

# Car Headlight Beams reported 'Bent'

Australian Police discover possible UFO landing site

UNDER the headline FLYING SAUCER IN DEATH CRASH? the *Daily Express* of April 12 carried the following strange story from Melbourne, Australia:—

"Motorist Ronald Sullivan was cruising along in the moonlight when the beam of his headlights 'bent' inexplicably to the right.

"'Had I followed them I would have run off the road', he told police at Maryborough, near Melbourne. 'I managed to stop before I crashed. Just then I saw a display of gaseous lights in all the colours of the spectrum in a nearby field. An object rose about 10 ft. in the air—and disappeared'.

"Later, he returned to the scene and found 19-year-old motorist Gary Taylor had been killed the previous night in a crash at same spot. Police checked and found in a freshly ploughed field a circular depression from two to five inches in depth and about five feet in diameter.

"They regard 38-year-old Sullivan as an intelligent and highly respected business-man—who does not believe in flying saucers".

When Dr. Bernard Finch forwarded a copy of the relative *Associated Press* message (which he had obtained privately), we learned that Mr. Sullivan's frightening experience had taken place on April 4, that he had returned to the site on April 8, and that the fatal accident had occurred on April 7. The incident took place on the road between Bendigo and St. Arnaud, in Victoria.

A few days later we received a welcome selection of newspaper cuttings from our friends of the

*Victorian Flying Saucer Research Society*.\* Among them was one from the *Melbourne Herald* of April 11, which gave additional details of the incident.

After the object which rose from the field had disappeared, Mr. Sullivan drove on to Wyche-proof, where he had his headlights checked. They were found to be in perfect order.

The depression discovered by the police in the newly ploughed field, was some 50 feet from the fence.

The scene of the sighting, and, three days later, of the death crash, was on a stretch of straight bitumen road about nine miles east of Bealiba, itself 120 miles north-west of Melbourne. No trace of alcohol was found after a blood test on the dead driver.

When Mr. Sullivan's headlights were deflected, it was a moonlit night: on the night of the fatality it was cloudy.

Police at Maryborough, Castlemaine, Bealiba and Newstead said that they had all heard reports of flying saucers seen in the area. They were non-committal on how seriously they regarded the (Sullivan) report.

[Was the light-bending caused accidentally by the car's proximity to the force-field of the UFO, or more sinisterly, was the bending caused by a deliberate act?—EDITOR.]

NOTE—\* This very active group publishes the AUSTRALIAN FLYING SAUCER REVIEW. Their address is: P.O. Box 43, Moorabbin, Victoria, Australia.

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# MICHIGAN FURORE

by Charles Bowen

THE UFO sightings in the vicinity of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on and after March 20, 1966, aroused such a storm in a teacup that one can hardly be blamed for imagining that it would need a much larger earthenware receptacle to contain the tempest. Despite the fuss, the sightings were really quite minor ones, yet they earned the tag "Best verified UFO" in the *New York Herald-Tribune* of March 22, not only because of the number of people who witnessed them, but also because of the status and standing of those people.

The first newspaper item to reach me was a clipping from the *Houston Chronicle* of March 21. This was so interesting that it was immediately set aside for our World-Round-up columns. For a day or so little more happened until the London *Evening News* of March 30 put me on my guard with its headline NEW FLYING SAUCER SCARE SWEEPS THE U.S. Their report paid scant attention to the incidents that aroused the furore in Michigan, but it did mention circular indentations that had been discovered in the State, that charcoal-like granules had been found on this site, and that geiger counters had 'jumped' in the vicinity of the spots.

It was as well I was on my guard. Even while I was preparing to write to our correspondents for further material, we were deluged with items drawn, so it seemed, from almost every newspaper in the States.

## Frank Mannor's experience

An early-comer was the *Detroit News* of March 21. From this, and the *Houston Chronicle*, we learned the story of Frank Mannor, a grizzled outdoor type of 47 years, father of ten, fond of hunting, fishing and shooting, who lives beyond the edge of the small community of Dexter, seven miles north-west from Ann Arbor.

At 7.30 p.m. on March 20, he saw lights approach the top of nearby trees, first red, then blue, then white. With his son Ronald, 19, he ran into nearby familiar swampland towards the light. His wife telephoned the police on their ten-party line—the story quickly got out!

Mannor stated that when he was some 500 yards from the thing (the name applied by some to our Warminster phenomenon seems to have caught on in America where it is now frequently used—and with a capital 'T') he saw that it was

**pyramid-shaped.** The length of a car, it had a hazy mist under it as it hung above ground level. There was 'a light here, and a light there, and what looked like a porthole', although it didn't resemble a flying saucer. It had a *coral-like surface*.

Young Ronald yelled to his father to "Look at that horrible thing", and at that point the lights went out.

Mrs. Mannor described how she saw the object 'rise from the ground and hit the tree-top awhile, and fall back to the ground'.

Mannor returned to the house, and he and the family heard a high-pitched screeching over the roof, rather like a bullet ricochet. Down in the swamp, however, the noise had been more like a siren.

## Police witnesses

By now the police had responded to the call. Dexter police chief Robert R. Taylor and Patrolman N. G. Lee saw the sight from a nearby hill. They said that it was a pulsating red light, and when they arrived at the spot and proceeded on foot with flashlights, it disappeared. They heard a noise—'like an ambulance', said Lee. The time was 9.0 p.m.

Robert Taylor, 16, son of the police chief, claims he saw a red-lit vehicle in the sky, moving slowly in the east at 10.30 p.m. As he watched, it accelerated and sped off to the west, flashing red and white.

Washtenaw County Deputy Sheriff Bushroe, who had responded to the Mannor call, was returning towards Ann Arbor when, at 11.0 p.m., he too saw lights to the south; flashing bluish green, red and white. In his car, with other officers, he turned and followed the object which 'looked like an arc' and was 'round'. After a five-mile pursuit the police car gave up the chase. "We lost it in the trees. Either the lights went off, or it took off with a tremendous burst of speed. It was about 1,500 feet above the ground. It moved at about 100 mph. We were doing 70 . . ." said Bushroe.

Frank Mannor said he and his son have good sight, that they couldn't both be wrong, and that he knows every inch of the ground.

At the police H.Q. at Ann Arbor a composite drawing of the object was prepared. A copy of this is displayed on our front cover.

It should be noted that in the *Houston Chronicle*

report the Mannors are quoted as favouring a (rugby, or American-type) **football shape**, made of 'waffled material, with blinking lights and antennas'. The original pyramid shape seems to have been discarded. They also described the object as like two elliptical bowls cupped together, with a globe on top, brownish in colour.

### Hillsdale incident

While the *New York Herald-Tribune* told how the Air Force in Washington was stating that it had no report, and the Washtenaw County Sheriff was announcing that Air Force investigators were on the spot, a new incident hit the headlines. Among others, the *New York World Telegram and Sun* and the *Providence (Rhode Island) Journal* of March 22 told how an assistant dean of Hillside College, 87 'coeds', and a local Civil Defence Director, William van Horn, had watched a glowing object 'zip past a college dormitory . . . and hover over a swamp for hours' on March 21.

Mr. van Horn said the object 'dimmed its lights when the police cars approached, brightened again when they went away, and dodged an Air Force beacon light'.

The shape described by some of the students was roughly that of a (rugby) football.

From the same report we learned that the Air Force had despatched Professor J. Allen Hynek, director of Dearborn Observatory, Northwestern University, to investigate the two sighting claims which the *New York Daily News* chose to refer to as "Flying Oddballs . . .")

### Oddities

The *Duluth News-Tribune* of March 23 records how hundreds of persons armed with cameras and binoculars braved the icy rain in the hope of catching repeat performances. They were doomed to disappointment, as also was the man who played a violin in the hope that visiting 'pilots' would hear and come to earth, and the man who sat in his car blinking his headlights in a code for the 'universal equation PI'—his explanation—which he claimed is known and understood throughout the Universe. Small wonder ridicule of our subject persists.

### Doctor's diagnosis

On March 25, after a hurried investigation, Dr. Hynek held a news conference. We have been fortunate enough to obtain a transcript of his statement, and this will be found following this article. Briefly he was of the opinion that the witnesses had observed the spontaneous combustion of marsh gases—methane, etc.—and declared that

a 'dismal swamp (was) a most unlikely place for visitors from outer space' to land (*Christian Science Monitor* of March 28). It is hardly surprising to learn that this aroused a storm of protest. The Mannors and others declared roundly that they knew their marsh gases ('will-o-the-wisps') when they saw them. In fact, the Mannors stated categorically that they saw an object (*Duluth Herald* of March 28). Mr. van Horn claimed that he and the coeds saw a white and red object about 20 feet across.

Reader Robert E. Rymas of Warren, Michigan, asks "How can a cloud of gas give the distinct impression of a vehicular form such as that represented by the composite drawing . . .?" All in all, Dr. Hynek seems to have had a bad press, with talk of white-washing, and covering-up for the Air Force, although some newspapers steered well clear of the rising note of hysteria. The *Denver Post* of March 27, for example, asks whether methane glows, and answered its own question with a note from a Dr. W. McKinnell of Marathon Oil Company, who said that it doesn't, unless enough heat is applied. The same scientist was also puzzled as to how such ignition happened so widely in the Michigan swamp areas, although he himself had seen swamp gas flares—in Michigan. The *Denver Post* stated sensibly that the whole UFO business is a fascinating scientific problem that deserves much research, a line also taken by the *Christian Science Monitor* of March 30. This great newspaper is glad that Dr. Hynek, a distinguished astronomer, carried out the investigation, because unlike many of his colleagues he takes these studies seriously. I feel we must echo these sentiments, (although not always in agreement with him, as will be seen later), for he has been studying the problem in his present capacity, we are told, for some 18 years. If he had no time for UFOs he would have lost interest long ago: it must be remembered that he has investigated many interesting cases, among them Socorro (April 1964)<sup>1</sup>, and Damon, Texas (Deputies Goode and McCoy),<sup>2</sup> and has declared that objects involved in those cases were definitely unknowns. And if one takes a close look at the Hynek press statement, one cannot fail to notice that he says: "In my capacity as Scientific Consultant, I have recommended that competent scientists quietly study such cases when evidence from responsible people appears to warrant such study". I do not think the Air Force Scientific Consultant has been deliberately covering up. He has been very strict in his investigation, and this does not go down too well with those folk who are inclined to see more in some incidents than is warranted by the evidence.

## Reactions

On the other side of the fence, the Mannors must be given credit for knowing the swamp and its habits and they claim to have seen something solid. Everyone, including Dr. Hynek, acknowledges that Frank Mannor, poor but proud, is a solid type of citizen. *Life* magazine of April 1 (*Life International* of April 18) carried an article summarising the incidents. Mannor is quoted as declaring "I seen what I seen and nobody's going to tell me different. That wasn't no old foxfire or hullabillusion. It was an object". The same issue of *Life* also ran articles with superb colour photographs of UFOs.

As for the object, Aimé Michel has drawn my attention to the similarity between the composite drawing of the Dexter object and the Valensole object,<sup>3</sup> which in itself betokens a similarity to the Socorro UFO.

The view expressed by Dr. Hynek that a swamp is an unlikely place for an extraterrestrial ship to land is open to dispute. There have been several reports of landings in such areas, none more recent than that at Tully, Queensland<sup>4</sup>—unverified I agree, but with plenty of evidence to support the view that something very strange went on in a swamp even nastier than those in Michigan. Swamps are usually lonely, out-of-the-way places, and just the location for uninterrupted landings. If the UFO techniques are as good as we think they are, then swamps can be but minor hazards to them. Also, what about the mass of reports of UFO comings and goings in the oceans<sup>5</sup> of the world? Can anything be nastier, or wetter, than our storm-swept seas?

## Final round-up

I note that at his news conference, Dr. Hynek held up a copy of the first Adamski photograph, and declared that it was a picture of a 'chicken feeder' (*Christian Science Monitor* of March 28). Presumably the professor has not read the statements of the photographic expert reported by the late Waveney Girvan in his *Flying Saucers and Common Sense*, and I doubt whether he would change his opinion if he had. Reader W. J. MacLean of Edinburgh writes to ask if Dr. Hynek can produce a chicken feeder of 1952 vintage

resembling an Adamski saucer, and he wonders what chickens could want with portholes! Mr. MacLean also produced a newspaper photograph (*The News* of Adelaide, South Australia, January 27, 1966) in which a similar object was snapped as it passed over a flock of sheep in Queensland. Which forces him, and me too, to the conclusion that Australians keep chickens as well as sheep.

While headlines throughout the United States proclaimed further sightings, and questions in the House by Congressman Ford, and new demands for Congressional enquiries by Major Donald Keyhoe, the *Duluth Herald* of March 30 reported that the U.S. Air Force denies "squelching reports" (a lovely description!) of UFOs. From the *New York Journal American* I see that Major Quintanella of Project Blue Book states "Our files are open to any accredited newspaperman, or anybody writing a book", which seems to be borne out by the fact that Jacques Vallée has drawn considerably on that source for material for his two books *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* and *Les Phénomènes Insolites de l'Espace*.

Finally, the *New York Journal American* of March 29 reports the investigation, by Mr. van Horn of Hillsdale, of circular indentations found in a gravel pit—which is where I came in with my copy of the *Evening News*.

Acknowledgments for newspaper clippings to: Louise Amsden, New York City: 'K.W.B.', Houston Texas: Luther C. Conant, Moorestown, N.J.: W. P. Farrow, Waterville, Maine: Peter J. Kelly, Southampton: F. K. Letteney, Lexington, Mass.: R. Lloyd-Taylor, Brighton: Mrs. I. M. Loman, Isle of Man: W. J. MacLean, Edinburgh: Gary S. Matthams, Cloquet, Minn.: John Ogilvy, Forfar: R. E. Rymas, Warren, Mich.: A. J. Van Cleave, Taos, New Mexico: Roman Forostyna, Brooklyn, N.Y.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> FLYING SAUCER REVIEW Vol. 10, No. 6 (November/December 1964): *The Socorro Classic* (reprint from NICAP's *UFO Investigator*).

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Clark: *The Greatest Flap Yet? Part III*. (See page 13).

<sup>3</sup> Aimé Michel: *The Valensole Affair*. FSR Vol. 11, No. 6. (November/December 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Judith Magee: *Queensland Again*, FSR Vol. 12, No. 2 (March/April 1966).

<sup>5</sup> Antonio Ribera: *UFOs and the Sea*, FSR Vol. 10, No. 6 (November/December 1964).

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**FLYING SAUCER REVIEW**

# STATEMENT ON THE DEXTER AND HILLSDALE UFO SIGHTINGS

made to the Press by **Dr. J. Allen Hynek**, Scientific Consultant  
to Project Blue Book, on March 25, 1966

**T**HE Air Force has asked me to make a statement on my findings to date. This I am happy to do, provided it is clearly understood that my statement will refer to the two principal events as reported to me: the event near Dexter, Michigan, on March 20, and a similar one at Hillsdale, Michigan, on March 21. It does not cover the hundreds of unexplained reports as opposed to the thousands of explained cases made not only to Project Blue Book, but those from other countries, over the past several years, as described in recent books and articles. I have not investigated those—such as the one near Exeter, New Hampshire and those in the western states last year, nor the puzzling foreign cases, such as that at Cuernavaca, Mexico, last fall. **I have recommended in my capacity as Scientific Consultant, that competent scientists quietly study such cases when evidence from responsible people appears to warrant such study. There may be much of potential value to science in such events.** We know a very great deal more about the physical world in 1966 than we did in 1866—but, by the same token, the people in the year 2066 may regard us as very incomplete in our scientific knowledge. We must not, in our haste to have answers, be Frederick Smiths.

If then, it is understood **I am not making a blanket statement to cover the entire UFO phenomenon** over the past 20 years in this and other countries, I am prepared to discuss the Dexter and Hillsdale sightings.

Now, in addition to these two specific cases, there has been a flood of other reports from this area, both before and after last Sunday and Monday, and I could not possibly have had the time to investigate all of these. I have had time, however, to determine that in Hillsdale, *over and above* the sincere and honest reporting by the young ladies at Hillsdale College of a very puzzling sighting, certain young men have played pranks with flares. And, I have also determined that the pictures released yesterday to the press **were taken on March 17**, near Milan, Michigan, and have no reference whatever to the sightings of March 20 or 21, and are without any question a time exposure of the rising crescent moon and the planet Venus. I emphasise that this explanation refers

to those specific pictures and not to the two cases now in question.

At long last now, the Dexter and Hillsdale cases: Here are the hard facts, the residue, the common denominator after sifting out as much of the subjective, peripheral, and inconsistent statements as I have been able to do in this short time.

The majority of observers in both cases reported only lights—red, yellow and green, silent glowing lights, near the ground. They have not described an object. Even the only two observers who did describe an object have stated that they were no closer than 500 yards—better than a quarter of a mile away—a distance which does not allow details to be determined. Witnesses have described glowing lights—lights that seemed to move but never far from a definite locale, or which suddenly disappeared and popped up at another place. Now what was that locale in both instances? In both cases, a swamp. In both cases the location of the glow was pin-pointed: in Dexter it was seen between two distant groups of people, and at Hillsdale it was seen in a swampy depression between the girls and distant trees. It was in both cases a very localised phenomenon. I think that this is a most significant point.

A dismal swamp is a *most unlikely* place for a visit from outer space! It is not a place where a helicopter would hover for several hours, or where a soundless, secret device would likely be tested.

Now what is a swamp? It is a place of rotting vegetation and of decomposition. Swamps are not the normal province of the astronomer; he usually has his eyes trained toward far loftier places—yet the Dutch astronomer, Minnaert, in his book, "Light and Colour, in The Open Air", has this to say about swamps. He describes lights that have been seen in swamps by the astronomer Bessel and other excellent observers. The lights, he says, resemble tiny flames, sometimes seen right on the ground, sometimes floating above it. The flames go out in one place and suddenly appear in another, giving the illusion of motion. The colours, he says, are sometimes yellow, sometimes red and blue-green. No heat is felt, and the lights do not burn or char the ground. They can appear for hours at a time and sometimes for a whole night. Generally there is no smell, and usually no sound,

except the popping sound of little explosions, such as when a gas burner ignites.

Where does the gas come from, and what lights it? The rotting vegetation produces marsh gas which can be trapped by ice and winter conditions. When a spring thaw occurs, the gas may be released in some quantity.

The flame, Minnaert says, is a form of chemical luminescence and its low temperature is one of its peculiar features. Exactly how it occurs is not known and this in itself might be made a subject of an interesting study.

The glowing lights on the swamp near Dexter and Hillsdale were observed for two to three hours. No sounds were heard, except for popping sounds. The lights were red, green or yellow and they appeared to move sideways, and to rise a short distance. I emphasise this would not be seen frequently—it is of a unique character. I have never seen it myself and I can easily understand the dismay of the witnesses who saw it and who sincerely described what they saw.

It seems likely that as the present spring thaws came, the trapped gases  $\text{CH}_4$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$ ,  $\text{PH}_3$ , resulting from decomposition of organic materials were released. The chemistry book by Sienko and Plane has this to say: "In air, phosphine,  $\text{PH}_3$ , usually bursts into flame, apparently because it is ignited by a spontaneous oxidation of the impurity  $\text{P}_2\text{H}_4$ . The will-o-the-wisp, sometimes observed in marshes, may be due to spontaneous ignition of impure  $\text{PH}_3$ , which might be formed by reduction of naturally occurring phosphorous compounds".

Other scientists have pointed out to me that in swamps the formation of  $\text{H}_2\text{S}$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  from rotting vegetation is common. These could be ignited by the spontaneous burning of the Phosphine,  $\text{PH}_3$ .

It would seem to me that the association of the sightings with swamps, in these particular cases, is more than coincidence. **No group of witnesses observed any craft coming to or going away from the swamps.** The glow was localised there. Deputy Fitzpatrick described the glow as coming from beyond a rise adjacent to the swamp, and visible through the trees. He stated that the lights brightened and dimmed much as stage lights do—smoothly and slowly. The girls at Hillsdale described almost the identical thing. This could have been due to the release of variable quantities of marsh gas.

The disappearance of the light when people got close with flash-lights or car lights, would indicate that the glow seemed bright only to dark-adapted eyes. The night was dark—there was no moon. The Hillsdale girls kept their rooms dark in order to see the lights in the swamp.

I emphasise in conclusion that I cannot prove in a Court of Law that this is the full explanation of these sightings. It appears very likely, however, that the combination of the conditions of this particular winter, an unusually mild one in this area, and the particular weather conditions that night—there was little wind at either location—were such as to have produced this unusual and puzzling display.—[My emphasis on certain passages.—EDITOR]

#### OLD HANDS

We observe from the March/April, 1966, edition of **Lumières dans la nuit** that R. Veillith's excellent journal, which frequently features articles by Aimé Michel, is now in its ninth year—a fine service to our cause. Enquiries to: M. R. Veillith, "Les Pins", LE CHAMBON-SUR-LIGNON (Haute Loire), France.

#### SMART NEW LOOK

**Phénomènes Spatiaux**, the quarterly journal of the French Group, G.E.P.A., has made its 1966 appearance in a pleasing new letterpress style. Editor: René Fouéré, 69 rue da la Tombe Issoire, Paris 14<sup>e</sup>.

#### THE MOON AND MARS

A note on the authors of our main feature which follows on page 9. **Antonio Ribera**, well known to our readers, is Vice-President of Centro de Estudios Interplanetarios, Barcelona, Spain. **José M. Oliver** is Secretary of the Agrupación Astronómica de Sabadell, Spain.