

## In a Saucer from Venus

ROLAND GELATT

**F**LYING saucers exist. Three of them have landed in this country and have been examined by scientists. (A fourth one, also spotted on the ground, took off before the scientists could get a good look at it.) Inside the flying saucers were found the dead bodies of little men, thirty-six to forty inches in height, "no different from us" except for lack of beards; also found were food, water, bunks, and other appurtenances of living beings. In construction these flying saucers "were quite dissimilar to anything we have designed. There was not a rivet, nor a bolt, nor a screw in any of the ships. Their control boards were a series of push buttons. Their outer construction was of a light metal resembling aluminum but so hard no application of heat could break it down." These craft operated on lines of magnetic force (a form of propulsion not yet mastered by earth men) and were able to attain speeds of at least 186,000 miles a second. The probability is that they came from Venus. Space ships like them are keeping the earth under constant surveillance, and an examination of older reports suggests they have been doing so for well over a century.

This farrago of astounding information comes from the pen of Frank Scully, columnist for *Variety* and former sports writer and movie publicist. It is the kernel of a newly published book\* that purports to offer a detailed factual explanation of this ubiquitous, if unverified, phenomenon.

Before going any further we should make it clear that "Behind the Flying Saucers" in and of itself isn't worth much fuss. But as representative of a growing and singularly unfortunate reversion to medieval processes of thought this repetitious and sloppily assembled volume has considerable

significance. The trend came into special prominence earlier this year with the publication of Immanuel Velikovsky's "Worlds in Collision." That this historico-astronomical hodgepodge, which has been refuted by reputable scientists throughout the world, should be published as scientific fact (no one would have objected had it borne the label "science-fiction") seems to be a complete denial of the modern approach to learning. The appeal of Velikovsky was not to critical intelligence but to superstition. And superstition pays today, as witness the prominent place that "Worlds in Collision" has enjoyed on best-seller lists from coast to coast. With the appearance now of a quasi-scientific book on flying saucers, it seems plain that we are in for a deluge of humbuggery calculated to exploit popular superstition and ignorance.

The gist of Frank Scully's information emanates from a supposedly eminent geophysicist, whom he never identifies, and from Silas M. Newton, described in the book as "one of the great geophysicists of the oil industry," who has "made and spent millions." Before the reader is introduced to these sources, however, he is taken on a trip to the University of Denver, where on March 8, 1950, an unidentified lecturer spoke to students of a basic science class on the phenomenon of flying saucers. Here were advanced the propositions summarized in the first paragraph of this article. Needless to say, a lecture of this sort within the sober walls of a university produced something of a sensation. "Such is the nature of man's distorted sense of curiosity," Scully observes, "that who the lecturer was soon began to overshadow what he had said. He, not the flying saucer, became the mystery that had to be solved by the students first." But, surely, the distortion here is Scully's, for the entire validity of any such recital hinges on the authority of the person who delivers it.

When Velikovsky speaks it is one thing; when Einstein speaks it is another.

Later in the book it becomes apparent to the diligent reader that the lecturer was the aforementioned Silas Newton. A check with Denver sources confirmed our suspicion. *SRL* then asked the University of Denver for further information about Mr. Newton's lecture and for their estimation of his competency on the subject. Here is what Vice Chancellor Alfred C. Nelson wrote in reply:

This lecture was not a formal presentation but an experiment in methods of evaluation in terms of the scientific approach to such matters as the then current reports about flying saucers. The experiment had only local significance at the time and there is nothing in it of importance at the present. No one here has any basis on which to judge Silas Newton on the subject of "interplanetary travel."

Our curiosity still piqued about Silas Newton, we checked with the American Petroleum Institute and learned that he is neither a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists nor of the Geological Society of America. According to our informant, Newton is not the key figure in the oil industry that Scully would have us believe.

**B**UT to get back to the speech and Scully's book. Nothing like a verbatim report of the speech is presented. However, without benefit of a transcript one learns that the flying saucers were built according to the "System of Nines," that the little men had no bad teeth and wore a sort of uniform, that timepieces were found that indicated the navigators worked on magnetic time (a magnetic day is twenty-three hours and fifty-eight minutes), that the ship carried no weapons but was capable of disintegrating a pursuing object.

If true, this is certainly news. One's first question would be: Why does the information come from Frank Scully? According to his testimony, the U. S. Government knows all about these interplanetary space ships but just won't talk. When the first flying saucer landed in New Mexico, the story goes, the Air Force threw a guard around it and called in a "Dr. Gee," the unidentified geophysicist, and seven other specialists in magnetism to examine it. After what seems to have been a cursory reconnaissance the Air Force had the thing dismantled and shipped off to a Government testing laboratory. "When Dr. Gee next saw it, the instrument board, to his amazement and chagrin, had been broken up and all of the inner workings torn apart. This, he said, pre-

\*BEHIND THE FLYING SAUCERS. By Frank Scully. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 230 pp. \$2.75.

vented any further study by them as to the magnetic operation of the ship itself." As to the little men, "some of them had been dissected and studied by the medical division of the Air Force." "Dr. Gee" couldn't understand why the Government kept all this a secret, unless it would be "fear of a panic, or the upsetting of certain religious beliefs, or just plain brass exercising its authoritative powers to keep their powers from atrophying."

Despite the unprecedented shroud of secrecy enveloping these discoveries "Dr. Gee" was allowed to take home some souvenirs from the flying saucers. Replying to our request for pictorial evidence, Scully told SRL that "no photographs of parts will be available to anybody under present tensions." What a strange paradox! Evidently "present tensions" allow the publication of a report that the earth is being explored by visitors from other planets but will not allow presentation of corroborating evidence.

The souvenirs included some gears ("of a ratio unfamiliar to engineers on this earth") and a radio the size of a pack of cigarettes that had no tubes, no wires, and only one dial. "Dr. Gee built a special antenna for it, about four inches high, and was able to catch a high C sort of note at fifteen minutes past every hour." This radio bears examination. Disregarding what is meant by "a high C sort of note" (a note is either high C or it isn't), observe that it is heard fifteen minutes past every hour. Pre-

*"I affirm that the nineteenth century, and still more the twentieth, can knock the fifteenth into a cocked hat in point of susceptibility to marvels and miracles and saints and prophets and magicians and monsters and fairy tales of all kinds."* —BERNARD SHAW IN PREFACE TO "SAINT JOAN."

sumably the radio is tuned to Venus or some other body out in space. But earlier in the book we were told that the flying-saucer people operated on magnetic time, which is slower than earth time. It is odd, then, that this sound should be heard regularly at a quarter past the hour on our clock. A disturbing inconsistency—and aggravated at the end of the book when we discover that the radio has shrunk to "one-inch square" and that it is used as a "magnetic radio telephone" by "Dr. Gee" and Mr. Newton, which implies that a microphone, not previously mentioned, exists.

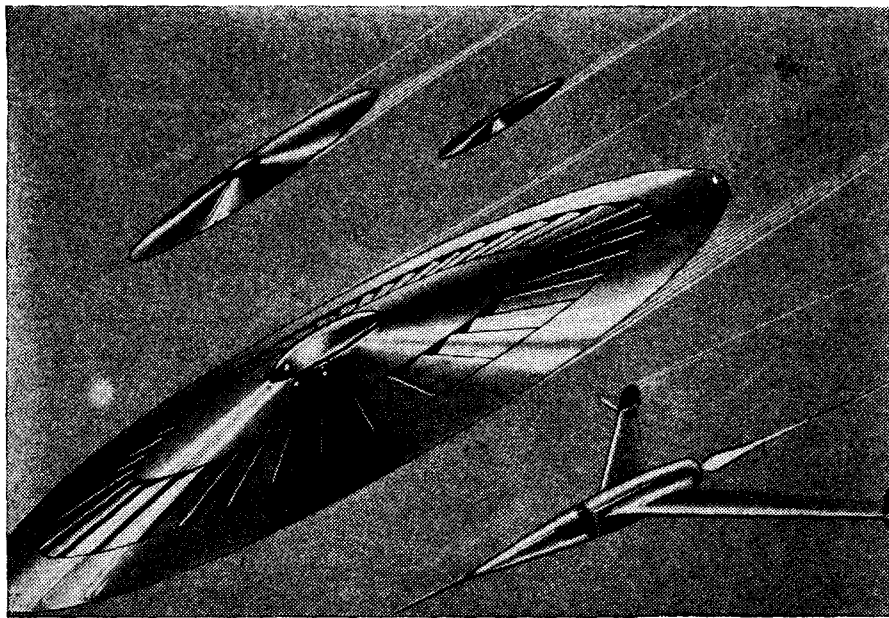
Contradictions of this order abound throughout "Behind the Flying Saucers"; to chronicle them all would be both tedious and profitless. Just as egregious are simple errors of fact, or even of multiplication. At one point in the book Scully wants to prove that travel at 186,000 miles per second is not as fantastic as it sounds. "This is slower compared to Air Force jet planes," he asserts, "than Air Force jets are to Caesar's marching legions." Scully figures the speed of jets as 1,000 miles per hour, which a little home mathematics shows to be .277 miles per second. Now, watch the reasoning. "If [Caesar's] centurions could do thirty miles per day a jet could

do 8,000, and that, in a month, would be 240,000 miles, while Caesar's soldier was walking off his first 1,000 miles. It is therefore more plausible to believe in 1950 that flying saucers can travel 186,000 miles per second than it would have in Caesar's time been to believe anybody could ever travel 1,000 miles per hour." In other words, 240 is to 1 as 186,000 is to .277.

THE author loves to display his knowledge of astronomy and magnetic physics. As long as he keeps talking about magnetrons and tenescopes and Wolf 359 and fault zones he has us properly gulled. But on the subject of the solar system we have our elementary-school training to fall back on. "Pluto," Scully says, "is the nearest to the Sun, and the others move outward in the following order: Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Earth, Venus, and Mercury." Unless things have changed since Miss Ford taught us in sixth grade, exactly the opposite is the case.

"Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself." This was Whitman's gambit; and if it will do for Walt it ought also to do for Frank. Let's forget about the blatant inconsistencies and misstatements of fact. Let's accept at face value the concept of flying saucers navigated by little men that come from outer space and fly at the speed of light. Are we to take all this seriously or as a deliberate hoax? At first glance one would guess this book to be the literary equivalent of Orson Welles's "Men from Mars" broadcast. But a thorough investigation satisfies us that it is offered as a sober exposition. In response to a direct query from SRL Frank Scully wired: "BEHIND FLYING SAUCERS IS SERIOUS PRESENTATION NOT A HOAX AND CALLS FOR A SERIOUS REVIEW." The publishers back up Scully's claim that he is dead serious. "If it's a hoax," they confessed to us, "we'll be the biggest suckers of all." George Koehler, a Denver radio reporter who helped arrange for the University of Denver lecture, was once supposed to have said that the "little men story" was a gag. But in reply to a question from SRL Koehler insisted: "I never stated to anyone that flying saucers or their pilots or their assumed origin were a hoax or a joke." He added that he believed "Frank Scully's sources of information reliable and authoritative, and that his book will render a val-

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—Designed by Jacque Fresco.

But is it from Venus? This draughtsman's conception of a flying saucer shows a helicoptered transparent metal turret with a series of blades flush with the disc's surface. The disc is rotated on the ground at relatively high r.p.m., then the pitch is turned on in the blades, propelling the air from the upper surface of the disc to the lower. This results in decreased pressure on the top and an increase beneath, lifting the disc in a vertical position to any desired altitude. In flying, the disc would be tilted slightly nose down, causing the air underneath to slip backward and propelling the disc forward.



# Our Knight & Windmill

## A Classic Re-evaluated

HARRISON SMITH

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article initiates a weekly series of literary re-evaluations that SRL is presenting in conjunction with the National Broadcasting Company and the University of Louisville. Eighteen authors, ranging from Cervantes to Stephen Crane, will be discussed. Concurrently with this series "NBC Theatre" will offer a dramatization of an important work by each author concerned. The broadcasts are presently heard Sunday afternoons (check local newspapers for time and station). This fall "NBC Theatre" forms part of a course in world fiction offered by the "University of the Air"—a project in education via radio begun by the University of Louisville and now sponsored by several other schools as well. SRL is associating itself with this significant project by publishing weekly critical essays designed to assess the contemporary meaning of the authors.

Readers who may wish to enroll in the "University of the Air"—either for college credit or just plain enjoyment—should write to SRL for the name of the nearest participating university. "Don Quixote" will be broadcast September 24.

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THREE YEARS ago the literary world celebrated the four-hundredth birthday of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, though it is to be noted that Cervantes's countrymen treated Spain's greatest writer with the cold disdain that critics in totalitarian countries mete out to humanists and liberals of their own, or any other, century. Only a year ago the English-speaking world was favored with a superb translation of Cervantes's immortal classic, "Don Quixote," on which Samuel Putnam, an American, had been engaged for more than sixteen years. Like many another famous and classic writer, Cervantes's name and reputation had remained unblemished, but readers of the present generation were finding the translations of "Don Quixote" less and less to their liking. The clumsy attempts to lend an antique flavor to Cervantes's lucid Castilian prose and to turn his comedy into heavy-handed burlesque were described by an English critic and scholar, Aubrey F. G. Bell, whose biographical study of Cervantes happily coincided with the anniversary of Cervantes's birth. His work offered a modern and brilliant commentary as a text for writers whose task it was to restore for the moment an almost legendary name to its rightful place in the hierarchy of genius and to lend new life to a masterpiece which has been translated into more languages than any other work except the Bible.

Aubrey Bell asked a difficult question: whether as a universal classic "Don Quixote" had not joined Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, and the Bible in being universally praised but com-

paratively seldom read. Out of the twelve persons "of keen intelligence and wide reading" he had questioned half had not read "Don Quixote," and none of them spoke of it with unqualified admiration. As those who had read it depended on English-language translations "which did not do justice to the original," they wrote that they found it to be dull and almost unreadable. Mr. Bell's inclusion of the Bible and Shakespeare in this list increases rather than diminishes the stature of "Don Quixote" in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is certain that a book of foreign authorship cannot appear to its readers to be any better than its translation, so that the devotees of Cervantes as one of the world's greatest writers can only hope that Mr. Putnam's lucid "Don Quixote" will be soon presented in popular editions for a host of new readers.

There is every reason why "Don

Quixote" should remain an immortal classic. It is one of the most human and humane books ever written; it is full of vigor and life and humor. Though it is a satire on chivalric romances of the Middle Ages it is not necessary for the reader ever to have troubled his head with Orlando Furioso, Amadis of Gaul, or Don Belianis of Greece, or the other fabulous knights-errant who rescued maidens and slew dragons during the years when chivalry was proclaiming its right to dominate ordinary human beings and to overwhelm the rules of logic and common sense. When Cervantes wrote in his old age "The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha" the age of chivalry was passing, for men were wearied of wandering heroes and the toll they exacted from poor and rich alike.

"Don Quixote" is essentially concerned with the birth of a new, democratic life for humanity. "The Knight of the Dolorous Countenance" and his comic, and yet intensely human, squire, Sancho Panza, became one as comrades in adversity. Throughout the entire book the innate wisdom and humanity of the poorest of the subjects of Spain are transparent to every reader. Shepherds, muleteers, hungry peasants, slatternly maids, and even criminals on their way to serve in the king's galleys are thus transformed by Cervantes's magic.

GR<sup>EAT</sup> literature not only mirrors life, it creates it, so that the human beings who play their parts in poetry, in novels, or on the stage have an immortality that history only grants to its greatest figures, the saints and devils, the rulers and conquerors who have appealed to the imagination of mankind over the centuries. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are living today, though one was an elderly poverty-stricken soldier and the other a peasant. Their absurd adventures led them into the heart of the peasantry whose vitality was once

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"You are right, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "but you must remember that all times are not alike and do not always take the same course; and what the vulgar commonly call omens (for which there is no rational basis) are to be looked upon by the wise man as being no more than happy accidents. One of these believers in omens will rise in the morning, leave his house, and fall in with a friar of the order of the blessed St. Francis; whereupon, as though he had encountered a griffin, he will turn around and go home. If a Mendoza chances to spill salt on the table, he spills gloom over his heart at the same time, just as if nature were under any obligation to give notice of coming misfortunes through things of such little moment as those mentioned. The man who is at once wise and a Christian ought not to trifle with the will of Heaven. When Scipio came to Africa he stumbled as he leaped ashore, and his soldiers took it for an ill omen, but as he embraced the earth he cried out, 'You will not escape me, Africa, for I hold you tightly in my arms.' And similarly, Sancho, our meeting with these images has been for me simply a very happy occurrence."

—"DON QUIXOTE," PART II, CHAP. 58.

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