

First Person to Report UFO's Still Believes in Phenomenon

On June 24, 1947, Kenneth Arnold, of Meridian, Idaho, was flying his two-seater plane from Chehalis to Yakima, Wash., over Mount Rainier.

Suddenly, there in his path, he said, were nine shiny, pulsating objects flying over the Cascade Mountains as fast as 1,700 miles an hour. They were moving in a strange, weaving motion.

With that sighting, Arnold was believed to have been the first person to report seeing "flying saucers."

The publicity-shy Arnold, now

62, makes few public appearances. He recently gave the keynote address, however, at a three-day international conference in Chicago on unidentified flying objects (UFO's).

"They seemed to be alive in the center, to have the ability to change their density," the businessman said. "No, I have never claimed to have seen any little men in them. Others have, not me. I didn't want to exploit anyone and I didn't want to be exploited."

Soon after Arnold's report, UFO's became a craze. The flying-

saucer term was coined. Everyone seemed to be seeing them. Arnold said he has seen UFO's six times since the first sighting.

To mark the anniversary of that first sighting 20 years ago, the New Age Foundation—a UFO group from the Northwest—planned lectures, a salmon bake, and a sky watch over the 14,410-foot-high Mount Rainier.

Most Believe

Gallup polls show that 51 percent of Americans now believe in UFO's. A 1973 survey found 15,000,000 Americans said they have seen them.

The United States Air Force, in its Project Blue Book, investigated thousands of UFO sightings. It concluded that some UFO reports were hard to explain, although no national security threat was found.

Now semiretired, Arnold thinks the UFO phenomenon is ground-

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ed in age-old human experience.

He said a model he made of what he saw parallels what Ezekiel described in the Bible. He said he has seen 100-year-old drawings in the British Museum almost identical to what he saw.

Arnold said he once took movies of two UFO's flying under his light plane at treetop level near California's Mount Lassen.

His description has remained constant. The craft flew erratically, "like speedboats on rough water," cruising both flat and sideways. They were circular, pulsed like fireflies in the center, and traveled at great speeds.

"I have talked with commercial pilots who have seen them," Arnold said. "I have talked with hundreds of plain, ordinary citizens.

"It appears that the scientific community, after years of dismissing us as kooks, has decided to reconsider."