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Because of suspicions aroused by several of the descriptions, the Daily News called the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. in Akron, Ohio, this morning to see if any of their blimps might have been in this area at the time of the sightings.

"None of our blimps were in your area last night," was the answer from Tom Reilly, public relations officer for Goodyear's blimp division.

Reilly said the Mayflower, which normally flies in this area during the summer, was in Alabama; the America has been in Elkhart, Ind., for the last four days, and the third blimp is permanently based in California.

Although many area residents observed the unidentified

Aerial Phenomenon, the control tower at the Harrisburg International Airport had no information on dirigibles or helicopters in this area at the time in question and the airport's radar, which ranges to distances of 50 miles (but more frequently 30) failed to detect anything unknown.

This writer was among those who observed the object and agrees that the lights around its perimeter did resemble the configuration of a blimp when first sighted at approximately 9:40 p.m. approaching North Lebanon Township from the direction of Fredericksburg. However, as the object passed directly overhead, the lights depicted more the shape of a horseshoe crab.

A Jonestown resident, Barry Batz, reported that he and a number of unidentified friends spotted what he described as similar to a blimp; the object was also called "oblong."

Batz noted that at the time he viewed the UFO (about 10 p.m.) it was "very dark," with no lights visible anywhere.

He also said that the device had a kind of cage or bubble near the top. The UFO was said to have been nearly motionless at an approximate altitude of 75 to 100 yards.

The object was also seen from the vicinity of the Lebanon Plaza shopping center at about the same time.

Bill Sutcliffe of Mt. Gretna also told of having seen the object.

He reported that he saw the object while traveling along Route 117 in Mt. Gretna, and noted that it appeared to have three white lights close together along the base or underside, and a single, brighter light (also white) higher up on the structure.

This generally agrees with my own description, though I would opt for possibly four white lights along the perimeter in addition to the top light.

The UFO spotted by Sutcliffe was also in the vicinity of the Plaza, sometime between 9:30 and 10 p.m.

Sutcliffe said that it was

"pretty damn high if I could see it from here (Gretna)." He pointed out that at first he thought the lights on the structure were stars, but realized differently after a second look.

Another Mt. Gretna resident who declined to be identified said he noted the UFO from Gretna as he looked toward Lebanon. He said he at first thought it was stars from the constellation Orion.

He described what he saw as three lights in a row with a bright light above them. "It was not moving, just sitting there," he said.

The Daily News also received several unconfirmed reports that a blimp-like object was sighted over Boscov's department store. In each case, the descriptions varied to a degree.

No Explanation

A spokesman at the control tower of Harrisburg International Airport told the Daily News that the Lebanon County

Civil Defense communications center had called about an unidentified aircraft, but the tower had no information on conventional aircraft in the area at the time to explain the sighting.

He said the airport's radar failed to detect anything unknown in the vicinity at the time of the sightings. However, he pointed out that if the object was extremely low or motionless in the air, the tower radar would have failed to register the aerial unknown.

He cited an example by way of a hovering helicopter, which he said "would be immediately cancelled out" by radar instrumentation. The spokesman further indicated that their mode of radar is designed specifically for tracking moving targets.

The radar also tracks well above the reported altitude of the UFO, often at an altitude of between 3,000 and 5,000 feet.

A spokesman at the Helicopter Support Facility, Muir Field, Ft. Indiantown Gap, also reported this morning that there were no aviation activities last night from that facility that would explain the mystery.

Several skeptics last night attempted to explain away the phenomenon as a "covey of jets flying in formation." But, the slow speeds and low altitude reported for the object as well as the reports from Indiantown Gap and Harrisburg International Airport would appear to rule out that possibility.

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DAILY NEWS
(Lebanon, Pa.)
October 24, 1975

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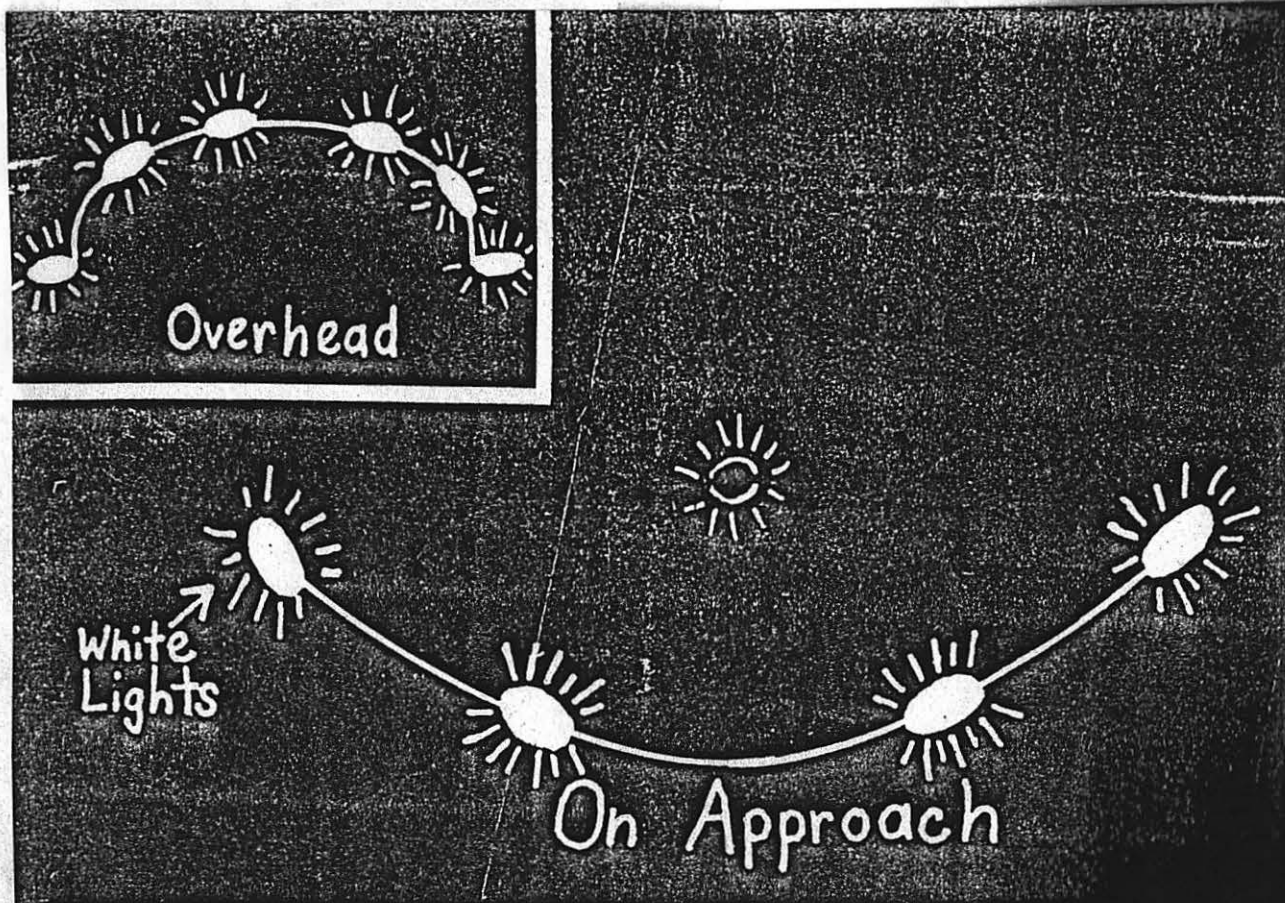
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UNIDENTIFIED OBJECT — This drawing depicts one description of the unidentified aerial object that passed over Lebanon County last night. On approach, the object seemed to have four lights around its perimeter and another white light above, giving somewhat the appearance of a blimp. But, as it passed directly overhead the lights took on more the appearance of a horseshoe crab.



OK, IF IT WASN'T THE GOOD YEAR BLIMP, WHAT WAS IT?

**Phantom dirigible hovers in the skies above
Lebanon, Pa., as prelude to a new UFO flap.**

BY CURT SUTHERLY

It was about 9:35 p.m., October 23, 1975. I was behind the typewriter, cranking out a news story for the local paper. The switched-on television provided more noisy companionship than entertainment.

Abruptly the set's sound and video garbled; apparently the driver of the passing car was keying his citizen's band (CB) radio. The one CB term which survived the conflict of signals was *U-foe*—or UFO.

Almost immediately the telephone started ringing. A curious sensation manifested itself as I grabbed the receiver.

Rich Metcalf, the dogwatch reporter for the *Lebanon (Pa.) Daily News* began, "Curt, I thought you might like to know that I just got a report about some kind of strange object seen flying over the city (Lebanon)..." He proceeded to relate the information he had just received from a regional civil defense dispatcher. Apparently, a dirigible-shaped air machine—or machines—was visiting Lebanon. I groaned inwardly and thought of the feature that had run that day on Lucius Farish, an Arkansas UFOlogist and freelance writer, and his research into the still unexplained na-

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tionwide "airship" flap of 1896-97.

Several telephone calls were made and a brief report on the aerial activities was prepared for the next edition. Before the account would appear, it would be expanded rather extensively.

News staff writer John (Jack) Linder-muth numbered among those who had witnessed the silent passage of the airship, so when he discovered the report lying on the city desk, he made short work of beefing it up with his own observations of the phantom airship.

A front-page banner proclaimed "MYSTERY AIRCRAFT SPURS SPECULATION ABOUT UFOS," while the lead told readers, "Whatever else it may have been, it wasn't one of the Goodyear blimps."

And so began Pennsylvania's most recent UFO flap, or as one individual rather bluntly put it, "a hell of a lot of UFO sightings."

As Linder-muth told readers, he saw the "airship" directly over his home at approximately 9:40 p.m. With white lights about its perimeter, it "... did resemble the configuration of a blimp when first sighted. However, as the object passed directly overhead, the lights depicted more the shape of a horseshoe crab," he wrote, adding that it made no audible sound.

Later we located other witnesses who described what they had seen. Barry Batz, a resident of Jonestown, Pa., and Fred Carpenter, of Palmyra, Pa., who were in Lebanon with a third man, saw the device in the vicinity of the Lebanon City Municipal Building.

Comparing the object to a blimp, Batz called it "oblong." All three witnesses explained that it had been late evening (about 10 p.m.) and the object had been "very dark," and had shown no visible lighting. Yet, they could see what appeared to be "a kind of cage" or "bubble" near the top of the alleged craft. While the object was in view, a period of several minutes, it remained nearly motionless in the sky at an altitude of about 100 yards. The three recall having heard a "faint whooshing sound" which may or may not have been created by the airship.

Several unidentified individuals also reported seeing the dirigible-shape at about 10 p.m. near the Lebanon Plaza Shopping Center (about one-half mile from the municipal building), raising the

question of how many airships were about that night.

Meanwhile, North Cornwall-West Lebanon Township Police patrolman Donald Wengert, was parked to the rear of the Lebanon Valley Mall shopping center (at the west end of the city) and was watching the object (or something similar) fly over the mall and head in a northeasterly direction. He noticed the phantom had "four burning lights in a flattened half-moon shape with a fifth (light) top center" and estimated the airship's altitude at between 200 and 300 feet. Asserting that it flew "too fast for a hot-air balloon and too slow for a jet plane," Wengert was certain the object was not a helicopter. Interestingly, the policeman also heard the whooshing noise reported by Batz and Carpenter.

In Mt. Gretna, a small community several miles south of Lebanon, at least two individuals watched the silent flight of the airship. Bill Sutcliffe was traveling along Route 117 (through Mt. Gretna), when he noticed what at first looked like several bright stars. He soon realized that he was instead watching three white lights set close together on the underside of what appeared to be a cigar-like shape. Higher up on the structure, Sutcliffe detected a fourth white light.

The other Mt. Gretna witness also saw three lights in a row, and at first assumed they were the stars making up

A FLICKERING WHITE LIGHT hovered over this Monroe Valley, Pa., marsh as this reporter approached it.



the "belt" of the constellation Opion. The individual said, "It was not moving, just sitting there."

The number of "dirigible" sightings made a call to Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, Akron, Ohio, advisable. Linder-muth contacted Tom Reilly, the public relations director for Goodyear's blimp division, and was told, "None of our blimps was in your area last night." Reilly further stated that the airship *Mayflower* was then in Alabama; the *America* in Elkhart, Indiana, and the *Columbia* is permanently based in California.

A call to the Helicopter Support Facility, Muir Field, Fort Indiantown Gap (a nearby army post), revealed that no helicopter activity had occurred on the night in question.

The control tower at Capital City Airport (Harrisburg, Pa.) reported that the airport's radar, which blankets most of Lebanon and Lancaster Counties, had detected no unexplained aerial activity.

However, the control tower spokesman admitted that low-flying or hovering aircraft, for example a helicopter, would not register on the tower's radar scope because its particular mode of radar was specifically designed to track *moving* objects. Hovering or near-hovering craft "would be immediately canceled out" by automatic instrumentation. Normal tracking altitude for the Capital City radar was said to be generally effective between 3,000 and 5,000 feet.

The sightings meanwhile occurred nightly. On October 24 at approximately 8:05 p.m., Scott Burns, 31, Palmyra RD 1, spotted a strange aircraft hovering over the Derry Township landfill near Hershey, Pa. (It perhaps should be noted here that anomalous aerial ob-

jects seem to have a preference for bodies of water, garbage dumps, landfills and old burial grounds.)

Burns had seen a similar object the previous night. Again the UFO he saw appeared to be about the size of (what else?) a blimp. "It was the closest I've ever been to anything and didn't know what it was. I'm disgusted I didn't pay more attention to it," he said. The witness did notice that the airship seemed to fade from view after a short time. He attributes this to heavy cloud cover.

Burns' report triggered a police search for the aerial object. It was fruitless.

Then it was October 25, a night so fraught with bizarre sighting activity that the airship reports came to seem normal in comparison.

At approximately 9 p.m., two men were burning leaves behind the combination sporting goods shop/restaurant they jointly operate in a mountainous region of the northern county when a familiar pattern of white lights soared overhead. They watched in stunned silence.

During an October 31 telephone conversation, one of the men recalled thinking at first, that the stars were becoming visible (the night was overcast). He soon realized, however, that the lights were unlike any he'd ever before witnessed.

Other residents apparently saw the object as it began to climb then to hover over a nearby mountain peak. A general alarm went out over many citizen's band radios maintained in the area, ultimately bringing county sheriff's department, civil defense and state police officials onto the scene.

Bob and Sandy Rumpf, Fredricksburg, Pa., noticed "a brilliant white light" over the mountains after they were called by one of the aforementioned sighters. He, they recalled, had been in a highly disturbed state of mind when he phoned.

Neither Bob nor Sandy could honestly attest to having noticed anything extraordinary about the light. They indicated that it had been rather far away by the time they had arrived, and soon thereafter it had disappeared completely.

State police officials also missed the chance to view the reported object closely, and later tended to connect the mysterious light with an electric flash used by coon hunters who were then on the mountain. (Sandy Rumpf later declared that if what she had seen was an illuminated flashlight, it "must have been extremely powerful.")

The flashlight explanation became questionable later that night, for, those same coon hunters stumbled out of the mountains at about 11 p.m. in a highly excited state. They apparently saw

lights still burning in the windows of the sporting goods shop, and within minutes were inside describing their own frightening experience.

The hunters (from the Swope's Valley) were near the top of the mountain over which the UFO had been hovering when they began hearing strange sounds.

At first, the men believed an airplane was crashing. The noise they heard was the equivalent to the sound of tearing metal. They could see almost nothing, for a heavy fog had roofed the mountain. The noise persisted at considerable length and subsequently appeared to grow louder. The band of hunters panicked and retreated to the base of the mountain.

Throughout their adventure, none of the hunters knew the county's ghost-like airship was in the vicinity. As for the noise, all stated that, throughout a lifetime of day and night hunting, they had never heard such sounds on a mountain. Similar noises have accompanied UFO manifestations in other regions.

The events of October 25 marked the last appearance of the phantom airship(s). Nonetheless, the UFO reports persisted.

At approximately 11:30 p.m., October 30, an excited young man called to report he—and two friends—had seen an object of "no definite shape." Twenty-two-year-old John Adams of Fredericksburg was riding with Bruce Dasher, 24, and Terry Bishop, 23, in their van at about 10:15 that night. They were using a seldom-traveled route in the Little Blue Mountain, north of Fredericksburg, when the object passed directly before them. Traveling in an east to west direction, it seemed to "bounce" through the air, much as a rubber ball bounces along the ground.

Vaguely spherical, it had a number of "rods" or "projections" extending from the underside and was luminous white in color. Although its size could not be accurately gauged, Adams said, it appeared to be very large. Soon it was hidden from view behind a heavily-forested section of the mountain.

Adams noted, "We'd been talking about UFOs only an hour or so before, and had been asking ourselves just that question." He added—as if to quell any suspicions—"We actually saw a UFO!"

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That following night I had seen an anomalous white light near the base of the Little Blue Mountain and in a region referred to as Monroe Valley. It was about 9:30 p.m. when I saw the light. Except for having an odd tendency to flicker on and off, it looked amazingly like an aircraft landing light. Later, when I examined the scene in full daylight, I discovered a marsh-like area I'd never chanced upon before.

It should also be pointed out that while Lebanon County residents were having their fill of *white* meandering lights, those living in Lancaster County (south of Lebanon Co.) were reporting *reddish-orange* lights. In either case, the objects attached to the lights are obviously something other than standard aircraft, for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations strictly forbid night-flying without the routine red, green and amber flashing position lights. *Not one individual* reported seeing these latter fixtures on any of the alleged airships or assorted UFOs.

Of course, the buffs would jump on the bandwagon at this point and declare that all we have just noted is indicative of spaceships, or something equally unfounded. This isn't necessarily so, as the UFO phenomenon seems to assume many forms. In some cases, it seemingly copies the appearance of standard aircraft. All of this makes many paranormal investigators believe there is a whole lot more going on than just visitors from outer space . . .

On October 31, the *Daily News* carried a page one update—by Lindermuth and myself—on the recent flap. Part of the story described the experience of John Adams and friends, while the remainder detailed something rather more unusual. The account read:

"On the night of the original sightings, Oct. 23, a resident of a trailer park in North Lebanon Township observed a different type of aerial phenomenon.

"The witness, who has asked to remain anonymous, said he was returning from town (Lebanon) and was about to enter his trailer when he spotted two helicopters hovering at a low altitude over an adjacent cornfield.

"His curiosity was aroused by the 'copters' seemingly aimless activity of passing back and forth over the field. His immediate assumption was that the

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PHANTOM DIRIGIBLE

(Continued from page 51)

ships were state police helicopters involved in some phase of a drug raid or in a search for escaped convicts. The helicopters were illuminated by the lights from the trailer court and he said they appeared to be greyish.

“Obtaining a pair of binoculars from his car, he took a closer look at the helicopters and said he could see no markings of any kind on the ships. Perplexed, he watched for several minutes until the ships flew away.

“Sightings of similar unmarked helicopters have become a peripheral phase in the UFO puzzle in many parts of the world in recent years. However, our informant was unaware of this and his story was only revealed when he questioned a *Daily News* report that there was no military aviation activity the night of the UFO sightings.

“The man was also not aware of the UFO sightings when he first observed

the helicopters at approximately 11 p.m., on Oct. 23.

“Another couple residing at the same trailer park reported that on the following evening they saw a small globular light fly a zig-zag pattern horizontally across the same cornfield several times and then disappear.”

The events themselves seem to point to something far more involved than simply accounts of spaceships. And its curious indeed that the standard “flying saucer” or disk-shape so frequently reported in any peak of UFO activity failed to become manifest during the October, Lebanon County flap. Did the aliens suddenly revert back to the more primitive airships, or what?

And was it just chance that the airship flap began immediately on the heels of the published *Daily News* story concerning Lou Farish’s airship interest? Equally curious, just before Jack Lindermuth spotted the UFO over his house, he had been reading *The Unidentified*, by Jerry Clark and Loren Coleman (1975), a book which deals

directly with—among other things—the airship overflights of 1896-97!

Irony—or is someone trying to tell us something?

Probe the
Unknown
March '76.