

# I DID SEE THE FLYING DISKS



# KENNETH ARNOLD



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**K**enneth Arnold (1915–1984) was an American businessman and private pilot who is remembered as the one who first broke the “flying saucer” or UFO story in the mainstream American media.

On June 24, 1947, he was returning home to Boise, Idaho from a business trip, flying his single-engine Callair airplane. He had made a detour into the Yakima, Washington area to help in an aerial search for a missing C-46 marine transport plane that was believed to have gone down in the area. Around 3:00 PM he was flying at about 9,000 feet, near Mount Rainier, when a flash of light caught his eye. He turned and saw a procession of nine very strange objects flying from north to south in front of his plane. They were flat and very shiny, and they moved erratically, he reported, apparently bouncing on the air currents “like a saucer would if you skipped it across water.” This statement was the origin of the term “flying saucer” which soon became a media buzzword.

Arnold’s sighting was reported in an Oregon newspaper and was quickly picked up by the wire services and appeared in many newspapers across the country. The original story, reproduced below, appeared in the *East Oregonian* of Pendleton, Oregon, on June 26, 1947, under the byline of Bill Bequette.

\*\*\*

Kenneth Arnold, a six-foot, 200-pound flying Boise, Ida., business man, was about the only person today who believed he saw nine mysterious objects—as big as four-engined airplanes—whizzing over western Washington at 1200 miles an hour.

Army and civilian air experts either expressed polite incredulity or scoffed openly at Mr. Arnold's story, but the 32-year-old one-time Minot, N.D. football star clung to his story of shiny, flat objects racing over the Cascade mountains with a peculiar weaving motion "like the tail of a Chinese kite."

A CAA inspector in Portland, quoted by the Associated Press, said: "I rather doubt that anything would be traveling that fast."

A Washington, D.C., army spokesman was quoted as saying, "As far as we know, nothing flies that fast except a V-2 rocket, which travels at about 3500 miles an hour—and that's too fast to be seen." He added that there were no high-speed experimental tests being made in the area where Mr. Arnold reported seeing the mysterious objects.

The Boise man, who owns the Great Western fire control supply company which handles automatic fire fighting systems, described the objects as "flat like a pie pan and somewhat bat-shaped" and so shiny they reflected the sun like a mirror.

He said the reflection was so brilliant that it blinded him "as if someone had started an arc light in front of my eyes."

Mr. Arnold reported he was flying east at 2:50 PM Tuesday toward Mt. Rainier when the objects appeared directly in front of him 25–30 miles away at about 10,000 feet altitude.

By his plane's clock he timed them at 1:42 minutes for the 50 miles between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams. He said he later figured their speed by triangulation at "about 1200 miles an hour." He admits he

might have erred by 200–300 miles in his figuring but added, “they still were the fastest things I ever saw.”

When first sighted, he thought the objects were snow geese. “But geese don’t fly that high—and anyway, what would geese be doing going south this time of year?”

Next he thought they were jet planes. He said he had heard so many stories of the speed this type of craft traveled, so he determined to clock them. However he quickly realized that their motion was not like that of jets.

“I guess I don’t know what they were—unless they were guided missiles,” he said. “Everyone says I’m nuts,” he added ruefully, “and I guess I’d say it too if someone else reported those things. But I saw them and watched them closely. It seems impossible—but there it is.”

Mr. Arnold, who flies 60 to 100 hours monthly throughout five western states, said he was 25–30 miles west of Mt. Rainier, en route from Chehalis to Yakima, when he sighted the objects.

He explained that he had been cruising around the western slope of the mountain in hope of seeing a marine corps plane, missing since last January. “I heard there was a \$10,000 reward offered to anyone who locates it,” he added.

He said the objects remained visible by the flashes of reflected sunlight for some seconds after they passed Mt. Adams, perhaps for as far away as 50 miles.

Mr. Arnold admitted the angle from which he viewed the objects would make difficult a precise estimation of their speed, but insisted any error would not be grave “for that speed.”

The DC-4 was closer than the objects, but at 14,000 feet and somewhat north of him. He said he could estimate the distance of the objects better be-

cause an intervening peak once blocked his view of them. He found the peak was 25 miles away, he related.

The Boise flyer said they flew on the west sides of Rainier and Adams, adding that he believed this would make it more difficult for them to be seen from the ground. He said he "measured" the formation by a snow-covered ridge over which they passed and estimated the "train" was five miles long.

He said that at first he thought the window of his plane might be causing the reflections, but that he still saw the objects after rolling it down.

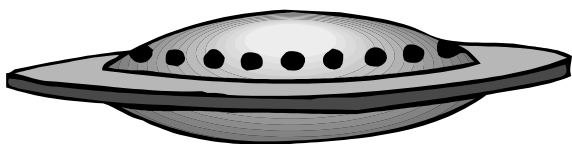
He also described the objects as "saucer-like" and their motion "like a fish flipping in the sun."

Mostly, he said, he was surprised at the way they twisted just above the higher peaks, almost appearing to be threading their way along the mountain ridge line. "No orthodox plane would be flying like that," he commented. "Ten thousand feet is very low for anything going at that speed."

Mr. Arnold was flying a three-passenger, single-engined plane at 9,200 feet at the time, he reported. His speed was about 110 miles an hour.

The Boise man, who is married and has two children, landed here yesterday and said he would remain another day or two before returning to Boise. He described himself as a "fire control engineer" and emphasized he is not employed by the forest service but is a free-lance contractor.

# I Did See the Flying Disks



**Kenneth Arnold**

**T**he following story of what I observed over the Cascade mountains, as impossible as it may seem, is positively true. I never asked nor wanted any notoriety for just accidentally being in the right spot at the right time to observe what I did. I reported something that I know any pilot would have reported. I don't think that in any way my observation was due to sensitivity of eyesight or judgment other than what is considered normal for any pilot.

On Tuesday, June 24, 1947, I had finished my work for the Central Air Service at Chehalis, Washington, and at about two o'clock I took off from the Chehalis, Washington airport with the intention of going to Yakima, Washington. My trip was delayed for an hour to search for a large Marine transport that supposedly went down near or around the southwest side of Mt. Rainier in the state of Washington. (This airplane has been discovered at the time of this writing—July 29, 1947.)

I flew directly toward Mt. Rainier after reaching an altitude of about 9,500 feet, which is the approximate elevation of the high plateau from which Mt. Rainier

rises. I had made one sweep of this high plateau to the westward, searching all of the various ridges for this Marine ship and flew to the west down and near the ridge side of the canyon where Ashford, Washington, is located.

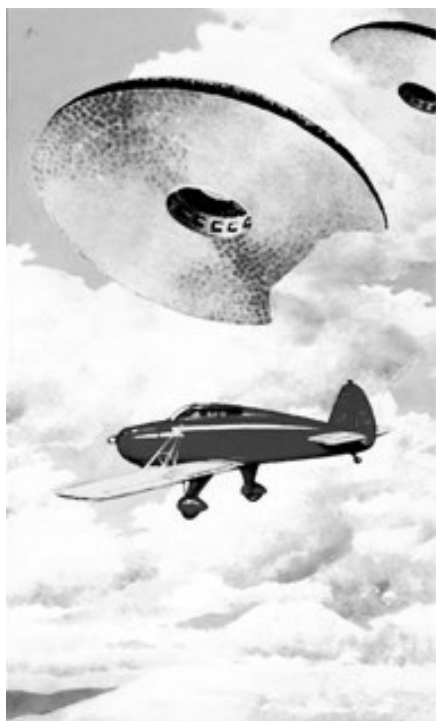
Unable to see anything that looked like the lost ship, I made a 360 degree turn to the right and above the little city of Mineral, starting again toward Mt. Rainier. I climbed back up to an altitude of approximately 9,200 feet.

The air was so smooth that day that it was a real pleasure flying and, as most pilots do when the air is smooth and they are flying at a higher altitude, I trimmed out my airplane in the direction of Yakima, Washington, which was almost directly east of my position, and simply sat in my plane observing the sky and terrain.

There was a DC-4 to the left and to the rear of me approximately fifteen miles distant and, I should judge, at 14,000 feet elevation.

The sky and air were as clear as crystal. I had not flown more than two or three minutes on my course when a bright flash reflected on my airplane. It startled me as I thought I was too close to some other aircraft. I looked every place in the sky and couldn't find where the reflection had come from until I looked to the left and the north of Mt. Rainier where I observed a chain of nine peculiar-looking aircraft flying from north to south at approximately 9,500 feet elevation and going, seemingly, in a definite direction of about 170 degrees north to south.

They were approaching Mt. Rainier very rapidly, and I merely assumed they were jet planes. Anyhow, I discovered that this was where the reflection had come from, as two or three of them every few seconds would dip or change their course slightly, just enough



for the sun to strike them at an angle that reflected brightly in my eyes.

These objects being quite far away, I was unable for a few seconds to make out their shape or their formation. Very shortly they approached Mt. Rainier, and I observed their outline against the snow quite plainly.

I thought it was very peculiar that I couldn't find their tails, but assumed they were some new type of jet. I was determined to clock

their speed. I had two definite points—Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams—to clock them by, and the air was so clear that it was very easy to see the objects and determine their approximate shape and size as far as fifty miles.

I remember distinctly that my sweep-second hand on my eight-day clock, which is located on my instrument panel, read one minute to 3 PM as the first object of this formation passed the southern edge of Mt. Rainier. I watched these objects with great interest as I had never before observed airplanes flying so close to the mountain tops, flying directly south to south-east down the hog's back of a mountain range. I would estimate their elevation could have varied a thousand feet one way or another up or down, but they were pretty much on the horizon to me which

would indicate they were near the same elevation as I was.

They flew, as I have frequently observed geese fly, in a rather diagonal chain-like line as if they were linked together. They seemed to hold a definite direction, but swerved in and out of the high mountain peaks. Their speed at the time did not impress me particularly, because I knew that our army and air forces had planes that went very fast.

What kept bothering me as I watched them flip and flash in the sun right along their path was the fact that I couldn't make out any tail on them, and I am sure that any pilot would justify more than a second look at such a plane.

I observed them quite plainly, and I estimate my distance from them, which was almost at right angles, to be between twenty to twenty-five miles. I knew they must be very large to permit me to observe their shape at that distance, even on as clear a day as it was. In fact, I compared a zeus fastener or cowl tool I had in my pocket with them, holding it up on them and holding it up on the DC-4 that I could observe at quite a distance to my left, and they seemed smaller than the DC-4; but I should judge their span would have been as wide as the farthest engines on each side of the fuselage of the DC-4.

The more I observed these objects, the more upset I became, as I am accustomed and familiar with most all flying objects whether I am close to the ground or at higher altitudes. I observed the chain of these objects passing another high snow-covered ridge in between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams, and as the first one was passing the south crest of this ridge the last object was entering the northern crest of the ridge.

As I was flying in the direction of this particular ridge, I measured it and found it to be approximately five miles, so I could safely assume that the chain of

these saucer-like objects was at least five miles long. I could quite accurately determine their pathway due to the fact that there were several of them as well as higher peaks on the other side of their pathway.

As the last unit of this formation passed the northernmost high snow-covered crest of Mt. Adams, I looked at my sweep-second hand and it showed that they had traveled the distance in one minute and forty-two seconds. Even at the time this timing did not upset me as I felt confident that after I landed there would be some explanation of what I had seen.

A number of news men and experts suggested that I might have been seeing reflections or even a mirage. This I know to be absolutely false, as I observed these objects not only through the glass of my airplane but turned my airplane sideways where I could open my window and observe them with a completely unobstructed view.

Even though two minutes seems like a very short time to one on the ground, in the air in two minutes' time a pilot can observe a great many things and anything within his field of vision probably as many as fifty or sixty times.

I continued my search for the Marine plane for another fifteen or twenty minutes, and while searching for this Marine plane the things I had just observed kept going through my mind. I became more disturbed, so after taking a last look at Teton Reservoir I headed for Yakima.

I might add that my complete observation of these objects, which I could even follow by their flashes as they passed Mt. Adams, was around two and one-half or three minutes—although by the time they reached Mt. Adams they were out of my range of vision as far as determining shape or form. Of course, when the sun reflected from one or two or three of these units, they appeared to be completely round; but, I am mak-

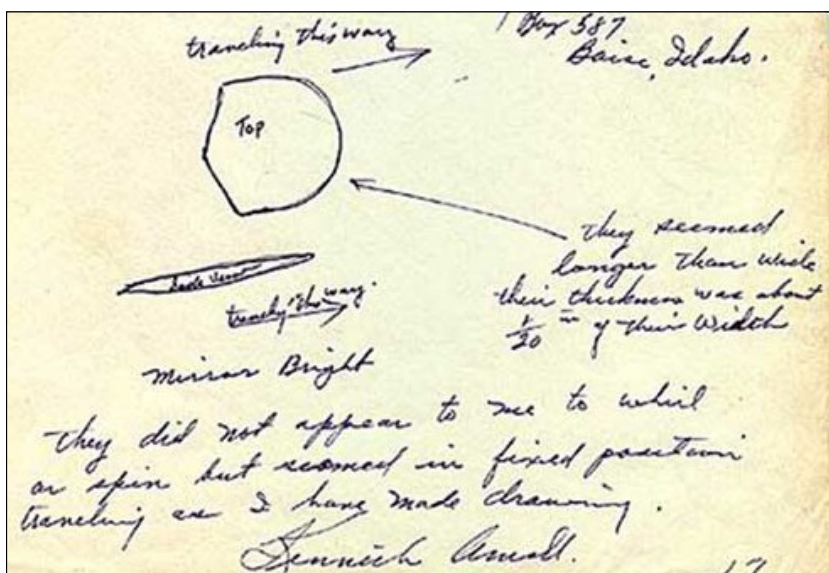
ing a drawing to the best of my ability, which I am including, as to the shape I observed these objects to be as they passed the snow-covered ridges at Mt. Rainier.

When these objects were flying approximately straight and level, they were just a thin black line and the only time I could get a judgment as to their size was when they flipped.

These objects were holding an almost constant elevation; they did not seem to be going up or to be coming down, such as would be the case of rockets or artillery shells. I am convinced in my own mind that they were some type of airplane, even though they did not conform with the many aspects of the conventional type of planes that I know.

Although these objects have been reported by many other observers throughout the United States, there have been six or seven other accounts written by some of these observers that I can truthfully say must have observed the same thing that I did; particularly, the descriptions of the three Western Air Lines employees of Cedar City, Utah; the pilot from Oklahoma City; the locomotive engineer in Illinois; John Corlett, a United Press correspondent of Boise, Idaho; Dave Johnson, news editor at the Boise *Daily Statesman*; Captain Smith, a co-pilot; Stevens and Marty Morrow of United Air Lines; and Captain Charles F. Gebian and Jack Harvey of United Air Lines, both of whom on July 28, 1947, made their observation on United Air Lines flight 105 westbound out of Boise.

It is my opinion that descriptions could not be very accurate taken from the ground unless these saucer-like discs were at quite a great height and there is a possibility that all of the people who observed peculiar objects could have seen the same thing I did; but, it would have been very difficult from the ground to observe these for more than four or five seconds, and



there is always the possibility of atmospheric moisture and dust near the ground which could distort one's vision while air observers I would judge to be much more accurate.

I have in my possession letters from all over the United States and Europe from people who profess that these objects have been observed over other portions of the world, principally Sweden, Bermuda, and California.

I would have given almost anything that day to have had a movie camera with a telephoto lens, and from now on I will never be without one.

When I landed at Yakima, Washington airport I described what I had seen to my very good friend, Al Baxter, who is the General Manager of Central Aircraft Company. He listened patiently and was very courteous but in a joking way didn't believe me.

I did not accurately measure the distance between these two mountains until I landed at Pendleton, Oregon, that same day, where I told a number of pilot friends of mine what I had observed; and they did not

scoff or laugh, but suggested they might be guided missiles or something new. In fact, several former Army pilots informed me that they had been briefed before going into combat overseas that they might see objects of similar shape and design that I described and assured me that I wasn't dreaming or going crazy.

I quote Sonny Robinson, a former Army Air Force pilot who is now doing dusting operations at Pendleton, Oregon: "What you observed, I am convinced, is some type of jet or rocket-propelled ship that is in the process of being tested by our government, or it could even be by some foreign government."

Anyhow, the news that I had observed these spread very rapidly, and before the night was over I was receiving telephone calls from all parts of the world; and to date I have not received one telephone call or one letter of scoffing or disbelief. The only disbelief that I know of was what was printed in the papers.

I look at this whole affair as not something funny as some people have made it out to be. To me it is mighty serious and since I evidently did observe something that at least Mr. John Doe on the street corner or Pete Andrews on the ranch has never heard about, is no reason that it does not exist. Even though I openly invited an investigation by the Army and the FBI as to the authenticity of my story or a mental and physical examination as to my capabilities, I received no interest from these two important protective forces of our country until two weeks after my observation. I will go so far as to assume that if our Military Intelligence was not aware of what I observed and reported to the United and Associated Press and over the radio on two different occasions which apparently set the nation buzzing, they would be the very first people I could expect as visitors.

I have received lots of requests from people who told me to make a lot of wild guesses. I have based what I have written here in this article on positive facts, and as far as guessing what it was I observed, it is just as much a mystery to me as it is to the rest of the world. I saw them and I know they are real.

My pilot's license is 33489. I fly a Callair airplane, which is a three-place single-engine land ship that is designed and manufactured at Afton, Wyoming, as an extremely high performance, high altitude airplane that was made for mountain work. The national certificate of my plane is NC-33355.



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To- Commanding General  
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Dear Sir:

You have my permission to quote, give out, or reprint my written account and report of nine strange aircraft I observed on June 24th, in the Cascade Mountains in the State of Washington. This report was sent to you at request some days ago. It is with considerable disappointment you cannot give the explanation of these aircraft as I felt certain they belonged to our government. They have apparently meant no harm, but used as an instrument of destruction in combination with our atomic bomb the effects could destroy life on our planet. Capt. Smith, co-pilot, Stevens of United Air Lines, and myself have compared our observations in as much detail as possible, and agreed we had observed the same type of Aircraft as to size, shape and form.

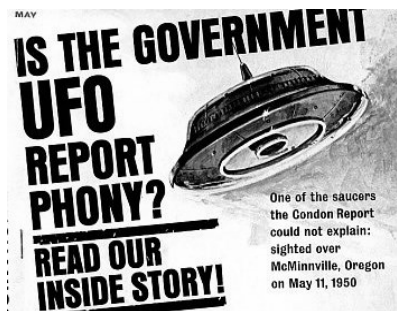
We have not taken this lightly. It is to us of very serious concern, as we are as interested in the welfare of our country as you are.

Boise, Idaho  
Pilot's License 333487  
Kenneth Arnold



**Flying Saucer Camera** will be used by Air Force to clear up saucer questions. One lens takes regular picture; the other separates light into colors so scientists can judge the source and make-up of saucers.

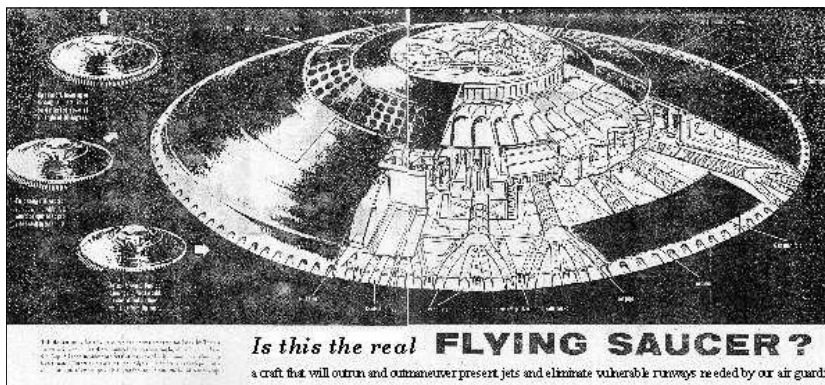
*Mechanix Illustrated*, Jan. 1953



*Science & Mechanics*, May 1969



Movie poster, 1950



*Look*, June 14, 1955

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*Fantastic Story*, Sept. 1953



A scene from the movie *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956)

Arnold's sighting was followed by a wave of similar reports, and "flying saucers" quickly became a popular image in the US mass media of the 1950s.

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I Contacted An Unknown Race



Richard S. Shaver

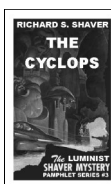
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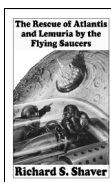


Richard S. Shaver

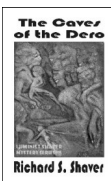
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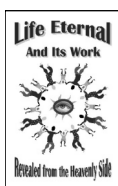
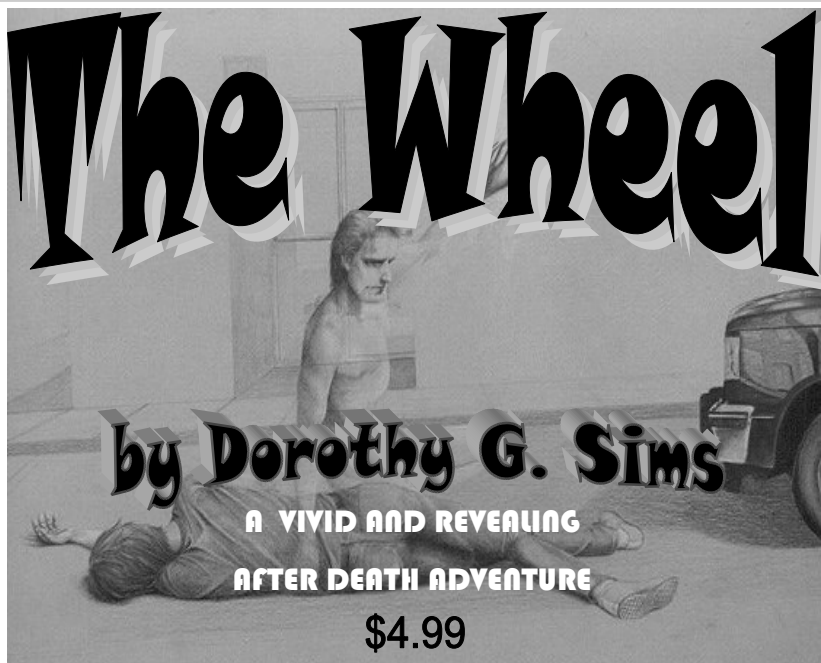


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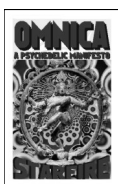


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# LUMINIST PUBLICATIONS



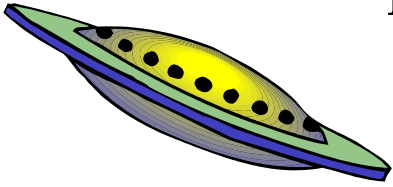
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I observed a chain of nine peculiar-looking aircraft flying from north to south at approximately 9,500 feet elevation and going, seemingly, in a definite direction of about 170 degrees north to south. I was unable for a few seconds to make out their shape or their formation. Very shortly they approached Mt. Rainier, and I observed their outline against the snow quite plainly. They flew, as I have frequently observed geese fly, in a rather diagonal chain-like line as if they were linked together. They seemed to hold a definite direction, but swerved in and out of the high mountain peaks.