

# RING CLOUDS AND ANGEL HAIR

By *Barrie Pottage*

In the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* for July-August, 1963, there appeared a reference to the mysterious cloud formation seen over Arizona which "Science" declared to be unprecedented in years of sky-watching. The author has collated other similar sightings and they are printed here as they may well have some connection with flying saucers. Appended is an instance of the angel's hair phenomenon. Except where noted the following observations were taken from the "U.S. Notices to Mariners" and they are reprinted with the permission of the compilers. The "Spiders' Filaments" and the "Ring Cloud" incidents are reprinted from the "Marine Observer" for October, 1963, with permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

## 1. North Pacific

4th April, 1963, 0500 G.M.T.  
Lat. 31° 30' N., long. 128° 53' W.

Junior Second Officer B. Gronberg of the Swedish M.V. Kungsholm, Capt. H. Solje, Master reported the following:—

"On passage from Honolulu to Los Angeles a white cloud, more intensive than the surrounding clouds, was seen. A few seconds later the cloud transformed into several concentric rings which became larger and larger similar to the rings formed when a stone is dropped into smooth water. In the centre of the inner ring 6 or 7 bright white dots similar to bright stars were seen. The phenomenon was bearing 315° altitude 45° and was moving westward very rapidly. After about 3 minutes the dots separated into 2 groups, one group proceeded as before and the other group turned to the right and disappeared. The phenomenon lasted about 7 minutes."

Weather partly cloudy with good visibility, wind N.E. force 1, temperatures: dry 20.0° C., wet 16.8° C.

## 2. North Pacific

15th June, 1963, 1120 G.M.T.  
Lat. 7° 10' N., long. 81° 26' W.

Second Officer George R. Berens of the American S.S. Elizabethport, Capt. John T. E. Bodden, Master, reported the following:—

"On passage from the Panama Canal to Long Beach, California, an unusual cloud was observed. It was composed of 4 concentric rings and pure white. It bore 280° altitude 35°. It appeared above large cumulus clouds which were tinged

with grey and pale yellowish tints. Two other clouds similar but of less regular formation were observed at the same time."

Weather cloudy, wind 31° at 5 knots, slight sea and swell, barometer 1012.9 mbs., air temp. 26.7° C., sea temp. 28.9° C.

## 3. Red Sea

1st November, 1962, 2005 S.M.T.  
Lat. 19° 37' N., long. 39° 10' E.

Mr. B. F. Keith, Extra Third Officer, of the S.S. City of Liverpool, Capt. T. S. Dennis, Master, and many of the ship's company, observed the following:—

"At 2005 S.M.T. a ball of what seemed to be dense white cloud was seen on a bearing of 260° at an altitude of about 7°. As it approached, and passed ahead of the vessel, moving in a north-easterly direction, it assumed the form of a smoke ring, the apparent diameter of which, when bearing 350°, was about 5 or 6 times that of the full moon. The ring, which became elliptical in shape, as shown in the accompanying drawing, was thought to be rotating in an anticlockwise direction. By 2015 it had completely disappeared, having become increasingly indistinct as it receded from the ship. The sky was cloudless and visibility was very good. The moon, age 4 days, was setting on a bearing of about 252°."

Wind, light northwesterly airs, air temp. 86.2° F., wet bulb 77.3°, sea 88.1°.

Met. Office's remark:— "We can suggest no reasonable explanation of the phenomena described above."

The following reports, in date order, concern objects with halos or rings around them:—

### 1. North Atlantic

4th November, 1959, 2155 G.M.T.  
Lat.  $19^{\circ} 57' N.$ , long.  $52^{\circ} 21' W.$

A Panamanian ship reported the following:—

"A bright body, of first magnitude, with a halo, was seen crossing the sky on an easterly course at a high speed. It took 5 minutes to disappear above the horizon."

### 2. North Atlantic

4th November, 1959, 2155 G.M.T.  
Lat.  $15^{\circ} 00' N.$ , long.  $27^{\circ} 22' W.$

A British ship reported the following:—

"An object, like a planet with a halo around it, was sighted bearing  $275^{\circ}$  altitude  $7^{\circ}$ . It moved up to altitude  $40^{\circ}$  bearing about  $206^{\circ}$  and then disappeared. It was visible 10-15 minutes."

### 3. Philippines

5th June, 1960, 1128 G.M.T.  
Lat.  $6^{\circ} 53' N.$ , long.  $126^{\circ} 32' E.$

A Danish ship reported the following:—

"A round flying object, size of Jupiter, yellowish with encircling rings, was seen bearing  $50^{\circ}$  altitude  $28^{\circ}$ . It travelled at a very high speed, estimated over 3,000 m.p.h., for 4 seconds when it disappeared behind clouds bearing  $90^{\circ}$ . There was no trail, but a lingering light followed the object."

### 4. North Atlantic

25th June, 1960, 0016 G.M.T.  
Lat.  $21^{\circ} 03' N.$ , long.  $48^{\circ} 52' W.$

A Liberian ship reported the following:—

"A flying body was first observed bearing  $277^{\circ}$  altitude  $7^{\circ}$ . It rose at high speed to  $90^{\circ}$  and then disappeared, having been visible for about 2 minutes. The body was surrounded by a circular white cloud, and through binoculars it looked like a planet (size of Neptune), and had a smaller moon in front of it."

### 5. North Pacific

21st September, 1961, 1700 G.M.T.  
Lat.  $31^{\circ} 30' N.$ ,  $175^{\circ} 30' E.$

An American ship reported the following:—

"A few minutes before morning twilight a white opaque mass, about twice the size of full moon, appeared in the north west, altitude about  $20^{\circ}$ . It continued to climb toward the zenith and at approximately  $40^{\circ}$  altitude the mass opened gradually to appear as a huge halo with a satellite in the centre, having very nearly the brightness

of a first magnitude star. By the time it reached zenith it had more than doubled its size, but then diminished as it proceeded south eastwards. It continued to decrease in size but did not appear to shrink into a corona as it had appeared, but rather faded out completely at altitude  $20^{\circ}$ . The entire mass was visible 8 to 10 minutes."

### 6. North Atlantic

27th November, 1963, 1926 G.M.T.  
Lat.  $13^{\circ} 05' N.$ ,  $22^{\circ} 45' W.$

The Master of the Panamanian M.V. Kimolos reported the following:—

"A celestial body the size of a planet with bright circles was observed bearing  $225^{\circ}$  altitude  $32^{\circ}$ . The body moved at high speed to the south southeast and disappeared bearing  $175^{\circ}$  at 1927 G.M.T."

### SPIDERS' FILAMENTS AT MONTREAL

M.V. Roxburgh Castle. Captain R. H. Pape.

The following is the text of a letter received from the Master dated 10th October, 1962:—

"At 2000 G.M.T. while the Roxburgh Castle was moored to her berth in Montreal, I was walking round outside my accommodation and noticed fine white filaments of unknown kind hanging around stanchions and topping lift wires of derricks.

"Calling the attention of the Chief Officer, I pulled one of these strands from a stanchion and found it to be quite tough and resilient. I stretched it but it would not break easily (as, for instance, a cobweb would have done) and after keeping it in my hand for 3 or 4 minutes it disappeared completely; in other words it just vanished into nothing.

"Looking up we could see small cocoons of the material floating down from the sky but as far as we could ascertain there was nothing either above or at street level to account for this extraordinary occurrence.

"Unfortunately I could not manage to preserve samples of the filaments as the disappearance took place so quickly.

"I would be very glad to know what explanation, if any, can be given to account for the phenomenon."

Note. Mr. D. J. Clark, of the Natural History Museum, comments as follows:—

"Spiders are, I think, responsible for the phenomena you describe. The majority of these particular spiders belong to the family Linyphiidae, and mature in the autumn. In the autumn on fine, warm and sunny days, especially with a fairly heavy early morning dew, the

spiders begin to disperse and migrate in order to colonise new areas where the food supply is greater. The method they use is known as 'ballooning.' As the sun dries off the dew, upward air currents are created. The spider runs to the top of a plant, fence, etc., and lifting the tip of the abdomen emits a globule of liquid silk. This silk is drawn out in a thread by the air currents and hardens as a result of this drawing out, not simply by contact with the air. When the thread is long enough to support the spider, it lets go of its support and flies away. The spiders sometimes are carried many miles. Eventually, they come down to earth and on landing cut free the 'parachute.' This again floats away and

becomes entangled with other threads, sometimes quite thick bands are thus formed, and when this again settles down it is very conspicuous. The single thread is very fine and difficult to see unless the light is reflected from it, but when entangled together with other threads it is easy to see and quite tough and resilient.

"I cannot explain the disappearance of these strands when held in the hand. It may be that the threads of the strand you describe were not so entangled and when handled broke up into individual threads thus becoming very inconspicuous. Spider silk cannot melt because heat does not affect it, it is on the whole less soluble than true silk."

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## LIFE ON THE MOON?

by the Reverend Guy J. Cyr

THE leading article in the January-February issue was, as usual, excellent, and I think that one of its points could well be elaborated. The leader writer remarked that the scientist is logical in rejecting that which is impossible, but the philosopher goes deeper and asks: "Does man know the *limits* of possibilities?" Obviously he does not, for he keeps on discovering and inventing things which, in the previous generation, were "impossible." I do not like that pessimistic word, especially when it is applied to the question of extraterrestrial life. In my judgment, the scientist as an individual and privately does not like it either. Even in his carefully worded public statements you can see the typical scientist today believes clandestinely that there are living creatures elsewhere in the cosmos.

Years ago telescopic observations "proved" that the surface of the moon was covered by rocks casting weird shadows. Then, the astronomers "discovered" smaller pieces in the form of volcanic slag and ashes and, of course, the reports are filed with the unproven word "lifeless." Then later the word "dust" becomes prominent as a description of the material which allegedly constitutes the lunar surface. It's much better; but, it's far from being as *lively* as "soil," "loam" or "humus."

However, that "dust" is more mysterious than life itself, for according to various researchers for the U.S. Air Force and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration this dust is fibrous and skeletal; and there is nothing like it on earth.

Briefly, these experts in the past year or so, after analysing carefully data obtained from visual, photometric, polarimetric, infra-red, microwave and radio-wave observations, concluded variously that the surface of our natural satellite must be covered with a material comprising "deep holes with vertical walls and sharp edges." This substance, whatever it is, they continue, must be covered by dust which must cling to the slopes, even the vertical walls of the deep cavities. These quotations are from the *official* report made by NASA, December, 1962.

### A Positive Approach

However, the very same scientists were much more free to talk and, therefore, much bolder in their individual reports made in writing or orally. Notice the positive approach in their expressions when they described recently the composition and structure of the lunar surface: "powder that has a cobweb-like structure." Another: "deep layers of fluffy matter." A third