

The Greatest Flap Yet? — Part III

by Jerome Clark

IN the first two parts of this account of the UFO events which flooded North America during the late summer months of 1965, I surveyed the scene to the end of August. Before we examine the incidents of September and October, I would like to remind readers that I am citing only those cases which I feel are of outstanding importance, having ignored numerous mundane reports—including my own humble sighting.

The case of Deputy Goode

Within 24 hours of each other were to occur the two most startling single encounters of the flap. The first, the Exeter, New Hampshire, incident, has already been described in these pages.¹ The second, taking place halfway across the country, actually eclipses its counterpart both in detail and in implication. In fact, if it is what it appears to be, it could well be one of the most significant UFO cases on record.

Early in the evening of September 3, Patrol Deputy Robert Goode of the Brazoria County, Texas, Sheriff's Department was helping his son move an alligator when the animal bit him on the left index finger. The wound, quite painful, swelled rapidly and bled freely. It was still bothering Goode when later he went on duty with Chief Deputy Billy McCoy.

The night was apparently a quiet one, and the two officers drove undisturbed down Highway 36 south of Damon. Suddenly, shortly after midnight, they sighted a huge craft—about 200 feet long and 50 feet thick in the middle, tapering off toward the ends—hovering silently in the sky. The UFO carried a purple light on its left side and a blue light on its right. Watching through binoculars, Goode and McCoy were horrified to see the object was moving toward them at a not inconsiderable speed. Panicking, they fled, but not before the saucer and flashed a brilliant light on the car. When its beams fell on Goode's left arm, which hung out the window, the officer felt a "warm" sensation. This only added to their excitement, and the two raced back to Damon at over 100 miles an hour.

Not too long afterwards, Goode and McCoy decided to return. When they did, the UFO made as if to approach them again, and they left once again at a comparable speed. They did not come back for a third time.

But, even though they did not see the saucer

again, the story was far from over. Goode was to notice, shortly after the first encounter, that his finger was no longer bleeding or swelling. The pain was gone, and the wound was curing unnaturally fast—all this on the arm that had been exposed to the UFO's rays.

Strange as all this was, the oddest part of all did not come until slightly later. Two strangers appeared at the Sheriff's Office looking for Deputy Goode, who was not in. When they found him at a West Columbia area restaurant, they immediately began to describe in detail how the UFO looked—even before Goode had an opportunity to tell them. The ship, they continued, operated on magnetic rays. They suggested that in the future, should he encounter a similar machine, he should co-operate with its occupants and keep to himself any conversation that might ensue.²

Major Laurence R. Leach, Jr., of Ellington Air Force Base, investigated the affair. "Both officers appeared to be intelligent, mature, level-headed and capable of sound judgment and reasoning. Chief Deputy Sheriff McCoy holds a responsible position in the department requiring the supervision of over 42 personnel." He admitted that he had no explanation for the incident.

Mexican cases

While sightings in the United States slackened off during the last three weeks of September, they increased spectacularly in neighbouring Mexico. The writer has not been able to obtain many details of this visitation, but the few newspaper accounts available describe rather generally a spate of rumours involving alleged landings and contacts—many of them frankly dubious. Others seem to merit more serious consideration. Among them is a report made by four men who saw a UFO flashing lights near Tijuana on the U.S.-Mexican border, and on impulse signalled back with a flashlight. When the UFO began moving toward them, they ran away. Another group of people claimed to have seen a flying saucer land near the national Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City, and newspapers later carried pictures of rocks supposedly scorched by the UFO's exhaust.

Shots at Rio Vista

Two Rio Vista, California, boys fired on a UFO on September 21. About 8.30 p.m., said Danny Bland, 18, "I was down on Riverview

Road when it appeared and I ran home and then called my chum, Tom Springs. I grabbed a .22 rifle and Tom took a .22 pistol. It was then about 260 feet off the ground and moving toward the mesa of the city. The brilliance changed to a kind of smoggy red, and we were scared. Both of us fired several shots at it. It became brighter when the bullets struck. We knew we had hit it because the object gave off a metallic ring. The light flooded our car just as if the sun was shining."

The next night several hundred residents of Rio Vista waited near a water tower five miles from town where the object had allegedly appeared on a number of occasions. It did not disappoint its audience, passing silently over the area in full view of everyone.

Unusual "Ufonaut" reports

Sightings continued to decline during October as the flap, if not really dying, was becoming less intense. Yet those incidents that were recorded—the three of any significance—were among the most interesting of the entire wave.

October 4, Rio Vista, California. During the evening Mrs. Betty Valine was sitting outside with her 12-year-old son Robbie when they sighted a large plate-shaped machine with a dome on top. Inside this dome stood three "people", plainly visible.

October 13, Minto, North Dakota. Two 15-year-old high school girls, Marg Gudajtes and Judy Norlock, watched a huge UFO land in a park on the edge of town, and later described it as a metallic oval, with bluish lights. It was still there when they left but had gone when they returned with help. All that remained of the visitation was an oval ring of crushed grass.

October 23, Long Prairie, Minnesota. In one of the most unusual ufonaut encounter reports of recent years, a 19-year-old radio announcer named James Townsend was driving down Highway 27 near Long Prairie—the time was 7.15 p.m.—when, as he rounded a curve, "all of a sudden my engine stopped, my lights went out and my radio stopped playing. I let the car coast and then I put on the brakes because I saw this thing in the centre of the highway.

"It was like a rocket ship. It was about 30 feet tall and about 10 feet in diameter. It was sitting on fins. Then I saw them. They were standing in a big circle of light under the ship.

"I jumped out of my car and was going to try to knock one over but then they came at me. They came right up to the car. There were three of them."

"They" looked like 303 cans.³ "They had no

eyes or anything. Just those tripod legs and those matchstick arms", extending from their bottoms and sides. Their colour was a kind of brownish-black. Townsend thought they had come from behind the because he had not seen them step out of it.

"They may have been robots", he told Clarke John Jansen of *Fate* magazine, "but they acted like creatures".

"I can't explain it because they didn't have eyes", he went on, "but they were looking right at me". For some moments Townsend and the beings "stared" at each other, the witness becoming increasingly frightened; "then they turned around and scooted under the ship. The light was so bright I didn't see where they went.

"Then there was a high-pitched humming sound and the ship took off straight up. It went up about a quarter of a mile, stopped for a moment and then disappeared. After it left, my lights on the car came back on and the engine started running. And I didn't touch it, either. I just can't explain that. Then I heard my radio playing again.

"I got out of there fast".

Townsend immediately reported the incident to Todd County Sheriff James Bain and Long Prairie policeman Luverne Lubitz, whom he assured he was not "crazy, drunk, or ignorant". He was obviously shaken, according to Lubitz, who knew him as "reliable and level-headed"—a hardworking, well behaved boy who never drinks". (Townsend, who the summer before had served as a counsellor at a Bible camp, has religious convictions against drinking).

The officers drove Townsend back to the scene of the purported landing, even though the young man, still badly frightened, seemed reluctant. Once there, the men looked up and to their amazement sighted a strange yellow light moving across the sky.

Although one newspaper announced contemptuously that "they couldn't find any trace of the 'space visitor'", such was not the case. On the ground the officers and Townsend discovered three strips, three feet long by four inches wide, composed of an oil-like material. It was like nothing they had ever seen before, said officer Lubitz. The two men were convinced that Townsend was telling the truth.

Two other sightings in the area the night of the 23rd added creditability to the tale. Over Minneapolis, at 7.00 p.m.—15 minutes before Townsend's experience—a 14-year-old boy, Ray Blessing, watched a mysterious sombrero-shaped machine through a 200-power telescope as it

passed across the sky from north-west to south-east. He told his parents about it, but they said nothing until after the Long Prairie encounter had been publicised and they saw its significance.

Three youths hunting coons near where Townsend was confronted told the sheriff that they had seen "a light in the sky" at the same time as the UFO had supposedly taken off from the highway. Other Long Prairie residents told Bain that they themselves had seen a peculiar flying object operating in the area recently, but had said nothing about it for fear of ridicule.

"I know what I saw and I know it was real", Townsend concludes. "I am telling the truth."

Public reaction

While an attempt to uncover the significance of the August-October flap would be not only premature but pointless, a word about public reaction to the wave is in order. For the first time in a long while, it seemed, Americans were begin-

ning to wonder just how straight a story they were getting from their Air Force. Never before have there appeared so many newspaper editorials criticising the service's handling of the UFO mystery, nor so many articles in generally conservative publications seriously discussing the merits of our case. Especially surprising were pieces in the *Saturday Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. True hastily inserted a condensation of Vallée's recent book into its October issue, and later published an article by Donald Keyhoe. Several pro-UFO tomes have been accepted for publication in 1966, when since 1958 books on flying saucers have been rejected as unsaleable. All of this is very encouraging. If the momentum can be continued (past experience leaves considerable doubt on this score), the greatest American flap to date may do infinitely more than provide ufologists with more sightings to hash over.

NOTES

¹ FLYING SAUCER REVIEW Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 3. *Important New England Sighting*.

² One cannot help drawing parallels between the two "strangers" of Goode's story and their counterpart in the notorious Maury Island incident, termed by Ruppelt "the dirtiest hoax in UFO history" but proclaimed by Arnold, Palmer, and others to be genuinely inexplicable. The evidence on both sides, in the writer's view, is equally convincing. For the Air Force position, see Chapter 2 of Edward J. Ruppelt's *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Doubleday, 1956). The opposite interpretation is given by Kenneth Arnold and Ray Palmer in their *The Coming of the Saucers* (Wisconsin, 1952) and by Harold T. Wilkins in Chapter 4 of *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (Citadel, 1954). See also *Fate* for Spring 1948.

³ Some newspaper accounts, obviously in an underhand attempt to cast doubts on the witness' sobriety, quoted Townsend as saying the Ufonauts resembled "beer cans", but subsequently he rather bitterly denied having used the expression.

⁴ In an October 25 story, the *Minneapolis Star* reported what it apparently considered a strong objection to the incident's validity: "Townsend . . . had been studying a lengthy article on UFOs in the current issue of a national magazine" i.e., the condensation, in the October *True*, of Jacques Vallée's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*. Townsend, however, told *Fate* that he had not read the article until after the encounter, when several persons referred him to it.

Postscript: Since completing part III of *The Greatest Flap Yet?* Mr. Clark has written to say that the wave concluded in October. Many reports some sensational, others merely surprising, have found their way to him, and it now seems that the wave continued into 1966. We hope to include accounts of these newly reported incidents in our next issue.

TWO NEW BOOKS

THE most recent of new books on UFOs is by one of the longest-serving and most valued contributors to FLYING SAUCER REVIEW. In fact none other than **Antonio Ribera**, our friend from Barcelona in Spain. As one can gather from the title *El Gran Enigma de los Platillos Volantes* (published by Editorial Pomaire of Santiago de Chile, Buenos Aires, Mexico and Barcelona; 435 pages, including appendices), Senor Ribera takes his readers with a broad sweep through the saucer story of the last 20-odd years. In numerous appendices he looks at the historical and biblical aspect of the subject, the problem of satellites of Mars, the Mariner IV and Moon photograph comparisons, and so on.

The author is well known as a sound, objective researcher, with a vast capacity for work—and we learn from the fly-leaf that he is also one of the leading Spanish experts on submarine exploration. In this latest book, which should have not only great appeal in Spain, but should also be more than welcome in South and Central American

countries, some of his chapter headings give an idea of the scope of the work: "Are we alone in the Cosmos?"; "Appearances of flying saucers on the scene"; "Secrets of the United States Air Force"; "Adamski, and those who have followed him"; "The great French wave of 1954"; "The Spanish wave of 1950"; "The great summer wave of 1965"; "Possible methods of propulsion, and probable origin"; "Submarine bases?"

The arrival on the scene of **Jacques Vallée's** second book *Les Phénomènes Insolites de l'Espace* Editions de la Table Ronde, 40 rue du Bao, Paris-7^e, France, this time in co-authorship with **Janine Vallée**, his wife, is without doubt the first of several appearances. In fact an English language version (translated by Gordon Creighton) is due to be published by the Henry Regnery Company of Chicago towards the end of the year, when a full appreciation will appear in FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

For the present, suffice it to say that the Vallées
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