

Palmer's at their home. From Mr. Palmer's letter to the REVIEW, it was obvious that he had been deeply impressed by what he had seen, and more than a little scared. I found them to be an intelligent and sincere couple, still somewhat shaken by their experience.

This is speculation, I know, but I suggest that the rash on Mr. Palmer's face could have been due to exposure to ultra violet rays given off by highly ionised air (the random rotating lights) under the UFO as it passed over the house.

New Landing and Creature Reports

Sightings in Erie, Pennsylvania

by John A. Keel

THE last few days of July, 1966, were marked by a number of reports of strange objects and lights in the skies above Erie and surrounding districts. At Presque Isle on the evening of July 31, the little wave culminated in a UFO landing and creature report with unusual features.

Presque Isle is a hook-shaped peninsula encompassing Erie Harbour on Lake Erie. It is a state park and recreation area; well patrolled and kept spotlessly clean and well tended. At the far end of the hook there is a Coast Guard station which is equipped with radio transmitters. The small, modern administration building houses the police dispatcher's 15-watt transmitter and is about half-a-mile from the alleged landing site and 300 yards from the position of the witnesses at the time of the sighting. Several people work in the administration building during the day. At night there is usually only one man . . . the police dispatcher. . . in the building, transmitting orders to two patrolmen. There a number of telephone lines to the building and outside phone booths are situated at convenient locations around the peninsula. The

park's eleven beaches close at sundown. The entrance to the park itself is closed by gates at midnight.

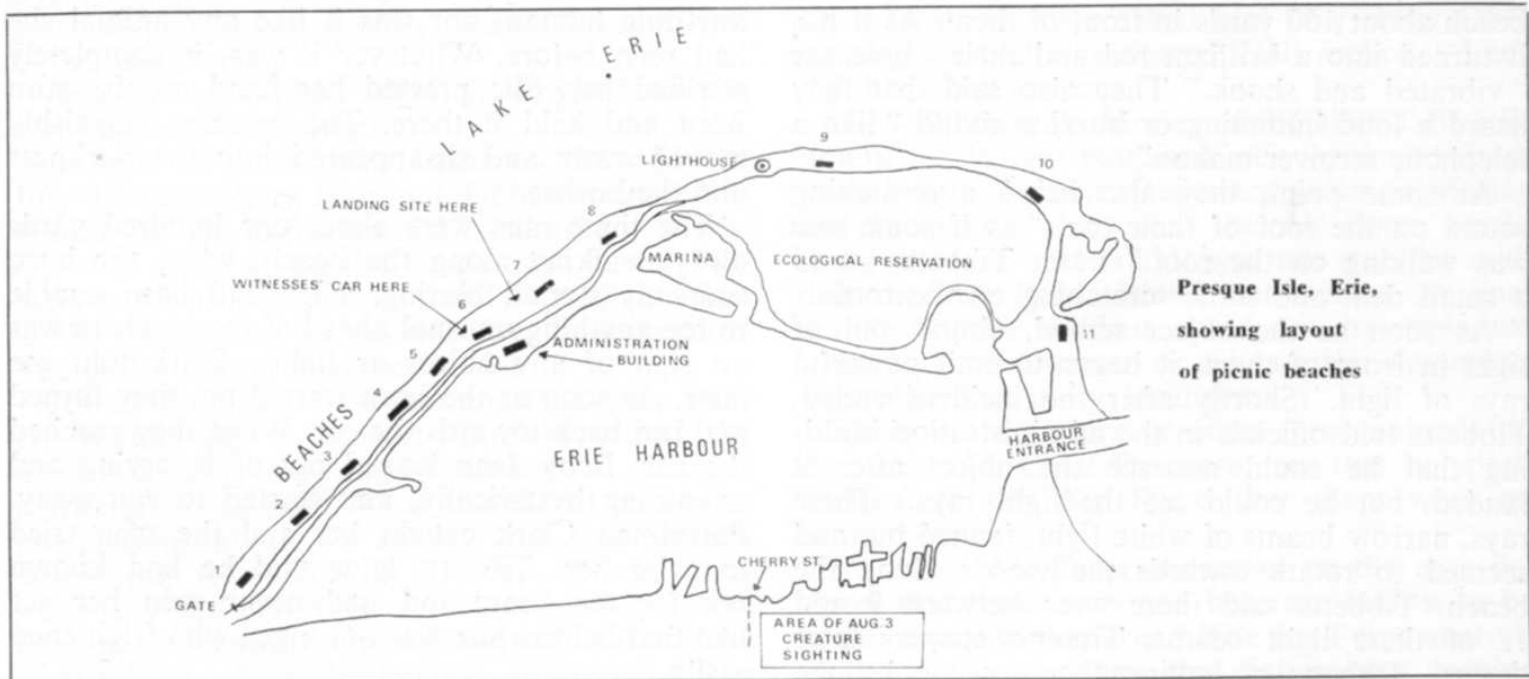
On the night in question, Patrolman Paul Wilson (a moonlighting schoolteacher), was acting as dispatcher. Patrolmen Ralph E. Clark and Robert Loeb, Jr. were on duty.

Prologue

The witnesses, four adults and two small children (girls, aged 2 years, and 6 months old) arrived in the park about 8 p.m. for a picnic. They were:

Betty Jean Klem, 16, of Jamestown, N.Y.
 Douglas J. Tibbetts, 18, of Greenhurst, N.Y.
 Anita Haifley, 22, (mother of the two children), of Jamestown.
 Gerald La Belle, 26, of Jamestown.

They held their picnic on Beach No. 6, at a picnic table situated under trees on the edge of the wooded area facing the beach. Apparently they drove their car too close to the table and it sank into the sand and became stuck. Gerald La Belle



Presque Isle, Erie,
 showing layout
 of picnic beaches

left the area to find help. Shortly afterwards, Patrolmen Clark and Loeb arrived on a routine check of the beaches and Tibbetts assured them that everything was all right. They left. The picnickers packed up and sat in the car to await La Belle's return. The beaches were now deserted and the air was chilly. The sky was clear, with a full moon and many stars.

Tibbetts and Betty Jean, his girl friend, sat in the front seat of the car. Mrs. Haifley sat in the back with her two children who were falling asleep.

The Sighting

The car was stuck in a "U"-shaped section of trees and brush, with some large bushes about twelve feet high directly in front, and other trees and bushes on both sides. Tibbetts and Betty Jean were looking at the stars through the wind-shield when one large, especially bright "star" caught their attention. They began watching it some time between 9.30 and 10 p.m. As they observed it, it seemed to grow larger and head directly for them. As it loomed nearer, they could see that it was a brilliant white light with some kind of definite form. It dropped straight down for Beach 7 directly in front of them, beyond the bushes.

"It was as big as a house," Betty Jean Klem reported later. She said that it was "mushroom shaped" with a narrow base rising to an oval structure and she could see lights on the back of the object.

Tibbetts, however, later told Patrolman Clark that it was "triangular". A newspaper quoted him as saying that it was shaped like a cake. Later, on a local radio programme, he described it as being "hexagonal," hollowed out in the centre.

They claim that they saw it settle on to the beach about 150 yards in front of them. As it hit, it turned into a brilliant red and their whole car "vibrated and shook." They also said that they heard a loud humming or buzzing sound "like a telephone receiver makes."

At some point, they also heard a scratching sound on the roof of their car, "as if some one was walking on the roof." Later Tibbetts found a small dent and some scratching on the roof.

As soon as the object settled, almost out of sight in front of them, it began to emit powerful rays of light. (Shortly after the incident ended, Tibbetts told officials in the administration building that he could not see the object after it landed, but he could see the light rays.) These rays, narrow beams of white light, fanned out and seemed to rotate towards the woods along the beach. Tibbetts said there were between 9 and 12 of these light beams. The newspapers later quoted Tibbetts as saying there was only one

beam of light which "moved along the ground in a straight line . . . it lit up the whole woods along its path. It was like a searchlight." Betty Jean Klem told the newspapers that the light did not waver back and forth like a searchlight, but continued to extend its beam into the woods. However, in his first interview Tibbetts said there were several light beams and they moved "like they were searching for something".

"Doug, do you see it?" Betty asked. He said, "Yes." "We just couldn't believe it was really happening," she said later. The time was about 10.15-10.20 p.m. Patrolmen Loeb and Clark drove into the area again and, according to Tibbetts, the lights on the object went off immediately. Tibbetts flashed his brake lights and the Patrolmen stopped. The eighteen-year-old jumped off his car and ran towards the Police car. "There's something weird going on here," he told the two officers.

The "Creature"

Loeb, Clark, and Tibbetts decided to walk up the beach to investigate, leaving the two women and two children behind in the car. The windows of the car were closed but the two side vents on the front windows were open.

A few minutes after the three men had disappeared into the darkness, Betty Jean cried out to Anita: "Don't look! There's something out there!" Later she told the police and reporters that a tall, upright figure had moved up to the car. She could not make out any features. It was just a tall (over 6 feet) creature. Only by leaning forward and looking upwards through the wind-shield could she determine that it had a head. She could not see its legs. It was not, she insists, anything human, nor was it like any animal she had seen before. Whatever it was, it completely terrified her. She pressed her hand on the auto horn and held it there. The creature sluggishly moved away and disappeared into the darkness and the bushes.

The three men were about one hundred yards away, walking along the beach, when the horn suddenly started blaring. They had been unable to see anything unusual ahead of them. There was no sign of any object or lights, Clark told me later. As soon as the horn started up, they turned and ran back towards the car. When they reached the car, Betty Jean leaped out of it, crying and screaming hysterically, and started to run away. Patrolman Clark caught her and the men tried to calm her. Tibbetts later said he had known her for ten years and had never seen her act like that before. She was not a girl who frightened easily.

Mrs. Haifley remained calm through the entire incident. She did not see the alleged creature from her position in the back seat.

Betty Jean's panic was contagious and the men decided that it would be prudent to leave the area and go to the administration building. They piled into the Police car and drove off.

The Markings and the "Wet Spots"

When they drove up to the administration building and got out of the car carrying the two sleeping children, Officer Wilson at the dispatcher's desk watched in horror. His first thought, he said, upon seeing the hysterical girl and the two inert youngsters, was that they were dead . . . drowned. Flying saucer stories were not new to any of the officers. The local papers had carried a number of reports in recent weeks. Wilson immediately called Michael E. Wargo, the Park Superintendent who lived nearby, and the chief of the Park Police, Dan Descanio. Betty Jean was so frightened that she refused to sit with her back to a window. All of the men were impressed with the genuineness of Betty's hysteria. "I know what people are going to say," Chief Descanio told reporters later. "But this girl saw something that scared her badly. This is no joke so far as I'm concerned."

The girl was still shaking when newsmen arrived and her eyes were red from crying. Douglas Tibbetts was very excited and talkative.

Chief Descanio ordered the entrance to the park closed and put his men to work checking each car that passed through in either direction. The police files contain a list of everyone who entered or left the park after the incident. One car, containing Peter N. Fisher, 25, of Fort Edward, N.Y. and some friends, reported having seen an irregular-shaped object directly overhead some time in the late evening.

Descanio also called ATIC at Wright-Patterson and reported the incident.

In spite of their great fright on the night of July 31, both Betty Jean and Tibbetts returned to Pesque Isle the following night and asked for permission to sit up on the beach until dawn. Tibbetts had heard somewhere that UFOs often return to the same place for several days in succession. The police denied them permission.

About 7 a.m. the next morning Patrolmen Paul H. Wilson and J. Robert Canfield visited the alleged landing site and discovered a series of markings in the sand. They found two triangular indentations about 18 inches long and sloping downwards to a depth of 8 inches. These prints were very distinct. Several feet away they found three more identical impressions (they had no tape measure to check the actual distances). Two

"skid marks" were also found in this pattern. They also discovered a series of imprints, conical-shaped "as if someone had pressed a pointed drinking cup into the sand." These were nine inches in diameter and six inches deep. They led from the land site to about 12 feet from where the car was stuck. Officer Canfield photographed these markings with a Polaroid camera. They placed sticks around the triangular marks. The area was not cordoned off. In addition, they also found three spots of wet sand. The liquid was colourless, odourless, and sticky to the touch. All of the officers pointed out to me that most liquids, such as water, coca cola, coffee, urine, etc, quickly evaporate on the beach. These wet spots persisted for a day. Samples of this substance were collected in plastic bottles.

One officer told me that he collected some of this wet sand and had it analysed privately. When dried, he said, this substance formed a colourless material which could be bent without breaking . . . "like plastics." The analysis was performed by a relative who is a chemist, and it showed that the material was silicon.

The Air Force Investigation

Wright-Patterson ordered Major William S. Hall of the Youngstown AFB to the site. One Corporal Howard A. Murray made plaster casts of the impressions in the sand and then Major Hall quickly kicked over the traces, destroying the markings. He took possession of all the bottles of the sand in the Chief's possession and borrowed the photographs made by Officer Canfield. Major Hall quickly took charge, talking with newsmen and handling phone calls. He seemed to know exactly what he was doing, Descanio told me, but when local reporters asked him how many UFO sightings he had investigated, Hall replied, "Let's say this is my first one."

A Lt. William W. Morley of PROJECT BLUE-BOOK at Wright-Patterson also spoke to Park officials by telephone. Reporters spoke to Morley and he assured them that the Air Force would study the case in detail. It was not true, he said, that the Air Force would not release its final findings if the incident could not be explained as natural phenomenon or a hoax. His statements were played up in the local press.

There are no bears or other large animals on the peninsula. Chief Descanio says that he specifically told the Air Force that there were no bears there.

The final Air Force statement on the case declares that "raccoons and bear are known to be in the woods in that area." The Air Force analysis of the wet sand claims that "there was nothing

unusual in the soil sample except urine."

I interviewed all the police officers involved in this case. They all said that Betty Jean was genuinely frightened by something and that Tibbetts was really excited. They all believe the story to be true. These officers are bright, mature, responsible men. Two of them are school teachers. The Presque Isle police force did a thorough job of documenting the incident and handled the entire situation in an exemplary manner. They were all extremely co-operative although I was asked not to quote them directly and they would not allow me to tape my interviews with them.

Curiosity-seekers poured into Presque Isle for several days after the sightings. And then attendances fell off sharply. The editor of the *Edinboro* (Pa.) *Independent* later told me, "A lot of people are afraid to go there now. They think some kind of monster is loose."

Oddly enough, Chief Descanio, Superintendent Wargo, and each police officer asked me separately if there had ever been any reports of kidnappings by UFOs. They all seemed to be especially interested in this aspect but would not tell me why. **July 31st** (night of Tibbetts—Klem sighting)

10.30 p.m. (a Doctor) reported seeing a "circular patch of orange light . . . about the size of a baseball" travelling SW at high rate of speed. Estimated altitude : 500-1,000 feet. Viewing position places witness about one mile south of Presque Isle, near the coast of Lake Erie. (PARK POLICE FILES).

Witness : Dr. Abbas Lubbus, Erie. Phone 833-7585.

Also **July 31st.**

1 a.m. (cops, actually August 1st.) Witness observed a bright light over Lake Erie for 1½ hours. Viewing position was a cottage at foot of Cherry St., on Presque Isle Bay. (Phone call to Park Police.)

Witness : Margaret Daniels. (No address or phone number given.)

The Creature Returns (?)

Three days after the Presque Isle incident, on August 3, 1966, an unusual creature was seen on the streets of Erie, Pa. The witness claims that she was awakened at 5.30 a.m. by the barking of neighbourhood dogs. She looked out of a window and saw what she described as a human-shaped being about 5 ft. 6in. tall (she is 5 ft. 2 in. and said the creature was taller than she is). It was clothed in a yellow jacket and yellow trousers with no discernible pockets, belts, or other features. The head, she said, was huge and moon-shaped and when seen from the side the back of its head appeared to be flat. This head was covered with "straggly" brown hair . . . a muddy-colour. The creature had very big shoulders and a slender build. It moved with a stiff, jerky, mechanical motion, holding its arms close to its sides . . . they did not move at all. Its legs did not bend at the knees, "He moved," she said, "like a mechanical wind-up toy." Local dogs were barking at its heels but it ignored them. The sight of this creature frightened her and she woke up her husband. He looked out the window but, since he was not wearing his glasses, he said he only saw a movement." The creature appeared across from the United Oil Storage tanks on West 3rd Street in Erie and walked stiffly out of view.

She reported the incident to the police. I talked with her at length about this incident on the phone. She seems to be sincere, and really concerned because nobody seems to believe her. She thought it may have come from a ship that docks nearby frequently and is, for some reason, mysterious to her.

Another woman in the area saw a similar creature that same week, she told me. This woman, whose name she could not give me, says she was driving down Third Street late at night when she saw the creature and stopped her car. It came up to her car and "pounded on the hood," then moved off into the darkness.

CAN ANYONE HELP ?

A correspondent of ours has informed us that since last Spring numbers of little coloured balls—apparently fallen from the sky—have been found in countryside, gardens and roads. More often than not several of these objects are found at the same spot, and on one occasion more than 100 were discovered in a garden in France. We would be pleased to learn if similar discoveries have been made by any of our readers, and if so, whether or not they have kept any samples.