

PART TWO

The Problem of Communicating Experience

UFO WATCHERS: THE LONELY CROWD

Mort Young

The author was a reporter and feature writer on the *New York Journal-American* when the Michigan 'flap' of 1966 began. His book 'UFO—Top Secret', published in 1967, fully outlines his findings.

FOR a full 45 days in the early spring of 1966, and again for nine days that June, unidentified flying objects visited communities within a 100-mile radius of New York City.

Few New Yorkers learned of the sightings. Newspapers and radio and television stations ignored them with only a few exceptions. Outside the communities affected, only one New York newspaper—my own, the *Journal-American* (now defunct)—briefly mentioned two sightings. The nation's largest city remained uninformed.

The situation was neither unusual nor unique. The inhabitants of most, if not all, major American cities have been kept ignorant of nearby UFO visits for the last 20 years.

At first glance, it seemed that collusion between the press and the government was the answer. Such a marriage of expediency is alluded to by those claiming that a massive plot is underfoot to keep the truth about flying saucers from the public.

But if that were so, then I would not have been assigned to cover the Michigan sightings and told to continue to explore UFOs in as many articles as I deemed necessary. Nor would syndicated columnists have written series of articles outlining the UFO problem and the Air Force methods of handling it.

Officially, newsmen have been told for the last two decades that UFO reports are inadequately detailed by lay observers. When the reports come from trained personnel, an answer is always found: radar malfunctions, balloons seen at an unusual angle. Other explanations involve planets, stars, and meteorite showers, as well as people catching glimpses of secret, experimental airborne devices.

Privately, newsmen puzzled by a continual stream of UFO reports have been assured that such reports are nonsense sent in by cranks, publicity seekers, and honestly mistaken people who, once having called attention to themselves, are loath to admit that they embroidered their story.

As far as the public is concerned, of the UFOs reported and officially investigated between 1947 and 1966, only 5 per cent, or 6 per cent, or 1 per cent—depending on which official is talking—remain unexplained.

Yet, after studying the cases and the explanations, the official identifications of the UFOs are often more unbelievable than the incidents which they pretend to explain. The result is an atmosphere of ridicule which automatically descends on people honest—or foolish—enough to report a UFO.

After an unprecedented series of sightings in the spring of 1966 in

upstate New York, a woman whose family watched the UFOs night after night commented: "Do you think there's something wrong with us?" In Pennsylvania, a father said he had hesitated to report a UFO incident "because I was afraid people would say we were crazy".

The nation at large is left with no "realistic" alternative but to consider UFO witnesses liars and fools—a conclusion that hundreds of people who have known and respected them for years reject. Nonetheless, it is a conclusion that is in agreement with the official policy that unidentified flying objects are beneath the dignity of intelligent men.

Men and women who have seen UFOs are not unique and their separate sightings are not unique. What was seen yesterday has been seen before.

Still, the past 20 years have taught people to keep their silence, to remain isolated in their knowledge, alone in their wonderment, frightened of being thought ridiculous.

Perhaps most frightening of all the effects is the reluctance to report unidentified flying objects—a reluctance shared by Air Force pilots, including members of the Strategic Air Command. Are they all paranoiacs? Can five million Americans share identical illusions?¹

We have been effectively cut off from each other, as though living on islands separated by vast reaches of ocean. Concerning UFOs, New York City does not know what happened in Boston. Pittsburgh remains ignorant of sightings in Camden. San Francisco is blind to the experiences of Denver. God knows what takes place in Washington!

If this can be accomplished for the sake of keeping UFOs semi-secret, it can be accomplished at any time, for any purpose. We can all be fragmented into ignorant mobs of lonely strangers.

The "Flaps" of 1966

On the night of March 30, 1966, police departments in Cayuga, Oswego, Ontario and Seneca counties in upstate New York received hundreds of phone calls within a single two-hour period, between 10 o'clock and midnight, reporting lights and lighted objects aloft. Patrolmen radioed their own sightings to headquarters throughout the four counties.

The UFOs, some resembling shallow lampshades, slammed across the cloudless skies in fantastic convoys; others danced at tree-top level over hills, through valleys. Always, the UFOs fled toward the south.

That eerie Wednesday night was like Hallowe'en for thousands of people all over the country. Around 10 p.m. that evening a young man named Bruce Fields was driving along highway 27 outside East Hampton, a small town near the very tip of Long Island, east of New York City. As he neared the McKay Radio Towers next to the highway (these towers beam signals across the Atlantic), his automobile stalled suddenly. He climbed out and started to look at the engine. Suddenly he became aware of a giant luminous object hovering directly above him. He felt a rush of paralyzing fear and stood transfixed until the object silently floated away.

On April 5, 1966, I visited Long Island for the *Journal-American* to interview UFO witnesses who had phoned or written to me. One family in particular, the Spicers, had an intriguing story to tell. They lived on a shady back street in East

Hampton in an area where the homes were fairly well separated by fields and trees. Mr. Dallas Spicer, 34, said that around 9.0 p.m. on the night of Wednesday, March 30, 1966, he noticed a strange beam of light apparently focused on the telephone pole outside their home. It seemed to be coming from above and was directed at the base of the pole. Whatever it was, it moved around slightly and was bright enough to cause the pole to cast a shadow.

Mr. Spicer called his wife from the house and she also watched this odd phenomenon for several minutes. One of their four children, Shirley May, 9, joined them and pointed out a black oval object hovering high in the air above the pole. The beam of light, they all testified, seemed to grow brighter and appeared to consist of a bright outer beam with a slightly different kind of light inside it.

"The wires kind of vibrated . . . jumped around," Mr. Spicer observed.

At approximately 10.10 p.m. Mrs. Spicer decided to call the local police. A police car arrived a few minutes later with its red light flashing.

"As soon as the police car drove up," Mr. Spicer said, "the light dimmed and the object seemed to fade out."

The policeman looked around but could not see anything unusual. He left shortly afterwards. As soon as he drove off, the object faded back into view and the beam of light brightened on the telephone pole.

"Then it started to move in closer," Mr. Spicer noted. "It came in real close . . . maybe 300-400 feet up."

The excited family decided to call the police again. But shortly after Mrs. Spicer placed the call the object rose upwards and disappeared eastward.

This marked the beginning of a long sequence of UFO sightings for the Spicers.²

Another family living in an isolated upstate region near Lake Carmel, N.Y., began seeing unidentifiable things in the sky on March 31, 1966. In the weeks that followed they claimed that they saw dozens of UFOs on 24 different

nights. After they wrote to me at the *Journal-American* I visited their home, interviewed them at length and asked them to keep a diary of sightings. They asked me not to reveal their names, so in my book I referred to them as the "Smiths".

They said they saw armadas of gold, silver, red, blue and green lights and objects, hovering and dancing low over the nearby hills and forests. Some seemed of huge proportions. Some resembled stars that changed weirdly into V-shapes; others were crescent-shaped; still others floated by like airborne torpedoes. A rare sight was a mushroom-shaped UFO. There were sparkling silver balls, and saucer-shaped objects with greenish domes. Reddish objects appeared also, and cast out double beams of red light.

The Smiths weren't the only ones seeing UFOs in the Lake Carmel skies. But the mystery was "solved" on April 14 when a deputy sheriff found a bright red balloon stuck in a treetop. On the balloon was stencilled, "U.S. Army Property. If found, this object is not dangerous." This discovery did not bring the sightings to a halt, however. According to the Smith's diary, they saw unexplainable things on the nights of April 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, and May 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 15.

At my request, the Smiths telephoned the Stewart Air Force Base on April 18. Nine days later, on April 27, a young lieutenant, accompanied by his wife and child, dropped by and asked them a few questions about the objects.

In early July, the Smiths received a telephone call from the Air Force, requesting to see their notes. They still did not know what it was the family had seen. Although the sightings perplexed them, the most unusual UFO they described was one resembling a mushroom: a column attached to a base.

For whatever consolation it holds for the Smiths—they are not alone. Mushroom UFOs were reported on October 3, 1954, in Chereng and Armentieres, France, and on October 28 in Yaounde, Cameroun, where a witness described it as "an enormous, stationary disk, powerfully illuminated, mushroom-shaped, and carrying beneath it a

cylinder of a length equal to its own diameter, which was dangling from it". An upside-down mushroom object was seen also on September 2, 1961, over Fairborn, Ohio.

Yet—what did the Smiths see?

Ever since I became involved with the Michigan sightings, people have asked me: "Are they real?" When I reply that I think they are—the "they" being understood—the next question invariably is: "What are they?" I cannot answer

that one in less than two hours. But I am tired of seeming impolite by countering: "I don't know", and cutting the conversation short. Nor do I enjoy being confronted by a belligerent - yet - doubtful - face mouthing the flat statement: "I don't believe they're from outer space." I usually shrug and mumble something such as: "I don't believe you believe it, either."

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Portions reprinted from "UFO-

TOP SECRET" by Mort Young, published by Simon & Shuster, New York, 1967.

NOTES

- ¹ A 1966 Gallup Poll asserted that 5 million Americans had seen UFOs.
- ² The Spicers continued to report sightings near their home, including the brief touchdown of a reddish object in April, 1966. Their reputation suffered because of their frequent reports. In the summer of 1966, their home burned to the ground. The local fire department was unable to determine the cause of the blaze. Mr. Spicer was born in West Virginia. His wife, Shirley, is part Indian.

FSR PUBLICATIONS; SOME FACTS . . .

BEYOND CONDON . . . is the second special issue published by **FLYING SAUCER REVIEW** (popularly known as "FSR") during the fifteen years' history of the journal.

The first "special" was **THE HUMANOIDS**, which appeared in October 1966, was an outstanding success. Twice reprinted, it is now about to be published, revised and enlarged, as a 256-page hard-cover volume by Neville Spearman Ltd. (see page 5).

Many of the contributors to **BEYOND CONDON . . .** write frequently for the regular bi-monthly FSR, and if you have not already made the acquaintance of our 32-page magazine, and your interest in the subject is strong, we suggest you hasten to write to our subscription department.

Articles appearing in the issue for May/June 1969 include:

<i>North Queensland UFO Saga</i>	S. Seers & W. Lasich
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PEOPLE WHO SEE UFOs

Otto Binder

A leading science writer specializing in space and rocket technology, the author's two paperback books on the UFO phenomenon have reached a large audience in the United States ('What We Really Know About Flying Saucers' and 'Flying Saucers Are Watching Us').

MANY thousands of UFO sightings have been published and otherwise recorded for access to all researchers. I would like to add a small but heretofore unpublished group of sightings which I've received as "fan" mail as a consequence of my syndicated newspaper feature called OUR SPACE AGE.

This cartoon or picture-panel series started in October, 1960, as a daily feature (six per week) and at first dealt only with space-age technology, satellites, rockets, and NASA's launch schedule. In September, 1965, after taking a long second look at UFO reports and books, I decided to leap into the flying saucer controversy and switched almost entirely to UFO themes as time went on. In answer to requests for sightings from my reader audience, the letters began to pour in steadily. OUR SPACE AGE has variously been in some 132 newspapers in 35 states.

I have no accurate count of the total sightings received in the past three years, but I made an analysis in depth of 225 of those reports.

Four specific states are heavily represented—New Jersey (64), Pennsylvania (61), New York (35), and Ohio (16). Other miscellaneous states are included with 30 more unusual and interesting reports—North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, Washington, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Indiana. One lone report, dating back to 1942 and the war, is from the South Pacific.

The main body of statistics I've compiled deal with the years 1965 (44), 1966 (89) and 1967 (59). However, some 30 more hand-picked reports are included from prior years, from 1922 to 1964.

For what they are worth, the following statistical data* are drawn from those 225 reports I selected, from which we shall try to extract some interesting conclusions and speculations.

The first table is limited to the years 1965 through 1967 only, in order to have a sufficient number of massed cases to make the figures meaningful.

Table I—Sighting by Months (3 years)

January	12	July.....	29
February	13	August	29
March.....	15	September	12
April.....	22	October.....	12
May.....	11	November.....	10
June.....	29	December.....	11

June, July and August each by coincidence has exactly the same number of reported sightings. I think this peaking in the summer months is typical of all summaries of sightings, since people are outdoors more and tend to look up in the sky oftener. It probably has no true correlation to the *actual* number of UFOs flying around. December may have as many UFOs in the air as July, but fewer of them are seen.

Table II—Time of Sightings

Day time	41
Dusk.....	41
Dawn	3
Night	121
Not stated.....	19

This again corroborates or follows the pattern reported by Dr. Jacques Vallée and others—that many more UFOs fly around (or are seen) at night than in the day-time. Oddly, dusk or twilight (6.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m., depending on season) furnishes a large number of sightings. This may either mean the UFOs begin their night operations as soon as possible when daylight fades, or that the growing darkness allows more strange lights to be seen. It has not yet been proven, so far as I know, that *more* UFOs cruise by night than by day, only that

* Not necessarily adding up to or limited to 225 reports in all tables, for lack of data on certain cases, and overlapping data in other cases.