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### WHY I BELIEVE IN FLYING SAUCERS

... An Eye-Witness Story  
by MacKinlay Kantor



# Why I Believe

By **MAC KINLAY KANTOR**

*Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "Andersonville"*



The noted writer—co-author with Gen. Curtis E. LeMay of "Mission with LeMay. My Story"—tells of the strange personal sighting that convinced him that UFOs are real



## in Flying Saucers

**W**ell, to begin with, I saw one.

But for some years previously I had believed that Unidentified Flying Objects must exist. I'd heard the calm testimony of too many experienced pilots and other observers, not to believe.

Let's say that you are a skeptic—the same sort of grimly determined Doubting Thomas that I used to be. Would your skepticism still prevail if you could

hear the dry steady voice of Gen. Curtis E. LeMay saying—as indeed I've heard him say:

“Repeat again: There were some cases we could not explain. Never could.”

When I first spotted the UFO it was hanging motionless in the sky.

I looked at my wristwatch. 6:07 p.m.

The date was January 4, 1954, a Monday. The place: My own beach on the

*Continued*

Gulf of Mexico, about five miles from downtown Sarasota, Fla., on an island called Siesta Key.

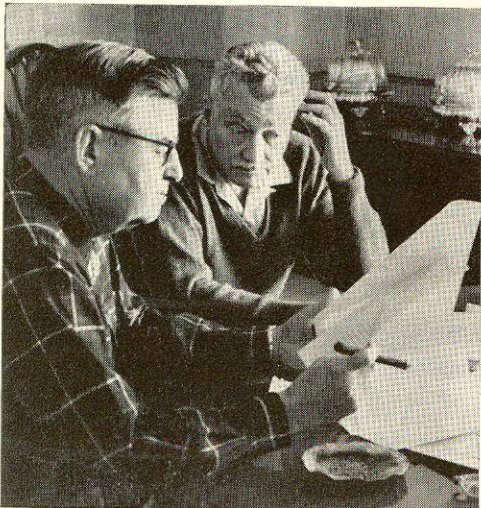
On viewing the UFO, I felt a great wave of thankfulness. By golly, I thought, at last it's here. Now I don't just have to *believe*. Now I *know*.

It looked like the top third of an apricot. The sun had fallen below the horizon a few minutes before, and earth and Gulf were now in shadow. But that object in the sky still gleamed brightly. I assumed that the orange coloration came from the sun's reflection on a curved surface of metal or some similar substance, rather than from any light radiating from the critter's interior. Also, there seemed to be some sort of rim around the bottom.

It was at too great a distance: I couldn't tell whether there were any windows or ports. And, both on the right and left sides of the curved body, dark shadows came up to claim the surface and accentuate a brilliant sheen on that portion of the curve nearest me.

I noted the position, and approximate height above some pines. I nailed the thing to its relationship with the tallest two trees: It was directly above them. Later I used instrumental aid to determine the exact height at which the object had hovered above the horizon. Eleven degrees up. As for a compass reading, the bearing would have been anywhere from 187 to 192 degrees.

*[Continued on page 198]*



Former Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, discusses book he co-authored with MacKinlay Kantor after retiring from active duty.



Maj. Hector Quintanilla Jr. is head of the Air Force's Project Blue Book, which investigates and evaluates reports of UFOs.

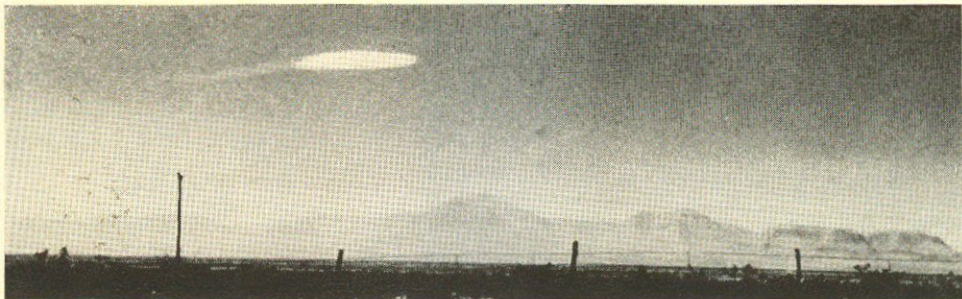
## Are you up-to-date on UFOs?

Almost 10,000 UFO sightings have been reported to the Air Force since 1947, when it set up Project Blue Book, the official U. S. agency that analyzes and evaluates flying-saucer reports. There have also been sightings unreported to the project.

Not one has ever given any indication that it was a space vehicle under intelligent control, according to the Air Force, although the Air Force cannot account for the origin of many UFOs.

Maj. Hector Quintanilla Jr., chief of the Project, says, "We have determined in the vast majority of cases what the stimulus of the sighting was—stars that seem to move, operational and experimental aircraft, satellites, balloons, or just plain hoaxes." But he concedes that the origin of at least 672 UFOs has not been accounted for. The Air Force has no reason to believe that any of the UFOs unaccounted for came from another planet.

"There's no question that the people who spot UFOs see something," says Dr.

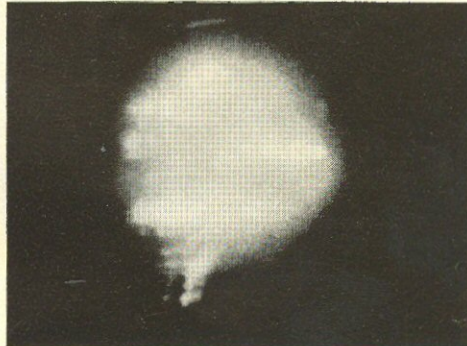


Flying saucer in flight was the report Project Blue Book office received on this picture taken in 1957

at Alamogordo, N.M. Photo analysis revealed the "unidentified object" to be a lenticular cloud.



Socorro, N.M., policeman Lonnie Zamora watches A. F. investigator Maj. William Connor use Geiger counter to check area in which he sighted UFO.



Flying light source over Sherman, Tex., was photographed by TV newsman last August. Air Force has not been able to determine what it was.

J. Allen Hynek, chairman of Northwestern University's Dearborn Observatory and the Air Force's chief scientific consultant on UFOs. "But the majority of cases we can't explain result from the fact that we don't have anything tangible that can be measured scientifically."

"I'd like to see just one piece of a UFO," Quintanilla says. His office at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, has received all kinds of materials purporting to be pieces of flying saucers. But analysis of the samples has always shown them to be of earthly origin.

"We're certainly not trying to hold anything back," Quintanilla says. "The Air Force would have a lot of technical knowledge to gain from examining a real UFO."

UFOs are reported by people from all walks of life. "We accept every report as valid," Quintanilla says, "unless there is evidence to substantiate a report as a hoax."

Eighty percent of the cases are easily solved. "We have all the resources of the federal government at our disposal and much

of private industry also," Quintanilla says.

One case still "bugs" Quintanilla. In the late afternoon of April 24, 1964, Patrolman Lonnie Zamora of Socorro, N.M., was chasing a speeding car on U.S. 85 when he heard an explosion. He immediately turned off the road and saw a white, egg-shaped vehicle, like a car standing on end. One or two men he believed to be occupants of the vehicle were standing alongside.

Then smoke and flame began to spout from the bottom of the thing and Zamora ran behind his car to shield himself. The vehicle rose to about 20 feet, hovered for several seconds, and then flew off. There were no other witnesses, but Air Force investigators found a great deal of physical evidence they could not explain—burnt vegetation and indentations in the ground.

Quintanilla thought the UFO might have been an experimental lunar-landing vehicle. "I've spent a lot of sleepless nights over that case," he says. "It has been well investigated and analyzed by experts. But it's still a mystery."

## Why I Believe in Flying Saucers

[Continued from page 74]

As for true altitude and size, there was nothing to do but guess and wonder. The UFO had to be somewhere out over the Gulf of Mexico. Since I didn't know its size I couldn't establish any true altitude. Nor could I do more than guess at its distance from me.

The thing was motionless. It moved neither to right nor left, for a matter of minutes. It did not appear to become any larger; hence it was not advancing. It did not appear to become any smaller; hence it was not receding.

The instant after I had checked the time, on first viewing the object, I began to yell for my wife. I bellowed her name several times. No use. The house was less than 100 yards from where I stood, but she and some friends, who had been visiting us through the New Year's holiday, had the hi-fi turned on and didn't hear me.

On the next property an old man stepped onto the beach, Dr. Gillespie who had rented the place for the season. I headed for him as fast as I could move.

"Doctor! Doctor! Look!" I pointed as I ran. He stared, turned, gazed toward the sea. When I reached him he was looking a little too far to the west, and I put my arm around his shoulders and turned him more toward the south.

"Above the trees! Don't you see it?"

"I see it," he said, "but I can't make out just what it is. Doesn't that look like—? Isn't it two airplanes refueling in midair?"

"If it's two airplanes refueling in midair, aren't they headed in opposite directions?"

The doctor chuckled. "Guess they are."

"But, Doctor, that thing's absolutely motionless. It doesn't move to right or left."

"I guess you're right."

At that moment the object took off. It started with unbelievable speed, moving on a diagonal line, ascending as it receded into the southwest.

I didn't take my eyes off the thing. It was really traveling. I had never seen anything hurtle so rapidly except a meteorite. I have messed around with the Air Force for a good long generation, and have poked my nose into two wars.

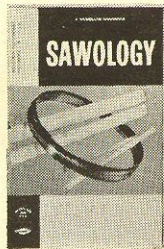
I know of no aircraft which might move with such terrific speed through our atmosphere. Then it was gone.

The time was 6:11 p.m.



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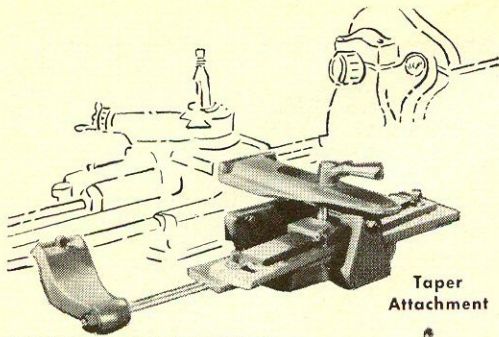
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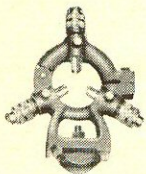
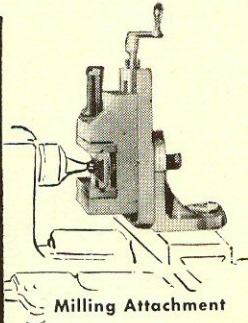
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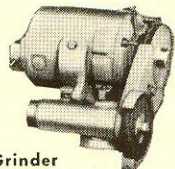
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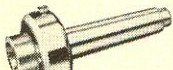
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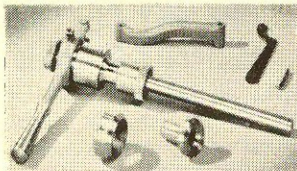
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**Why I Believe in Flying Saucers**

Did anyone else on Siesta Key happen to see that thing?

Damned if I know.

Next morning I drove to MacDill Air Force Base at Tampa, to report the incident to Col. Michael McCoy, who was then commanding a bomb wing.

At MacDill, I found Mike McCoy in his office, and proceeded to sit down and tell him the whole story. I drew some sketches, too. When I was through, Mike sat tugging at his red-gray moustache.

"Well, what do we do, Mack? Send a report to Project Blue Book at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base?"

"No," I said. "I guess not."

"You saw it, didn't you?"

"Yes. But if we send in this report, some character will come along and tell me patiently that what I saw was the planet Venus or the planet Mars or the star so-and-so, or a Navy balloon, or a conventional aircraft; or that maybe I was the victim of an illusion induced by hysteria."

"Exactly," said Colonel McCoy. "That's what they're always saying. Let's just forget it."

"I won't forget it," I told him. "I'll remember it."

Recently Curt LeMay and I were discussing UFOs while I worked with him on his autobiography [*Mission With LeMay. My Story*, by General Curtis E. LeMay with MacKinlay Kantor. Doubleday, 1965].

Let me quote a few lines from what General LeMay had to say about UFOs.

"Some natural phenomenon might usually account for those sightings which had been seen and reported, and thus explain them. However, we had a number of reports from reputable individuals (well-educated, serious-minded folks—scientists and flyers) who surely saw something.

"Many of the mysteries might be explained away as weather balloons, stars, reflected lights, all sorts of odds and ends. I don't mean to say that, in the unclosed and unexplained or unexplainable instances, those were actually flying objects. All I can say is that no natural phenomena could be found to account for them. . . .

"Repeat again: There were some cases we could not explain. Never could."

It's 12 years since I saw my first UFO. Maybe it will be my only one. I've never seen the shine of one since. But I'm always watching. P.S.