

Kansas City, KS

File # 1961

13

Case 9. Kansas City, Kansas, August 12, 1961

Another such case, involving very much closer-range observation of a craft-like object, is to be found in Bluebook files as an UNIDENTIFIED. (USAF has repeatedly asserted, for 15 years, that in their unidentified cases lies nothing that defies explanation "in terms of present-day science and technology." Not so, I am obliged to say. I am making a special study of Air Force UNIDENTIFIEDS, and would stress that there is a very large body of phenomenology in those UNIDENTIFIEDS that most certainly defies explanation in terms of today's science or today's technology! Indeed, this is the principal conclusion of the studies of all serious students of the UFO problem.)

At about 9:00 p.m. on August 12, 1961, two college-age boys living in Kansas City, Kansas, became involved in a close-range sighting of considerable interest¹². I have recently interviewed both of these witnesses, T. A. Phipps and J. B. Furkenhoff. They were driving towards Furkenhoff's home in Phipps' open-top convertible near Old Mission High School on 50th Street. Furkenhoff sighted the object first and had been watching it for some time before he called it to Phipps' attention. It seemed to be hovering, by that time, at perhaps 50-100 ft altitude over a point only a few city blocks away. It appeared to have lights all around its lower edge, and made no sound then or later.

They drove almost directly under it and looked up at its base, where it hovered over houses whose residents were evidently unaware of the presence of the object, since no other persons were seen out of doors by the two boys. No wings, tail or propellers were visible, and no exhaust or noise was perceptible. The lights around its underside were yellowish and had a neon-glow character, according to Phipps. It was the complete lack of sound that eventually made them uneasy after a total viewing-time that they estimated at several minutes. They did not get out of the convertible, from which they had a quite adequate view. Phipps could not recall whether he stopped his engine.

The size was estimated at that of "a football field" when they were interrogated by USAF personnel in 1961 (Bluebook file account), but when I interviewed them in early 1968, they put it at more like 100 ft across. It was opaque, solid, and obscured the sky above, which was cloudless according to the Bluebook data. The Bluebook file report indicated that its shape was compared to that of a "sled with running boards", yet neither witness, when I questioned them, had the slightest idea how such a description was filed by the interrogating personnel. Their recollections differed as to shape: Phipps recalled it as disc-shaped, while Furkenhoff recalled it as a rounded cylinder.

After about 3-4 minutes of observing the silently hovering object, their uneasiness was broken by the sudden departure of the object. It accelerated from a stationary position and climbed away out of sight in a time of only a few seconds, each witness agreed. The precise climb-out path was recalled somewhat differently by the two witnesses. The 1961 Air Force interview recorded the climb-out as beginning with a directly vertical ascent followed by an inclined departure path to the east.

They each told their parents, and Phipps' mother asked a friend who was on active Air Force duty, a Maj. John Yancer, to phone the Richards-Gebaur AFB near Kansas City. He was told that an unidentified had been seen on radar, and so he urged that the boys be interviewed by USAF personnel. Telephone interviews were accomplished the next day, but no further USAF interrogation in the ensuing half-dozen years was ever carried out. This, despite the fact that it was put in the UNIDENTIFIED category at Bluebook. Such lack of

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14

followup of even the most intriguing UNIDENTIFIED cases is almost the rule, not the exception; this systematic failure to pursue UFO reports is only one of many disturbing facets of the USAF investigations since 1953.

The August 1961 sighting is not readily explained. Economy of expression suggests calling the object an unconventional machine-like object exhibiting performance characteristics well beyond the state of the art. I must say it also seems to defy explanation in terms of present-day science and technology, to use the Air Force's threadbare phraseology.
