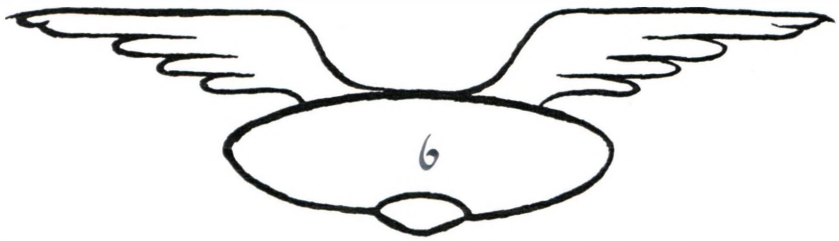
FLYING SAUCER NEWS BULLETIN



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FLYING SAUCER NEWS:- BULLETIN NO. 6

REMARKABLE NORWEGIAN NEAR-LANDING CASE OF 1954 NOW PUBLISHED
(Abstract from C.S.I. News-letter No. 7, Editor Lex Mebane, 245 West 104th St. New York)

In the March, 1957 issue of SIR! magazine (thanks to Theodore W. Hill of Woodbury, N.J. for sending it to us), Norwegian newspaperman Oddvar Larsen tells of an extraordinary sighting, which he believes to be authentic. (Incidentally, publication in a magazine like SIR! might raise a question of whether the whole thing is a piece of fiction; fortunately, we can attest to the bona fides of Oddvar Larsen.) Larsen writes directly in English: the article is not a translation.

The date was November 23, 1954 - a time just after the great landing wave in France, when notable sightings were being made in many places, among them Italy and Brazil. The witnesses were three little girls, Anne and Tora Storedal and Tora Moy Haugo, of Torpo, in the Hallingdal district; Anne was ten years old, the other two were nine, and all were frightened out of their wits. As they were coming home from school near some woods, a black object descended rapidly from the sky, knocked snow from the tree tops, and stopped only a few feet above the girls' heads. They gave the following weird description of it: "It looked like a stone...like a ball... about ten feet across; the lower part was black, but trimmed with yellow spots which could have been made of glass, and there were also a number of small, red jags." The upper part was transparent - the trees could be seen through it - and a human or at any rate semi-human pilot was visible inside, operating controls of some sort. Dressed in black, this man or entity had "big eyes, covered by a pair of immense, red glasses", with which he looked straight at the girls. The craft then rose again with a droning sound, brushing a high-tension line and striking a shower of sparks from it; an odor compared by Tora Moy to "fried sausages" (ozone?) filled the air; and the little girls ran for their lives.

When Larsen first heard of this story, he was naturally skeptical; but after hearing tape recordings of an on-the-spot investigation of the case, he was convinced that neither hoax nor helicopter could account for it. He cites, for example, this detail given by Tora Storedal:

"When the stone came down toward me it had a long, white tail behind, but when the stone turned and moved away, the tail went first. That was funny, I thought."

In the snow, there was found and photographed a disturbed track 25 yards long, presumably made by the craft after the girls had turned their backs on it.

The Research Section is of course not in a position to endorse this case, but Larsen's writing gives a favorable impression of his good sense, and the evidence as he reports it appears good.

A striking parallel is apparent between the Torpo case and the Hemmingford, Quebec landing of August 28, 1954. Here too a spherical craft was reported, with "men" (seven feet tall) dressed in black, with "big round eyes" (unfortunately, no further detail is available.) The Hemmingford case's claim to acceptance likewise rests principally on the good impression of honesty and sanity given by the witnesses (Mrs. Coupal and sons) in a taped interview, for which the saucer world is indebted to investigator Dr. A.G. Dittmar of Au Sable Forks, N.Y. (Dr. Dittmar, director of Tape Recorded UFO Information Service, generously offers to copy tapes from his collection for those who send a spool of blank tape with directions about speed, etc. Although he does this gratis, you ought to send a couple of dollars to repay him for his time.)

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REPORT ON VAN WINKLE SIGHTING.

(Abstract from C.S.I. Newsletter No. 7)

This incident received wide newspaper mention. The Research Section has investigated it, as special representatives of NICAP as well as for CSI, and the following account is the result.

A few minutes before midnight on March 8, 1957, Captain Matthew ("Rip") Van Winkle took his airliner up from Idlewild Airport, bound to San Juan, Puerto Rico. Co-pilot Dion W. Taylor, Flight Engineer John Washuta, and stewardesses Julie Santiago and C. Silva completed the crew on Pan American Airlines flight 257. There were 44 passengers aboard. The flight was routine, except that it was necessary to keep to the west of the normal flight course in order to avoid a storm centre farther out in the Atlantic.

At 3:33 a.m. (EST) the plane was far out over the Atlantic, about 650 miles to the east of Jacksonville, Florida, flying at 19,000 feet on a south-by-east heading (between 160° and 175° true). At this point, the flight abruptly ceased to be routine. About 80° to their right, Van Winkle and Washuta simultaneously saw a brilliant light. Van Winkle had the impression of seeing an orange glow at first, although he was later uncertain about this detail. At any rate, it seemed to "come out of nowhere," and immediately assumed the appearance of a round, brilliant greenish-white "spotlight," almost as large as a full moon.

The light appeared "contained," having a clear and well-defined edge; Washuta described it as "rim-like" around the edge. This "rim" seemed to reflect a greenish colour, while the centre was a brilliant white. It looked like a spotlight directed to the front of them, so that they were not looking directly into the source of light.

Van Winkle's first thought was that it might be a jet interceptor with a spotlight in the nose, but he immediately rejected this idea because of the brilliance of the light, and "because they (interceptors) always come at least by twos - one

pulling alongside of you ready for action, the other throwing a spotlight on your identification markings from a distance to find out who you are."

The object seemed to be of about airplane size, and no more than a half-mile away (an erroneous impression, as he discovered later). It was exactly level with him, and apparently heading horizontally across the nose of his plane, on a collision course. Within two seconds after first seeing it, he pulled the plane up and to the left in a violent evasive manoeuver to avoid possible collision; the plane climbed 1500 feet in a matter of seconds. In concentrating on handling the plane, he lost sight of the object. (The news accounts reported that V.W. saw the object "slip by under my right wing." Actually Van Winkle explains, this was not so: the object was hidden from his sight by the right wing as it lifted.)

Washuta, who was seated in the right of the cockpit, had a better view of the light, and reportedly observed it for about four seconds, after which it "went out." By the time Van Winkle had righted the aircraft, the light was no longer to be seen. Neither the co-pilot, busy with the navigation instruments, nor any of the passengers, had seen it.

In the cabin, there was pandemonium. All those who had not had their seat belts fastened had hit the ceiling of the cabin when the tail dropped, and three people were more or less seriously injured: Miss Santiago with a possible concussion, Mrs. Abraham Gitlow of Philadelphia, who appeared to have a broken rib; and one Monserrate Soto, injuries unspecified.

Miss Silva and the co-pilot tried to assuage the panic in the cabin, but it was Van Winkle's calm reassuring voice over the loudspeaker that was most effective in settling the passengers. The knowledge that a UFO had been responsible for their distress seemed to calm their agitation. (INS erroneously reported that, according to passengers, a strong light "like a hundred suns" filled the cabin of the aircraft.)

Immediately following the incident, Van Winkle's radio suddenly came alive: at least six other aircraft had seen the object. All were flying roughly SSE on the same route, and they occupied an area, from north to south, more than 300 miles long.

About 150 miles to the north of Van Winkle, at 31° 35' N, 70° 50' W, was Capt. Ed Perry, piloting PAA's Flight 269 at 19,000 feet. Capt. Perry and Flight Engineer Don Sheehan saw the object to the WSW, as did Van Winkle, and described it as arcing upward and then falling slightly in a concave trajectory as it moved on an apparently ESE course. According to the press, Perry described it as being "almost a magnesium flash, white with pale greenish tints around it ...At first I thought that it was a flare, then I thought it could be another of those 'mis-guided' missiles. I saw it for about five seconds - it must have been moving at a terrific speed."

Flying 15 minutes ahead of Van Winkle, Capt. D. Shrum, piloting PAA's Flight 257-A at 15,000 feet, did not notice the object. (Van Winkle gives his own position as 30° N, 70° 40' W.)

Some 180 miles to the southeast of Van Winkle, at 28° 20' N, 68° 15' W, was PAA Flight 215, flying at 17,000 feet. Capt. Robert Wyland and Flight Engineer Jerry Noosinow saw the object, again to the west of them. "It appeared first as a bright light, traveling fast...it grew in intensity until it was exceedingly brilliant for a moment as it passed, then it seemed to fade." Its angular size, to Wyland as to Van Winkle, was "as large as a full moon at the zenith." It was greenish-blue at the perimeter, blending into a white centre. He said it "looked at first as though it were coming directly toward us on our flight level. It either veered slightly, or our original impression was in error, as it slanted diagonally across our starboard quarter descending, and seemed to 'go out.' As it passed, there was a definite reddish tinge to the tail or rear portion, and a piece seemed to fall off, or was ejected. The portion that dropped off was 10% the size of the whole, and was definitely reddish in colour." Wyland had the object in view from two to five seconds.

About 220 miles SSE of Van Winkle, at roughly 27° N, 69° 20' W (650 miles east of West Palm Beach) was PAA Flight 215-A, piloted by Capt. Ken G. Brosdal, flying at 19,000 feet, the same altitude as Van Winkle and Perry. Brosdal did not see the object reported by the other pilots, but he had seen something identical almost two hours earlier. Brosdal's flight engineer, Richard Smith, saw the object(s) involved in both incidents.

According to Smith, the object seen at 3:33 a.m. - observed by all the other pilots - was seen to the west of his plane and appeared to be going parallel to his direction. He said it seemed as large as "a dime held at arm's length." The second engineer, who called Smith's attention to the phenomenon, estimated that it was in view for two or three seconds. Round, it had no ragged edges - "smooth" was Smith's word for it - and was a brilliant greenish-white in colour. He saw a slight projection at the rear that detached itself and turned red as it fell. At this point, the main section began to arc downward at a slight angle, and then suddenly went out. Smith did not think the object was a meteor.

Almost two hours earlier, about 12:45 a.m., while Flight 215-A was in the vicinity of Delta Oscar (a positional marker located off the Carolinas), Brosdal and Smith had seen a similar object - "smaller than a full moon," according to Brosdal - streaking north or NNW. This object was also due west, or almost due west, of their position. It moved in a completely horizontal trajectory, and had a red tail-like projection, which suddenly dropped off, and fell "like a flare." The main part, which was green, continued in a straight line and passed out of Brosdal's range of vision. Smith, who was seated on the right side of the cockpit, looked back as it passed, and thought he saw it quickly disappear into clouds; however, a later check indicated that there were few, if any, clouds in the area. Brosdal said he saw it for about three seconds; Smith slightly longer. Several of Brosdal's passengers had seen it also.

Returning to the 3:33 a.m. object, three other air-

craft are reported to have observed this: another Pan-American flight (unidentified); the pilot of an Eastern Airlines plane who thought the object was a two-stage rocket; and one Trans-Carribean pilot who said it was a meteor. We have not been able to get in touch with any of these pilots.

It is quite clear from the testimonies of the pilots that the object they saw was much farther away than they at first realized. Note that over a 300-mile baseline, all of them saw it to their west or southwest; that it appeared to be moving in roughly the same direction relative to all observers; and that its angular measurement from all of these widely-separated points was approximately half a degree. These circumstances obviously indicate an exceedingly large object seen at a distance measured in the hundreds of miles. The nearest possible location for the appearing-point permitted by the geometry is at about 29° N, 78° W. This point is 80° to the right of a 160° heading for Van Winkle, 100° to the right of a 185° heading for Wyland (assuming this is 185° true, not magnetic), and places the object about 250 miles from Wyland, and somewhat more than 100 miles from Van Winkle. However, since it appeared no larger to Van Winkle than to Perry, Wyland, and Smith, a location so close to Van Winkle is not very plausible; Something like 28° N, 75° W, 300 to 400 miles from all the planes, is more likely. Wyland himself has calculated that it was from 300 to 800 miles distant from him. An angular measurement of one-half degree at four hundred miles gives the object a diameter in excess of three miles; but such calculations are misleading when applied to luminour bodies, which always appear far larger than they are.

This large scale of the phenomenon is highly suggestive of a meteoric fireball. However, it should be noted that none of the four witnesses (Smith, Brosdal, Wyland, and Van Winkle) whom we have interviewed believed that it was a meteor. Van Winkle said he has seen some extremely spectacular meteors, but none has ever resembled this object. The absence of any visible tail; the difference in quality between this "contained" light and a flaming fireball; and its substantially horizontal trajectory at unreasonably low altitudes, seem different from what would be expected of a meteor. And the chances against seeing two such remarkably similar "meteors"

over the same area within the span of two hours are "astronomical."

On the other hand, the object appeared for only five seconds at the most - typical of meteors; it exhibited no sort of controlled manoeuver; and the wide area over which it was observed is typical of fireballs rather than of UFO phenomena.

One is inclined to say that this was neither a "normal" UFO nor a "normal" fireball. Can it be classified as a "green fireball"? It was certainly not a deep Kelly-green in colour, but the behavior was very similar (cf. Ruppelt, pp. 72-3,78). There is a large group of sightings strikingly similar to this one, some of them in this same area. On May 8, 1952, at 4:30 a.m., a pilot had a near-collision with a similar object while en route to San Juan. (See The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects, by Ruppelt, pp. 178-80.) On April 23, 1954, several PAA pilots saw an "object with an orange-green light zip by." (Flying Saucer Conspiracy, by Keyhoe, p.133.) Auriphebo Simoes is one of those who have seen such a "fireball" (O Disco Voador, 7/3).

And on March 25, 1957 - not three weeks after Van Winkle's report - Capt. E. Munson, piloting PAA Flight 216, San Juan to New York, had a daytime sighting along the same route. (Details on this observation are now being sought.)

(Note on sources: Besides the data secured directly from four of the witnesses, additional information on the March 9 sighting was gleaned from the N.Y. Times, 3/10 (UP 3/9); N.Y. Mirror 3/10 (AP 3/9); N.Y. Journal-American, 3/9 (INS) and 3/11 (INS by Van Winkle); and numerous other papers carrying substantially the same wire accounts. Our thanks go also to Bill Nash of PAA and Chris Pantages of Riddle Airlines for their valuable assistance.)