

UFO ENCOUNTER AT LOWELL AND NORTH ANDOVER/  
MIDDLETON, MASSACHUSETTS - OCTOBER 29, 1976

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CONTENTS

THE LOWELL SIGHTING .....	1
THE NORTH ANDOVER-MIDDLETON SIGHTING .....	4
THE INVESTIGATION .....	8
EVALUATION .....	12
NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PRINCIPALS .....	15
MAPS (3) OF SIGHTING ROUTES	
DRAWINGS (3) OF UFO	

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THE LOWELL SIGHTING

On January 21, 1977, Richard ("Rick") P. Romano, 23, of Wilmington, Massachusetts, telephoned Boston's Charles Hayden Planetarium to find out if there were any local UFO organizations he could join. After I gave him the information, Romano explained that his interest in the subject was sparked by a low-level sighting he and others had experienced three months ago in the Lowell area. Actually, witnesses in two vehicles some distance apart were allegedly involved. I expressed an interest in his sighting, asking him to send me a written report.

Perhaps a week later Romano called again to tell me he had typed a short account of the UFO observation, but felt he could probably describe what happened better in person. The following account resulted from an interview with Romano at my home on February 8 and from a drive along the sighting route on March 6.

Rick was fairly certain the incident occurred on the last Friday night in October, 1976 (the 29th), because he recalled going hunting that weekend. He lived with a family friend in Wilmington, George ("Ernie") \_\_\_\_\_, 45. On that Friday Rick and Ernie had completed some work on their cottage overlooking Russell Mill Pond in Chelmsford and were returning home in Ernie's 1973 AMC Ambassador. Ernie was driving and Romano was sitting to his right. The driver's 14-year-old son John and a friend Dennis \_\_\_\_\_, also 14, of Roberts Street, Chelmsford, were seated in back.

From State 4 in Chelmsford, they turned east (at Exit 21) onto Interstate 495. After driving about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles on this divided multilane highway (which skirts the southern edge of the city of Lowell), Romano said Ernie looked to his left and noticed a bluish light in the sky behind a cloud. (Rick indicated to me a position for the object corresponding to an elevation of roughly  $10^\circ$  and a true azimuth of approximately  $325^\circ$  --near northwest. All angles in this report were measured by this investigator using an inclinometer and a sighting-compass.) The driver called the others' attention to it. The time was between 8 and 8:30 p.m.(EDT). The sky was partly cloudy, according to Rick, and stars were visible.

After a few seconds the light emerged from behind the cloud and began descending toward the highway at about a  $30^\circ$  angle. Rick said Ernie slowed the car (from an estimated 45 miles per hour) and rolled down his window for a better view of the object whose light had changed to a white color. At this time the object was estimated to be about a mile away and closing fast,

its course taking it toward the highway ahead of the witnesses.

Very soon it became obvious to everyone that the object was a UFO and not a conventional craft. According to Romano, a ring of white lights around a dark shape dimmed and brightened at regular intervals, as if the whole ring were rotating rapidly, creating a strobe effect.

The UFO came to a stop in mid-air about half a mile in front of the car near the opposite side of the highway. By this time, Rick recalled, the two teenagers in the back seat were becoming quite excited, laughing and shouting as their car neared the object's position. Ernie rolled to a stop in the breakdown lane just beyond the hovering object, and everyone got out. (The precise observation point was on a rise where I-495 crosses the B & M Railroad a quarter mile short of Exit 26, the State 38/I-495 intersection. The site was also just beyond Motorist Aid Call Box 589 located on the opposite side of the road.)

As the four witnesses looked across the highway at the UFO, Rick said it appeared huge, maybe 75 to 100 feet in diameter, and tilted back and forth slightly in a slow gyroscopic-like oscillation. Romano estimated its distance at about 100 feet from them and its height, about 150 feet.

(Upon closer inspection on our trip March 6, Rick felt the object must have been hovering in the vicinity of the railroad and a cement plant and therefore situated perhaps a road's-width from the edge of the highway. We measured I-495's width at this location--some 160 feet across--which would place the UFO over 300 feet from the observers. In addition, it was determined Rick's height estimate referred to a point above the highway level, which happens to rise considerably over the railroad and surrounding countryside. Once again I had Romano point to where he thought he saw the UFO, resulting in a rough elevation/true bearing of  $10^{\circ}/295^{\circ}$  --west-northwest. I believe these values, especially the elevation figure, should be regarded as somewhat uncertain in view of the elapsed interval since the sighting and the fact the sighting occurred at night, not in daylight when the above estimates were made.)

According to Rick, the ring of lights around the object consisted of circular windows or ports, each emitting a dull white glow. This section continued to rotate as the craft tilted back and forth. Below the rotating ring appeared a stationary row of smaller white lights. A dark conical dome could be seen above the circular windows, silhouetted against the background glow of city lights. Protruding from the top of the dome were three thick, tubular, antenna-like structures, each with a very bright, red, steady light at its tip. The three red lights, Romano remembered, were brighter than the windows and, in fact, the brightest light sources on the UFO.

Rick said he got a clipboard from the car and began a drawing of the object. But, deciding he might miss something, he com-

pleted the sketch in the car after he left the scene. Although there were no audible sounds from the craft, Rick asserted he felt a tingling sensation in his ears which he associated with ultrasonics, a frequency he is familiar with in his electronics work. The others apparently reported no such effect. No other physiological effects nor interference with the car's electrical system was described.

Traffic was light on the highway. Rick guessed only three or four other cars passed them while they were parked. Ernie decided to flag down a car in order to obtain additional witnesses. He managed to get a 1962 or '63 white Ford Station wagon to pull in behind his vehicle. Going over to the male driver, the lone occupant, and pointing to the object, Ernie said: "You see that?" Spotting the UFO, the motorist reportedly exclaimed: "Oh, sh--!" According to Rick, the Ford then "burned rubber," speeding off down the highway.

After approximately three minutes of close observation, Romano said all of the UFO's lights except the three red ones suddenly went out and the object began moving away, ascending northeastward along the highway. The witnesses jumped into the car and followed the craft a short distance to Exit 26. The UFO's lights came back on. As the observers turned down the exit ramp, Rick said the object seemed to cross I-495, accelerate more rapidly, and disappear from view behind a hill. The total estimated observation time was about ten minutes.

Upon arriving home in Wilmington, Romano said Ernie telephoned both the Lowell Police Department and the State Police barracks in Andover to ask if anyone else had reported seeing a strange flying object. Although the latter said no reports of anything unusual had been received, the former stated that some people had called in a UFO sighting, but it was "explained" as an aircraft.

All four witnesses agreed it would be wise, for the time being, to keep what they had seen to themselves. But one night in December, while Rick was on duty as a security guard, he said one of the other guards brought up the subject of UFOs. During the ensuing discussion (Romano claimed he still withheld his own sighting at this point), another guard, Randy \_\_\_\_\_, started telling about a UFO he had witnessed. According to Rick, it was not long before he realized Randy had seen the same object observed by him. Unwilling to admit his own sighting, Romano volunteered that "his buddy" (Ernie) watched the same UFO on the same evening. Later Rick said he revealed to Randy that he also shared in his friend's sighting. (Randy recalled a slightly different version of the initial discussion with Rick and the other guards.)

Richard Romano's background is as follows: at the time of his sighting, he worked during the day at Analog Devices, Wilmington, as a senior electromechanical technician. His job was to repair electronic equipment for integrated circuits. Romano

worked nights as a security guard employed by Bromleys Security Services.

Currently, he has terminated his work with Bromleys and works at Analog Devices only on weekends while he takes courses at Middlesex Community College and the University of Lowell. His goal is an electrical engineering degree. He also hopes to obtain a pilot's license, having already taken six lessons and flown two private aircraft.

Since he was eight, Rick said he has been interested in the sky and stargazing. He owns a Tasco 260 mm. refracting telescope. Although he has read a number of books on UFOs, Romano claims he had not read a book on the topic for about a year prior to his sighting. When I asked him what he thought the object he saw might have been, he answered without hesitation: "Beyond any doubt, an extraterrestrial craft."

#### THE NORTH ANDOVER-MIDDLETON SIGHTING

In contrast to Richard Romano, Randy appeared much more sensitive about his sighting, apparently due in part to ridicule by his in-laws, to the fear of suffering further embarrassment if the report should be published, and to the utter incredibility of the sighting itself. Despite my repeated guarantees that his name would not be disclosed, Randy decided not to divulge his last name nor his street address. (I experienced similar difficulties with the other witnesses in the Romano car. Although their names finally were released, interviews were refused.)

After my interview with Romano, Rick managed to persuade Randy to write an account of his sighting for me. An excellent six-page handwritten report and a drawing of the UFO were relayed to Rick, who then mailed it to me. Enclosed in the envelope was a note from Romano, stating that Randy had agreed to my telephoning him at his home in Chelmsford.

On March 4 I called Randy and convinced him that a drive along his sighting route would prove extremely helpful. The account that follows resulted from the drive with the witness on March 26, and also from his written report.

At approximately 7 p.m.(EDT) on a Friday evening in October or November, 1976--most likely October--Randy \_\_\_\_\_, 23, left his home in Chelmsford to visit his cousin in Salem. Since he said he visited his cousin as often as once a week, he was quite familiar with the route traveled.

Turning east onto Interstate 495 (at Exit 22), Randy covered the same stretch driven by Rick a short time later except that he turned off I-495 at Exit 30 (State 114 intersection), four exits beyond Rick's departure point from the highway. After driv-

ing southeastward about five miles on State 114 (Salem Turnpike) in North Andover, Randy said he suddenly became aware of a strange row of lights in the sky about a mile down the road. (He indicated a position corresponding to a rough elevation/true azimuth of 3-5°/130° --near southeast.)

The lights appeared to be hovering just above the treetops ahead and just to the left of the road. They seemed to be spinning as well as changing color from white to bluish. The witness guessed the time might have been approximately 7:40, based upon his usual driving speed on the Salem trip.

At first he speculated he might be seeing some sort of lighted sign atop a tall building, but as he drew closer, he said he realized it was neither a sign nor an airplane. Keeping an eye on it, Randy sped toward the object. When he was about a quarter mile away, the observer pulled his 1972 VW Karmann Ghia convertible into a dirt lot, stopped, and jumped out.

The object, though stationary above a wooded area on the opposite side of the road and just across the Middleton town line, continually gyrated or oscillated up and down about the vertical axis, like a rotating coin coming to rest upon a hard surface. While it oscillated, according to Randy, a double row of windows rotated around the center of a darkened disc-like craft. The witness estimated its height as some 300 to 600 feet above the ground (elevation/azimuth of 15-20°/115°--near east-southeast).

Hoping the UFO might respond in some way to his presence, Randy reached into his car and flashed his headlights on and off a half dozen times. Suddenly the object tipped forward at a 45-degree angle so its top portion was visible and, still gyrating and spinning, moved toward the witness in this tilted attitude. It stopped at about a 50-degree elevation (but at the same actual height) above the road at the town line. This event "scared the hell out of me," according to Randy.

Immediately, the witness said he jumped back into his car and took off down the road toward Al's Motel about 1000 feet ahead on the left. (Apparently he passed under the object.) Pulling up in front of what he thought was the motel, Randy got out and knocked on one of the front doors in an effort to obtain more witnesses. The room inside was dimly lit, and a radio could be heard. But no one came to the door. (Actually, the place turned out to be Edward's Restaurant adjacent to the motel.)

Stepping back to his car, Randy said he looked up and discovered the UFO had returned to its original position almost above the restaurant. At this moment the observer spotted a white Ford station wagon parked in front of the motel. The male driver was preparing to change a tire while a woman companion waited in the front seat.

Randy dashed over to the station wagon and asked the man

to look and see if he was "seeing things." The driver crawled out of the back of the wagon and peered upward. According to Randy, the man exclaimed: "Oh, wow! I don't believe it! A flying saucer!"

Upon hearing this, the woman got out, looked up, and voiced similar surprise. Randy said the three of them watched the UFO for perhaps two minutes while it gyrated up and down at a tilt-angle somewhat less than before. During this time no sound was detected. Randy said the spinning window area completely encircled the craft and gave off a yellowish-white light which was bright but not enough to illuminate the ground. Although the edges of each window were indefinite, the observer felt the windows were squarish and arranged in a double row. No details or shapes were discernible behind them.

The top and bottom of the UFO were dimly visible against the night sky, and the witness said he could see that the top was shaped like an upside-down funnel, with three lights of different colors--red, orange, and green--at the apex. (He seems certain the lights were not the same color and thinks they were steady.) As the UFO gyrated, the bottom was exposed periodically, revealing what Randy perceived as a scooped-out circular area or depression.

Though he was uncertain about the object's size, the witness emphasized it must have been huge, perhaps 150 to 180 feet in diameter and 90 feet high. With its windows and conical top, Randy said the UFO resembled a "flying beautiful mansion." In fact, the craft was so big, bright, and low that the viewer said he could not understand why cars were moving by at normal speeds and not stopping. No physiological or electrical effects were noticed.

According to Randy, the other driver said: "Don't let it get away. I have to get more people." Very shortly after he ran into the motel--no more than half a minute--the UFO began moving away "as if somehow it knew more people were coming and didn't like this." Feeling he should not let the object out of his sight, Randy then ran toward his car, leaving the woman standing there (and unfortunately never getting the names of either witness).

On the way to his car, Randy passed another woman who was standing near the restaurant. He said he asked her if she saw the flying saucer. According to Randy, she glanced up and then looked back at him "as if I were nuts." He was not certain she saw the UFO. Indeed, only after getting into his car and pulling out of the parking lot did he discover that the object had crossed over the highway and was now proceeding northwestward along the left side of Route 114.

Randy asserted: "I did not want to lose the object and was driving like a madman (at estimated speeds up to 70 miles per hour), trying to get other cars' attention." As other motorists approached, he pointed at the UFO and honked his horn. The ob-

ject was now about twice as high in the sky, growing smaller, still noticeably spinning, and gradually veering away from the highway. As he passed a Texaco station on his left, Randy said the car in front of him turned into the station. The driver got out and pointed to the object to another occupant in the car. The witness said he also noticed two or three more vehicles, with a couple of passengers in each, had stopped along the right side of the road; the occupants were standing and looking at the object. Randy figured he saw at least seven persons in all observing the UFO along the road.

The prime witness continued following the object although its distance from him was increasing all the time. Six miles from the restaurant, he said he came upon a patrolman directing traffic at the Andover Mall near the I-495 intersection. Parking his car at the mall, he walked over to the officer and pointed out the dwindling UFO (elevation/azimuth of perhaps 5-6°/320-325°--near northwest). The officer was asked what he thought the object was, and he replied it was an airplane. Randy then asked him if he had seen it pass over a few minutes before. He had not. The witness then assured the policeman that he was not drunk, that he had been watching it for about 35 minutes, and proceeded to describe what he had seen at the motel. (Based upon estimated driving speeds and stops, I estimated a total observation time of 25 to 30 minutes at most.) The officer glanced at the disappearing object again and agreed it was rather strangely illuminated to be an ordinary aircraft. According to Randy, the patrolman then suggested the witness tell his story to the newspaper just back down the road (Lawrence Eagle-Tribune). When Randy looked up again, the UFO was gone, having vanished beyond the trees along the horizon.

Deciding not to visit the newspaper office, the observer said he telephoned both his cousin in Salem and his wife in Chelmsford and described what happened. He guessed the time was about 8:30 or 8:45 when he made these calls from the shopping mall. (Based upon Randy's estimate of the start of his observation and my estimate of its duration, the time of the calls could have been earlier.)

When Randy arrived at his cousin's house, he said he again recounted his sighting, apparently convincing his normally skeptical cousin that he was telling the truth.

Later that same night, from another friend's house in Marblehead, Randy said he called the Andover Police Department and inquired if anyone had reported a UFO. He was told no one had. The officer suggested he call another number, which he believes was the Andover State Police barracks. A spokesman there, asserts the witness, claimed that although no such reports had been received, he would be interested in hearing about Randy's sighting. Randy stated: "I told him all about it, and that was the end of it." It will be recalled that Ernie also allegedly called the same barracks that evening, with a similar response--no UFO reports received.



Randy told no one about the UFO encounter except his family and in-laws. Although his wife and his parents believed his story, he said his in-laws discounted the whole thing in such a way that he soon felt "uncomfortable" talking about the experience.

About a month or two after the sighting, the witness was on a job with Bromleys Security Services when he said he overheard Rick Romano and another guard talking about Rick's UFO sighting. Randy turned to Rick and declared: "Wait a minute! I can tell you exactly what you saw." Then he proceeded to describe a similar object, possibly seen the same night as Romano's UFO and in the same general area (about 10 miles apart). As reported under the Lowell sighting, each witness told a somewhat different version of the initial exchange between them.

At the time Randy was, and still is, employed as a security guard for Bromleys. He was acquainted with Rick for a couple of months prior to their sightings, having spoken to him briefly at two security jobs. Without knowledge of what Randy said, Rick confirmed this, stating he knew Randy, at most, a month and a half on the two jobs and agreed the conversations had been short ones. Randy claims he had no previous interest in the UFO subject.

#### THE INVESTIGATION

My investigation of both sightings proceeded as follows:

February 8, 1977--I conducted an interview with Richard Romano at my home. He presented me with a short typed report of his sighting and a drawing of the UFO he said he made the night of the observation. Another sketch of the object, this one drafted by John (Ernie's son) a few months after the sighting, was also submitted. When asked for the last names of the other three viewers in his car, Romano declined. He said the driver, Ernie, desired no further involvement for himself or his son. While Rick felt Ernie would not grant an interview, he was more optimistic that Randy would agree to one eventually.

February 14--I telephoned Raymond Fowler of Wenham, Director of Investigations for MUFON (Mutual UFO Network), to learn if his files might contain similar UFO sightings in the Lowell area on the date in question. The next day Fowler called back to report he had no unusual sightings filed for that period.

February 16--Although the unknown object's lighting characteristics and behavior ruled out a night advertising plane, nevertheless I felt it was important to completely eliminate the possibility. That meant checking all three firms which own such aircraft in eastern Massachusetts--especially National Aerial Advertising, Inc., based at Lawrence Municipal Airport in North Andover, not far from the area of the sightings.

My first calls went to Mr. Mansfield of National and to Sky-Ads. Mansfield said his Cessna was not up that night. A Beverly Airport spokesman told me the Sky-Ads Piper Tri-Pacer had been grounded for many months. A call to Sky-Ads' Burlington number

went unanswered. (On March 1, however, the third ad company confirmed the plane's grounding during the period in question.)

February 19--Rick Romano telephoned to say he had persuaded Randy to write a report on his sighting which would be delivered to me by a friend during the coming week.

March 1--In an effort to locate the owner of the third night ad plane, Eric Hanner (Hanner and Company), whose number was unpublished, I again called Beverly Airport and was told Hanner should be at Revere Aviation. I managed to contact him there. Hanner said although he never flies his Cessna in the Lowell area, he promised to check his log anyway. Calling back the next day, he reported he hadn't flown at all October 29.

(Mr. Hanner, incidentally, mentioned a strange sighting from his own aircraft that occurred over Connecticut some time ago. It involved two pulsating red lights that flew parallel with him for 20 to 30 seconds. In addition, he offered to allow me to photograph his plane both on the ground and in the air during a special staged night run.)

March 2--Randy's report, which was given to Rick, arrived by mail instead of by messenger. Enclosed with Randy's six-page handwritten account and drawing of the UFO was a note from Romano. It said Randy would at least allow me to telephone him at home. A Chelmsford telephone number was given.

About March 2 or 3--I called Rick to ask him to accompany me on a drive along his sighting route on the 6th. He agreed to do this.

March 4--I telephoned Randy for a similar meeting along his route. This was agreeable to him, especially since he didn't want me to interview him in the presence of others. He said relatives had accused him of seeing an airplane, and consequently he felt "uncomfortable" talking about his sighting. But he emphasized he knows what he saw, and it was no airplane. He said he would accompany me on a drive during the weekend of the 12th. I was to call back on the 9th to set up the precise time.

March 6--I drove Romano along his sighting route, checking mileage intervals at key points and making elevation/azimuth estimates. The witness said his companion, Ernie, would allow his full name to appear on this report (see "Names and Addresses of Principals") with the condition the name not be published. He also preferred not to consent to an interview with himself or his son. When Romano spoke to the other youth's father, the same stipulations were made: the use of his son's last name on the report was permitted but it must not be published, nor would an interview be granted. Much of the concern from both fathers apparently stemmed from the fear of involving teenaged sons in what might result in unfavorable publicity or ridicule.

After dropping Rick off at our starting point, I visited

each of the police stations Ernie and Randy said they had telephoned the night of their sightings. I was interested in seeing if their UFO reports were logged and whether any other calls were received the same night.

At the Lowell Police Department I was told to contact Sergeant Maher of the Records Bureau on Monday, and he could then check the radio log.

At Andover an officer inspected the logs on the spot but found no unusual sighting calls recorded on October 29. It is not at all surprising that Randy's call was not entered; he claimed his query was merely referred to another telephone number, the nearby State Police barracks.

The desk officer at the barracks told me last year's logs were locked up, and I should call a Sergeant Grillo on Monday.

My round-trip, five-hour journey on the 6th covered 111 miles.

March 9, 10, 11, 18, 23--After a series of calls to Randy and successive postponements of our first meeting (due to illness in his family and a death in my wife's family), we finally agreed to meet on the 26th.

March 11--I called the Andover barracks and spoke to Sergeant Grillo. He checked the log for October 29 and said no UFO reports were noted on that date. Both Ernie and Randy said they called the barracks the night of their sightings to learn if anyone had phoned in similar reports. The response was negative. Although Randy was asked to describe what he saw, it is quite possible his information was never recorded. It is assumed, of course, that both sightings occurred on the same date (if indeed they occurred at all).

I also got in touch with Sergeant Maher of the Lowell Police Department. He said he would check the logs and call back. However, he never did. (On March 24 I tried his office again. Although the sergeant wasn't available at the time, I was told he would call back. But he never responded.)

March 26--Randy accompanied me along his sighting route while I noted down mileage checkpoints and performed angular measurements of the UFO's estimated position. The observer still refused to give me his last name but said he would think about it and let me know his decision during the coming week.

My round-trip, another five-hour drive, covered 114 miles.

April 4--I telephoned both Randy and Rick to obtain answers to a few questions before drafting my final report. Randy still wanted another day to think about whether he should divulge his last name.

April 5--In order to help check out Randy's story, I called

Edward's Restaurant and spoke to the manager, Mr. Hajjar. I wanted to learn if the place was open the night of October 29, and if it was, whether the manager recalled anything unusual in the sky, electrical malfunctions, etc. However, Mr. Hajjar said he was not the owner last October, having purchased the restaurant in December from Arthur Greeke. I was given Mr. Greeke's home address and his business telephone, which I called. He wasn't in.

April 6--I tried Greeke's number again, and this time I spoke to him. He said the restaurant would have been open on a Friday night; he recalled no strange occurrences during the period. Although Greeke said he would check his books to be sure and call back, I never received a response. (I had the impression Greeke never treated my call seriously.)

April 21--Having not heard from Randy for more than two weeks, I decided to call him. He told me he had elected not to release his last name.

April 22--In a final effort to secure additional witnesses capable of corroborating Randy and Rick's sightings, I contacted both the Middleton and North Andover Police Departments as well as the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune, which is located on Route 114. Police spokesmen at both stations said they could find no UFO reports in their logs for October 29. On the other hand, my hopes were temporarily raised by the editor of the newspaper who thought he remembered doing a story on a UFO sighting around that time. He said he would check his files and call back the following week. He even appeared interested in publishing a story regarding my investigation.

April 29--Having received no telephone call from the Eagle-Tribune, I called again and was put in touch with reporter Steven Asher. He said he had checked Middleton and Lawrence town news for the period in question but uncovered no UFO reports. After I asked him about North Andover news, he promised to inspect the newspaper files again and then call back Monday (May 2).

May 2--Asher telephoned and told me he could find no UFO accounts for the time frame mentioned. He also explained that the editor's recollection of a UFO report was based upon an earlier published story in July. Asher followed up the editor's interest by asking to see my report on the case when completed and possibly even interviewing the witnesses. But I hedged on the request, explaining my promises to the observers that their sightings would not appear in the local press.

May 20--Having been unsuccessful twice before in getting the Lowell police to return my calls, I decided to try one more time. When I got through to Sergeant Maher, he said he recalled my request and thought he had called back. Although he also remembered finding no UFO calls on the radio-log transcript for October 29, Maher said he would recheck the records and contact me again the same morning. This time the officer did call back, with a negative confirmation. Maher pointed out that if anyone

(such as Ernie) merely queried about whether others had reported a UFO, there probably would be no written record of his call. According to Romano, Lowell police did tell Ernie that other callers phoned in sightings that night, but these reports were discounted as an aircraft (probably without a careful check). Thus, again it seems unlikely a record of these calls would exist.

#### EVALUATION

Because the two independent prime witnesses were acquainted with each other prior to their sightings and because this investigator was denied permission to interrogate three other identified witnesses, it became imperative to search for other independent observers who viewed the alleged UFO on October 29, 1976. Of the some 16 persons who were purportedly seen watching the object, at least 11 remain unknown and anonymous--mostly other motorists and their passengers.

Despite calls to four police departments and a newspaper, all located in the sighting area, no additional attestors to the reported object were uncovered. In view of my rather favorable impressions of Rick and Randy's stories, it is most unfortunate not a single solid confirmation of their accounts turned up.

The UFO possessed many of the typical features reported in the classic cases: domed disc with small lights on top, lighted ports or windows around the middle, rotation and oscillation, hovering, silent movement, and signal-and-response behavior. Owing to the proximity both in time and distance, it is probable the same UFO was observed in both instances. Slight differences in the object's description lend credence to the reports. For example, Rick's drawing of the UFO portrays a row of separate large circular windows, a second row of smaller lights, and three red lights atop tubular structures. Randy, on the other hand, visualized in his sketch a double row of squarish, side-by-side windows and three lights, each a different color, mounted on a small raised portion of the dome. (It is possible Randy might not have noticed the tubes, and therefore his mind filled in the space directly below the lights with a single extension of the dome.) A third sketch, allegedly drawn by Ernie's son, is somewhat similar to Rick's.

During initial stages of the investigation, night advertising aircraft were eliminated from contention because (1) none of the three aircraft flying in eastern Massachusetts were in the air on the date of the sightings, and (2) the object bore no resemblance, either in shape, lighting characteristics or behavior, to conventional aircraft. For the same reason as #2, helicopters, blimps, and balloons were ruled out.

Although astronomical bodies obviously were not involved, I checked out the positions of bright planets and the moon anyway.

Jupiter was the only naked-eye planet in the sky at the time, low in the east shining at magnitude -2.4 (it was near opposition to the sun and at maximum brightness). The first-quarter moon (at 8 p.m. EDT) also would have been visible at an elevation/true azimuth of 32°/200°(south-southwest).

What arguments support the hoax hypothesis?

(1.) Although their sightings were made independently, Rick and Randy happened to have known each other, though apparently not closely, for a few months before their UFO encounter. The question is what are the odds two witnesses to a UFO event 10 miles apart would know each other?

(2.) Despite the fact a total of at least 16 witnesses were claimed in the double sighting, I was able to locate only two persons, Rick and Randy, who permitted interviews. The others were either anonymous drivers (and an unidentified patrolman) or alleged occupants of the Romano car. According to Rick, the latter group did not wish further involvement or publicity. Ernie, it was said, was especially adamant about refusing an interview. Romano finally produced Ernie's last name with the condition the name not be published. Rick also passed along the information that neither Ernie nor Dennis's father would grant interviews with their sons due to fear of negative publicity or ridicule. Finally, although Randy talked with me with some reluctance, even he refused to reveal his last name and his street address. In addition, the restrictions imposed by the witnesses presumably meant there was no way I could discuss the case with other family members, relatives, or friends.

(3.) Police stations in four towns surrounding the sighting area did not record either telephone calls from Ernie or Randy or from others who might have corroborated the UFO. The Lawrence newspaper, located right on the road where Randy said he counted at least 10 witnesses, failed to produce a single UFO report for October 29.

(4.) A white Ford station wagon was mentioned by both Rick and Randy in each sighting (one reportedly had a lone occupant and the other, two). Was this reference to the same make and model vehicle merely a coincidence, or a tiny slip by one of the fabricators in going over their story together?

Countering these arguments is my own favorable subjective impressions of Rick and Randy's testimony after interrogating them separately for hours and taking them along their sighting routes. I was struck with what appeared to be a sincere desire on the part of both individuals to cooperate and be helpful but without forcing details on me or overstating their descriptions. At the same time each projected a genuine sense of awe and bewilderment about their experiences. While their claimed close encounters certainly represent significant episodes, a hoax usually takes a much more sensational turn--a landing, entities, abduction, etc.--and, moreover, a motive for a false story could

never be established. If both witnesses had described the object in exactly the same way without allowance for differences in normal individual perception, distance and angle of the object, etc., I would have been much more inclined to suspect their stories were the result of collusion. But instead those variations exist as mentioned above.

The experiences probably would never have become known if Rick hadn't called the planetarium about joining a UFO group. Almost reluctantly, he alluded to the sightings he had kept quiet for nearly three months. While Rick had some previous knowledge of UFOs through reading books, Randy said he had no prior interest in the topic.

The fear of ridicule could just as well explain the lack of police reports received on the night of October 29. In addition, the attitudes and judgments of the desk officer on duty have a lot to do with whether a call is considered important enough to record. If the caller only asks whether anyone else has seen a UFO, his own call most likely will not be noted down. This may have happened to Ernie and Randy's calls. Nevertheless, even one more independent witness would have strengthened the case immensely.

The refusal to grant interviews by eyewitnesses to legitimate UFO events is, unfortunately, an all too common occurrence. The fear of unfavorable publicity and the shock to one's own beliefs are understandable reactions and very real concerns to persons who see UFOs. How can a UFO viewer--especially one who has encountered a strange object at close range--expect anyone else to accept what is difficult for the eyewitness himself to affirm? After applying gentle pressure, about all the honest investigator can do is to respect the witness's decision, whatever it might be. Denial of interviews or the use of full names does not necessarily imply a coverup or wrongdoing. I felt it was particularly difficult for Randy to decide not to release his full identity. He hinted that his decision was based partly upon his sensitive work as a security guard and that publicity of this sort might make it hard for him to keep his job or to get another one in the same field.

I believe the Lowell-North Andover/Middleton UFO encounter should be classified as a low-weight unknown. A hoax seems unlikely to me despite the lack of additional identifiable witnesses. If one had unlimited time and resources, it might eventually be possible to unearth more observers of this UFO and thereby elevate the rating of this case. Owing to the time already expended on the incident and to the distance from the investigator's house, I regret I cannot pursue it any further.

(For the first time, I determined the cost of one of my UFO investigations. Expenses totaled about \$21, which included \$15 for long-distance telephone calls and about \$6 for gas. Fortunately, 18 of the 29 calls were made on a WATS line. Of course, this does not take into account the time involved in interviewing, traveling along the sighting routes [two round-trips totaled 10

hours and 225 miles], visiting police stations, and preparing this report.)

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PRINCIPALS

NOTE: MR. ROBICHEAU'S LAST NAME AND DENNIS SARGENT'S LAST NAME ARE TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND ARE NOT TO BE PUBLISHED!

Richard P. Romano, aged 23, 6 McDonald Road, Wilmington, Massachusetts 01887. 617-658-8169.

George ("Ernie") Robicheau, aged 45. Same address.

John Robicheau, aged 14. Same address.

Dennis Sargent, aged 14, Roberts Street, Chelmsford, Massachusetts 01824.

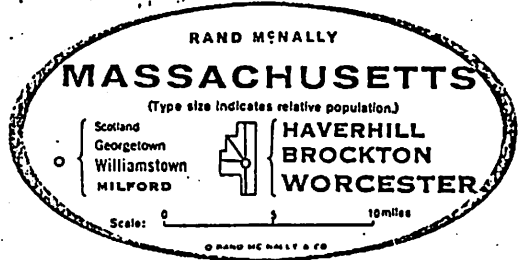
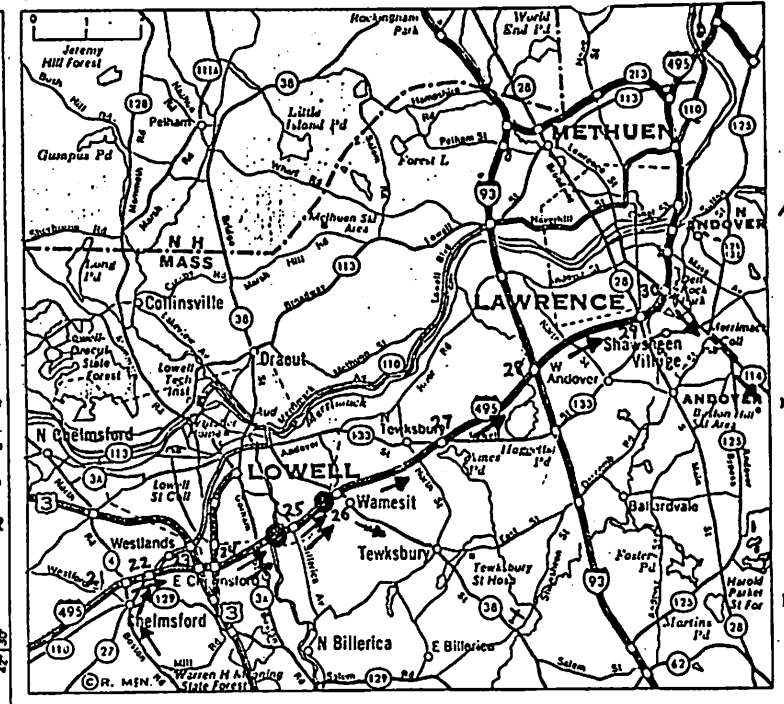
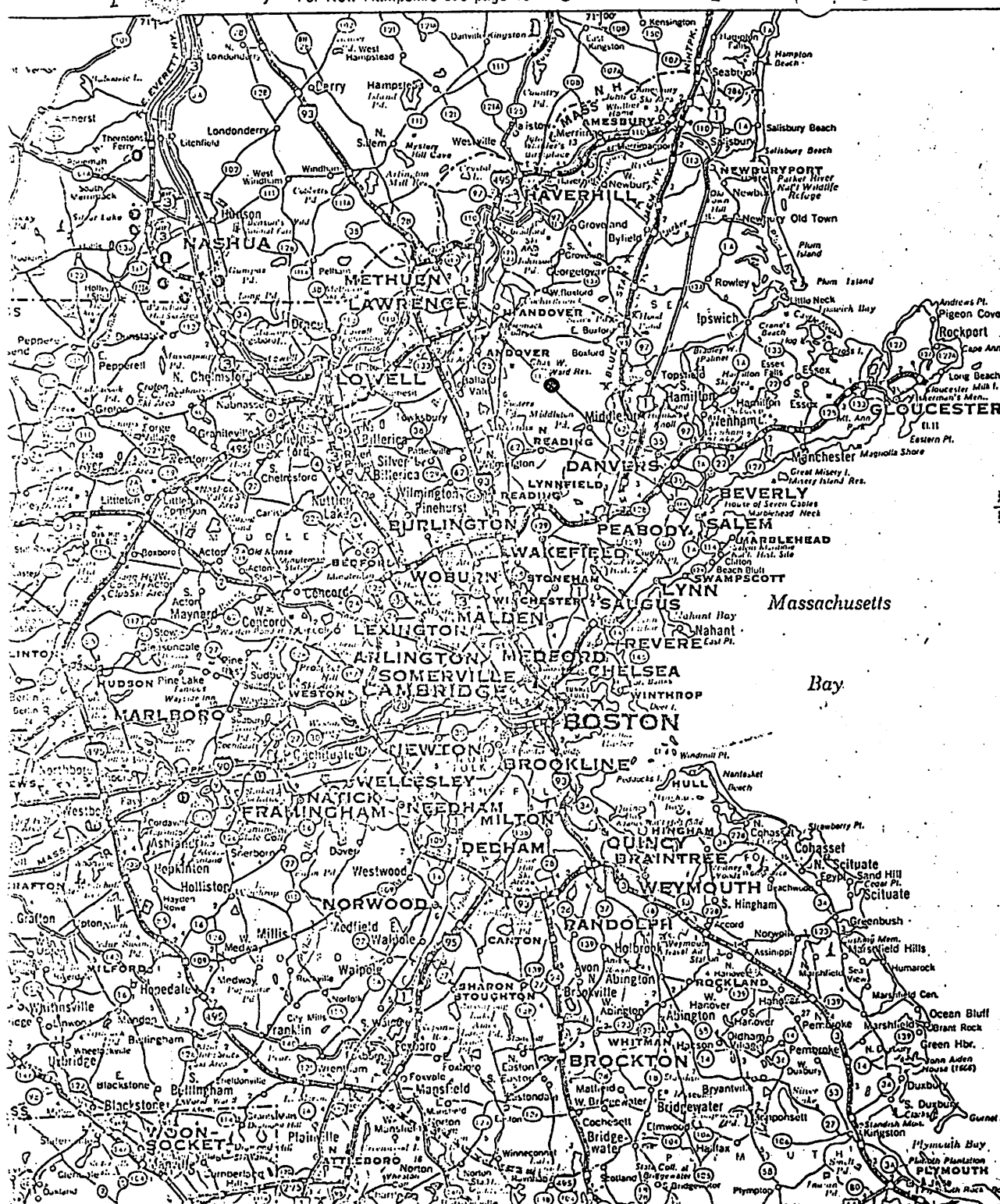
Randy \_\_\_\_\_, aged 23, Chelmsford, Massachusetts 01824. 617-256-5845.

*Walter N. Webb*

Walter N. Webb  
APRO Consultant  
6/5/77



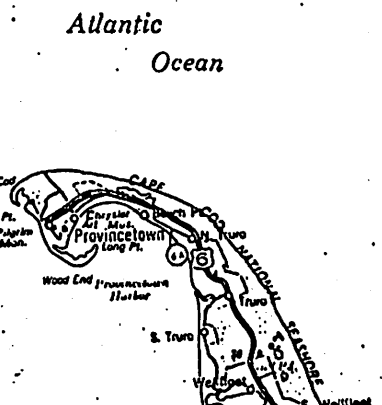
THE FOLLOWING THREE PAGES CONTAIN MAPS OF THE SIGHTING ROUTES. THE EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS MAP NOTES BOTH CLOSE ENCOUNTER SITES (RED DOTS) AND INCLUDES AN INSET SHOWING THE ROUTES TRAVELED (RICK--BLACK ARROWS, RANDY--RED ARROWS) AND LOCATIONS OF LOWELL FIRST SIGHTING AND CLOSE ENCOUNTER (RED DOTS). MAP IS FROM RAND McNALLY ROAD ATLAS (1975). NOTED ON THE REMAINING TWO MAPS ARE THE ROUTES OF EACH WITNESS (BLACK ARROWS), KEY POINTS (CIRCLES) ALONG THE ROUTES, AND TRUE BEARINGS TO THE OBJECT (RED ARROWS). THESE TWO MAPS ARE FROM THE UNIVERSAL ATLAS OF METROPOLITAN BOSTON AND EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS, UNIVERSAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, BOSTON (1973).



**MASSACHUSETTS TURNPIKE**  
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 Passenger Car Toll \$2.75

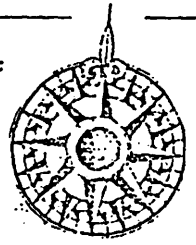
1. West Stockbridge—Mass. 41
2. Lee—U.S. 20
3. Westfield—U.S. 208 & Mass. 10
4. West Springfield—U.S. 5
5. Chicago—Mass. 33
6. Springfield—Burnett Rd.
7. Ludlow—Mass. 21
8. Palmer—Mass. 22
9. Sturbridge—U.S. 20 & Mass. 15
10. Auburn—Int. 70C & Mass. 12
11. Millbury—Mass. 122
- 11A. Hopkinton—Int. 492
12. Framingham—Mass. 9
13. Waltham—Mass. 20
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N



Exit 27

Exit 26

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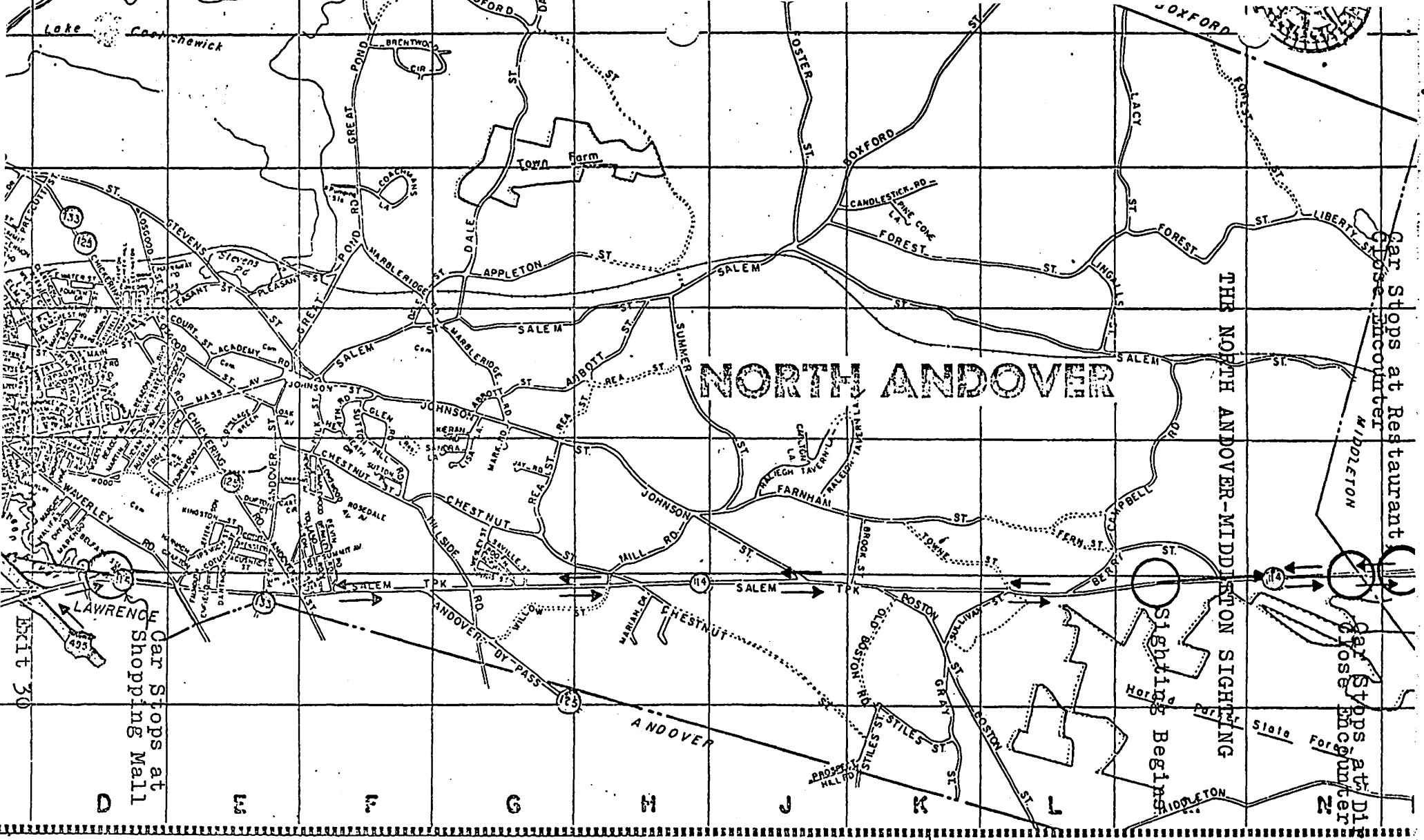
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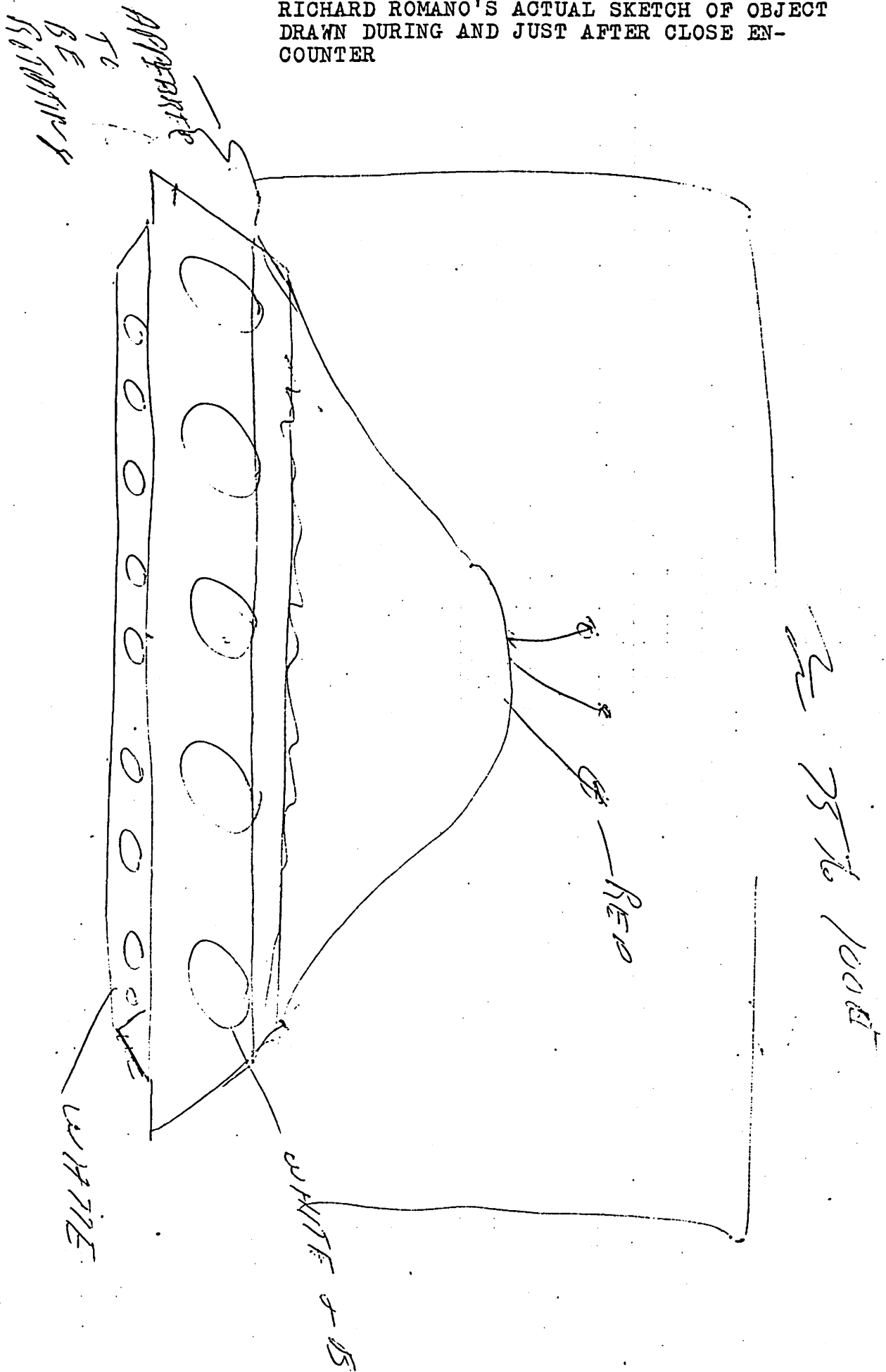
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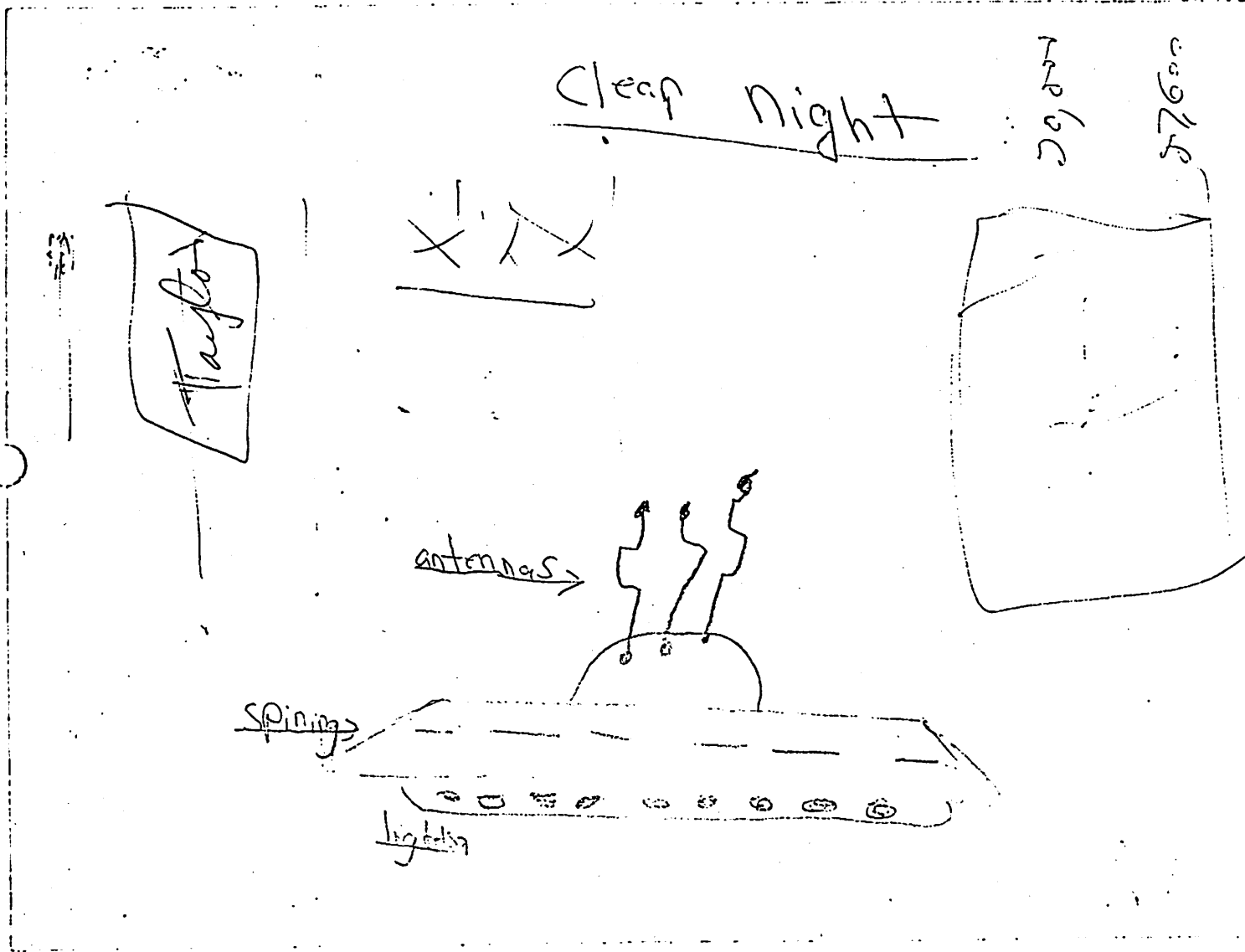
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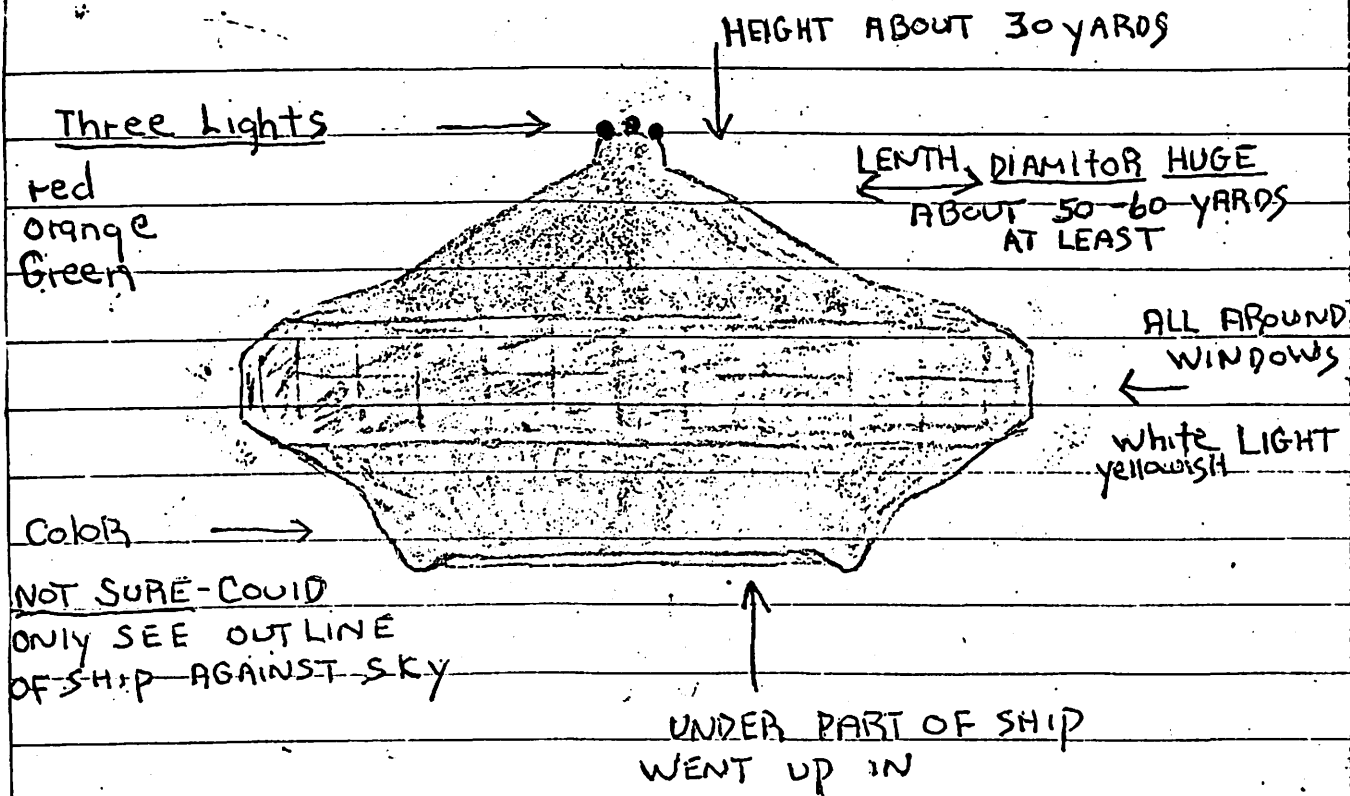
RICHARD ROMANO'S ACTUAL SKETCH OF OBJECT  
DRAWN DURING AND JUST AFTER CLOSE EN-  
COUNTER



JOHN'S ACTUAL SKETCH OF OBJECT DRAWN A FEW MONTHS  
AFTER CLOSE ENCOUNTER



RANDY'S ACTUAL SKETCH OF OBJECT DRAWN FOUR MONTHS  
AFTER CLOSE ENCOUNTER



- This Ship was Spinning, and the Out-  
line of it quite clear, against the Sky.  
IT was almost always tilting back  
and forth, and staying upon its side  
for a second or so.  
IT made no noise that I could hear.  
The only way I can describe it is like  
a flying Beautiful Mansion: