

For machine manipulation, it was desirable to be able to select the sample of cards (all reports, all sightings, or all phenomena) to be included in a particular study. The concept of a SIGHTING IDENTIFICATION NUMBER was evolved to fill this desire. Using one column of the IBM card, and the correlated working papers, the code for this function was developed. Multiple punching eliminated the need to use several columns for discrete expression of the variations. Selection of the proper number in this column thus permitted selection of the desired sample of cards.

Evaluation of Individual Reports

Evaluation of sighting reports was recognized as a crucial step in the preparation of data for statistical treatment; inconsistent evaluations would have invalidated any conclusions to be derived from this study. A method of evaluation was, therefore, determined simultaneously with the development of the questionnaire, the coding system, and the work sheet. It is emphasized that all phases of evaluation, even including the tedious preparation of the original data for statistical treatment, were entrusted only to selected, specially qualified scientists and engineers.

Evaluation consisted of a standardized procedure to be followed for: (1) the deduction of discrete facts from data which depended on human impressions rather than scientific measurements, (2) the rating of the observer and his report as determined from available information, and (3) the determination of the probable identification of the phenomenon observed. Categories of identification, established upon the basis of previous experience, were as follows:

Balloon
Astronomical
Aircraft
Light phenomenon
Birds
Clouds, dust, etc.
Insufficient information
Psychological manifestations
Unknown
Other

The first step in evaluation, the deduction of discrete facts from subjective data, required certain calculations based on the information available in the sighting report. An example was the finding of the approximate angular velocity and acceleration of the object or objects sighted. Care was taken during this phase of the work to insure against the deduction of discrete facts not warranted by the original data. Thus, even though there was a complete lack of any valid evidence consisting of

physical matter in any case of a reported unidentified aerial object, this was not assumed to be prima facie evidence that "flying saucers" did not exist.

In those cases in which an attempt to reduce the information to a factual level failed completely, the report was eliminated from further consideration, and thus not included in the statistical analysis. About 800 reports of sightings were eliminated or rejected in this manner. Most of these reports were rejected because they were extremely nebulous; the rest were rejected because they contained highly conflicting statements.

The second step in evaluation, the rating of the observer and his report, logically followed the first step, the reduction of the data to usable form. Ratings were assigned on the basis of the following factors of information, considered in relation to one another:

- (1) The experience of the observer, deduced from his occupation, age, and training;
- (2) The consistency among the separate portions of the description of the sighting;
- (3) The general quality and completeness of the report;
- (4) Consideration of the observer's fact-reporting ability and attitude, as disclosed by his manner of describing the sighting.

In cases in which insufficient information was available to make a judgment of the observer or report, none was made, but the report was accepted for the statistical study.

The third step in the process of evaluation, the attempted identification of the object or objects sighted, was done twice, first by the individual who made the transcription of the data (the preliminary identification), and later (the final identification) by a conference of four persons, two representatives from ATIC and two from the panel of consultants. Although representatives of ATIC participated in making the final identifications, it must be emphasized that any previous identification of a sighting made by ATIC was not introduced or referred to in any way.

In the coding system, the choices provided for final identifications were based on ATIC's previous experience in analysis of the data. They had found that the majority of sightings could be classified as misinterpretations of common objects or natural phenomena. Accordingly, categories for objects most frequently present in the air were provided. Balloons, aircraft, astronomical bodies (such as meteors), birds, and clouds or dust were recognized as major categories. The less frequent, but common objects, such as kites, fireworks, flares, rockets, contrails, and