IUR
International UFO Reporter

Spring 1996
Volume 21, Number 1

Got 'Cakes' from Saucer Men Is Claim of Joe Simonton

* * *

HE DOES NOT recall hearing them speak to each other, or to him. Simonton said he looked into the interior of the space ship and that it was the color of black wrought iron. He said he could see several instrument panels and he could hear a slow whining sound, like the hum of a generator.

"It appeared one of the men in the ship was frying food on a flameless grill," and Simonton said he motioned to indicate an interest in their food. He said one of the men, dressed in black, but with a narrow red trim along the trouser, handed him three of the small cakes, which he has shown to authorities in Eagle River.

Simonton said the visit did not seem more than five minutes. He said the large hatch snapped shut—and that it was machined so smoothly you could scarcely detect where the hatch was, when it was closed.

He said the ship took off rapidly, to the south, and that there was a blast of air which bowed nearby pine trees.

He said it climbed at a 45 degree angle and disappeared in a couple seconds.

He recalls that along the edge of the saucer he noted exhaust pipes about 6 or 7 inches in diameter.

Simonton has lived at that location about four miles west of Eagle River for about 30 years.

Walter Weller and John Tumlin accompany J. Allen Hynek to Eagle River, Wisconsin, in April 1961 to investigate Joe Simonton's claim that small beings in a flying saucer had asked him for a jug of water and given him four pancakes in return.

INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER

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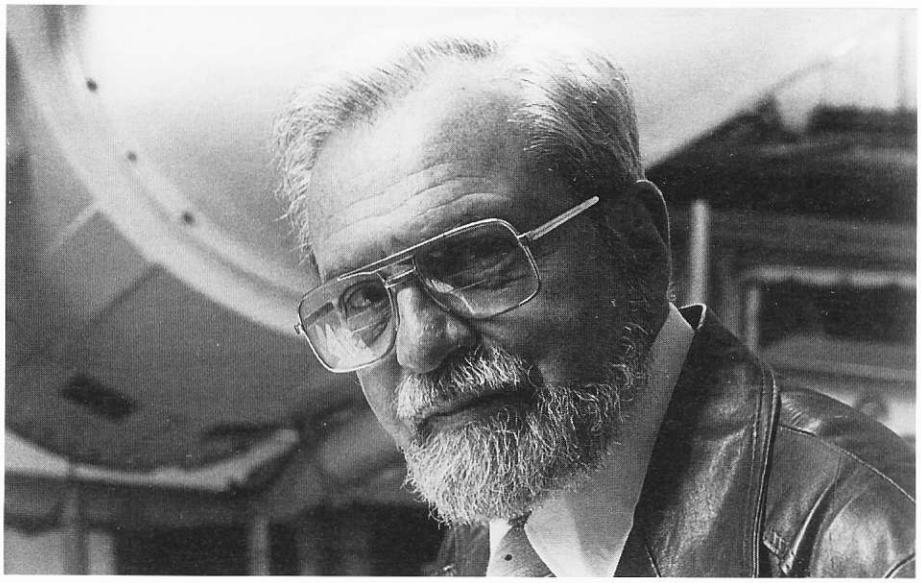

J. Allen Hynek
1910 - 1986

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International UFO Reporter (ISSN 0720-174X) is published quarterly by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

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Third-class postage paid at Glenview, Illinois.

Advertisements accepted for publication in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.

Address all article submissions, letters to the editor, and other editorial correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659. Address all subscription correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

The *International UFO Reporter* is a benefit publication mailed to Associates of the Center for a contribution of $25.00 or more. Foreign Associates add $5.00 for delivery. All amounts in U.S. funds. Other publications also available for contributors of larger amounts. For details, write to the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659, USA. **Postmaster:** Send Form 3579 to CUFOS, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

CLASSIC CASES FROM THE CUFOS ARCHIVES

THE PANCAKES OF EAGLE RIVER

BY JEROME CLARK

As he would tell the story many times to many people, Joe Simonton was eating lunch when he heard the sound. He thought it was from a passing jet airplane, and since jet overflights were something he was used to, he paid little attention. It was 11 a.m., April 18, 1961, and Simonton, a 54-year-old plumber who lived alone on a farm four miles from Eagle River, Wisconsin, was about to become a national celebrity for the next few days. He was also destined to be the central figure in a furious controversy in ufology.

He went to the sink to deposit dishes. Looking out the window by the sink, he was surprised, but not frightened, to see that something was landing on his driveway. It was a disc-shaped, windowless vehicle which resembled two saucers, one overturned and placed on top of the other. It was a bright chromium color.

Simonton would assert, and those who knew him confirmed, that he had no interest in UFOs and was barely aware of the subject. He would insist that the idea that the object was a flying saucer did not occur to him, and he went outside to see it curious but unafraid. As he approached it, a hatchway was opening, rather in the fashion of a car trunk. A short man stood in the doorway holding something that resembled a water jug and making gestures, prominent among them a motion that suggested he wanted a drink. He said nothing then or ever.

Simonton took the jug into his basement, filled it with water, and brought it back. Standing tiptoed and supporting himself with one hand against the side of the craft, he handed the jug up to the man. While doing so, he glanced into the interior, which was "sort of a dull black" and dimly lit. There were three "control boards," two feet high and four feet long. A man sat in front of a panel, paying no attention to Simonton. Another man sat at a flameless grill cooking pancakes. Simonton would recall:

> Around each control board and the grill there was a board like a guard of about ½" to 2" steel, I suppose to act as a guard. To these guards there were fastened two cable-like pieces which hooked to the sides of the man there. It looked like stabilizing cables. I suppose they were to act as safety belts. The man at the control board and the man at the grill had these cables hooked at their sides.
>
> These men were dressed in black two piece suits which looked like jersey material and it was about ½" thick, no buttons or zippers or anything. The jacket was like a turtle neck and the suit fit not too tightly and not too loose. I couldn't see their feet as they were below the hatch. Their caps fit real tight and came down almost to their ears and eye brows. They were about five feet tall and about 120 lbs. and looked like that [sic] of Italian descent. Very nice looking fellows about 25 to 30 years old. Each one very well built in proportion to their size. The man that asked for water had a narrow white stripe down the sides of his trousers and by that I suppose he was the officer on the saucer.

Of these beings Simonton would say they "had a complexion much finer than any woman['s] I ever saw.... When they looked in your eyes, well, you just couldn't stand to look at them for long. They seemed to do something to you."

When Simonton stepped back from the craft, the "officer," filled jug in hand, made a sort of salute with the back of his hand. Simonton responded with the conventional military salute. Then, hoping to get one of the crew to say something, he tried to initiate conversation with a gesture he intended to communicate the question, "Are you eating?" He pointed to the cook, who ignored him. But the "officer" picked up four of the cakes and handed them to Simonton.

With that he closed the hatch. Sounding like a "large generator or electric motor," the craft rose 20 feet, then tilted upward at a 45-degree angle and abruptly shot away. It was lost to sight in two or three seconds. A jack pine tree just behind the object took the brunt of the blast of air that emanated from the departing craft, but it sprang back into place unharmed. Simonton found no traces indicating the UFO's presence on the ground. He decided that it must have been hovering rather than landed. The entire incident had lasted no more than five minutes.

As he stood there in the wake of the object's departure,

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he took a bite of a still hot pancake. "It tasted like cardboard," he would report. It would be his only taste.

Food fight

Within days Simonton's strange story had evolved from local wonder to national joke. Most press accounts were written tongue in cheek, predictably enough given the tale's outlandish character and rural setting. But most people who had known Simonton for a long time believed him. For example, Sheriff John Schroeder said, "Joe really believes everything he says, and he isn't a drinking man. He talks sensibly." But the most outspoken, even ferocious, local advocate of Simonton's claims would be Frank W. Carter, for 42 years a Vilas County judge.

Carter was also a UFO enthusiast and a member of the Washington-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), directed by retired Marine Corps Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe, the most famous UFO proponent of the period. As a body which sought to persuade scientists and middle-class professionals of the importance of the UFO problem, NICAP was known to be skittish about reports of UFO occupants. NICAP did not want to be seen as a body engaged in the pursuit of "little green men."

If Judge Carter did not know that on April 21, when he mailed one of the cakes to NICAP, he would soon be made unpleasantly aware of the fact. His cover letter, addressed directly to Keyhoe, explained that he was sending an "exhibit of some kind of a porous fried food allegedly made by occupants of a UFO that was supposed to have landed on the premises of one Joe Simonton. . . . Please have this article that looks like a somewhat oblong thin pancake about 3 inches by 2 inches, and very greasy, and perforated by small round holes, chemically analyzed to ascertain if made of ingredients found on this earth, or if of some unknown ingredients, etc."

NICAP felt far more comfortable battling the Air Force, which it believed was concealing significant UFO secrets. In an effort to force an end to this alleged cover-up, NICAP lobbied Congress for hearings on the subject and attracted some allies with power and influence. For its part the Air Force felt that NICAP was something between an irritation and a threat, and so it sought to counter the organization's efforts whenever it could do so.

Thus, when Maj. Robert Friend of Project Blue Book heard of the case on April 26 from the Duluth, Minnesota, Air Defense Sector, he immediately—and hugely mistakenly—thought that NICAP would play up the story for all it was worth. After all, as he learned from a phone conversation that morning with Carter, the judge had sent one of the pancakes to Keyhoe. Alarmed, Friend phoned Blue Book's scientific advisor, Northwestern University astronomer J. Allen Hynek, at 10:45 a.m. and asked him to get up to Eagle River as quickly as he could possibly do so.

Hynek enlisted two graduate students, Walter Weller and John Tumlin, and drove from Evanston, Illinois, up to Pewaukee, Wisconsin, where they rented a Bonanza single-engine plane and flew north to Eagle River, arriving late in the afternoon. Hynek contacted Bob Satran, brother of the editor of the local newspaper. Unable to reach Simonton by phone, Satran took the three investigators out to Simonton's farm. Soon after their arrival, they heard that he was in the neighborhood and searched him out.

With Simonton in tow, they returned to the farm, took pictures, and examined the pine tree. They noticed some broken branches, but Simonton said a snowplow had caused them, not the UFO. Hynek invited him to dinner in town, and the conversation continued. In a memo written for Blue Book, Hynek reported:

> People passed the table frequently and he was greeted as though he were a very respected member of the community. I excused myself and went into the bar to strike up a conversation with people there, and both in that encounter and in many other casual conversations, it appeared that the town by and large believed him, although there were some rather voluble skeptics. . . . Mr. Weller talked with Judge Carter, and experienced great difficulty in being admitted to the house. Apparently the Judge thought he was from the Air Force and the Air Force appears to be strictly *persona non grata* among the flying saucer people here.

Later, however, Carter opened up to Hynek, who came to suspect the judge had "introduced many details into the story which were later incorporated bodily by Simonton as gospel." This allegation is hard to square with these observations of Hynek's:

> In talking with Simonton, one did not get the impression that he was an Adamski type. [Contactee George Adamski, a southern Californian, claimed contacts with Venusians and other "Space Brothers."] He answered questions directly, did not contradict himself, insisted on the facts being exactly as he stated and he refused to accept embellishments or modifications. He stated he was sure that we wouldn't believe him but that he didn't care whether he was believed. He stated simply this happened and that was that. . . .
>
> Mr. Simonton appeared quite sincere to me, did not appear to be the perpetrator of a hoax, but to attempt to determine whether he had a physical experience or a mental aberration places the matter in the realm of psychology. . . .

Hynek managed to win Simonton's confidence in spite of his association with the Air Force:

> Simonton had already received many letters which he kindly allowed me to read. The general tenor was that he had been a very privileged individual to have had this experience and that he should be very careful of the Air Force in divulging any information or particularly of giving them any material evidence. He was warned that

> the Air Force would attempt to hush him up and that if he gave the Air Force any material evidence he would never get it back. I was questioned a number of times on my feelings toward NICAP and Major Keyhoe, and I of course stated that I thought that NICAP was attempting to do a serious job and that they had a lot of interested and sincere members who were trying to do the best they could. In no case, of course, did I attempt to say anything that could later be turned against us . . . as unsympathetic toward the efforts of NICAP.

Apparently the tactic worked. When Hynek and his associates left Eagle River at midnight, they had half of a pancake with them.

(Years later Hynek would recall that he was "not at all impressed with [Simonton] personally or with his surroundings. . . . He . . . lived in a sort of a shack on the outskirts of town. . . . This man could have been a wino, the yard was sort of unkempt, bottles and so forth, not wine bottles, but just untidy. . . . My interpretation at that time was that he'd been having pancakes himself for breakfast and had suddenly had a waking dream or . . . isolation delusion." As his views on the UFO phenomenon generally moved in a more positive direction in the years to come, Hynek would consider more seriously the possibility that Simonton had experienced a real encounter.)

The cake was sent to the Aeronautical Systems Division of the Air Force Systems Command. Another sample, which Simonton had given to a second Air Force investigator, went to the Food and Drug Administration. The former's analysis indicated that the cake had been "prepared," according to an internal Blue Book document, "from a low protein flour with small quantities of sugar and salt and cooked in a hydrogenated oil." The Food and Drug Administration reported on June 8:

> Microscopic analysis shows the presence of fat, starch, buckwheat hulls, wheat bran, and soybean hulls. The material appears to be a portion of an ordinary pancake made predominantly of buckwheat. Bacteriological examination and measurement of radioactivity gave results which are consistent with the view that the article is an ordinary pancake of terrestrial origin.

A month earlier, on May 7, having received no acknowledgement from NICAP of his previous letter and enclosure, Judge Carter wrote Keyhoe again. "Either analyze [the pancake] OR mail it back to me," he asked with more than a hint of exasperation. Two days later, in a response marked CONFIDENTIAL, NICAP secretary Richard Hall wrote, "We did receive the 'cake', much to our surprise, without any advance notice that you had announced this to the press." Carter had told reporters that he had mailed the cake to NICAP and that it would analyze the sample and report the results. Hall went on:

> In effect, it seems you expected that we would accept Mr. Simonton's story at face value and be willing to link ourselves publicly with it. We are engaged in very important liaison work with Congress which may well lead to hearings on UFOs and we do not propose to compromise this work for the sake of an unproven, and, you must admit, fantastic sounding claim. Accordingly, we do not wish to have any further publicity in connection with this claim unless strong supporting evidence is forthcoming.

In a private letter written on April 25 to NICAP board member Charles A. Maney, Hall expressed the organization's fear that the case could be a public-relations disaster. The story "would be an ideal set-up for the newswires who just love to carry the most ridiculous of 'contactee' stories. . . .

Perhaps it would be better to ignore the case, but we want to be objective and the claim apparently is made in all seriousness."

The April/May issue of NICAP's *U.F.O. Investigator* relegated the Simonton story to a tiny item on the bottom of the back page. Misleadingly titled "New 'Contactee' Claim," it read in part:

> The recent "spacemen contact" claim at Eagle River, Wisc., received so much publicity that it unfortunately may lead many to think the UFO mystery a joke. . . . In line with our policy, NICAP will evaluate this report for any real evidence of a contact. To date, no such claims have been proven; many are frauds or delusions. This sensational new story probably will be used by the AF [Air Force] for added ridicule of serious UFO reports. We urge our members to offset any such action by citing the massive documented evidence of UFO reality—and putting unproven contact stories in the proper light.

In press accounts NICAP was quoted as stating that it was "highly skeptical" of Simonton's story and that it placed no great priority on the analysis of the pancake. It was reported that the cake was being returned to Carter. When it failed to arrive, the judge wrote Keyhoe once more. The response again came from Hall, not Keyhoe. Hall said the cake had been turned over to a chemist "who said that he would send a report to you in his own name."

By now the judge was furious. On May 25 he composed a rambling, emotional letter to Keyhoe. He indignantly denied asking the organization to accept Simonton's claim on faith. All he had done, he said, was to ask it to evaluate the evidence, which in this instance happened to be physical and therefore offered the prospect of a conclusive answer, positive or negative. Nonetheless, since NICAP had brought up the subject, he allowed as how he had known Simonton for a number of years, respected him, and doubted that he was a liar or a lunatic. Carter said he was no more a believer in contact stories than Keyhoe was, but he felt all reports, even the more fantastic ones, deserved impartial consideration. He remarked:

> I can see that the subject is a TOUCHY one for you, from your present position. You should change the name of your committee to the better name to apply to your organization, if THAT is your true position as to UFOs. Change it to National Investigating Committee of Aerial Phenomena OTHER THAN SO-CALLED CONTACT STORIES, and that would apply, as you do not intend to investigate them at all. However, IF this cake has been analyzed and turned out a fraud, that would have proven your theory, but IF it turned out otherwise, then perhaps you do not want any such results to turn up, and that you WANT to REMAIN with your eyes shut as to ANY contact story. And just TALK against them instead of nailing them to a cross IF the result showed a FRAUD. Are you AFRAID to examine for fear that it MIGHT RESULT in a vindication of their story?

Carter noted that other UFO researchers had acted far more open-mindedly. For example, June Larsen of the Seattle-based Aerial Phenomena Research Association, a conservative group, had asked for a pancake sample. "We have access to laboratory facilities," she wrote, "and would be most happy to provide you and/or Mr. Simonton with a copy of any such analysis, once completed." Unfortunately, Carter bitterly observed, his one sample had already gone off to NICAP.

Always quick to exploit a controversy (or anything else), Ray Palmer, the flamboyant editor of *Flying Saucers,* a pulp magazine published in Amherst, Wisconsin, reprinted Carter's letter as part of a lengthy broadside against NICAP. "With the Keyhoe formula," Palmer charged, "nothing but complete failure in uncovering the truth can result."

Other critics jumped in. In its June 1961 issue *Saucer News,* never friendly to NICAP or to its director, fulminated, "Keyhoe . . . was too worried about what his 'friends in Washington' would think about his 'dirtying his hands' by merely investigating a landing story! Thus we see again that NICAP is not an unbiased research group. It never has been, and with Keyhoe at the helm, it never will be!"

In a more thoughtful vein Waveney Girvan, editor of England's *Flying Saucer Review,* reflected on the irony of Keyhoe's position:

> Most pioneers in our study—Donald E. Keyhoe among them—faced ridicule in an acute form when they first wrote and spoke about flying saucers in the early years. Those who fear ridicule had better even now study something safer. It is, therefore, hard to believe that Major Keyhoe is really afraid of ridicule, and I would prefer to believe that his inhibition about contact claims is due to the method he has adopted in his attempt to break the story: the putting of pressure on a government department to reveal the truth. In this role he must remain respectable and "scientific." The contact claims are not respectable. It is therefore safer to ignore them, to destroy them, even, rather than to be associated with such disreputable heresies. Two unfortunate results follow. NICAP puts itself into the same position as the U.S. Air Force, which feels about sightings exactly what Major Keyhoe feels about contact claims. He cannot complain that the contact claims have attracted hoaxers and must therefore be ignored; the U.S. Air Force can make the same comment about some of the sightings. But what is sadder is that one of the most efficient investigative bodies in the world is perhaps throwing away its greatest chance of solving the whole saucer mystery. Respectability is very comfortable: a fearless and open mind brings trials and tribulations, but it is more likely to triumph in the end.

Joe Symington

PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD

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1. DATE: 18 Apr 61	2. LOCATION: Eagle River, Wisconsin	12. CONCLUSIONS: ☐ Was Balloon ☐ Probably Balloon ☐ Possibly Balloon ☐ Was Aircraft ☐ Probably Aircraft ☐ Possibly Aircraft ☐ Was Astronomical ☐ Probably Astronomical ☐ Possibly Astronomical ☐ Other Hallucination ☐ Insufficient Data for Evaluation ☐ Unknown
3. DATE-TIME GROUP: Local 1100; GMT 18/1800Z Apr 61	4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION: ☒ Ground-Visual ☐ Ground-Radar ☐ Air-Visual ☐ Air-Intercept Radar	
5. PHOTOS: Physical Specimen ☐ Yes (Pancake) ☒ No	6. SOURCE: Civilian	
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 5 minutes	8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS: One	9. COURSE: Object landed.

10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING

Object shaped like 2 soup bowls togather, as a round saucer configuration. Aprox 30 ft in diameterand 12 ft. thick at center tapering to 1 ft at rim. Brighter than chrome. Exhaust pipes 6" - 8" in diameter spaced 1 ft apart around rim. Landed and encounter with space people ensued. Object caused severe air turbulance when departing. Sounded like snow tires on pavement at high speed only louder. Jet like sound. Landed outside observers window.

11. COMMENTS

Case received wide publicity through news media and saucer fans. Investigated by Air Force at scene and in the opinion of the investigators the witness was found to be a balanced person of good mental health and that he actually believes that the sequence of events really happened. However the inconsistancies coupled with lack of supporting evidence tend to indicate that the witness suffered an hallucination followed with delusion.

ATIC FORM 329 (REV 26 SEP 52)

CONTACT, ENCOUNTER, OR DELUSION?

Like Carter, Girvan implicitly accepted NICAP's definition of Simonton as a "contactee" and his alleged experience as a "contact claim." Whereas Carter considered himself—with this one exception—a disbeliever in such stories, Girvan was among Adamski's leading champions. As a publishing executive Girvan had bought Adamski's first book (written with Desmond Leslie), *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (1953), and he filled *Flying Saucer Review* with tales of Venusian and other contacts. Yet, as no less than the skeptical Hynek had observed, Simonton was no Adamski. Unlike Adamski and his compatriots, Simonton was a modest, simple man; he had no knowledge of occultism, held no fringe beliefs, and did not lust after profits. Moreover, whatever else might be said about it, his story was short, uncomplicated, and devoid of messages of cosmic uplift from golden-haired Space Brothers. It was barely a "contact" at all; communication, what there was of it, did not go beyond a few gestures. And finally, again in contrast to the Adamskis of the saucer world, Simonton claimed no further interaction with space people.

It was unfair, in other words, to tie Simonton's relatively modest claim to the contactees' extravagant yarns. Other ufologists placed the Eagle River case in a different category: what was then called the "occupant report" and now the "close encounter of the third kind," or CE3. CE3 witnesses had the same profile as witnesses to other kinds of UFO appearances, and like the overwhelming majority of UFO observers, they gave every indication of sanity and sincerity. The beings they reported seeing tended to be humanoids, not angels in spacesuits.

Thus the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), which scoffed at contact claims but otherwise did not blanch at the idea of UFO occupants, treated Simonton's report with respect and urged "further investigation including hypnoanalysis." Even the chemist to whom NICAP gave the pancake, Alexander Mebane (a ufologist associated with Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York), had a generally sympathetic view of CE3s, including Simonton's.

NICAP defended its actions in the July/August 1961 issue of *The U.F.O. Investigator*. It *had* tried to analyze the pancake, it insisted. It had sent the sample to Charles A. Maney, a NICAP board member on the faculty of a small college in Ohio. Maney gave it to a colleague, chemist Nathan Meltz, who fell ill and died before he could perform an analysis. The cake was then shipped back to NICAP, which passed it on to Mebane. Preliminary analysis showed a "common type of hydrogenated-oil shortening, melting at body temperature." With "more urgent projects" in the works and with funds limited, NICAP saw no reason to spend the additional $300 it would take to complete the analysis.

In a June 2 internal memorandum Air Force Col. Philip G. Evans of the Air Technical Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, previewed the official explanation of the Eagle River episode:

> This case was discussed with a psychologist of the Aeronautical Systems Division who has clinical experience and it is his opinion that the witness suffered a hallucination and subsequent delusion concerning his experience. The psychologist pointed out that cases of this type could be injurious to the mental health of the individual if they became upset due to the experience. He pointed out that if cases of this type are to be pursued, in an attempt to make the witness aware that his experience was not real, that a professional should undertake the job because of the possible danger of injuring the witness' mental health. It was pointed out that experiences of this type, hallucinations followed by delusion, are not at all uncommon and especially in rural communities. Many persons who experience these hallucinations understand them or do not make public their experiences. These hallucinations may be a "one-time" experience brought on by circumstances which may never again be presented to the individual. The psychologist pointed out that many deluded individuals who, due to the fact that they are adjusted to their communities and their communities to them, are not hospitalized for treatment for they are better off without the added concern over their mental condition.

The operating assumption here is that since no such experience could have happened, Simonton must have been crazy—even if no evidence to that effect can be demonstrated. The psychologist's observations amount to guesses without empirical justification. He had neither met Simonton nor subjected him to formal psychological testing. Even Blue Book dissented, at least in part; it would not endorse the claim that Simonton, a "balanced person of good mental health," was crazy. Still, in its official statement on the case, Blue Book echoed the anonymous psychologist's off-the-cuff analysis; it agreed that "the witness suffered an hallucination followed with delusion."

Aside from its other inadequacies, this explanation fails to address the central fact of the case: that Simonton produced physical evidence of his experience. However dramatic, a "hallucination followed with delusion" does not generate pancakes. (One rumor held that the incident grew out of a scheme by local businessmen who hypnotized Simonton and provided him with the pancakes, on the theory that a sensational UFO tale would bring tourists to the area. Though it saw print in some UFO periodicals, the story apparently had its origins in a joke told to an impressionable Wisconsin APRO member.) No one who paid any serious attention to the episode thought Simonton hoaxed the story; yet if one cannot credit the notion that he had a UFO encounter, one is left with virtually no alternative to the hoax explanation. If UFO beings did not make the pancakes, the man who says they did must have. But did he?

There was, and is, no evidence to suggest that Joe Simonton cooked up—in the literal sense—a bogus UFO story. There is, on the other hand, only a small amount of circumstantial evidence for the opposite proposition, which unfortunately requires us to believe that traveling extraterrestrials consume terrestrial agricultural products on their earthly sojourns.

Nonetheless UFO activity seems to have been occurring around Simonton's property. Though the sighting was never properly investigated, a man named Savino Borgo reported that while driving on Highway 70, about a mile from Simonton's farm, at the time of the alleged encounter, he saw a "saucer" rise diagonally and head west on a parallel course with the road.

Early on the evening of April 27, at the Tony Lorbetske farm a few miles east of Simonton's place, two teenagers sighted what one described as a "big discular [sic] object probably between 40–50 feet in diameter and around 15 feet high. . . . [I]t was like if you would put two pie plates together." The young men estimated its altitude to be 4000 to 5000 feet. They alerted their mother, who came outside with two more of the Lorbetske children. All of them watched the object for another two or three minutes as it flew from north to south (*UFO Sighting*, n.d.). The object they described—as they themselves noted—was virtually identical to the one Simonton claimed to have seen.

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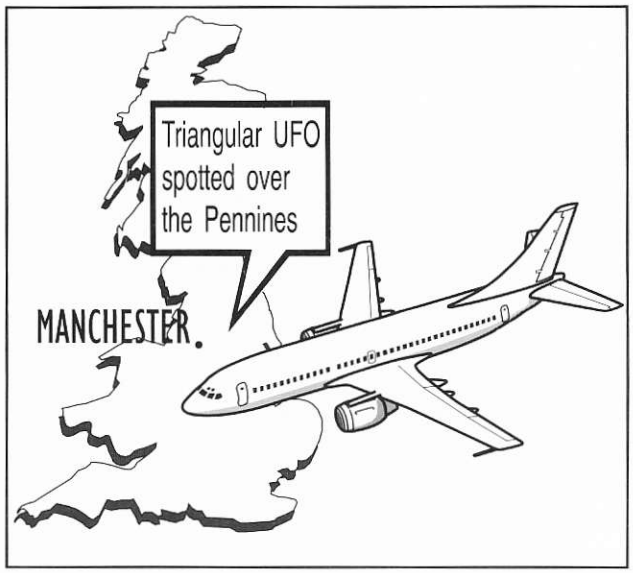
In its report, the Joint Airmiss Working Group dismissed several possible explanations for the object, such as hang gliders, paragliders, microlights, large model aircraft, or commercially operated remote-controlled craft, as unlikely primarily because of the obvious hazards of flying in the dark, high winds, and the treacherous terrain of the Pennine Chain. It also found no evidence for military activity, but since the 737 was near uncontrolled airspace to the east of Manchester, the possibility of unknown military or civilian activity in that area cannot be completely discounted. The Group's summary suggests, however, that such activity would probably have been detected because the area is served by several radars.

The Group emphasized that the report from two responsible airline pilots was taken seriously, and its members commended the pilots for their courage in submitting their reports and the airline for its enlightened attitude that made the report possible. The hope was expressed that this example might encourage other pilots who experience unusual sightings to report them without fear of ridicule. From the information available to them, including the pilots's reports, transcripts of the radio communications, a video recording, and reports from the air traffic controllers, the investigators had no doubt that the pilots saw an unusual object. After the normal avenues of investigation had been explored, the object remains unknown. The report stated that although speculation about extraterrestrial activity was fascinating, it was not within the Working Group's jurisdiction and would have to be left to those with an interest in such matters. The summary pointed out that almost all UFO sightings can be explained by a wide range of well-known natural phenomena. No concurrent reports were made by ground observers.



The Joint Airmiss Working Group concluded that in the absence of any solid evidence that could identify or explain the object, it could not assess either the cause or the risk by any of the normal criteria applicable to airmiss reports, so the incident remains unresolved. ✦

PANCAKES—*continued from page 8*

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