," as they passed over Roseville about 10.30 p.m. Just ten minutes later, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Nelson saw two UFOs near Fort Ripley. One of them had apparently landed near the camp's west entrance, for when the Nelson's car approached, it shot up into the sky like a "falling star going up". Near Herman, at 11 p.m. Mr. and Mrs. Ray Schuman saw a football-shaped craft, with "ports" on each end, cross the road in front of them. A flame, similar to a rocket's exhaust, shot out of its back, and the Schumans were able to detect a "whistling" sound as it flew over them.

Electromagnetic effect ?

Meanwhile, Tom Untiedt, on Highway 28 three miles west of Cyrus, saw an odd object resting on a country road about a quarter of a mile away. "From where I was," he said, "it looked like it was about 10 feet long and about six feet in diameter. It reminded me of a stovepipe in shape, but it had a cone on the top, which seemed to be made of a red fluorescent material. There was also a white sort of glow around the entire thing." Untiedt reported trouble with his car during the sighting. "The speed of the car dropped about 40 miles an hour down to around 20 miles an hour," he claimed. The UFO rose into the air and within 15 seconds had disappeared in the north-east leaving behind a trail of vapour or flame.

About the same time a number of persons, including several highway patrolmen, sighted UFOs at Seen and Erskine. At Woodside, south-west of Erskine, a farm wife watched a luminous phenomenon land in the cornfield. Later she found a circle in the field, surrounded by a ring three or four feet wide of crushed grass.

Localised power failures

But the strange climax to the Minnesota concentration did not come until later. According to NICAP's *U.F.O. Investigator* :

"Power failures at St. Paul, Minnesota, simultaneous with UFO sightings, were reported November 26 by the Northern States Power Company, police and numerous residents. According to the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, the sudden failures knocked out house lights and appliances.

"The area hardest hit was Totem Town, on Highway 61. Residents reported all lights went out as objects giving off blue or orange flashes appeared overhead. The power company said it was unable to determine the blackout cause.

"The first failure, a small-scale blackout, occurred shortly after 8 p.m. when two witnesses, Nick DeVara and Mark Wilcox, spotted a huge blue light like someone welding in the sky." As it passed overhead, the lights in a nearby service station went out.

"Moments later, a little to the north, another blackout occurred. At 8.15, reported Mrs. Don Housh of 1875 Hoyt Avenue, all house lights and appliances went dead. At this time, witnesses also sighted the blue-glowing UFO, or a similar one. Observers included a motorist who reported that his car lights and radio went out."

Natural phenomena or UFO crashes ?

A remarkably complex series of UFO sightings took place during the late afternoon of December 9, and, although the main object was "identified" as a meteor, there are pertinent reasons for believing the incident involved the appearances—and subsequent crashes—of several unknown aerial machines.

Published accounts are rather confusing, and I have been able to reconstruct the occurrences only with some difficulty. At any rate, about 4.30 p.m., so news accounts report, something exploded over Lake St. Clair east of Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario, producing shock waves violent enough to rock aircraft in the area.

It is not clear what the relationship is between the explosion and the "fireball"-UFO observed at the same time which, according to Robert Gribble, "passed in a straight line from somewhat east of Flint, Michigan, *over Lake St. Clair* [my italics] to Oberlin and Elyria near Cleveland, Ohio, in a south-east by southerly direction and then made a 25-degree turn to the east." We can only speculate whether we are dealing with two totally separate UFOs, or whether the explosion eventually caused the "fireball" object to fall into a woods in Pennsylvania.

Whatever the case, after making a sharp turn near Cleveland, the UFO resumed its straight-line course toward the east. At Cleveland, radar traced it at a speed of 1062.5 miles per hour. A meteor's slowest known speed, let it be noted, is

27,000 m.p.h.

In the meantime pieces of UFOs had dropped to the ground in two states. At 4.30, two Ingham County, Michigan, sheriff's deputies, Donald Hilton and Robert Murphy, saw a 3-ft. UFO trailing smoke descending about 80 feet from them. The object disintegrated however, leaving only a thin black substance.

In Chippewa Township, Pennsylvania, three boys observed something dropping into the woods, and one witness, Edward Bozic, 11, called it "a great big square brown thing. There was fire all around it and a big puff of smoke," he said, "but nothing burned. The smoke stayed and stayed." Although the trees were scraped and broken, investigation found no marks on the ground.

At 4.45, Mrs Arnold Kalp and her two children sighted a strange object in Michigan. "Nevin saw it first," she said. "He said it looked like a flaming star. It left a trail of flames behind and it fell in the woods. Then I came out to look and I saw some smoke. Then it turned sort of cloudy, and went away almost like it buried itself in the ground." Dale Howard, a mile from the scene, felt a "vibration" and a "thump" when the UFO hit the ground.

Three other falls of aerial material were reported in Michigan about the same time. Near Livonia, two 11-year-old boys watched a baseball-size chunk of lightweight fused metal come out of the sky and bury itself in the ground. "It was still smoking when I picked it up," Brian Parent said. "But it didn't seem to be warm to the touch." Its colour ranged from light grey to black with some traces of brown, and it had a "terrible smell." Chunks of similar material were retrieved at Warren, Michigan, by a group of children who had seen them fall to earth. At Concord, near Jackson, 13-year-old Roy Root uncovered a 15-pound metallic object in a field close to his farm home. It rested in a hole about two feet deep, and was still smoking when the young Root came across it.

At 4.44 a woman living in Elwyrria, near Cleveland, sighted a UFO about the size of a volley ball. Crashing into a clump of trees, it ignited a grass fire over a 1000-foot area.

At 4.50 the sightings climaxed with the crash of a brilliant orange UFO into a woods thirty miles south of Pittsburgh. One of the witnesses, a farm-woman residing near Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, notified State Police immediately. Responding to her call, law officers were startled to find sizeable military units already at the scene. One service official told newsmen, "We don't know what we have here, but there is an Unidentified Flying Object in the woods."

And so what must surely be one of the most

important—and most baffling—sightings of 1965 ends. The only conclusion to be drawn, improbable as it may be, is that several UFOs met with violent disaster, **within minutes of each other**, over the North-east on the afternoon December 9.

Curiously, the "fireball" was not the only UFO observed that day. Some hours earlier, shortly before midnight, four California Highway Patrolmen sighted a glowing, green object as it flew over Humboldt County. At the same time pilots of four airliners coming in from the Pacific reported a huge UFO on the Pacific Coast—evidently the same or a similar object.

Nightmare truck ride

The last significant incident of 1965 occurred on December 20 near Herman, Minnesota, when 15-year-old Edward Bruns, driving to his father's farm in a pick-up truck, noticed a peculiar object hovering six feet above the road several dozen feet from him. When seconds later the engine died, the terrified youth watched the UFO begin to glow red, rising upwards, shooting "sparks" from it.

What happened next Bruns does not remember, but when consciousness returned, he found himself in the ditch; the pickup, which had been travelling west, now pointed east. **And there were no tracks leading into the ditch.** Apparently the UFO had lifted the truck and deposited it along the side of the road!

The encounter so affected Bruns, who suffers from a heart condition, that afterwards he required medical attention.

The Herman sighting did not mark the end of the flap, by any means. Reports were to continue into early January in California, where on the first of that month a law officer, control tower operators, and three airline pilots reported a UFO landing near Hayward. Two policemen, David Koller and Michael Barbour, said the object alternately flared and dimmed before disappearing. At the same time Julie Herrick and Michael Wilburn, on the road to Sonoma from Santa Rosa, saw a multi-coloured object hit the ground seven or eight miles from Sonoma. About 9 a.m. "something like a sparkler" fell into the hills of Ventura County in South-western California. In Thousands Oaks residents said an object dropped into a field near Californian Lutheran College. At 10.30, according to Captain Barbara Williams of Mather Air Force Base, men in the control tower reported a UFO. "They said it glowed bright, and seemed to drift down between the two runways," she stated. "Someone went out to look for it but they found nothing."

The early morning hours of January 2 produced reports of a "falling, flaming object" at Long

Beach. A helicopter search uncovered nothing. At 4 a.m. on the third, Mrs. Gene Knox awoke to see something over Banning. "It was sparkling white with a long, wide, wide tail—so long that it looked like it was right outside the window. I waited for the fire department siren because I thought the thing was going to hit the ground. It was so very, very large, then it looked like it just disappeared. A bat of an eye and it was gone." Her husband, awakening at 5 a.m., saw what resembled stars falling. "There were 20 or 25 of those with trails," his wife said. "Gene thought I was nuts, that I had flipped, when I first told him about the fireball. But then he began to see the others."

From here the scene shifted to New Jersey, where in mid-January a flurry of reports centred around the Wanaque reservoir, reminiscent of the September 1962 concentration near the Oradell reservoir in the same state. Since the main sighting, made on the 11th by hundreds of witnesses including the mayor and two city councilmen, has already been dealt with in the "World Round-Up" section of this journal (March/April), we shall not recapitulate the details here.

For our purposes, the flap ended here—but only temporarily. But by now American UFO students had an idea what was going to happen. We passed through the period of inactivity that reigned almost

uninterrupted from 1958 to 1963, and now the flying saucers were back in vaster numbers than ever before, and it seemed probable that a whole new phase of UFO operations had begun. Although the months of April 1964 and August 1965 stood out, there existed by now strong evidence that the United States was undergoing not a series of different flaps but one Great Flap, each of its components emphasising something peculiar generally to itself. In November for instance, came the North-eastern Blackout—the single most important fact of the August-January events, whether or not a UFO connection can ever be proven.

But many of us suspected a great deal more would take place within a very few months. And in March 1966 the next act of the greatest American flap yet opened.

NOTES

- ¹ The most intelligent critique of the "official" explanation I have yet seen is "The Question of the Power Blackouts," *The A.P.R.O. Bulletin*, November-December 1965, pp. 4-7. See also Ch. 15 of Fuller's book.
- ² Charles Bowen discusses the very earliest stages of the new flap in *Michigan Furor*, *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, May/June 1966, pp. 4-6.
- ³ *A.P.R.O. Bulletin*, November/December 1965, p. 3. (3910 E. Kleindale Road, Tucson, Arizona, 85716 U.S.A.)
- ⁴ A similar detail was noted by Olden Moore of Ohio in his classic encounter of November 6, 1957. (See NICAP's *The UFO Evidence*, p. 169.)
- ⁵ National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, 1536 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, U.S.A.

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UFO REPORTS requiring investigation should be sent to Ken Rogers, Deputy Information Officer, 1 Vicars Moor Lane, N.21. For full details of THE BRITISH U.F.O. RESEARCH ASSOCIATION and lectures, send a 9 in. x 4 in. S.A.E. to: Lionel Beer (FSR), Flat 15, Freshwater Court, Crawford Street, London, W.1.

A FLYING SAUCER FOUNDATION

I thank all those readers who wrote in response to my article in the March/April issue and I ask them to accept this report in reply. It is clear that there would not be sufficient financial support to launch a private Foundation on the lines envisaged in the article.

Since it was published, news has been released of a substantial grant by the U.S. government to the University of Colorado for the purpose of investigating flying saucers and this attempt to accomplish our aim is welcomed. At the same time, I believe that any extra-terrestrial explanation of flying saucers may well be first provided by information obtained from space and it is encouraging to see the analysis of photographic film sent back to earth by the first Lunar Orbiter spacecraft and reported in *The Times* of October 8th under the heading: "Dynamic Evolution seen on the Moon". It would seem that the moon is by no means a dead body; therefore, if there are travellers in space visiting earth they are more likely to have bases on the moon, which should be open to discovery in the quite near future.

JOHN LADE