

*by Jacques Vallée*

The introduction of a codification system is justified by the fact that, although varying in the manner in which they are reported, the sightings can all be reduced to a limited number of well-defined types, showing various specific differences, but with characteristics which recur throughout the whole field under investigation.

**Specimen Codification Card.**

I have therefore given the denotation "Type I Sighting" to such manifestations of the phenomenon as consist of the observation, by the witnesses, of an unusual image, namely a device which is spherical or discoid in shape, or possibly even more complex than this, such device being on the ground or close to the ground. This image may or may not be associated with physical effects of a thermic, or luminous, or purely material (i.e. traces) kind. This type of sighting is encountered throughout the whole history of the flying saucer phenomenon—inclusive of the most recent period—and is not confined to the autumn of 1954 as is sometimes believed to be the case. Let us give a few examples.

We will begin by giving the testimony (as communicated by Mr. Cristian Vogt) of an official of the Provincial Senate of the Province of Buenos Aires, in the Argentine Republic, who was driving his 1946 Ford car along the road between Unsue and Bolivar on August 8, 1958, when his engine suddenly stalled. His dash-board clock stopped, showing 1.27 a.m. The witness got out to find the cause of the breakdown, cleaned the distributor-heads, and then tried to get the car going again, but in vain. Only then did he notice, at a distance of 300 or 400 metres, what seemed to be a machine which was approaching relatively slowly, and close to the ground. He thereupon put his lights off. The phenomenon observed by him was not completely symmetrical, as the witness speaks of a flatness of the "hind-part"; a tenuous phosphorescence was given off from the thing. The phenomenon was accompanied by a soft whirring, like the noise of a fan varying according to its movements. The witness describes this "machine" as having a cupola or cockpit that emitted a blinding bluish light. Finally, the thing rose, at a "staggering" speed, towards the south, giving off whistling noises. Returning to his car, the witness found that the needle on his oil-gauge had gone "crazy," but that he was able to start the engine again.

On May 20, 1959, at 5.30 p.m., two men who were out hunting saw, near Tres Lomas, in the Province of La Pampa (also the Argentine) a disc-shaped object on the ground, at a distance of 150 metres. They describe the phenomenon as a machine having the appearance of being made of aluminium or of some silvery metal or even of brilliant frosted glass, and from 2 to 2½ metres in height. Here too a "cupola" with a radius of one metre is mentioned. After the "object" had departed the grass was found to have been flattened.

We will give the category of "Type II Sighting" to eyewitness accounts in which it is reported that they have seen a vertical "cylindrical form" in the sky, associated with a diffused cloud. This type of sighting has been given various names, such as "Large Vertical Cigar," "Cloud Sphere," or "Cloud Cigar."

Within Type II, two categories are to be distinguished, which we designate IIa and IIb. The first-named of these will contain all sightings of vertical cylindrical forms moving in the atmosphere in a more or less erratic manner. The second will group together sightings of the same sort of forms when they are stationary and when they give rise to secondary phenomena related in general to the type designated below as Type IV.

Typical cases of Type IIa sightings are furnished by the following eyewitness accounts: at Pouilly-sur-Vingeanne (near Dôle, in France) on July 18 or 19, 1952, at 6 p.m., residents of Pouilly and Vénarey-les-Launnes reported that they saw "a spindle-shaped thing, with neither wings nor protuberances, emitting at regular intervals a brief and powerful flash, and giving off a very dense white smoke which quickly dissipated." The witnesses describe this spindle as having an apparent length of 30 metres, and as being in a vertical position and emitting a fairly loud rumbling noise. On November 27, 1954, between 4.15 and 4.30 p.m., witnesses who were on the Red Square at Moscow saw a "machine of cylindrical form" to the north-west, at an estimated height of 200 or 300 metres. The witnesses reported that the thing rose up "with the speed of a jet plane," while assuming a vertical position.

Numerous examples of sightings of Type IIb are given in the cases of "large cigars" painstakingly recorded by Michel in his *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery*\*: examples such as those at Oloron Sainte Marie, Gaillac, Montlevic, Poncey-sur-l'ignon, and Domérat, and also the case at Vernon.

We shall give the name of "Type III Sighting" to any case where an allegedly abnormal "object," of spherical, discoidal or elliptical shape, is reported to have been observed stationary in the atmosphere. And, in particular, we shall designate as a "Type IIIa Sighting" any Type III case where the immobility of the "object" occurs between two periods of motion, and is associated with a movement of erratic, broken, descent of the "object" towards the vicinity of the surface of the earth, or "falling dead leaf descent."

A sighting which took place at Alès (France) at 11.45 a.m. on October 9, 1954, falls into Type III: several eyewitnesses, one of whom was M. Taurelle who works in the Riche-Hotel, report that they saw a stationary "saucer" turning in the air upon its own axis, before disappearing rapidly at an ever-increasing speed. Likewise a sighting at Yaoundé (French Cameroons) on October 28, 1954, by numerous persons of that town, of whom one was the head of the hospital, refers to "an enormous stationary disc, powerfully illuminated." This "object" is described as mushroom-shaped, and carrying beneath it a cylinder of a length equal to its own diameter, which was dangling from it.

Finally, we shall apply the category "Type IV Sighting" to sightings where an abnormal "object," corresponding to one of the forms described above, has been seen in continuous movement through the air, regardless of whatever accelerations, variations in luminosity, secondary rotations, etc., may have been associated with such movement.

Such a classification as this introduces at once an appreciable simplification of the statistical examination of flying saucer reports, and throws a certain amount of light on the methods by which a purely physical investigation as to the actual nature of the images or objects observed could be conducted. It is clear that the Type IV sightings are the ones that are most subject to caution, confusion being very frequently possible with material or non-material physical phenomena, whether of human or natural origin, hastily invoked to "explain" the phenomenon: i.e. ball-lightning, reflections from car headlights, mirages, so far as physical non-material causes are concerned. And meteorites, flying machines of human construction, sonde-balloons, flights of birds, exceptional meteorological phenomena or even astronomical objects deformed by an erroneous interpretation (Mars, or Jupiter, or the Moon) where material physical causes are present, and including, more recently, the artificial satellites of the Earth.

If, however, one considers the sightings of the first three Types, and especially those classed under I, IIb, and IIIa, it is clear that hallucination and hoax are in actual fact the only possible interpretations if we exclude the hypothesis of an objective physical cause that is still unknown.

This classification consequently introduces a great simplification in the work of analysis, but in my opinion its essential interest resides in the fact that it in no way involves any preconceived notions as to the nature—be it physical, or purely

psychic or psychological—of the phenomenon in question, and the fact that, *a fortiori*, it in no way presupposes the existence of a material object at the root of these sightings. Consequently, we insist fundamentally that the broad generality of this method be noted.

### Codification of secondary characteristics

We have described above a classification of sightings according to different types, based on the essential features of the phenomenon as described in the reports of witnesses. But now we need to have available a practical method of recording—in as compact a form as possible—the secondary characteristics of the sighting, such as, for example, the number of witnesses present, or the existence of marks and traces.

I will therefore describe the system used by us at present for the registering of sightings on punched cards, this system being clearly utilisable—without any essential modifications—within the framework of whatever system of classification one may desire.

As my diagram shows, we begin by punching in columns 1 to 5 the number allotted to the sighting (usually in the chronological order of the lists), and then the co-ordinates (longitude and latitude in that order, expressed in decimal degrees and based on the Greenwich meridian) in all cases where these have been precisely established.

Next we find the date and the time of the phenomenon, in hours and minutes, followed by a three-figure number which we call the "hour group." The first digit indicates the time-system to which timing refers: 1 for local time, 0 for world-time (*temps universel*), 2 when the time is approximately known, on an average to within two hours, plus or minus. The two following digits give the length of the sighting in minutes, 99 being taken by convention to indicate that the reported duration was in excess of one hour and a half.

Next we give the indication of the place of the sighting, placed in brackets in a case where the alleged "object" has been seen stationary at a low altitude (less than 50 metres), which we class in our system as a Type I phenomenon. This indication may be preceded by a minus sign (–) if the sighting is doubtful, or by an asterisk (\*) if the eye witness is a person of indubitable scientific or technical education, or if the sighting has been confirmed by an investigation by the Gendarmerie or Armed Forces.

Next a group of two letters indicates the country or region of the world where the sighting took place.

The following seven figures or letters constitute the code itself, and give the details of the sighting.

The code indicating the *nature* of the sighting occupies columns 68-69-70 of the card, following the under-mentioned convention :

Sighting	Col. 68	Col. 69	Col. 70
Type I classic ...	0	No. of "pilots"	No. of craft
Type I at sea ...	1	0	No. of craft
Type IIb ...	1	1	No. of small sec- ondary objects
Type IIa ...	1	2	Blank
"Jellyfish - saucer"	1	3	No. of craft
"Jellyfish - saucer" with a part touch- ing the ground	1	4	same convention
Type IV ...	1	5	same convention
Type III ...	3	0	same convention
Suspicious luminous phenomenon ...	1	8	Blank

The number of witnesses is next shown by a figure at position 71, following the under-mentioned convention :

0 .....	report given by an aircraft
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 .....	respectively : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 witnesses
6 .....	about ten witnesses
7 .....	several tens of witnesses
8 .....	hundreds of witnesses
9 .....	thousands of witnesses

We have reserved columns 72-73 for special sightings coded as follows:

	<i>without photo or film</i>	<i>with photo</i>
Sighting by a pilot in flight	0	5
Sighting made separately by radar ... ..	1	6
Indisputable traces ...	2	7
Electromagnetic effects ...	3	8
Any other interesting physi- cal sighting ... ..	4	9

In column 74 we give the dimensions suggested by the witnesses, in accordance with the following code :

0 .....	a few tens of centimetres
1 .....	1 to 2 metres
2 .....	2 to 5 metres
3 .....	5 to 10 metres
4 .....	10 to 20 metres
5 .....	20 to 30 metres
6 .....	30 to 60 metres
7 .....	60 to 100 metres
8 .....	about 100 metres
9 .....	immense

The last columns of the card are reserved for indications of the catalogue or list from which the sighting is taken, for notes on various properties of the sightings (notes which could vary according to the type of research envisaged and which we do not consider it of any use to discuss at the present moment).

### Conclusion

Our aim in this article has been to set forth briefly a few principles which can be used in the classification and coding of flying saucer sightings, while being careful not to pre-judge the fundamental nature of the phenomenon, which has been the subject of numerous discussions and does not appear likely, in our view, to receive a final elucidation in any near future. In the course of our own studies, we have acquired a certain experience of the problem of statistical treatment of coding of sightings, and it would seem to us imprudent to affirm that the system of coding presented herein should be retained as definitive. However, while modifications may be considered in the classification of secondary characteristics—which we have described quite roughly (an improved system giving, in particular, detailed information as to shape, colour, and certain other features of the sightings is at present being studied). On the other hand, the division into the Types which we have indicated in our introductory paragraphs does seem indeed to correspond to a fundamental distribution of the qualitative features in the phenomenon in which we are interested.

\* The French edition carried the title *Mystérieux objets Célestes*.

## PERSONAL COLUMN

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