

with lights pulsating in a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, pattern.) There was also an object flat underneath with a tail or fin, an object of hammered metal, and an object with two lights the width of a wingspread. (One wonders what scientists would say if such descriptions of ball lightning appeared in an encyclopedia!).

To me, however, one of the most remarkable things about this whole series of sightings is this: of the more than 60 persons interviewed, not one mentioned physical harm done by the "masses of charged particles". Not one person was hurt, not one car damaged, no grass or forest fires started, no trees or rooftops set afire by these huge globs of plasma which were floating around so freely in Exeter and vicinity for several months in the fall of 1965. This dangerous phenomenon called ball lightning, in spite of its durability, great size, and apparent attraction to a variety of objects, always managed to stop short of actual contact with environment, while one on a collision course with a tree was seen to go up over the tree.

This bafflement in the face of the explanations is probably "old hat" to the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW and its readers, but I am still new enough to the field to be bewildered by it. Consistent testimony from so many

would seem to indicate the phenomena was accurately described. I am not saying ball lightning cannot show the appearance and behaviour described here, but I do believe any explanation based on the "plasma theory" must account for the features demonstrated in these accounts, without any attempt to minimise or distort them.

One last point—about those "cloud cigars" and the tornado theory. Anyone living close to the "tornado belt" of the midwestern U.S.A. would know better than to compare the awesome but dignified "Type II" appearance and behaviour with the rampaging fury of one of nature's most terrible spectacles. Whether or not they touch the ground, tornadoes are not the kind of thing you just stand and watch! They do not remain stationary in the sky so that you can watch them for half an hour, wondering what they are. You know what they are—the accompanying clouds (black), hail, lightning, and noise leave little room for doubt. Nor do I recall any news account describing a fall of "angel hair" in the wake of a tornado.

NOTES

- ¹ Refer to FLYING SAUCER REVIEW January/February 1967 p. iv of cover.
- ² FSR January/February 1967
- ³ John G. Fuller, *Incident at Exeter*: Putnam.

TWENTY YEARS BACK

by Brinsley Le Poer Trench

This is the third contribution in the present series by a former Editor of Flying Saucer Review, reminding us of some of the classic sightings of two decades ago.

A FEW days after Kenneth Arnold's famous sighting of nine gleaming discs near Mt. Rainier, State of Washington, another remarkable one occurred involving a United Airlines plane.

On the evening of July 4, 1947, a DC-3 commanded by Captain E. J. Smith, a greatly respected veteran pilot of considerable experience, took off from Boise, Idaho. His co-pilot and First Officer was Ralph Stevens.

Captain Smith was a sceptic about flying saucers before the sightings as you will see from the following extract of his account related afterwards to Kenneth Arnold.

"We landed our DC-3 at Boise, Idaho, shortly before nine last night and, afraid to be late in our schedule, we took off promptly at 9.04. The weather was perfect. It was a funny thing, but just before take-off as I was climbing aboard our DC-3 someone in the crowd piped up and asked me if I had seen any flying saucers. Up to this time I not only hadn't seen any, but really didn't believe there were such things, though I was polite to the inquirer and yelled back at him that I would believe them when I saw them."

Eight minutes later he saw them!

Captain Smith and his crew saw not just one saucer but nine, just as Arnold had a few days earlier.

Eight minutes after take-off five 'flat and circular' discs appeared in formation. Captain Smith contacted

over his radio microphone the Ontario, Oregon, C.A.A. radio communication station, and asked if they could see anything. He was given a negative reply.

His co-pilot, Ralph Stevens, then reported that the five saucers had gone. However, four more came into view. Three in a group together and the fourth off on its own.

These objects then appeared to merge, disappear and then re-appear. Finally, they left and in the words of Captain Smith "and fast!"

Captain Smith stated that the objects were circular, flat on the bottom and bigger than any aircraft that we had on Earth.

The saucers were under observation for over ten minutes and were watched not only by Captain Smith and his First Officer but also by Martie Morrow, the DC-3's stewardess, who was specially called on to the flight deck.

Were these the same nine discs that Arnold had seen a few days earlier? Possibly not, as Arnold described the objects he had seen as crescent-shaped, but a lot depends upon the angle from which the craft are seen.

SOURCES

- The Coming of the Saucers*, by Kenneth Arnold & Ray Palmer, Amherst, Wisconsin, 1952.
The Riddle of the Flying Saucers, by Gerald Heard, Carroll & Nicolson, London, 1950.