

GENERAL SCIENCE

The Flying Saucer Mystery

► THE flying saucers that are again being reported as being seen around the country and in Mexico are most likely:

1) The planet Venus, now extremely brilliant in the morning in the southeastern sky. Venus is easily visible before the sun rises, but it can be seen throughout the day. It is two and one half hours ahead of the sun, that is, it rises a little after 4:00 a.m. E.S.T. At the present time Venus is almost as bright as it can get, more than four times the brightness of the closest star.

2) Balloons, either cosmic ray or weather balloons. Cosmic ray balloons can go at least as high as 18 or 20 miles. Some of them are big enough, 75 feet at their highest altitude, to be seen with the unaided eye. Weather balloons, though not quite so big, can also go to about the same height and could also be seen easily.

3) Meteors, sometimes known as shooting stars or fireballs. These small celestial bodies are invisible except when they enter the earth's atmosphere. Then they are heated by the impact of air and appear as

streaks of light across the sky. Unusually brilliant meteors are called fireballs.

4) Radio-controlled jet or rocket aircraft being secretly tested. Scientists familiar with aeronautical research trends do not entirely discount the reality of the strange flying disks despite Army and Navy disclaimers of such flights.

5) A mild form of mass hallucinations.

6) Actual disks. Some kind of a secret device being tested by the armed forces. Possibly this could be used either to test the effectiveness of our radar screen or to foul up the detecting of objects in the sky by radar in a manner similar to that accomplished by aluminum foil, or window, during World War II.

A possible explanation of the reports of visits of flying saucers containing men from other worlds is that of wishful thinking. Some people who are worried about the state of the world today believe that the most likely way of settling differences would be to unite all countries of the world against a common aggressor. The reported "men from Mars" would solve this problem nicely.

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

PSYCHIATRY

Best Truth Serum Yet

► SOMNOFORM, an inhalant anesthetic used for some 25 years by dentists, has been tried out as a "truth serum" and found to be superior to any so far investigated.

Indeed, somnoform is nearly perfect as a truth serum, reports Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, psychiatrist of the Nuremberg trials and now professor of criminology at the University of California, in the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY.

Dr. Kelley selected Somnoform after writing the specifications of the perfect truth serum, and then making a systematic

search of all known drugs which might fill the bill.

Such drugs release inhibitions, making it possible for mentally disturbed individuals to remember and talk freely about painful incidents of the past which the patient involuntarily cannot recall and which may be the cause of the ailment. Amnesia is a typical disturbance in which truth drugs are helpful. Such drugs are also useful in detecting willful deception by criminals, a field in which Dr. Kelley is currently working.

The psychiatrist said that Somnoform, used in about two million cases in dental

practice without a fatality, is administered through a face mask attached to a collapsible rubber bag. The drug comes in an ampule, which is broken when put into the bag, gentle pressure on the bag forcing the gas into the mask.

Dr. Kelley has used the gas on 38 patients, with no serious side effects or after-effects. Use of the gas permits interviews up to as long as a half hour.

He cited examples of the use of the gas, including those of a girl of 18 with amnesia and a war veteran suffering from an anxiety state. He is also using it in research with criminals.

Dr. Kelley is one of the pioneers of the use of truth drugs. He applied them successfully in the treatment of mentally disturbed soldiers fresh from the battlefields of World War II.

Truth drugs commonly used include sodium pentothal and sodium amytal, administered by injection, and nitrous oxide and ether, both gases.

The psychiatrist said Somnoform eliminates the fears of many patients of injection needles; it is easy to handle in an office situation; and it produces neither nausea nor the extreme excitability characteristic of some of the other drugs. About the only situation in which it is not superior to the others, he maintains, is in cases requiring long sleep after psychiatric interview, when sodium pentothal is used.

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

Words in Science— CEMENT-CONCRETE

► CEMENT is any finely powdered substance which acquires strong adhesive powers when mixed with water. Portland cement, so named because it resembled a building stone quarried on England's Isle of Portland, is the most important.

It is made wherever natural raw materials most closely approximate the desired chemical composition: a mixture of the oxides of calcium, aluminum, silicon, iron, magnesium and sulfur. Limestone and clay, cement rock, marl, slag or iron ore are ground, heated in rotating kilns until they fuse, then ground again.

Mixed with sand and crushed stone, plus water, cement locks these aggregates of concrete into a rock-solid mass which withstands the ravages of weather and wear. You will find concrete in buildings, bridges, dams, retaining walls and highways.

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, centuries ago bandaged a wound with a moldy rag, and the wound healed; the moldy rag probably contained a crude form of *penicillin*.

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