

THE BENT BEAMS CASE

by Stephen L. Smith, B.A.

YET again the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW has come up with another astonishing report of unidentified flying object activity, this time in Australia.

I do not doubt that motorist Ronald Sullivan received a very nasty shock when he nearly crashed off the road between Bendigo and St. Arnaud, in Victoria State; but the far greater shock comes when we learn of the means by which his life was endangered. Sullivan reports that his car headlight beams suddenly appeared to bend off to the right, whereupon he managed to stop the car in time to see a display of gaseous flames in a nearby field out of which rose an undescribed object. It would seem from the evidence found by the police in the field that an object of some sort had rested on the ploughed soil before April 8, and this fact corroborates Sullivan's story.

With the reality of the object established we can examine the other startling item in the report . . . the bending of the car headlights. It has unfortunately not been stated at what point along the headlight beams the bending took place, otherwise a more definite conclusion about the cause of the phenomenon could be arrived at. There are three possibilities: the beams were bent at source; they appeared bent to the observer through illusion or hallucination; they were bent somewhere along the beams.

In considering the first possibility we are hampered by the lack of details in the reports. We are not told what type of car the motorist was driving. With this knowledge it would not be difficult to find out what sort of dipping mechanism was fitted to the car and thus to decide on the possible mechanisms by which the lights could have been dipped out of line. However I feel that the spontaneous action of the dipping mechanism is not a good enough explanation to cover the facts, unless subsequent information states that the beams were bent at source.

The illusion/hallucination theory is perhaps to some the easy way out in trying to explain the phenomenon, but it is a distinct possibility, as possible as the object's being an alien spacecraft. Further I would like to point out to those readers who will try to argue against the hallucination idea, that the subject of hallucinations is not generally aware that he has been suffering from them, and also is usually indignant when it is suggested that he has suffered. What illusion though could account for the apparent bending of the beams? The Cambridge University Group have suggested to me that the illusion could be brought about by the sudden extinguishing of half, the left half, of the beam, which, through its divergent character, would then seem to have been bent to the right. The mechanism by which this could occur is not clear but would probably be in the nature of a freak of reflection caused by the absence of dust particles by which car headlight beams are normally seen. Again the lack of data in the report is to be regretted. The possibility of half the beam's being

obscured depends on the beam's being bent through only a small angle, and we just do not know how far the beams were bent. Further information on this point would be most welcome, and it is to be hoped that the *Australian Flying Saucer Review* do not cease their investigations before they are really complete, a habit into which many investigators seem to have lapsed of late.

If hallucination be the explanation, and as yet there does not seem to be any arguments against the idea in contrast to the other theories here presented, then there ought to be a cause for the hallucination. Either the delusion was generated spontaneously in Sullivan's brain or it was caused by some outside agency. The former explanation is not supported by the reports that say that Sullivan is "an intelligent and highly respected business-man". The latter course is open to any amount of speculation, one line of which can be followed with some support from other reports of alien spacecraft. This line suggests that the hallucination was brought about by the effects on Sullivan of the strong magnetic or other fields generated by the alien craft. Readers should refer to the several articles and notes by Dr. Bernard Finch for further ideas along these lines.

There is another unlikely though not impossible explanation and this is that after swerving very badly through falling asleep or some other cause, Sullivan made up the whole incident to cover his anonymity at being such a bad driver. An ingenious idea but as I say rather an unlikely explanation of the facts.

The last category of explanations covers the possibility that the beams were bent somewhere along their path from the headlights into the distance. It has been casually suggested that this bending could have been caused by some sort of "force field" generated by the object in the field. This suggestion does not take into account any of the other facts reported. For a start the only thing affected by the force field, if any, were the two head-light beams. This means that the field would have had to have a *very* selective effect on the many lightwaves passing through the space in front of the vehicle; such an explanation raises more difficulties than it overcomes. If no selective effect occurred then all lightwaves from the beams, the road, the surrounding countryside would have been equally bent and no observer, however, perceptive, in Sullivan's position would have noticed any change in his surroundings. Further, to add to the difficulties we would have to justify the existence of another field other than the three already known, i.e. electric, magnetic and gravitational, because each of these would have other effects on the car besides bending its headlights beams; unless of course the highly unlikely selective effect occurred.

So the facts of the sighting remain inexplicable except through the agency of imposed hallucination either caused accidentally or purposely by the craft, if that is what the object was.