

A Close Encounter in North California ?

William Murphy

I WAS motivated to investigate a UFO sighting, which occurred three miles south-east of Anderson, California, on November 13, 1972, because of the patent "Blue Book" type of "explanations" put out by the radio and newspapers. While the explanation might be that the sighting was of a radio-sonde balloon, the account is strange enough to render that explanation highly questionable. Furthermore, the witnesses seem to be wholly reliable. They are Mr. and Mrs. Les Harris (aged about 40), their daughter Mary (aged 14), and Mr. Rex Pixley (aged 54), the brother of Mrs. Harris. Mr. Harris works in a lumber mill and part of his job entails estimating the size of logs.

After having dinner with his sister and brother-in-law and his niece Mary, Mr. Pixley went out with them at about 6.00 p.m. for his usual evening stroll before retiring to his trailer-home on the lot next to the Harris's rural home.

The arrival

Rex says that as he walked past his trailer he thought he heard an aeroplane in trouble low over the Sacramento River about a quarter of a mile away. When he turned to look back in that direction he saw what he first assumed to be a parachutist about to land on the edge of the Harris's one-storey house which was nearest to him, at that time about 40 feet away. However, the device did not descend, but hovered silently about a foot or two above the roof.

It appeared to be a black ball about 16 feet in diameter with a 10-foot rigid pipe protruding from the bottom. The pipe, or rod, was about 6 inches in diameter. At the end of this protrusion was a rectangular box about $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, with the $3\frac{1}{2}$ -foot dimension horizontal. The three later witnesses, incidentally, agree on all of the estimated dimensions except that of the "ball" part. They thought it was closer to 20 or 30

feet in diameter. After having seen its apparent size stepped off against trees, the house, and the trailer, and having heard Rex's description of what it seemed like when it was directly over him, I would have to speculate that the 20-foot estimate is the more accurate.

When first seen, the object was black or gun-metal blue-black and no lights were on it. It was darker than the dusky overcast sky and reflected some light from the Harris house windows.

The stay

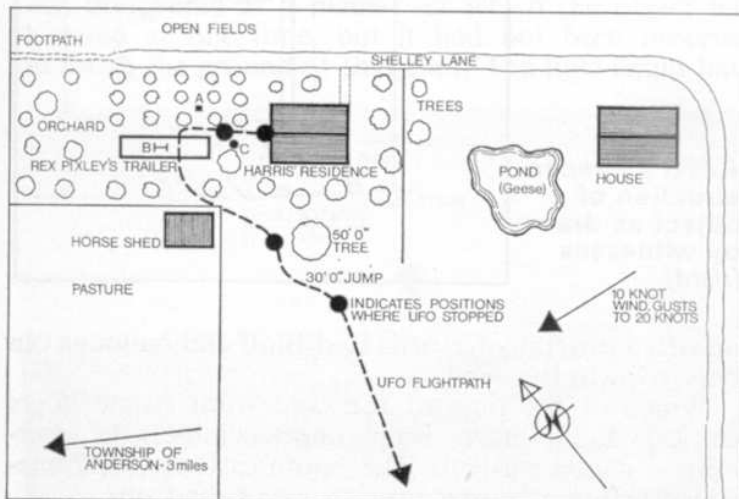
Mr. Pixley says he started back towards the object but retreated when, at the same time, it started towards him. It stopped for a few moments over a propane gas tank about 12 feet from its original position and stayed at the same height, the "box" about 15 feet from the ground and the top perhaps 45 feet up, or about the height of the larger shade tree that is behind the house. (A south-easterly wind was blowing at the time. Winds were gusting to over 20 knots according to the Federal Aviation Agency.)

The device then moved parallel to Rex's trailer, but turned 90° about mid-trailer and deftly manoeuvred its box between the tree branches and the TV antenna on the trailer. Rex had been standing a few feet from his trailer door, but darted and ducked away just as the thing made its opposite move over the trailer. Some time during this interval Rex saw two windows or lights on the ball as it revolved slowly, each slightly over one foot high and two or three feet wide, and separated by about a three-foot interval. The colour of the lights was a flickering orange-red with a suggestion of other colours interlaced.

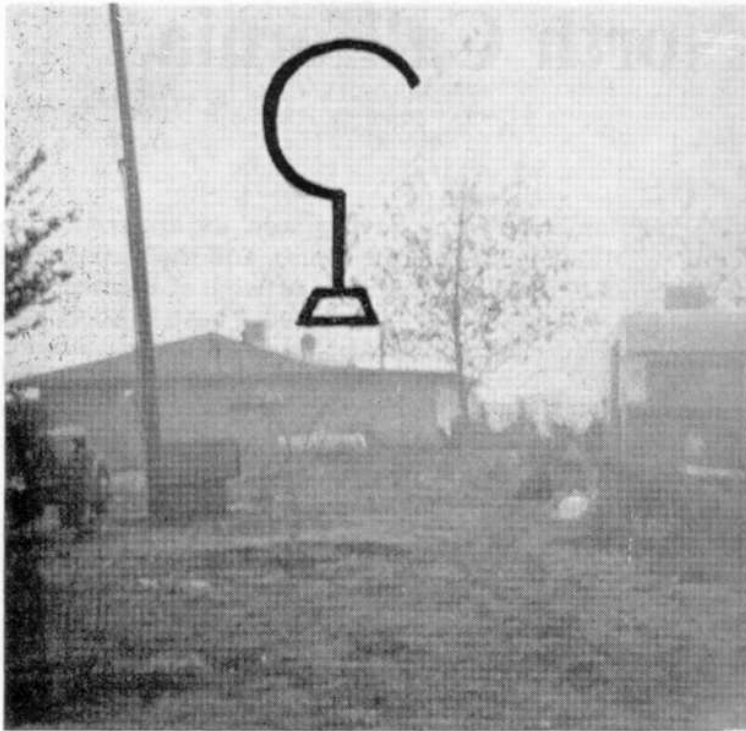
Rex then called to his sister, brother-in-law, and niece. Mrs. Harris came out first and saw it. Soon after that her daughter Mary saw it, and Mrs. Harris despatched Mary into the house to call the police. Mr. Harris was taking a shower and took time to dress before going out to view the excitement, and as a result arrived just shortly before the object's departure.

After crossing Mr. Pixley's trailer the thing moved back to the Harris's back yard, dangling its box between trees, the trailer and a horse shed on its way. At this time it was moving directly into the wind. It stopped beside a large shade tree for approximately six minutes, sometimes leaning slightly in various directions. Plucking up courage, Rex Pixley walked underneath it while it hovered there. At no time was it observed to touch the ground although the ball may have touched tree limbs which were waving in the wind. During the sighting the entire assemblage appeared to remain rigid.

When he stood under it, Rex could detect a "refrigerator" type of sound coming from the sphere. This sound, much amplified, was what Rex heard at the initial perception, and what all four heard at the departure of the object.



Key: A: Hole, B: TV antenna, C: Butane/Propane gas tank



The family dog was sick and being cared for in the house at the time, and was apparently unconcerned. None of the witnesses can remember what their horse did. The UFO had passed over the horse shed as it returned from the vicinity of the trailer, but the horse may have been in a distant part of the pasture. None can remember hearing noisy geese in an adjacent field, but they say they are so used to farm noises that they "tune them out." There was no effect on the electrical system of the house, including electric clocks.

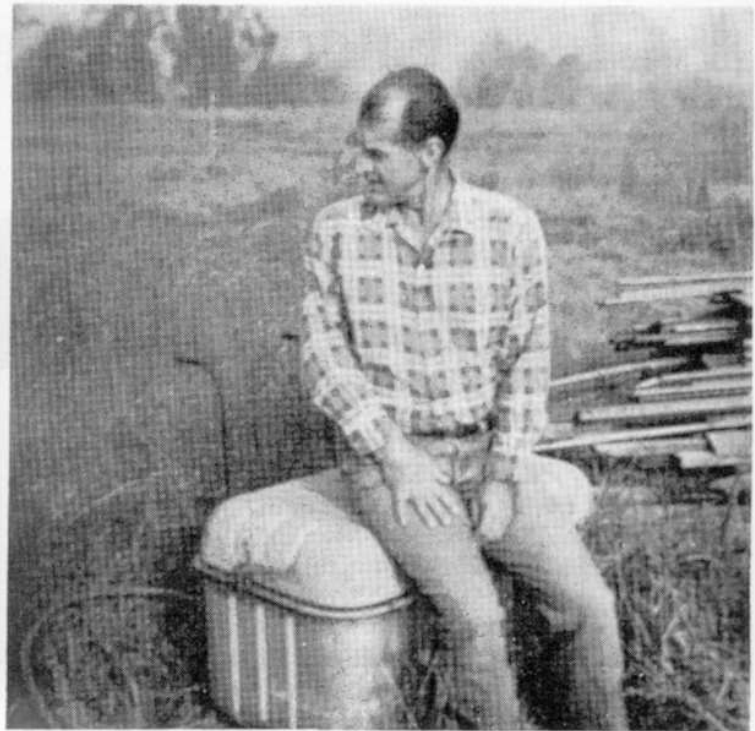
The departure

As already indicated, Rex Pixley, when he stood about 20 feet directly below the device, could hear a noise like that of refrigerator coming from the ball portion. This noise increased markedly as the object jumped quickly about 100 feet, and the other three observers, who were 30 feet away, could hear it plainly. They described it as the sound of horses stampeding, a bevy of great birds flapping, or sheets on a clothes line in a strong wind.

The UFO stopped for a moment above the tallest trees and power lines, then headed south-west at a constant speed of perhaps 10 m.p.h. It moved across, slightly into the strong wind. It could be seen for about a quarter of a mile against the overcast sky which was slightly illuminated by the twilight and reflected lights from the nearby town. At about this distance it seemed to brush two tall cottonwood trees. Mrs. Harris called the neighbour who lived near the trees. He went out to look for it but saw nothing. However, he was able to corroborate the wind and weather information the others had observed.

A U.S. weatherman at Red Bluff said it sounded like one of their radio sonde balloons *except for the windows, the dimensions, the sounds, the "pipe," and the manoeuvring (!)*.

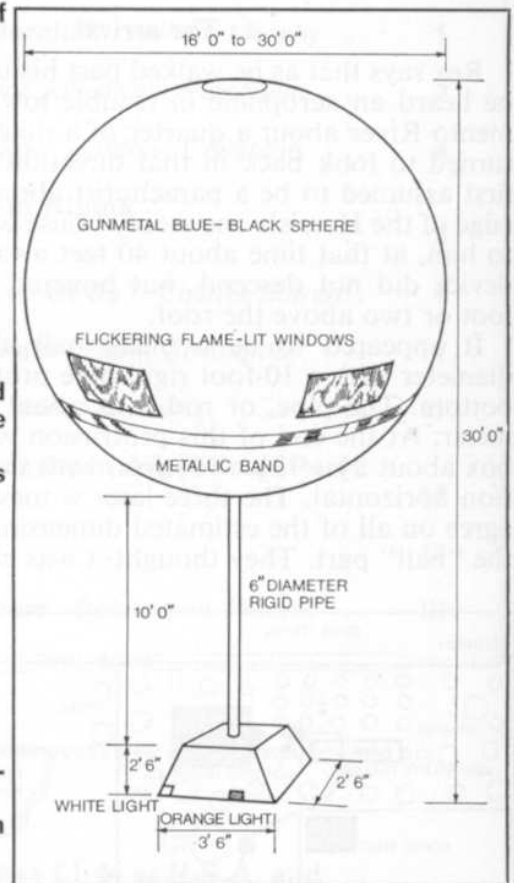
A balloon could have blown from Red Bluff to the Harris's yard that day (about 15 miles) but this thing



First sighting of object over house, behind or brushing the tree (above left)

Rex Pixley (above right) said the 'box' on the object was larger than this trunk

Artist's reconstruction of object as drawn by witnesses (right)



departed generally towards Red Bluff and balloons can only go with the wind.

Winds at the time of the cold front (some hours earlier) could have been unpredictable, or intermittently non-existent. The south-easterly wind prevailed before and after the passage of the front.

Just before mailing this report (which the observers have read and agreed is accurate) I consulted the local

Humanoids at Längelmävesi

Ilona Johansson-Paasonen

This account is taken from *Vimana*, the journal of the Finnish Interplanetarians Society, No. 3-4 of 1970, and has been edited from a translation provided by the publishers.

At the end of August, 1945, I was staying at a sauna situated by the shore of Längelmävesi, which is in the parish of Kangasala. My friend, Mrs. K., was away on a trip. The events which I describe occurred, as I learned later, on what was a lovely summer's day—a morning when the lake was as smooth as glass.

I had awakened some time before five o'clock, and was lying with my head turned away from the window when I noticed, all around the room, a stream of light under the edge of the roof. I thought someone was walking in front of the sauna with a torch in hand and looking in through the window. As the curtains were drawn, I did not know, before looking at my watch, that it was already morning. Very seldom was there anyone on the move so early, and, being alone, I was somewhat afraid, for the nearest dwelling was one kilometre from the sauna.

However, curiosity overcame nervousness: I was

puzzled about the light, and I raised the curtain. There seemed no limit to my astonishment, and I received a great shock. From the Sahalahti shore, which lies at approximately 4 kilometres distance from the shore where the sauna is situated, a dazzling ball of fire, as bright as the sun, and about 10 metres in diameter, was approaching the sauna at a great speed.

Overcome by fear, I threw myself down on the floor, on my back, to wait for the "end," for I was sure that if that ball of fire maintained its course it would sweep the sauna to the ground. Rushing over the surface of the lake, the ball, when I first saw it, could surely have been no more than 200 to 300 metres from the sauna, for already it was obliterating everything from view, including the small islands.

Puzzled and vastly relieved when the expected crash did not happen, I stood up after a few minutes to take
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weather station at Red Bluff to recheck the time the front passed, etc. The weatherman in charge, after seeing the drawing and other data presented to him, said he could not see how it could have been any type of balloon he knew about. Federal Aviation Agency personnel in the adjacent office agreed. What is more, they put me on the trail of another recent local sighting!

The duration of the sighting was about 10 minutes. It took place at about 6.00 p.m. P.S.T. on Monday, November 13, 1972; sunset that day was at 5.15 p.m. P.S.T. As well as an overcast sky there was variable rain and visibility variable to about 1 mile.

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A hole for which no one could find an explanation was discovered at a place over which the object had hovered at one time, but it had not been observed to touch the ground at that spot. The hole could have

been made by a shovel, but it was in a cared-for portion of the lawn. It was about 6 inches deep, with loose soil in the bottom, and firm sides, 6 × 8 inches in length forming a rectangle.

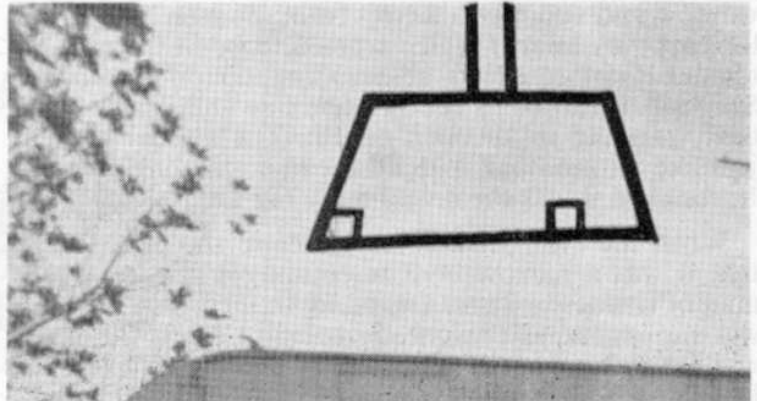
Editor's postscript: Mr. Murphy also sent a cutting from the Redding (Ca) *Record Searchlight* for November 15(?), 1972, which included a brief summary of the incident, and which closed with a note that the witnesses "... called sheriff's deputies, who determined the object must be a weather balloon.

"That conclusion was confirmed today by National Weather Service officials in San Francisco. 'It sounds like the radio sonde' ... one forecaster said."

Mr. Murphy italicised the words "sounds like" and asked how this could possibly be confirmation of the sheriff's deputies' guesswork.



Position last seen, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away, apparently brushing cottonwood trees (not to scale)



Box of object passed between tree and T.V. antenna on caravan