

THE PHENOMENON

From time to time throughout history there have been reports of strange things seen in the sky. In 1946 a whole series of such sightings occurred in Sweden, and since 1947 reports of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) have become increasingly prominent in the U. S. and most other parts of the world. These reports continue today, in increasing numbers and strangeness.

UFO sightings are reported to the Center for UFO Studies and other agencies by a very broad spectrum of the public, often through local law enforcement agencies. Police and military personnel are sometimes witnesses themselves. Reports come from professional people, the technically trained, the housewife and the man on the street.

The majority of present-day sightings prove to be misinterpretation of natural phenomena -- clouds, meteors, planets and stars -- or man-made objects such as airplanes, balloons and satellites. These should perhaps be referred to as identified flying objects (IFOs). A smaller number of reports cannot be investigated properly due either to lack of pertinent details or to the inaccessibility of witnesses. In any given set of UFO reports, however, there remains a residue of about 5%-10% which are truly puzzling, not only to the witnesses, but to those who investigate the reports and study the data. These cases are considered to be "true UFO reports."

While UFO reports differ in many details, there are also a number of similarities recurring in such features as shape, maneuverability, appearance, disappearance, sound and color. There are several basic observational categories into which sighting reports may be classified.

THE CATEGORIES

A. RELATIVELY DISTANT SIGHTINGS

1. Nocturnal Lights. These are sightings of well-defined lights in the night sky whose appearance and/or motions are not explainable in terms of conventional light sources. The lights appear most often as red, orange or white. They form the largest group of UFO reports.

2. Daylight Discs. Daytime sightings are generally of oval or disc-shaped metallic-appearing objects. They can appear high in the sky or close to the ground, and they are often reported to hover. They can seem to disappear with astounding speed.

3. Radar-Visuals. Of especial significance are unidentified "blips" on radar screens which coincide with and confirm simultaneous visual sightings by the same or (an) other witness(es).

B. RELATIVELY CLOSE SIGHTINGS (within 200 yards)

1. Close Encounters of the First Kind (CE-I). Though the witness observes a UFO nearby, there appears to be no interaction with either the witness or the environment.

2. Close Encounters of the Second Kind (CE-II). These encounters include details of interaction between the UFO and the environment which may vary from interference with car ignition systems and electronic gear to imprints or burns on the ground and physical effects on plants, animals and humans.

3. Close Encounters of the Third Kind (CE-III). In this category, occupants of a UFO, entities of more or less human-like appearance now refer-

red to as "humanoids" or else non-human creatures have been reported. There is usually no direct contact or communication with the witness, but there have been some reports, increasing in recent years, of incidents involving very close contact, even temporary detainment, of the witness(es).

THE KINDS OF EVIDENCE

After some UFO sightings, indications of the presence of something most unusual have been found.

1. Physical Traces. Compressed and dehydrated vegetation, broken tree branches and imprints in the ground have all been reported. Sometimes a soil sample taken from an area where a UFO had been seen close to the ground will be determined by laboratory analysis to have undergone heating or other changes not true of the control sample.

2. Medical Records. Medical verification of burns, eye inflammation or temporary blindness and other physiological effects attributed to encounters with UFOs -- even healings of previous conditions -- can also constitute evidence, especially when no other cause for the effect can be found by the medical examiner.

3. Radarscope Photos. A series of photographs of a radar screen on which a "blip" of a UFO is appearing is a powerful adjunct to a visual sighting, because it can be studied at leisure instead of during the heat of the moment of the actual sighting.

4. Photographs. While it might seem that photographs would constitute the best evidence for UFOs, this has not been the case. A hoax can usually