

2. Was the photo in fact taken from inside a vehicle at all?
3. If it was so taken, what vehicles have near-vertical windscreens?
4. Where is the port-side wind-screen-wiper?
5. Why is the outline of the wind-screen frame so uneven and wavy, and why is there no indication of the moulded surround?
6. Was there any glass in front of the camera when the photo was taken?
7. As the vehicle, if there is one, appears to have been pulled up very close to the edge of the road, if not actually over it, why did not Mr. Heflin quickly hop out of it and take the shot properly, without any glass in front of him?
8. Considering the strong light which is evidently lighting the

UFO from the right, why are there no shadows being cast upon the road by the telegraph poles on the right?

I am, as most of your readers know, a firm believer in the existence of UFOs, which I believe come from outer space. But the whole question of UFO photography wants to be watched with an eagle eye. I doubt whether more than a dozen or so of the hundreds of UFO photos I have seen, can be pronounced free of suspicion.—Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, London, S.W.7. [May 1967].

*[The Heflin photographs have been examined by photo-analysts of NICAP (Washington D.C.) who have indicated that they feel they are genuine. Mr. Heflin, a public-works roads inspector claims that he took them from an official truck. All four prints were sent to us by Mr. Ralph Rankow, formerly NICAP photographic consultant, and*

*if space permits, we hope to include an item about them.—EDITOR.]*

#### A scientist writes . . .

[In our March/April Mail Bag columns, we published a letter from an un-named European physicist. He has something more to say on the matter of the **Bent Light Rays.**]

Sir,—Thanks for publishing my remarks. In the case of the beam bending and the motor car crash in Australia, would you kindly suppress the restrictions concerning the lower speed of the motor vehicle. Because it turns out that the slower the speed, the smaller the radius of curvature of the trajectory (if the driving force is proportional to the mass concerned). So after all it may very well be that the force bending the light rays would also have caused the motor vehicle to crash. So please erase the restriction qualifying low speeds.

# MORE FROM MY OHIO VALLEY NOTE BOOK

by John A. Keel

## Sistersville, W. Va., Revisited

WHILE driving along the Ohio River valley in April, 1967, I passed through the sleepy little town of Sistersville, W. Va., and decided to stop and check out the celebrated UFO sighting of 1897. According to Major Donald E. Keyhoe's book, *The Flying Saucers are Real*, and Dr. Jacques Vallée's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*<sup>1</sup>, a large object surrounded by bright lights appeared over this place at 9 p.m. on April 19, 1897<sup>2</sup>. The story as generally told states that the object projected a powerful searchlight on to the ground and that the local mills blew their whistles to alert the residents.

My first stop was at the local library where I learned that no history of the town existed and, in fact, the only reference available was a dog-eared copy of Major Keyhoe's book. "A lot of people have been trying to find out more about that light," the librarian said. "But I don't believe there are any written records of it."

I visited the local newspaper office next and was told that the "old office and all of its files were destroyed by a fire in the 1950s". When asked if anyone had reported seeing anything unusual in the sky more recently the editor shrugged. "I've heard a few rumours . . . but we haven't published anything on 'em," he said. Then he delivered a commercial about the newly reconstructed hotel and advised me to see it before I left town.

At the Town Hall, across the street from the news-

paper office, I chatted with a few people, none of whom seemed to know anything about the 1897 incident, but they all suggested that there might be someone at the hotel who could help me. So, feeling that I had been conned into making an unplanned visit to the hotel, I rather reluctantly sought it out. And it was there that I struck "pay dirt".

Five minutes after I walked into the picturesque Hotel Wells, a careful reconstruction of a Gay Nineties hostelry, I was surrounded by people all shyly claiming to have seen UFOs in recent months. The daughter of the desk clerk, Joyce McGinnis, 17, said that she and several of her friends had observed a strange object hovering at low altitude directly over the Ford Garage on a late November afternoon in 1966. It was like an inverted mushroom, she explained, luminous but obviously a solid silvery metallic object with a dark band around its middle. Several other people in the hotel verified this and outlined their own sightings. One young man claimed that he and his friends had actually pursued one of these objects for several miles in an automobile in December.

(Later I stopped by the Ford Garage and discovered that it was on a slight rise directly overlooking the local school and the large school playground.)

Mrs. McGinnis was able to give me the phone number of the town's unofficial historian, Mr. Roy Thistle, who took a special interest in UFO sightings. Mr. Thistle, it developed, was two years old at the time of the 1897 sighting. In a phone conversation he told me that

he had often heard his father tell of the event, and he had known many of the other witnesses besides.

"It was just a meteor," Mr. Thistle explained. "And it didn't appear at 9 p.m. like all those books say. It was early in the morning . . . just before dawn . . . around 4.30 a.m. The thing was like a big ball of fire but it moved kind of slow and made a loud hissing sound. It came from the southwest and moved up the river and away towards the northeast."

Less than an hour after I had arrived in Sistersville I was in the office of the town's leading attorney, Mr. Robert Wright, a charming giant of a man who was a UFO buff.

"We've been seeing these things for months," Mr. Wright declared. "In fact, since last summer they've been showing up here almost every Wednesday like clockwork. Everybody's been watching them . . . but not everybody likes to talk about them. Now we're so well organized that when somebody spots one of them passing over they just grab the phone . . . we're all on party lines here . . . and yells 'UFO east', or 'UFO west', or whatever direction it's going in and everybody runs out and watches."

A wide variety of objects have been apparently observed manoeuvring low over the hills directly behind the town. Some have been metallic discs, others have been bright coloured lights. Cigar-shaped objects have also been seen.

"One Wednesday a few weeks back," Mr. Wright told me, "my wife and I watched one of these things for an hour just over that hill." He pointed to a high ridge visible from his office window. "Then it seemed to split into three . . . and all three of them took off like a herd of turtles."

Maybe the 1897 object was a meteor, but the folks at Sistersville are all certain that the things they've been watching during the past year are manufactured objects under intelligent control. Yet the local press has ignored these sightings and no one has bothered to report them to the Air Force or anyone else. They seem to realise that the situation in Sistersville is not unique. They know that the same things are being seen in all the other towns up and down the valley.

"They're weird all right," Mr. Wright stated. "But they don't seem to bother anybody."

#### **Aborted kidnap of a bloodmobile**

My next case was told to me by the schoolteacher father of the witness, and he told me the story in front of his class! I have no reason to doubt the story, but I must explain that I have never been able to get the young man on the phone. I gather that he was pretty badly shaken up by the incident, which is hardly surprising.

Early in March 1967 (believed to be March 5), a Red Cross Bloodmobile (a van which visits towns and obtains blood from volunteer donors) was moving along Highway 2, near the Ohio River, when a large glowing object descended over it and lowered two long arm-like projections, one on either side of the vehicle. The driver, Beau Shertz, 21, became extremely alarmed and accelerated, but the object remained with the vehicle and the arms appeared to be trying to pick up the whole machine. Fortunately some traffic

approached from the opposite direction, and when the headlights appeared the object withdrew the arms and flew away.

A nurse was in the vehicle, and both she and Shertz were hysterical when they reached Huntington, W.Va.

The incident was mentioned once in a radio newscast, but there was no mention of it in the local press. I found the driver's father in Point Pleasant: he was convinced his son was telling the truth, and says that he now refuses to drive along that highway . . . even in daylight.

#### **Telephone incidents**

A number of unusual telephone incidents now seem to be occurring throughout the country. Some—or all—of these could be the work of hoaxers, or just examples of telephone malfunctions. However, we should keep track of these incidents and search for possible patterns.

West Virginia has had its share. A number of UFO witnesses during January/April, 1967, later received calls which consisted only of a steady "bleeping" sound.

Others, including police using police radios, reported strange voices cutting in on all channels, speaking in an undecipherable language, while the witnesses were observing UFOs near their autos. Point Pleasant police said these voices sounded like "speeded-up phonograph records". Others said "they seemed to be speaking Spanish or Puerto Rican, very fast". Similar voices were picked up on CB radios on Long Island during the sightings of 1966, and in August of that year, a voice cut into the commercial channels of radios in several parts of Minnesota and announced: "Stand by for a message from outer space . . ." The message was never forthcoming.

UFOs have frequently been sighted around the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Lilly in Point Pleasant, W.Va., and their TV set reacts to these flights. Mrs. Lilly claims that, "I hope you don't think I'm losing my mind, but the other day I heard a baby cry, and there isn't a baby in the house, or even close by." Recently Mrs. Lilly's teenage daughter was talking on the phone when "suddenly the phone sounded as if it went dead, and this voice started talking in a language I couldn't understand." The Lilly's car has also been stalling. They live on the edge of the TNT area, site of many "monster" reports and UFO appearances.

POSTSCRIPT: In New Jersey, in December, a voice cut in on a long distance phone conversation, and claimed to be the voice of a space man. Telephone company personnel were alerted by the subscriber's wife from the house next door. They were able to monitor the call but could not trace it.

During his fourth pass over Hawaii in MA-9, Faith 7, on May 15, 1963, Astronaut Gordon Cooper's voice transmission was interrupted by an "unintelligible, foreign language transmission" on the channel reserved for space flights. NASA recorded the transmission, but were never able to identify or translate it. (05 41 38 of flight transcript.)

#### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Paperback edition.

<sup>2</sup> FSR, July/August 1966, p.12.

# MORE ON 1897

by Jerome Clark

Our contributor from Minnesota makes a welcome return to the columns of  
FLYING SAUCER REVIEW after a long illness.

THE 1897 UFO wave has been ignored far too long. Until 1965 UFO students had been little more than aware of its existence, relying upon the incomplete and somewhat misleading data of Fort,<sup>1</sup> Keyhoe,<sup>2</sup> and Ruppelt.<sup>3</sup> With the appearance of Jacques Vallée's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*—which drew attention to the LeRoy incident—interest in the period has grown considerably, and preliminary studies into the "airship" and related matters have already been published in the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW by Vallée, Donald Hanlon, Lucius Farish, and this writer.<sup>4</sup> Gordon Lore of the NICAP staff has written an important new book, to be published this year, that will deal in part with the airship.

It is now evident that the 1897 flap contains within it a number of highly significant clues to the UFO problem, and I suspect that a really thorough search through newspaper morgues, files of state historical societies, etc., would uncover masses of data that might place the general enigma in a new and radically different context. Even today, it seems to me, the "traditional" theories of ufologists are becoming increasingly irrelevant in the new light of the 1897 evidence. The relatively simple picture drawn by Keyhoe, Hall, Lorenzen, Oberth and most other serious investigators may eventually have to be discarded and replaced with—who knows?

## A Photograph

In common with its latter-day counterpart, the "flying saucer," the airship was photographed. Although to my knowledge none of these photographs has survived, the following account, discovered by Farish, is interesting because of its extreme detail. The photographer and speaker is Mr. C. D. Lawrence, a view artist:

"At 5.15 this morning (April 26) I was awakened by someone who ran into the house, arousing the inmates with the explanation that a large balloon was hovering over Baring Cross, beyond the upper bridge. The house where I was stopping is located near the power house of the street railway company, commanding an excellent view of that portion of the city where the mystery was seen. With other members of the household I hurried out and saw what at first appeared to be a very large balloon moving toward the south at a very rapid rate. It was coming end-on and I soon saw that it was not a balloon but the airship about which we have so long been reading. It approached toward the river, and then suddenly veered towards the east and after proceeding a short distance, turned northward, soon disappearing from sight, after having been visible for at least fifteen minutes. I secured a negative while

it appeared broad-side toward the amazed observers, and as you may see a very good view was secured. The negative shows a large cylindrical body pointed at both ends like a cigar, apparently about forty feet in length, although it was seen at such an altitude that no one could accurately judge of its dimensions. A car, in which the navigators of the vessel resided, depended from the buoyant body, being a large box-like arrangement, from which a heavy anchor depended by means of a long rope.<sup>5</sup> The propeller is arranged at one of the ends of the ship, as is plainly shown in the negative. I could not, of course, definitely give the velocity, but I think I am safe in saying that it could not have been less than fifty miles an hour. The testimony of the large number who witnessed the strange sight would be conclusive evidence of its genuineness, even if I had not been so fortunate as to secure this negative."

## A Contact

The next story appeared in the Harrisburg, Arkansas, *Modern News* for April 23, 1897. I am, frankly, quite sceptical of this account, mainly because of its suspiciously excessive detail. But several points are significant: for one, we have here probably the first reference to a UFO powered by "anti-gravity", a feature not to become prominent until the advent of the post-1947 contact claims. Secondly, the aeronaut expresses an interest in terrestrial political problems, especially the plight of the Cuban people under Spanish rule; an April 15 contact near Springfield, Illinois, has the airship's occupants discussing the same topic.<sup>6</sup> Third, as a point of possible corroboration, Mr. Harris's mention of an "old gentleman (who) wore a heavy set of dark, silken whiskers, which hung down near his waist", is reminiscent of Sumpter and McLemore's "man with a long dark beard".<sup>7</sup> Harris's airship allegedly contained a crew of, in addition to the old man, two young men and a woman; Sumpter and McLemore reported an elderly man, a young man and a woman. On the minus side, a search through the files of a Dallas daily newspaper did not turn up any reported sightings of an airship shortly after midnight of the morning of April 21.

I am presenting this claim, despite my reservations, for the record. Parts of the story had faded so badly on the newspaper page that they were impossible to read. Where this had happened, I have so indicated with a dash.

"The airship of which we have read so much of late has caused considerable comment but no one ever dreamed that it would ever be anchored in Harrisburg. Wednesday night (April 21) Ex-Senator Harris was