

side; one set was just in front and slightly overlapped the rear set, but appeared to be a great deal larger. The colour of the object seemed to be of a yellowish brown, a bit different than other accounts. The propeller was at the bow and, as well as the crowd could distinguish it, was made of long paddles, even as long as the ship itself. The much-heard-of searchlight was on the stern of the ship and appeared to cover the entire stern. It seemed to be a very large light and it would go out and relight at regular intervals. This was explained by some to be a disinclination of its navigators to being perceived, that it merely turned on the light occasionally to discover their whereabouts. The light was a deep golden colour and some of the observing party declared they could see plainly enough to have picked up a fly on the floor had there been no other light in the house. At this juncture, the ship had almost gone out of sight from the window and the crowd decided to look at it, but when they got outside it was nowhere to be seen. Upon returning and making more careful observation they found it to be a lightning-bug or fire-fly crawling slowly across the window-pane.'

30. Merkel: 'Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a large rope attached. They followed it until in crossing the railroad it caught on a rail. On looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship. It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several wings. One bright light in front like the headlight of a locomotive. After some 10 minutes a man was seen descending the rope: he came near enough to be plainly seen; he wore a light blue sailor suit, was small in size. He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor and cut the rope below him and sailed off in a north-east direction. The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott & Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people.'

Discussion

On the basis of several detailed descriptions of the airships seen at close range, descriptions that use such terms as 'wings', 'wheels', 'carriage', etc., Clark makes the strong assumption that the phenomenon is "a kind of heavier than air construction built for limited flights through the immediate atmosphere. It was most decidedly **not** any sort of spacecraft." This statement is somewhat ambiguous. If it is meant that **in the appearance of the objects to the observers**, they could only be interpreted as airships, the point is certainly well taken; if it is meant, however, that the intrinsic features of the craft made them drastically different from the class of UFO phenomena observed today, then we disagree with the statement. In addition to the similarities noted in our introduction, there are, in our view, three characteristics of the airships that duplicate the performances observed today: (i) The very general description of the objects as 'cigar-shaped', (ii) the dramatic way of arrival ('descending straight to the earth with great rapidity' in case No. 23) and departure ('like a shot out of a gun' in case

No. 27) and (iii) the reported noise 'whnning' or 'whirling' in case No. 27, witness 'awakened by a whirring noise similar to that made by machinery' in case No. 28).

Not only were these performances beyond the technology of 1897, but it would still be impossible to duplicate them: the airships have the characteristics of a ten-passenger vertical take-off and landing aircraft creating little noise and no ground disturbance, and not propelled by rockets, capable of both extremely high horizontal speeds and remarkable hovering or stationary flight! They violate the laws of inertia and aerodynamics precisely in the same manner as our 'modern' UFOs (see note 11). Yet their outside appearance seems well-designed to convey the impression that they are nothing but advanced dirigibles, just within the grasp of an American farmer of 1897. As for the conversations with the crews, they are also disturbing to the highest point, if they are reliably reported. It should be remembered, however, that **not all occupants were described as humans**. Hamilton himself, in Leroy, spoke of 'six of the strangest beings I ever saw. They were jabbering together, but we could not understand a word they said.' Later he refers again to 'the cursed thing with its big lights and hideous people.' On the contrary, in most of the Texas encounters, there was communication of the most uncomplicated and mundane nature between the witness and the operators—this duality is indeed present in modern time: it constitutes one of the major mysteries of the French wave of 1954 (cf. also Carrouges book *Les Apparitions de Martiens* and the South American cases).

A great deal of research and discussion will undoubtedly be necessary before this duality can be understood. To appraise objectively the 1897 sightings, one must replace them within the entire history of the rumours of aerial visions—and, perhaps, the strange astronomical observations—that flourished during the second half of the last century and may have culminated in the Siberian catastrophe of 1908 and the New Zealand wave of the following year. What is remarkable in the American wave itself is the revelation of a much higher proportion of landings than was originally suspected, and the discovery of a pattern of contact so remarkable that it may open an entirely new avenue of approach to the UFO mystery.

References:

- 1 Clark, J.: *The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship* FLYING SAUCER REVIEW XII, 4.
- 2 Hanlon, D. B.: FLYING SAUCER REVIEW XII, 5.
- 3 Fort, C.: *New Lands in Books of Charles Fort*, Holt ed. page 468.
- 4 Keyhoe, D.: *The Flying Saucers are Real*, Fawcett ed. 1950 page 60.

- ⁵ Ruppelt, E. J. : *The Report on UFOs*, ACE edition page 281.
⁶ Vallée, J. F. : *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, Chicago : Regnery 1965 page 16.
⁷ Hynek, J. A. : Talk presented to the Hypervelocity Impact Conference at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, April 27, 1960.
⁸ Fuller, J. : *Incident at Exeter*, Putnam, 1966.
⁹ The authors wish to thank Mr. Frank Masquelette, of the

- editorial staff of the *Houston Post*, for his very helpful contribution in locating the sighting accounts discussed in this article.
¹⁰ A special investigation of the case is under way. Progress will be reported in the REVIEW.
¹¹ As we write this article, it has just been announced that the US Army's vertical VTOL (vertical take-off and landing craft) has crashed during a test.

EVEN MORE AMAZING . . . Part IV

*Translated from the original deposition by
Gordon Creighton*

This is the final instalment of the statement by Antônio Villas Boas, given to Dr. Olavo Fontes, and Sr. Joao Martins at Rio de Janeiro on February 22, 1958.

Synopsis of account related in Parts I, II and III :

On the night of October 15/16, 1957, Antônio Villas Boas, a Brazilian farmer living in a remote part of the State of Minas Gerais, was ploughing a field. A strange machine descended from the sky, alighted and—so he claims—he was forcibly abducted by helmeted and uniformed creatures. Aboard the machine the terrified farmer was stripped, examined, subjected to tests and "tranquilised", whereafter he was introduced to a naked, fair-skinned, red-haired woman with slant eyes, who seduced him. When, at the conclusion of the act the woman left him, a crew member returned his clothes to him.

THE others remained seated, without looking at me. We walked towards the small ante-room and as far as the outer door, which was open again, with the ladder already rolled down. However, we did not go down it, for the man made a sign to me to accompany him towards a platform which was there, on either side of the door. This platform went around the machine and, although narrow, permitted one to go along it in either direction.

To begin with we went along towards the front. The first thing I noticed was a sort of metal projection, square in shape and firmly fixed into the side of the machine, and sticking out (there was a similar thing on the other side). Had these two parts not been so small I would have judged that they were wings for aiding the thing to fly. From their appearance I think that their purpose was perhaps to move up or down, controlling the rise or the descent of the machine. I admit however that at no moment, even when the craft took off, did I notice any movement of them.¹ And so I cannot explain what purpose they served.

Further on towards the front, the man pointed out to me the three metal shafts that I have already mentioned, solidly set (the two outer ones) in the sides of the machine and (the middle one) right in the front, as though they were three metal spurs. They were all of the same shape and length, very thick at the base and tapering off to a fine point at the tip. The position of all three was horizontal. I don't know whether they were of the same metal as the craft, because they were giving off a slight reddish phosphorescence, as though they were red-hot. However, I felt no heat.

A little bit above the bases of them, where they were attached to the craft, there were reddish lights set in it. The two side lights were smaller and round. The front one was enormous, also round, and was the "front headlight" of the machine, which I have already described. All around the hull of the craft and slightly above the platform, on which they cast a reddish light, were countless small square lamps similar in appearance to those used for the interior lighting of the machine.

In front, the platform did not go the whole way round, but ended near a large semi-projecting thick sheet of glass elongated towards the sides and stoutly embedded in the metalwork. Perhaps it served for seeing through, for **there were no windows anywhere at all**. I think however that that would be difficult for, seen from the outside, the glass seemed very blurred. Seen from inside I don't know how it would be, but I don't believe it could be any more transparent.

I think that those front spurs released the energy that drove the machine forward, because, when it took off, its luminosity increased extraordinarily, merging completely with the lights of the headlamps.

Having seen the front part of the machine, we returned to the rear (the back part bulged out much more than the front part). But, before that, we stopped for a few moments and the man pointed upwards to where the enormous dish-shaped cupola was rotating. It was turning slowly, completely lit up by a greenish fluorescent light coming from I don't know where. Even with that slow movement, you could hear a noise like the sound of air being drawn in by a vacuum-cleaner, a sort of whistle

(like the sound of air in movement when it is being sucked through lots of little holes; I did not see any holes, however. That is just by way of comparison).

Later, when the machine began to rise from the ground, the revolving dish increased its speed to such a point that it became invisible, and then only the light could be seen, the brightness of which also increased quite a lot, and it changed colour, turning to a vivid red. At that moment the sound also increased (showing that there was a connection with the speed of rotation of the round dish revolving on the top of the craft) and turned into a veritable hum or loud whine. I didn't understand the reasons for these changes, and I don't understand what would be the purpose of the luminous revolving dish, which never stopped turning for a single moment. But it must have had some use, since it was there.

There seemed to be a small reddish light in the centre of that revolving cupola or dish, but the movement prevented me from verifying this with certainty.

Returning now to the back part of the machine, we again passed in front of the door and walked on, following the rearward curve. Right at the back, in the place where the tail of an aircraft would project, there was a rectangular piece of metal set in a vertical position and running from front to back across the platform. But it was quite low, no higher than my knee, and I was able to step over it easily to go to the other side, and come back again.

As I was doing so I noticed, on the floor of the platform, one on either side of the plate, two inset reddish lights in the shape of thick bulging cuts. They resembled aircraft lights, though they were not flashing.

I think however that the piece of metal in question was a sort of rudder for changing the machine's direction. At any rate I saw this piece of metal move towards one side at the moment when the machine—then stationary in the air at a certain height after taking off—abruptly changed direction before starting to move off at a fantastic speed.

Having also seen the rear part of the machine, we returned to the door. My guide now pointed to the metal ladder and signed to me to go down it. I obeyed. When I was down on the ground I looked up. He was still there. Then he pointed to himself,² and then pointed to the ground, and finally to the sky towards the south. Then he made a sign to me to step back, and he disappeared into the machine.

The metal ladder now began to get shorter, the steps arranging themselves one above the other, like a stack of boards. When the ladder reached the top the door (which, when open, was the floor) began, in its turn, to rise until it fitted into the wall of the craft and became invisible.

The lights of the metal spurs and of the head-lamps and of the revolving dish all became brighter, while the dish was spinning faster and faster. Slowly the craft began to rise, vertically. At that moment,

the three shafts of the tripod on which it had been standing rose towards the sides, the lower part of each leg (narrower, rounded,³ and ending in an enlarged foot) began to enter the upper part (which was much thicker and square), and when that was finished, the top parts began to enter the base of the machine. Finally there was no longer anything to be seen there; the base was smooth and polished as though that tripod had never existed. I did not manage to make out any marks indicating the places where the shafts had fitted in. Those people certainly did a good job of it.

The craft continued to rise slowly into the air until it had reached a height of some thirty to fifty metres. There it had stopped for a few seconds, and at the same time its luminosity began to get still greater. The whirring noise of the air being displaced became much more intense and the revolving dish began to turn at a fearful speed, while its light changed through various colours till it was a vivid red. At that moment, the machine suddenly changed direction, with an abrupt movement, making a louder noise, a sort of "beat" (this was when I saw the part that I have called the "rudder" move to one side)

Then, listing slightly to one side, that strange machine shot off like a bullet towards the south, at such a speed that it was gone from sight in a few seconds.

Then I went back to my tractor. I left the craft at roughly 5.30 in the morning, having entered it at 1.15 in the early hours. So I had been in there for **four hours and fifteen minutes**. A very long time indeed.

When I tried to start up the engine of the tractor, I found that it still was not working. I looked to see if there was some defect, and discovered that one of the battery leads had been disconnected and was out of place. Somebody had done that, for a well secured battery lead doesn't come undone by itself (I had checked them when I left home). It must have been done by one of the men after the tractor had stopped, with its engine dead, probably while they were capturing me. It could have been done to prevent me from escaping again should I manage to free myself from their hold. They were pretty sharp-witted people; there was nothing that they hadn't foreseen.

Apart from my mother, I haven't told my story to anybody till now. She said I should never get mixed up with those people again. I had not the courage to tell my father, for I had already told him about the light that had appeared in the paddock of the farm and he had not believed me for he said I "had been seeing things."

Later, I decided to write to Senhor Joao Martins, after reading one of his articles in *O Cruzeiro*, in November, in which he appealed to readers to report to him all cases to do with the Flying Saucers. Had I possessed enough money, I would have come earlier. But as I didn't, I had to wait until he said he would help me with the cost of the journey.

I am at your disposal, Gentlemen. If you think

I should return home, I will go home tomorrow. But if you wish me to stay longer, I shall agree to do so. That is why I came.

[End of the A. V. Boas deposition.]

Notes by Gordon Creighton

¹ There is a discrepancy between this and Dr. Buhler's version as given by me in *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* for January/February 1965. In Dr. Buhler's version, Antônio Villas Boas said that these short projecting things "like planks" made a 30° turn when the machine took off. I think it possible that Dr. Buhler and Dr. Mario Prudente Aquino (who, as Dr. Buhler tells me, spent only about 1½ hours interviewing Antônio, whereas Dr. Olavo Fontes had Antônio with him in Rio de Janeiro for several days) may have misunderstood this point, and that their mention of a 30° turn really refers to the movement of the rudder. There are a good many minor discrepancies of this kind, and Dr. Buhler says he may make another trip to the Interior to see Antônio and try to clear them all up.

² Here is another discrepancy. In the account published by Dr. Buhler, if I have understood it correctly, there is no reference to the man having pointed first at himself, then at the ground and then at the sky. Instead, he is represented as having gone down the ladder with A.V.B. and, on reaching the ground, as having "made two holes in the earth, pointing first to one hole and himself and then skywards, and

then to the other hole and to the earth and A.V.B." (though I notice with regret that in our attempt to squeeze the story into the available space, we did not describe this miming by the man as fully as we should have done). This, then, is another discrepancy to be ironed out. One wonders whether something has crept in here from another case? (For example, in the José Higgins case one of the entities allegedly made holes in the ground and pointed to them as though they represented planets.)

³ In his new book, *El Gran Enigma de los Platillos Volantes*, Antonio Ribera reproduces an absolutely astonishing photograph, said to have been taken in the Italian mountains near Genoa in June 1963, which appeared in the newspaper *Domenica del Corriere* of September 9, 1963. The photograph shows a landed craft which I believe (as Ribera does) to be **identical with A.V.B.'s machine**. It shows the flat "dish" on top, the two short projecting "planks" or "wings", the "cat-walk", the ladder, and the three legs. It can be seen quite clearly that these legs resemble those of a camera tripod, being thicker at the top and with a square cross-section, while the lower part is thinner and appears to be round in cross-section. (See also Antonio Ribera's letter in *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* for May/June 1965, with our artist's line reproduction of the machine shown in the Italian photograph.)

[Dr. Olavo Fontes's medical report will be given in Part 5 of this article.]

MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

The truth about Aurora

Sir,—As a postscript to our article 'Airships over Texas' we wish to inform the readers of the *REVIEW* of new developments regarding the alleged airship observation in Aurora, Texas, of 17 April 1897. Given the highly unusual character of the report, we brought it to the attention of Dr. Hynek, the Air Force's scientific consultant, who very kindly proposed to make a private investigation of the matter. A friend of Dr. Hynek in Texas checked our references to the local papers and sent his conclusions as follows: "After reading these accounts, I drove to Aurora and stopped at the only service station there. The proprietor of the service station is named Oates and the station and his house are on what was Judge Proctor's place. It seems as if Aurora was once the largest town in Wise County and was also the county seat and Judge Proctor was a Justice of the Peace. Mr. Oates would neither confirm

nor deny the authenticity of the story but he told me to contact a Mr. Oscar Lowry a few miles down the road in the town of Newark, Texas, which, incidentally, is another thriving metropolis of slightly over 300 inhabitants.

"I found Mr. Lowry just where I was told I would, 'down the road apiece by the schoolhouse.' When I told him what I wanted he asked me to sit down on a bale of hay (I found him in his barn) and he would tell me the story. He was about eleven years old when this happened and he also told me that no less than twenty others have been there before me.

"Mr. Lowry said that Aurora was a busy little town until the railroads put down their new tracks and neglected to include Aurora in their plans. As a result, the town began to diminish as people moved to be near the railroad. E. E. Haydon was a cotton buyer and writer who lived in Aurora and wanted to do something to help keep people in town and to make it a tourist attrac-

tion. He got the idea, I suppose, from the actual sighting he had read about and made up his story. The T. J. Weems that was supposed to have been a U.S. Signal Service officer was actually the town blacksmith and, according to Mr. Lowry, the Proctor place never had a windmill on it. To further substantiate the hoax, the cemetery is a Masonic Cemetery and a chart is kept on who is buried there. There are no graves unaccounted for. Mr. Lowry said that Mr. Haydon later told others about his story and many went on letting people believe it.

"The old courthouse is gone in Aurora and Decatur is the county seat of Wise and just a few houses are left in Aurora."

The authors feel that this clarification of the Aurora mystery only adds to the flavour of the entire episode. We are thankful to Dr. Hynek and his friend in Texas for providing us with this colourful new piece of Americana. D. B. Hanlon and J. F. Vallée, Chicago, Illinois.