Denver Post

Saucer sages Koehler, Newton, Scully.

the FLYING SAUCERS and the MYSTERIOUS LITTLE MEN

by

J. P. CAHN

Had flying saucers manned by crews three feet tall actually landed on Earth? That was the question. This is how TRUE and Mr. Cahn found the answer

For four months, across 4,500 miles and five western states, I tracked down visitors from the planet Venus.

It was a fantastic assignment. The story I was to dig up if I could was the weirdest that any reporter could dream of having handed to him. If I found the Venusians, I couldn't interview them, even if I knew how to speak their language. For they were dead, those strange little beings, from unknown causes—half of their number crisped by heat to a dark brown color.

They'd come out of the sky in flying saucers. My job was to bring their story down to earth.

I got it—their full inside story. And though I didn't find the dead Venusians, I uncovered some rather fantastic living characters. . . .

On the crest of the wave of public excitement about flying saucers in the spring of 1950 came news from the West that topped any of the hundreds of saucer reports that had been recorded up to that time. Newspapers everywhere printed and reprinted the rumor that, in Denver, several businessmen had been shown pieces of metal, small gears, and a curious little radio set. These things, it was said, had been taken from a fallen flying saucer.

A True Book-Length Feature

The switch-trick disk at left, a 5¢ piece, and the unknown metal.

Phoenix Gazette

Leo A. GeBauer . . . last link in an investigative chain.

Flying Saucers and TRUE

TRUE was the first publication to discuss flying saucers logically and comprehensively. In January 1950 the memorable article, *The Flying Saucers Are Real*, announced our reasoned conclusion that they were interplanetary in origin. Four articles in subsequent issues detailed important new sightings. The U.S. Air Force meanwhile dismissed the saucers as misinterpretations, hoaxes, or hallucinations.

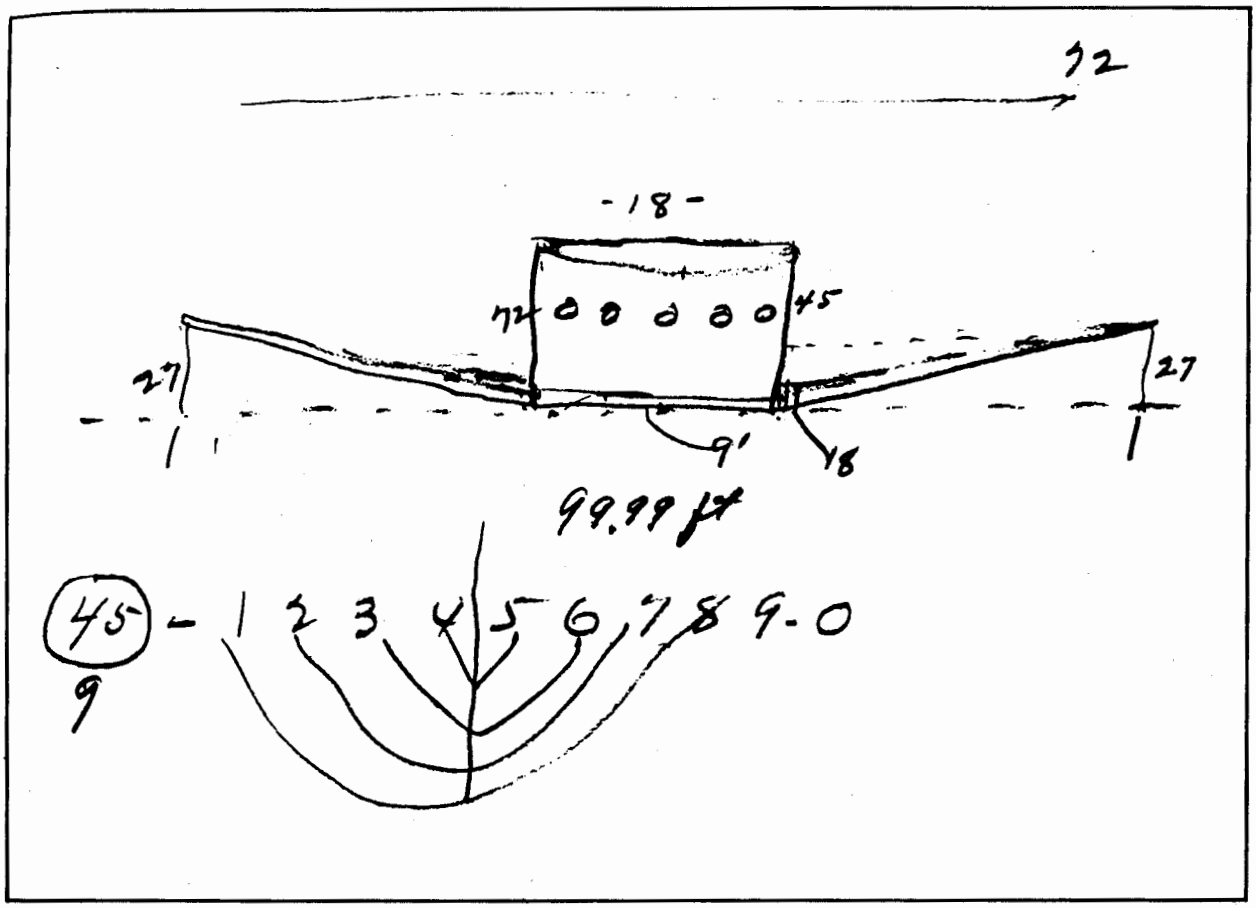
Events strengthened TRUE's position. Strange sky objects kept appearing. Some scientists attempted to explain them away as "sky hook" balloons or, alternatively, light refractions from atmospheric layers of warm air—in effect, mirages. Neither explanation fitted all the facts. Recently the Air Force reopened and intensified its saucer investigation.

Hoaxes, as well as mistakes and hallucinations, there have been and probably will be. When any major hoax is detected, TRUE will expose it—in the public interest, and to help remove doubt from the responsible, authentic sightings that may someday solve the flying saucer riddle.

—*The Editors*

The metal was an unknown stuff that defied analysis. The gears—well, they looked like ordinary gears. The tubeless radio set, however, was really something; it beeped every fifteen minutes, exactly on the quarter hours, with a single brief ethereal tone-note that was seemingly a signal from outer space.

That much was in the public prints and on the nation's broadcast channels. What I didn't know then was that two TRUE writers already investigating the matter were meeting oddly evasive resistance. In Denver, Donald Keyhoe was having no luck inducing a man named Koehler, who apparently had knowledge of the intriguing objects, to produce them for inspection. In California, Richard Tregaskis was permitted by Frank Scully, columnist for the theatrical newspaper *Variety*, to finger for a few moments a small disk of nameless metal that was part of the same saucer loot and to listen—but no questions, please—to a tale of a fallen saucer secretly seen and examined by anonymous scientists. The information that Koehler and Scully shared—they checked on each other by telephone—belonged to them, they made clear; they would divulge only so much and no more; their sources absolutely had to remain unidentified and protected; Scully would write it his own way or not at all. In short, take it or leave it. On such arbitrary terms, the pick was obvious. Fallen-saucer stories weren't, in fact, new even at that time. Back on July 9, 1947, only two weeks after private-flier Kenneth Arnold had alerted the nation with his nine disks seen skipping "saucer-like" near Mt. Rainier, Southwest newspapers headlined that a captured disk that had fallen on a New Mexico



For the author, Silas Newton drew dimensioned sketch of first saucer that landed and diagrammed the "system of 9's."

ranch was a dud. *That* one, when delivered to the Eighth Army Air Force, was identified as a tinfoil-covered reflector from a weather balloon.

The ravaged saucer and its collection of parts persisted in unverified versions through the spring and summer of 1950. Then, on September 8, it came alive with a bang.

On that date, the publishing firm of Henry Holt & Company, Inc., released upon a saucer-hungry world a 230-page book by Frank Scully entitled *Behind the Flying Saucers*. In it, Scully, vouched for by his publisher, unburdened himself of his secret. There wasn't just a single fallen saucer, but three of them. Four, actually, if you wanted to count the one that got away.

Scully categorically announced—no ifs or buts or maybes—that he was in contact with personages of high standing who had not only seen the three stranded saucers, but examined them closely, and that beyond any question the craft were from a planet other than Earth, presumably Venus. They carried full crews of perfectly formed little men, about three feet tall, all dead on or shortly after arrival. The corpses were taken away by the Air Force, which appropriated the saucers; Scully implied that, after some were dissected, most of the little men received indecent unburial in jars of pickling fluid.

The first space ship landed east of Aztec, New Mexico. Having watched it in the upper atmosphere as it approached, the Air Force had been able to calculate its landing place closely and they got there pretty quick. They sent out a rush call for a group of eight scientists, specialists in secret magnetic research, headed by a top authority in that field of study, a man whom Scully could refer to only by the initial pseudonym "Dr. Gee." The excited scientists came a-flying. It was from the lips of Dr. Gee himself that Scully, much later, heard the details.

The ship was whole and practically unmarred, having evidently made a gentle pancake landing. For two days, the scientists hovered around at a safe distance, testing with Geiger counters and photographing. Then they closed in. There seemed to be no visible door to the cabin-like structure in the depressed center of the saucer. Through a broken porthole window—the only apparent damage to the ship—they could count sixteen bodies of little men. Probing inside with a long pole, they hit a knob on the opposite wall, and a door flew open. The scientists entered.

They carried the little bodies out and laid them on the ground. Dressed alike in a dark-blue uniform garment, the saucerians, despite their measurements of 36 to 42 inches, were no misshapen dwarfs; they were as normal in appearance and well-proportioned as any earthling. The only thing wrong with them was that their skin seemed to be charred a very dark chocolate color, as if their bodies had been subjected to much heat.

The ship next received the scientists' attention. There was no engine or other means of propulsion. Dr. Gee deduced that it had operated by utilizing the earth's magnetism, gaining motion by crossing the magnetic lines of force. The controls appeared to be the buttons on an instrument board. The scientists decided not to try pushing the buttons because they didn't know what would happen.

The material of the ship puzzled them. Very light—two or three men together could lift one side of the saucer which measured 99 99/100 feet in diameter—it looked like aluminum but wasn't. In the laboratory it would prove to resist 150 tests and 10,000 degrees [*Continued on page* 102]

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of heat in scientific efforts to determine its composition. Dismantling the ship turned out to be a problem. There were no rivets, bolts or screws, and its structure defied $35,000 worth of diamond drills. After a long study, it was found to be assembled in segments, fitted in grooves and pinned together around the base. Disassembly disclosed a gear completely encircling the bottom of the cabin that fitted a gear around the saucer base. Evidently the saucer rim spun around the cabin—not for any aerodynamic lift or thrust, Dr. Gee surmised, but as a sort of gyroscopic balancing device.

There were other intriguing matters—little watchlike timepieces in the crew's clothing that measured off a 29-day magnetic month, food wafers that amply nourished laboratory guinea pigs, and heavy water for the crew's liquid intake. But the crucial factor—the means of magnetic propulsion—Dr. Gee was not to have the opportunity to solve, then or later.

The second saucer landed near a proving ground in Arizona. Its door stood open when it was found and its sixteen dead crewmen were not burned or browned. The scientists concluded that they had died after the door was opened, from the sudden exposure to Earth air in their cabin which was probably either vacuumed or pressurized to the atmosphere of their planet but not ours. This ship was smaller than the first, measuring 72 feet in diameter.

The third ship alighted in Arizona's Paradise Valley, right above Phoenix, and it was different from the others in being only a 36-foot two-seater and having a three-point landing gear consisting of steel balls rolling in sockets. One little man lay half out of an escape hatch; the other still sat in a bucket seat before the control board, his head slumped on his chest. Both dead. They brought the total toll to thirty-four.

Several other saucerians were more fortunate—or the lesson of their predecessors' deaths had been learned. These visitors arrived in a fourth saucer which members of Dr. Gee's research group came upon, lying empty, near a government proving ground. The scientists returned to their car for cameras and equipment and as they approached the ship again they saw several little men hop into the saucer, which instantly disappeared—not flew away, but vanished as if it had dissolved into air.

Where had the saucers come from? Operating on magnetism, which is an effect of electricity—which travels, like light, at a rate of 186,000 miles a second—they could have made short work of the trip from any of the nearer planets in our solar system. Which one? Dr. Gee decided Venus. In agreement with one school of thought among astronomical researchers, he felt there was more likelihood of human habitation on Venus than on Mars. The little men's size pointed that way, too; if they had come from Mars, they would probably be three or four times as large as people on Earth.

It was exceedingly interesting to the doctor that the diameters of the saucers were exactly 99 99/100, 72, and 36 feet, that the measurements of the large ship's cabin were 18 feet across and 72 inches high and that its top projected 45 inches above the level of the disk edge, which was elevated 27 inches from the saucer base line, and that the cabins and disk slant of the smaller ships were in relative proportion to the figures for the large ship. For all these measurements were divisible by 9. That indicated to the scientists that the Venusians used a mathematical method, not unlike ours, known as the "system of 9's."

But the doctor and his group were to have little chance of pressing their inquiries further. The Air Force took over the ships and sent them presumably to the government laboratories at Wright Field at Dayton, Ohio—except the little ship, which rested for awhile in the doctor's laboratory and then was dismantled and sent to join the others. The doctor and his colleagues had hoped, in time, to work out a plan whereby they could make certain tests with the different push buttons on the instrument boards and so gain clues to the secret of magnetic propulsion. When he next saw the instrument board of the large ship, it had, to his amazement and chagrin, been broken up and all of the inner workings torn apart. Since Air Force souvenir hunters had already lifted a number of items, he said, he grabbed a few things himself—not as trophies, but to use for research. All he had to show for his labors on the saucers was a tubeless radio receiver about the size of a cigarette package, some gears, some small disks, and other items that could be carried in the pocket.

Shortly thereafter, in July 1949, Dr. Gee separated himself from the government service. For the tremendous work he had done as leader of a billion-dollar magnetic-detection research program that, during the war had knocked out the Japanese submarine menace, he had received $7,200 a year. He quit to turn his knowledge to the use of industry where he could make a more profitable income. As a specialist in geomagnetics, he became a consultant to a wealthy oil man, himself a geophysicist, who was using instruments of his own design to make a microwave survey of the underlying formations of the Mojave Desert. The oil man was an old friend of Frank Scully; through him, Scully heard something of the fallen saucers and came to meet Dr. Gee on at least two occasions when the scientist visited California from Phoenix on business. The scientist talked freely of the saucers to the oil man and Scully—this was in the fall of '49—and on a later visit brought along the tiny radio, the gears, and some photographs.

Came the beginning of 1950 and, in the opinion of Scully, the reign of "error" and repression: the Air Force put its Project Saucer underground, denied everything, and by so doing set up between the people and the government a double standard of morality. Security became a dread threat. Scientists knew better than to talk. Furthermore, scientists have to have government-controlled materials for research, which might not be made available to those who refuse to cooperate.

But Scully, in possession now of the data, would have none of this bureaucratic muzzling which, he said, stifles free inquiry and breeds fear. Though "Dr. Gee's" identity had to be safeguarded, neither Scully nor the oil man was so bound, though the latter, being involved with the government on some top-secret deals, had to tread carefully.

To test public receptivity to the saucer revelation, the oil man-geophysicist appeared as an anonymous guest lecturer before a University of Denver elementary-science class on March 8, 1950, escorted by George T. Koehler, who is a salesman for Denver radio station KMYR. The lecturer told in detail of Dr. Gee's findings and drew some blackboard diagrams. News of the lecture leaked, of course, beyond the cloistered walls, and the how-come of university sponsorship raised a local tempest that blew off the lecturer's cloak of anonymity. His name was Silas M. Newton. The important thing was that 50 percent of his listeners were convinced by his lecture—a considerably better figure than the 26 percent of the people questioned in a nation-wide public-opinion poll who believed that flying saucers were real.

Frank Scully then wrote his book, acknowledging the role of Newton but shielding Dr. Gee, and setting forth everything that these two eminent men had told him about the captured saucers and the little men from Venus.

The book sold some 60,000 copies at $2.75, was digested by a magazine of large circulation, reprinted and widely sold as a paper-bound 25-cent volume, and discussed in newspapers abroad. It affected, in some degree, one way or another, the thinking of millions of people.

The fact that it was a loudly bad book was beside the point. Reviewers' opinions ranged from amusedly tolerant to stinging, a few reaching indignation. With a pitchman's shallow glibness, Scully garbled scientific concepts, contradicted himself in details, and committed rudimentary errors that would shame a high-school freshman. Yet the impact of his staggering story and its basic implications were there.

Unless . . . this was a gigantic joke? Frank Scully's last previous literary prominence, aside from his weekly column of comment in the show-business *Variety*, was the authorship of a book called *Fun in Bed*, a harmless collection of anecdotes, games, and other amusing trivia for convalescents. But if *Behind the Flying Saucers* was tongue-in-cheek humor, it was in pretty bad taste. It accused military officials of our government of being a pack of liars and blackmailers. That wasn't funny.

Then . . . was it a hoax? Granting, in a chapter in his book devoted to them, that scientific hoaxes of all sorts had been pulled off in the past and present, Scully specifically stated in his earnest-sounding preface, ". . . I have never participated in the perpetration of a hoax on flying saucers." And his publisher, the long-established and reputable firm of Henry Holt & Company, saw fit to preface Scully's preface with a note of their own at the beginning of the book that said, ". . . we are as convinced as any thoughtful publisher can be that Mr. Scully has approached his subject with probity and has interpreted the facts and figures given him with care and caution." In view of the demonstrably low quality of some of Scully's facts and figures, whatever moved the editors of Henry Holt & Company to make such a statement is beyond understanding. But Webster's Dictionary defines "probity" as: "Tried virtue or integrity; moral and intellectual honesty; rectitude; uprightness." If Holt took the trouble to go on record as saying that their author approached his subject with moral and intellectual honesty, certainly there must be something to it.

The fascinating Case of the Little Men from Venus couldn't be laughed at and it couldn't be ignored. There remained the vital question, bigger than ever:

Was it true?

If it wasn't, then a great many honest people were being diddled, deceived, and deluded. If it was, then one of the greatest stories in the world was being smothered. Either way, a public service would be accomplished by finding out the truth.

A newspaper, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and a magazine, TRUE, particularly wanted to know. And that was where I, as a special reporter, came into the picture.

Aside from Scully, there were two people dealt with in the book who could definitely clear up the question, if they wanted to or could be persuaded to.

One of them was Silas M. Newton, the oil man, from whom Scully had originally heard the story.

The other was the mysterious Dr. Gee, the superscientist who confirmed it and was forced into anonymity and silence, Scully implied, by the threat of government interference with his supply of essential research materials.

The first move, however, seemed to be to talk things over with Scully himself.

At first glance, Frank Scully is a reassuring person. He is a large, friendly man of striking appearance. He is keenly aware that in profile he rather resembles a Stuart portrait of George Washington. His hair is cloud-white and his complexion ruddy. His voice, particularly when he is excited, which is often, is high and harsh and loud enough to do credit to a train caller.

He lives in a middle-aged, comfortable, stucco home that grips the hillsides on one of the older residential sections above Hollywood. There is nothing particularly remarkable about the house except perhaps the fire-red color of the front door and the confusion inside. The Scully home is outstanding as being one of the world's worst places to try to conduct a calm, careful interview.

Traffic in the Scully living room usually consists of two or more of the five Scully children, ranging from college to cradle ages, their friends, two poodles, Mrs. Scully, who is necessarily a fast-moving and harried person, Scully himself, and a woman of all work. At times even Scully's piercing voice failed to carry over the bedlam.

The Scully household, if a little difficult on the interviewer, is otherwise normal and commonplace. It seemed incongruous as a center of flying-saucer knowledge.

Sitting in his easy chair and holding the baby in one arm while he fended off poodles with the other, Scully told me very much the same story about the saucers that he set down in his book.

Although the oral version was not one whit clearer, it was considerably more vehement, particularly the portions dealing with government officials who deny the existence of the saucers.

As he talked, Scully gave me the impression that he had only the vaguest idea of what he was talking about but he believed every word he was saying.

With very little prompting, he supplemented his story with letters he had received in response to his book. Some of them denounced him; others praised him mightily; one asked with superb naivety, "I hear your story is a hoax. Please write and tell me if you are a hoax." Hundreds of them spilled over the desk in his cluttered study, ample proof of the impact of his book. Some of the letters contained pictures.

At one point Scully hauled out a pair of photographs supposedly taken by an amateur astronomer. Certainly they were taken by an amateur photographer. They were murky views of the sky bordered at the bottom by what seemed to be the roof of a small building. One of the prints showed a jagged streak across the sky as if someone fumbling around in the darkroom had spilled something on it by mistake. The other had a large blot on it.

Scully eyed the two photographs somberly. "There's a perfect control factor," he said pointing vaguely at something in the pictures. "Saucers, most likely, both of them. I get this sort of thing all the time."

Since nothing in either picture was comprehensible, it was a little hard to get what Scully was driving at. He said that the negatives could be produced for inspection. I thought privately that inspecting them hardly seemed worth the effort. Even if the negatives were unaltered, they wouldn't prove anything.

Nor, for that matter, would Scully.

Stoutly maintaining that he was pledged to secrecy, he refused to name his chief source of information, Dr. Gee. He had promised Dr. Gee not to reveal any more of the story than he had set down in his book, and by God, he wasn't going to break that promise. If the government cracked down on Gee, it wasn't going to be Scully's fault.

Nor would he produce any of the objects taken from the saucers—the little radio, the gears, or the disks of unknown metal. Scully claimed that all this material was now out of his hands.

As for his one other source of information named in the book, Silas M. Newton, Scully was very cagey about producing him, either. Scully had written that Newton was "one of the great geophysicists of the oil industry, with a record of successful exploratory operations that was surpassed by none . . . a great athlete in his college years . . . a golf champion . . . the man who rediscovered the great Rangely oil field in Colorado . . . a patron of the arts. . . ." Newton had set up an independent oil company in Denver, of which he was still president. He was a very busy man, Scully told me, and was continually traveling on important, secret, government business. His Los Angeles telephone number was unlisted. Scully would not divulge it nor would he say where Newton lived.

And thus ended my first interview with the author of *Behind the Flying Saucers*. Getting behind the saucers would have to wait; I was going to have trouble enough, it appeared, getting behind Frank Scully.

A True Book-Length Feature

THE FLYING SAUCERS AND THE MYSTERIOUS LITTLE MEN

For maybe a week of intermittent contacts, Scully and I played games, with me trying to find out where Newton was and Scully trying to keep me from it and neither of us letting on to the other what we were really doing.

While we were politely scrimmaging I tried a kind of end-run play, but it didn't work. I figured that since Newton was such a big man in the oil business I should be able to get to him by finding someone else in the oil business who knew him. I telephoned Curtis Johnson of General Petroleum; Basil Kantzer of Union Oil; Frank Morgan of Richfield and C. W. March and Harry Godde, both of Signal Oil & Gas.

None of them had ever heard of Silas Mason Newton.

What with Scully's description of the man and the trouble I was having finding him, I began to imagine Newton as a secret power, a kind of shadow man, a sort of Sir Basil Zaharoff of the oil industry.

In the face of Scully's reluctance to produce him, I might even have begun to doubt that Newton existed, if it hadn't been for one factor. That factor was Mrs. Scully.

Mrs. Scully is the kind of thoroughly likable, wholesome person of whom you have no doubts. She had joined in several of our conversations and she not only backed up everything Scully said about Newton and Dr. Gee but she talked about having discussed flying saucers with them herself. It was absolutely impossible to think that Scully could have persuaded his wife to discuss conversations with imaginary people. Mrs. Scully had definitely talked with someone. The question was, who?

Suddenly I found out. One afternoon Scully casually announced that Newton would be at Scully's home that evening after dinner. If I cared to drop over, I would be most welcome.

It was a round for Scully, and the easy way he won it made me feel like a suspicious bumpkin.

Silas Newton is short and compact in build. He looked, on the night I first met him, like a conservative businessman turned just a shade Hollywood.

His pale sharkskin slacks were not too pale, his blue suede loafers did not have 2-inch crepe soles, the hand-picking on the collar of his light sport shirt was restrained, his tweed sport coat didn't look as if it had to be curried each morning. The expensive-looking gold watch on his wrist was held there by a plain, expensive-looking leather strap.

Although he is in his sixties, Newton looks considerably younger. He has the sort of face you'd expect to find on a middle-aged elf—tanned, deep-seamed, high-browed and crackling with good humor.

It developed that, like Scully, Newton had never seen a saucer. But he retold the stories Dr. Gee had given him in a firm, convincing voice. He flung scientific terms around in a kind of barrage. Unfortunately, they were the same scientific terms Scully had used in his book, the same saucer stories, and the same little men, with nothing added. But coming from Newton himself, they sounded good.

Newton was, in general, the epitome of culture, wealth, and good breeding. He wasn't too far off what you'd expect from the pedigree Scully had given him: graduate of Baylor University and Yale, postgraduate scholar at the University of Berlin.

The scientific terms he was using so freely reminded me of something. Gingerly I brought up an error in Scully's book. In describing the preliminary examination by Dr. Gee's group of the first saucer that landed, Scully had written: "They studied the ship from a distance for . . . two days, bombing it with Geiger counters, cosmic rays, and other protective devices." In the more scientific reviews of his book, Scully had been severely taken to task for that description, and in particular the Geiger-counter bombardment which is about like saying that a doctor took a patient's temperature by bombarding him with thermometers. I mentioned the slip to Newton.

"You have to overlook things like that," he said. "Frank, here, is not a scientific man and he did that book in an awful hurry. If I could have checked the proofs with him I could have caught a lot of errors like that one that made him look pretty bad. But I was too busy, see, with the top-brass on these government projects to help Frank out."

After sparring with Newton for maybe a half hour I got down to the proposition I had in mind.

A fully authenticated announcement that space ships were landing on Earth should have a very healthy effect on humanity after the shock wore off. If nothing else, such an announcement would probably stop the Korean war in the interest of global solidarity and that alone would be worth any risk Newton and his scientists might be taking in breaking the story.

As a public service, then, would Newton give me the *whole* flying-saucer story—names, photographs and everything Scully had to leave out of his book to protect Dr. Gee?

Newton thought the proposition over soberly.

Then he gave his decision: he agreed with my idea, but he wasn't sure that the time was right for such an announcement. At the moment, he and Dr. Gee would have to sacrifice too much if they told all they knew. I received the impression there was something else involved in the story of the flying saucers that Newton couldn't even hint at.

Certainly he would take up the matter with Dr. Gee. If it sounded at all reasonable to the doctor, Newton didn't see any reason why he couldn't arrange for me to see some of the things taken from the saucers while the final plans for releasing the story were being made.

Newton said he happened to be working at the moment on an oil-storage problem for the "big-brass" near San Francisco. If he got the go-ahead from Dr. Gee, he would meet me there in a week. And he would bring along some of the gears, the disks of unknown metal and maybe even the little radio if Doctor wasn't still experimenting with it.

We met in the dignified Palm Court restaurant of the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Scott Newhall, an old friend of mine and Sunday editor of the *Chronicle*, came along to see what I had dug up so far. Newhall wasn't taking the thing very seriously and by this time I couldn't blame him. Scully and Newton had begun to affect me that way. But we had to play it straight. One good laugh and Newton and whatever he had to show would be gone. And there was still just a chance that the man actually had the greatest story of all time.

The meal cost $18.20 plus tip but it was worth every cent of it. Newton was in fine form.

He nodded to the waiters, who all seemed to know him. He conferred with Adolphe, the maitre d'hotel, about an important message he was expecting. And he talked saucers.

Gleaming silver ships from the chill reaches of the heavens smoked through the Palm Court that evening to the accompaniment of the hotel's sedate string ensemble. Bureaucrats in Washington were damned for withholding the story from the public. Dr. Gee and his astonishing accomplishments with microwave equipment in the oil fields under Newton's supervision loomed across the background of the conversation.

Newton was expansive. Smiles sprang out of the deep furrows in his tanned cheeks. He was confidential. Squint lines puckered around his pale eyes. But everything he said, though fresh to Newhall, was the same thing that I'd heard before. Not once did he divulge anything that wasn't already made public in Scully's book.

As Newton talked I noticed more and more an odd little habit. He kept tossing in the word "see" when there was no point that required emphasis. Only if you considered that he might be using it as a stalling device while he thought up the rest of his story did Newton's "see" habit make any sense.

"This saucer thing, see. It would keep me going twenty-four hours a day if I'd let it. I'm just swamped. I've got my own business to attend to, and this goddamned high-brass, see, they're after me all the time on these contracts for the military."

It was a strange habit for a man so attuned to the genteel splendor of the Palace Hotel.

I began to notice that Newton had another strange habit for a man of his background. At this stag dinner, the more he talked, the more he swore. By the time he really got his gauge up he sounded like a mule skinner on Saturday night. It wasn't quite in keeping with what I had always expected of an old Yale man, and Newton had made quite a point of his degree from Yale. I decided that either I didn't know anything about Yale men or Newton's manner of speaking had simply been colored by his years in the oil fields—Colorado's huge Rangely,

which Newton modestly noted he had rediscovered after it had been abandoned by the major oil companies; the rugged wastelands of Wyoming; the Mojave where his crews were even now surveying hidden deposits of natural gas.

In the middle of a discussion of magnetics, Newton glanced over his shoulder furtively. Then he suddenly leaned over the table and fished a smudged and wrinkled handkerchief out of his coat pocket. Its corners were tied together and it bulged promisingly.

Newton slowly undid the knots, guarding the handkerchief with his hands and glancing around the room to be sure no one was watching.

For the first time in the evening he stopped talking, methodically working on the knots.

When he finished with them he held the corners of the handkerchief together and looked at us.

"You ever see anything like this?" he asked quietly and dumped the contents of the handkerchief on the table. The presentation couldn't have been more impressively nonchalant.

Four metal objects lay on the smooth tablecloth. Without a word from Newton they seemed to be touched with star dust.

I felt my stomach give a lurch and stop working on the roast beef I had just eaten.

Two of the objects were gears, fine-toothed and about the size of pocket watches. The other two were disks, dull-finished and about the size of a nickel. Here at last were the disks of unknown metal.

Newton scooped up his treasures quickly, as if he were afraid they might suddenly disappear, and put them back into the handkerchief. Then, one by one, he brought them out for us to examine closely.

The two disks were identical. There were no marks on them except tiny surface nicks and scratches. They felt incredibly light. The metal had a powdery-looking finish that did not come off with rubbing.

Newhall and I looked at each other. Neither of us felt much like laughing now.

The gears were not alike. One had a tiny gear fitted into the center of it. The other was solid and on a shaft. Newton held it and tapped it with his knife. A clear, faint, high-pitched tone blended with the music of the string ensemble. Surprisingly enough, holding the gear in your hand didn't have any dampening effect on the ringing note.

"It's magnetized," Newton explained. Just by way of experiment I touched the gear to the steel blade of my knife. There didn't seem to be any magnetic attraction between the two pieces of metal. Newton couldn't explain that, but he said Dr. Gee had once explained it to him.

Both of the gears were blotched and stained.

"Acid," said Newton. "We've subjected them, see, to 150 tests in our laboratories. Listen to that note." He tapped the gear again. "That's the note 'A' on the piano."

One of the gears was unmarked except for the stains. The other had a small fat arrow inscribed on it in outline. The arrow pointed toward a figure that looked very much like an ordinary 9. Newton had no explanation for these inscriptions.

He did, however, have some other things that might be interesting. They were in his room, he said confidentially, right upstairs.

Newton's room, although it was one of the Palace Hotel's smaller accommodations, looked exactly the way you might expect the hotel room of a busy, wealthy oil executive to look.

A saddle-leather suitcase lay open on the luggage rack. Across it lay a folded geological map—expensive, authentic.

An honest-looking old-fashioned valise slouched in one corner of the room, its baggy leather sides scuffed and scarred; a veteran, no doubt, of countless trips into the rugged, dusty oil lands.

Newton began talking immediately. His story, tidied up for family consumption, centered around Dr. Gee and his colleagues whose achievements apparently kept Newton in a perpetual state of wonder.

"Doctor is down there right now in our laboratories, see, along the south side of the airfield there at Phoenix. You know the place. Those buildings that used to be the big government top-secret laboratories. Our people are in there now.

"Funny thing. I was down there only a couple of weeks ago going over some problems, see, and I run across a great big thick goddamn pile of blue prints.

"I said to Doctor, I said, 'What in the hell is all this stuff?' And he said, see, 'Why, those are the detailed prints on the air-flow system for the B-36.'

"He'd been working on all that top government stuff for the big-brass and I never knew a thing about it.

"These scientific fellows, see. You can't tell what they're going to turn up with next. Here he has these absolutely top-secret plans laying right there on top of the desk."

There were other top-secret items Newton's men had developed while working on his petroleum-surveying equipment.

Newhall was sitting on the bed, trying to look nonchalant. I was sitting on the little desk chair and Newton was between us sitting on the edge of a big easy chair. Things were once more getting to the point where I didn't dare look at Newhall except out of the corner of my eye. As far as I could see, Newhall was making a detailed study of one of his shoes. Newton was talking, fast and steady, as if he'd just found out they were going to slap on a speech tax in the next ten minutes.

Doctor, it seems, had developed a magnetic fog, rain, and darkness-dispelling screen which, fitted to the windshield of an airplane, literally turned night into day and enabled a pilot to see through the sloppiest kind of weather.

Newton dropped his voice to a confidential whisper. "One of the biggest companies in the country, see. They're testing this thing right now. Absolutely top-secret. You'd know the name of the company in a minute if I mentioned it." He peered around the room to make sure no uninvited ears were listening. "You know Norden, the bombsight people? See. Well, they're testing this thing right now."

Newton hauled out a slim, clear rod.

"Looks exactly like Lucite, doesn't it? Well, it isn't. Better than Lucite. Flexible, shatterproof, and it positively will not burn.

"Doctor, see, made this revolutionary plastic stuff for the military. Made it right out of Perelite, a volcanic ash. Cheapest material in the world. There's whole hills of it. The military is using this stuff for cockpit canopies on planes because it won't burn."

And then there was the magnetic disintegrator.

Of course the big-brass was working on it. But there were problems. The disintegrator, briefly mentioned in Scully's book, was so all-destroying that split-second control of it was a vital factor.

It had taken better than a year, Newton said, just to work out the mathematics necessary to make certain the disintegrator would only operate in a one ten-thousandth-of-a-second flash.

Even so, in that brief moment, the disintegrating beams had shot out twenty miles and spread a swath of total destruction on the desert proving grounds two miles wide.

The big-brass planned to set a chain of these disintegrators around the United States and point them skyward to form an impenetrable screen of destruction through which no enemy planes could pass.

But there was a hitch in the plan. The beams of the magnetic disintegrator, if left on, would reach out and destroy the universe.

And then there was the big flying saucer Newton's men thought they had located, crashed in a swamp outside of Memphis.

"The captain, see, I can't tell you his name, was flying along one night testing this magnetic windshield screen for Norden when he saw this thing circling. It went right down into the swamp.

"My people got a fix on it and as soon as the rainy season ends down there we're going in and take a look at it. I can't tell you any more about it except, of course, it's probably one of the cigar-shaped saucers and probably a thousand feet long."

Newton fished into an expensive-looking, hand-stitched brief case and slid out a bundle of 8x10 pictures. He held them face down in his lap while he reminisced about the days in the oil fields, the beginnings of the Newton Oil Company in Denver, and the great days of rediscovering the Rangely oil fields after they had been abandoned by all the major oil companies as worthless.

The pictures were held in his lap, still face down. I knew perfectly well that he was giving them the old build-up treatment, but still it was working. It got so bad that I had a hard

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time keeping myself from reaching over and grabbing them away from him.

Finally he held one of them up, its back to Newhall and me, and looked at it for a long moment. Then he turned it around slowly. It was a fuzzy shot of some desert real estate.

"You see that?" said Newton, gravely. "That's where the first saucer landed."

He turned over two or three more prints of the same sort of thing.

"These will be very historical photographs someday," he said. "It's too bad I am not allowed to let you look at them closely."

Then he started to slide them back into his brief case. As he did, he paused and looked at us slyly. Then he slipped one picture up from behind the others and immediately slid it back again. From what I could see in that instant, it looked like a picture of a large beach umbrella on its side.

"You didn't see anything, did you?" Newton asked, winking. He had never been more correct, but the implication was that he had just permitted a glimpse of a photograph of a flying saucer.

Newton grew reflective. There just might be, he thought, the barest chance that he could persuade Doctor and his people to reveal the whole story. Perhaps, after all, it might be advisable, particularly if the thing that crashed in the swamp turned out to be a cigar-shaped saucer.

"You know," Newton mused dreamily, "a lot of people would pay a dollar to see a thing like that."

Then, suddenly, Newton announced that he had to whisk off to Washington for a conference with the big-brass.

Newhall and I stood up. "It's been a very interesting evening, Mr. Newton," Newhall said, his voice straining for self-control. "You'll be hearing from Cahn here. We'll talk the whole thing over and see what we can work out with you."

There were the usual polite remarks, with Newhall and me looking down at the carpet, and then we were out in the hall.

Newhall and I managed to hold it until we got down the corridor and in front of the elevator. There was no longer any question about it—the time had come to laugh, and we let go. When we could talk again, we tried to figure out what Newton was up to. It was a safe bet that he wasn't as closely in touch with the cosmos as Frank Scully would have had his readers believe. But he was up to something. Was the whole thing, Scully's book and all, a titanic piece of ballyhoo aimed at the day when the big cigar-shaped saucer opened for business on the midway at Playland-at-the-Beach?

I decided the next move was to go to Denver, Newton's old stamping ground, look over the Newton Oil Company, and follow up a few other leads from Scully's book.

In building up Silas Newton as an authority on flying saucers, Frank Scully provided a respectable academic setting by devoting the whole first chapter of his book to a description of the lecture that was given at the University of Denver on March 8, 1950. The chapter heading is "The Mystery of the University of Denver," the mystery being that the man who gave the lecture was known only as "Scientist X" until Thor Seversen, covering the event for the *Denver Post*, identified him, several days after the talk, as Newton. My first move in Denver was to hunt up Seversen.

Thor Seversen looks just the way he should to go with a name like that; big, well set-up, blond. He is not only a fine reporter, but he is a very understanding gent. It was snowing when I pulled into Denver. I was wearing a light gabardine suit. Seversen, taking pity on a chattering chump from California, suggested we might spend some time profitably in the nice, warm office of the *Post* going over the clips of the stories about the University of Denver lecture. It was a good idea. It not only kept me from shivering myself apart at the seams, but it proved that Frank Scully wasn't very much interested in doing a good reporting job in *Behind the Flying Saucers*.

Scully's book, published six months after the Denver lecture, described the event as "probably the most sensational lecture about this earth or any other planet since Galileo . . . faculty members left the room with their heads spinning."

On March 9, the day after the lecture, the *Denver Post* carried an interview with Francis Broman, the University of Denver instructor who arranged for "Scientist X" to address his basic-science class. Questioned about the scientific value of the lecture, Broman commented, "Absolute zero." Professor Albert Recht of the university's science division noted, "It was a good yarn . . . though he gave no documentation."

If he had wanted to, Scully had plenty of time to check those clippings before his book went to press. Obviously he wasn't interested. As a matter of fact he embarked on a shifty side step to avoid the columns of the Denver papers that gave the lecture a bad press and still provide himself with friendly newspaper coverage of the event. To hope he could get away with such a stunt indicates Scully's incredible gall.

In the second chapter of his book, also devoted to the lecture, Scully wrote:

"It was not the Denver papers that gave the best report of what Scientist X said. . . . The . . . prize for the best reporting would go to the *Summerside Journal*, a modest-sized publication quartered on Prince Edward Island, Canada . . . at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River."

Undisturbed by the unlikely prospect of a small Canadian paper published only three times a week having a correspondent as far away as Denver, Scully proceeds:

"This newspaper obviously got its story from a Denver correspondent, but it recapitulated what the speaker said so well that it's better than a transcript. . . ."

Scully then quotes the *Summerside Journal* story. To do this he must have had a copy or clipping of the paper before him. Therefore he could not have missed seeing the credit line at the top of the story.

The *Summerside Journal* story is credited, "Denver, Colo., *Post*." The story is Thor Seversen's *Denver Post* story, word for word. It was Seversen's first story of the lecture done before anyone knew who the lecturer was and before Seversen was sure the whole thing was a farce. As a consequence, it is a straight reporting job merely repeating what the speaker said. It suited Scully's needs admirably. On the few occasions that it didn't, Scully merely rewrote it.

By removing Seversen's one fairly friendly story from the otherwise unfriendly columns of the *Denver Post*, and crediting it elsewhere, Scully had his necessary newspaper coverage of the lecture.

By the time Seversen and I had finished digging around in the *Denver Post* morgue, it had stopped snowing, the sun had come out and it was fairly pleasant. We thought it would be a good idea to have a talk with Instructor Broman and see if he had revised his opinions of "Scientist X" and his flying-saucer lecture.

Francis Broman is a slight, dark-complexioned man of agreeable manner. His pleasantries with us had a kind of nervous quality to them which, considering the corner into which the "Scientist X" lecture had wedged him, is understandable enough.

While working at the university as an instructor, Broman was also studying for his doctorate there. To do a bang-up job as an instructor, Broman had, on his own hook, invited "Scientist X" to give the flying-saucer talk.

When the event got out of hand in the public prints and the university regents found the name of their school firmly lashed up with a lecturer who insisted little men from Venus were dropping like flies on the Earth, an icy academic breeze began blowing in Broman's direction. For awhile, Broman could see his diploma wafting away in the williwaw.

Having weathered that storm, Broman came to the interview with us prepared to make it very clear that Newton or "Scientist X" and his Venusians were about as welcome at the university as a case of pyorrhea at a kissing game.

Broman showed us a copy of the introductory statement he had made to his class before the lecture began. In it he had pointed out that the whole purpose of the lecture was to give his class an exercise in evaluating material presented by a speaker. Broman had even given his students a summary of the scientific method of evaluation they had been studying and asked them to see if the saucer lecture stood up under it.

Naturally, in view of the spectacular nature of the talk, a little thing like Broman's introduction was overlooked in the follow-

ing news stories, and certainly there was no mention of it in Scully's book. There were, however, a couple of carefully thought-out devices used by Scully to make the lecture sound like a weighty scholastic event.

One of them was Scully's sentence, "On that day at 12:30 p. m., 350 students of the University of Denver skipped lunch to hear a confidential scientific discourse. . . ."

I had been impressed when I read it. It takes a pretty good event to get a bunch of healthy students to skip lunch in order to take it in. I questioned Broman about it and asked if maybe the lecture wasn't given a much bigger build-up than he was letting on. Instead of answering, he shoved over the typed copy of his introduction to the lecture and, with a smile, held his finger on the second sentence. It read, "You folks are guests and members of the basic-science class that meets at 12:40 each day."

"Nobody missed any lunch that day or any other day as far as I know," said Broman. "It was a regular class held at the regular time."

Scully's other builder-upper also turned out to be an invention of somebody's soaring imagination.

As proof that the saucer lecture was so important that the University of Denver wanted to save any possible memento for posterity, Scully said on page 26 of his book, concerning the blackboard diagrams:

"After his lecture had caused such a stir, the chalked designs were preserved in lacquer. . . ."

Broman's comment: "The lecturer's drawings were not lacquered over. It would have been ridiculous to preserve them. They were just a couple of circles labeled 'Earth' and 'Venus,' a crude sketch of what the saucers were supposed to have looked like, and a diagram showing how combinations of digits can be added up to total nine which was supposed to illustrate something to do with the measurements of the saucers."

After talking with Broman I was more convinced than ever that Frank Scully's little men were about as miserable a hoax as the two-headed baby in a 10-cent side show. Proving it and finding out what was behind them, however, was something else again.

The next Denver lead on my list was George T. Koehler, the advertising salesman for Denver radio station KMYR who had escorted Newton to the lecture. Koehler is a fleshy individual, a breezy, back-slapping sort who looks younger than the 41 years he claims. Scully described him as "an old professional football player with the Chicago Bears." In Denver, Koehler admitted this statement was correct.

On the strength of Scully's apparent indifference to reporting the truth I sent the following wire to Ralph Brizzolara, manager of the Chicago Bears:

CAN YOU ADVISE COLLECT WHETHER GEORGE KOEHLER WAS EVER ON BEARS' ROSTER IF SO WHEN.

Mr. Brizzolara replied: DO NOT HAVE RECORD OF GEORGE KOEHLER PLAYING WITH BEARS. (signed) CHICAGO BEARS FOOTBALL CLUB.

From that point on I wasn't counting heavily on anything Koehler offered.

He was correct, however, in claiming that he was pretty close to Newton, for he and his wife, who was once Newton's nurse, live in a house that turned out to be rented by Newton and is filled with Newton's golfing trophies and other memorabilia, and he drives a Cadillac that is registered in the name of Newton Oil Company.

Koehler played a tape recording of the University of Denver lecture which was interesting only because it didn't include Broman's telltale introduction. Koehler, not knowing I had spoken to Broman, glossed over the importance of the missing introduction, although he never could satisfactorily explain why it wasn't on the tape. As far as the talk itself went, it was pretty much the same thing I had heard in the Palace Hotel from the lips of the master himself.

Koehler had some pretty interesting yarns to spin about the great Dr. Gee. In the middle of one of them he fished out a brown rod about a quarter of an inch in diameter and perhaps ten inches long. This, he claimed, was some of Doctor's Perelite, made up as an arrow shaft for Howard Hill, the noted archer.

"Hill used one of Doctor's arrows," Koehler remarked, "to kill an elephant on his last trip to Africa. That will give you an idea of how tough this stuff is."

That was an easy one to check.

I happened to know that Hill was engaged in selling a motion picture of the trip. Whenever a deal like that is in the making, you can bet your bottom dollar there'll be a publicity man eager to tell you anything you want to know and a lot of things you don't.

It didn't take long to get Mr. Hill's man on the phone. According to him the only arrows used on the Hill expedition were designed by Hill himself and made of tubular steel and Duralumin. Certainly, if Hill had used some revolutionary new material for arrow shafts his publicity man would have been beating the drum about it. But he wasn't. In fact, he'd never even heard of Perelite.

Since Koehler was apparently no more committed to telling the truth than Newton or Scully and wasn't half as entertaining, there didn't seem to be any advantage in investing any more time in him. Also, the more time I spent with Koehler the more chance there was of flushing my birds prematurely. So far I had been playing it straight, going right along with all the tall tales the boys had to offer. Because in the back of my mind I was working up a little plan.

First, I wanted to meet Dr. Gee—that is, if such a man existed. Second, I wanted to get my hands on one of those disks of unknown metal again and once I did I wasn't planning to let go of it until I got it into a good commercial laboratory for a chemical analysis. With that in mind it would have been absolutely fatal if Newton had any idea that I wasn't 100 percent sold on his story.

I thanked Koehler for all the inside dope he had given me and reserved my plane seat back to San Francisco. But before I left

"Let's ask, anyway—just in case."

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Denver I checked out two more leads that turned up in Scully's book and Newton's conversation.

I looked up the Newton Oil Company in the phone book, half expecting that it wouldn't be there at all. But it was. And the offices listed actually existed. They didn't however, exactly jibe with the picture of roaring activity conjured up by Scully when he wrote, "Silas Mason Newton, president of the Newton Oil Company . . . a man who never made more than $25,000,000 nor lost more than $20,000,000. . . ."

As far as I could see, the whole Newton Oil Company consisted of two offices connected by a little waiting room. When I dropped in saying that I was a friend of Mr. Newton's and just thought I'd look him up, the only activity in the place was a mild conversation going on between a man who introduced himself as the secretary of the company and the receptionist. For an organization that had, as both Scully and Newton claimed, rediscovered the mighty Rangely oil field, the operation seemed a little puny. My next move was to check on the Rangely story.

Richard D. White, exploration superintendent for the California Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of California, gave me a complete fill-in on Rangely. Mr. White is in a good position to know what he is talking about, for the California Company controls a vast majority of the leases at Rangely.

The offices of the California Company were the real thing. You could have lost the whole Newton Oil Company in the reception room.

I got out a copy of Scully's book and showed White this sentence that appears on page 33: "He (Newton) hunted for oil with instruments which had cost a fortune and were a closely guarded secret. With them he had rediscovered the Rangely oil field years after the major oil companies had written it off as a failure."

White grinned and shook his head. "Sure, I remember old Newton," he said. "He used to come out to Rangely with some kind of doodlebug outfit—one of those black boxes with a lot of dials on it nobody ever gets to look inside of. He tried to tell everybody we were way off on the geology. He even picked up some leases down where his doodlebug said the oil was supposed to be and did some drilling. Turned out he was the one that was way off on the geology. He used to bring a lot of people out here in those big cars of his. But as far as rediscovering Rangely, that's a lot of baloney.

"Here's the story on Rangely. Standard of California rediscovered the field in 1902 but for a long time there wasn't much activity out there. The reason for that's simple. Crude oil was selling for ten cents a barrel. Rangely was a long way from the refineries; and the roads, if you could call them that, were terrible.

"When World War II came along there was a big demand for oil and the price shot up to the point where it was worth while taking it out. The government came along with some help on the road situation and a private pipe line went in. Then Rangely really opened up. That's all there was to the rediscovering of Rangely."

There wasn't any doubt in my mind about whom to believe on the Rangely story. The past performance of the Newton-Scully team didn't leave me any choice.

As I was leaving White's office he offered a suggestion. "If you really want to get an idea of how Newton operates, get hold of some back issues of a magazine called the *Petroleum Review*. You'll find some articles in there by Newton himself that will give you a pretty good line on him."

Just before I got on the plane, I called Thor Severson at the *Denver Post* and asked him if he'd try to find the articles White mentioned. Then I headed back for San Francisco.

All the way back I tried to think of a way to get possession of one of those disks of unknown metal without Newton knowing I had it. Of course I could have just grabbed one and stuck it in my pocket, but with all the trouble Newton and Scully had gone to in building the story up, it was a dead cinch that they wouldn't stand hitched for a move like that. And I didn't see any point in winding up in a fist fight or a lawsuit or both if I could help it.

By the time I got back to San Francisco I thought I had a pretty good plan for getting one of the disks. I hadn't figured out yet how I was going to smoke out Dr. Gee, but I decided to let that wait until I got to it.

Laying hold of one of Newton's specimens of unknown metal turned out to be about as easy as getting a passkey to Fort Knox, but I didn't know it when I started.

My first move was to hunt up a good reliable laboratory that would cooperate on such a project. Stanford Research Institute, in Menlo Park, California, is one of the best commercial labs in the area and perhaps in the country. Dr. J. E. Hobson, director of the institute, agreed to go along with me. Dr. Hobson not only thought the whole project was pretty funny, but he also saw the value of knocking over what certainly was shaping up as a full-scale national scientific hoax. All I needed to do now was get one of the disks and SRI would do the rest.

My first move was flat-footedly to ask Newton if he'd permit an analysis of a disk. He laughed it off. His stand was that his own laboratories had already submitted the disks to 150 tests, discovered that they would withstand 10,000 degrees of heat, presumably Fahrenheit, although he didn't quite remember, and he didn't see any point in further testing. As far as Newton was concerned the stuff was unknown to Earth and what was the use of doing any more tests when you didn't know what you were testing for? It was a tricky piece of logic, but I had to go along with it for fear of tipping my hand.

My next suggestion, that no one would really believe his story unless he submitted the disks to an impartial laboratory, almost ended in disaster.

Newton puckered up his eyes and began spewing at me. "You've been chasing me down here for two months. I'm a busy man. I haven't got a goddamned bit of time to spend on this thing. Now I've been courteous as hell to you, see. And I'm just not interested in bothering with the damn thing any longer. Now how does that suit you?"

Newton carried on along those lines for quite awhile. What he was getting at was that apparently plenty of people had believed him without his having to submit anything to anybody; witness the number of copies Scully's book had sold. And what had he, Newton, got out of it? Nothing. Nothing but abuse and persecution. What had started out as a favor on Newton's part to Scully had boomeranged and Newton was getting tired of it. Looking at him as he stood there bristling, he was the picture of the injured philanthropist.

Then, almost without my realizing it, Newton's manner began to change and the point of the whole floor show swung into focus.

"I've talked with my people," Newton was saying in a calm, matter-of-fact voice, "and their statement to me was, see, that Scully made twenty-five or thirty thousand out of his book on what little information we've furnished him. They said to me, 'Now if we lay all this stuff on the line, it's going to take a lot of time and we want to know what there is in it for us.'"

Commerce had entered the picture.

The only thing to do was to declare open season on Newton's disks and start working on the plan I had figured out.

What I had in mind was to make a copy of Newton's disks and then, if I could get him to haul out the originals again, switch mine for one of his.

I had been counting on getting at least another look at the disks before creating the copy, but the way Newton was acting I realized I'd be lucky if I could get him to produce them even once more so I could switch on him. That meant I had to make the copies from memory. It had been some time since I had seen the disks and then, even though I'd handled them, the light hadn't been good for the sort of thing I had in mind.

I got hold of Newhall, the only other person who had been along when Newton produced his trophies, and we compared notes. We were agreed the disks were about the size of a nickel, plain-surfaced and silver-colored.

The weight was the only tricky problem. A piece of aluminum that looked about the right size didn't seem to weigh enough. Magnesium felt too light. Monel metal felt too heavy. Steel, although it felt a little too slippery, seemed to be the best bet for this job.

Among his other talents, Newhall is a pretty fair machinist.

He has a well-equipped shop in his garage and one afternoon we set up to do a little counterfeiting.

When we got through we had an assortment of steel disks, some a little bigger than a nickel, some a little smaller. Our idea was that by making the fakes in slightly varying sizes we would surely have one that was a good-enough match. For some reason or other we turned out one fake disk made of monel metal. Monel metal is heavier than steel to begin with and we made our monel disk about twice as thick as the ones made of steel. It was ridiculously heavy by comparison, but we added it to our collection anyway.

For the next few days I carried all the fakes around in my pockets to "age" them. The process worked pretty well. The only trouble was I jingled.

The problem now was to get Newton to produce his disks again so I could switch on him. But Newton wouldn't produce.

In a series of attempts to get Newton to haul out his disks, meetings with a whole new, tempting cast of characters were suggested to him: people of influence who could guarantee him protection in case "the military" turned against him and Dr. Gee; a man who would happily part with a sizable chunk of money for just a glimpse of the mysterious disks from Venus; kindred souls with reports of saucer sightings who begged for a peek at Newton's treasures. Still Newton wouldn't bite.

Finally another dinner was set up in the Palm Court, the place Newton had first produced the disks. This time Hal McIntyre, a professional magician who now uses his magic act to help him fit hearing aids to children, came along in the role of a friend who had a saucer sighting to report. Hal was loaded with the fake disks. Just before Newton appeared, I tried to give Hal a last minute fill-in on which one of the fakes I thought would be the best match for a Newton disk. Hal, who had been kept informed of the story, was about as exasperated as I was. He said, "I don't care what Newton's disks look like. Even if he pulls out a square one I'm going to switch on him."

But it was no go. Newton just kept playing his role of a science-fiction Scheherazade regaling us with more stories about Dr. Gee and his fabulous laboratories. Every time we worked around to the subject of the disks, Newton had an excuse for not producing them.

After about a week of trying I began to think the disks had sailed back to Venus on their own and my sanity was about to follow.

Then Newton's business with the "big-brass" took him to Washington. While he was away I decided to use the time to check up further on Newton's background and to start scouting out leads to Dr. Gee.

From Scully's book I knew that Newton had lived in New York City—in the winter of 1929–30, he had housed distinguished visitors in "his Park Avenue residence." I was to find that shortly after that time, Newton was embroiled in some activity in New York which Scully either knew nothing about or didn't bother to mention.

It's not in the glamorous Dick Tracy detective tradition to mole through old newspaper files, but sometimes it pays off. The *New York Times* publishes an index that amply justifies its famous slogan, "All the news that's fit to print." I discovered in the public library that in 1931 the *Times* reported that Silas M. Newton, "reputed wealthy oil man and golfer," had been arrested by New York police, charged with grand larceny on the complaint of an elderly retired New Jersey real-estate dealer who claimed that Newton had rigged a $25,000 sale to him of worthless stock in a gas and utilities company. Newton denied any fraud, claimed it was all a misunderstanding, and was released in $2,500 bail. The next day the *Times* noted that New York State authorities expected to arrange Newton's extradition to New Jersey within a week. Evidently Newton beat the rap, for no further news of the case appeared, and from checking records I learned that some five years later, in September 1936, his bail was discharged.

Another item I came across, which appeared this time not in the *New York Times* but, oddly enough, in the files of the *San Francisco Chronicle* a continent-width away, conveyed news from New York on January 15, 1932, that a Brooklyn man had asked the New York State Bureau of Securities for a Supreme Court examination order to determine if Newton was engaged in fraudulent stock practices. The man felt he had been bilked by Newton in the amount of $28,000. No outcome was recorded in the public prints, so presumably nothing came of it.

Then there were two up-state New York incidents. In September 1934, at Oneida, Newton got involved with the state police in a matter concerning false stock statements. In July 1935, at Elmira, he was arrested on a judge's bench warrant, charged with two violations of the law relating to false statements or advertisements on securities, and was released in $2,500 bail; a year and a half later the indictments were dismissed and the case closed.

It was plain that in his financial dealings, Newton had a tendency to get into trouble, and a knack for getting out of it.

I got to wondering if, what with his various oil enterprises, Newton might not have tried to sell a little stock in California. The rules on such matters are very strict in California, so strict that the office of the Corporation Commissioner keeps very careful records to insure that those rules are enforced. I found that the Commissioner's office was not unaware of Silas Newton, though nothing was pending against him.

Uncovering such a background for Scully's "Scientist X," the University of Denver lecturer, the great geophysicist of the oil industry, obviously called for some intensive digging into the man's current activities.

What came up unexpectedly in the first spadeful was a clear clue at last to Dr. Gee.

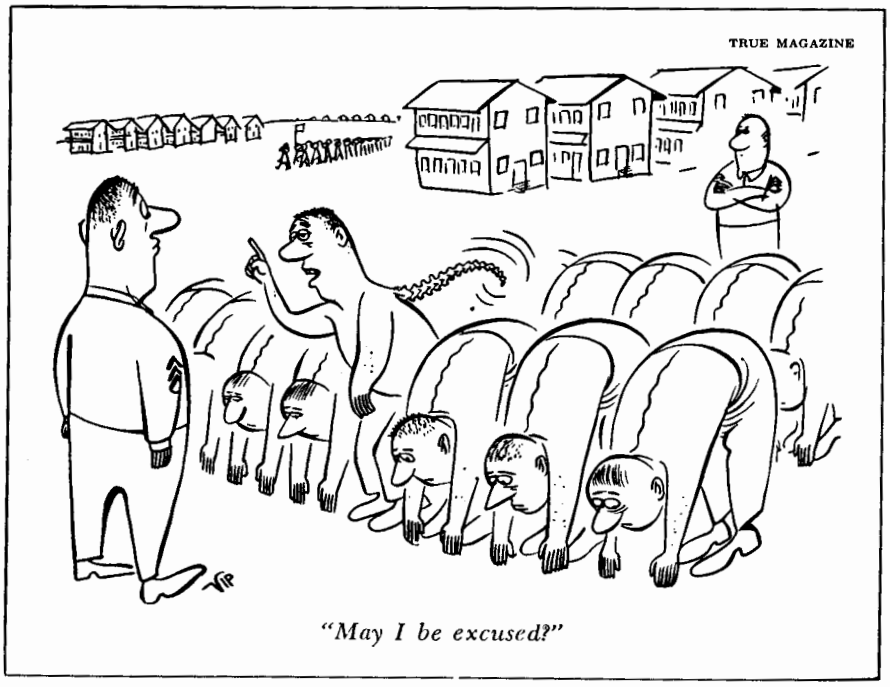
I won't go into the method of delving here. Let's say simply that the telephone is a great invention, and Newton is a great telephoner. A checkup revealed that he phoned often to Phoenix, Arizona. He spoke there with a Leo GeBauer.

Phoenix was the locale of Dr. Gee, according to Scully's book and to the statements of Newton himself. The pseudonym "Gee" and the name "GeBauer" certainly seemed to be kin.

Furthermore, the place and name were not the only significant similarities. Though he didn't appear, from a distance, to be a Newton-Scully grade of superscientist, GeBauer did have some technical knowledge of electronics. He was proprietor of the Western Radio & Engineering Company, a radio and television parts supply house.

It wouldn't do to call up GeBauer and ask him bluntly if he was Dr. Gee. My next step was laid out for me—to go to Phoenix and size up GeBauer in person.

I was set to take off when Newton turned up in San Francisco again. Apparently he was ready to talk business about the disks.



"May I be excused?"

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He started off by announcing over the telephone, "Now my people are not trying to sell anything. They haven't got anything to sell. But you certainly, see, should be in a position to know how far you want to go to get to the bottom of this deal."

If a cash offer was what was required to make Newton produce his disks again, there was only one thing to do.

The trouble was that making Newton an offer was kind of like trailing your foot in the water to lure a shark within gaffing distance. The stakes had to be high to make any sense and Newton could be counted on to take care of himself in a fast shuffle.

A very solemn conference was set up and Newton was authorized to tell "his people" that $10,000 would be put in escrow as soon as some reasonable proof of the story's authenticity was produced. An additional $25,000 was to be turned over to Newton prior to publication.

Newton was in great form that day. He was wearing a very pale gray flannel suit and somewhere in his travels he had picked up a deep tan. The way he handled himself I got to feeling that $35,000 was really a pretty chintzy offer.

There was the usual amount of backing and filling. Newton mulled the proposition over and gravely considered what his people would think. Occasionally he digressed long enough to spin some colorful bit of saucerian information, but by and large he was strictly the business man negotiating. It was a shock, then, when he rummaged around in a coat pocket, hauled out the grimy handkerchief, spread the gears and disks on the desk and said, "I suppose you wanted to see these again."

It was a bad moment. One look at Newton's disks and it was a cinch that the substitutes were at best pretty unreasonable facsimilies. But it could have been a lot worse—I could have been caught diskless. Luckily, I did have the fake disks with me, bad as they were. I was still carrying them around, aging them in my pockets.

The most obvious thing wrong with my fakes was that they were much too thin—all but the one made of monel metal. It was about halfway thick enough, but if it had seemed too heavy when it was made up, now, by secretly sorting it out and hefting it in my pocket, it seemed hopeless.

While I was wondering what to do, Newton was talking about a saucer that had been sighted over Africa. As swept away as he was by his new story he never once lost sight of the disks, handing over first one and then the other and placing them on his open handkerchief as they were returned.

I didn't dare stall any longer. Not only was there the chance that any minute Newton would wrap up the disks and tuck them away, but I was beginning to get the shakes.

I palmed the monel fake by gripping it with the fourth finger between the palm and second joint, and tried to remember what my friend McIntyre, the magician, had told me.

"Let me see one of those disks again, Mr. Newton," I said. I guess I'm not cut out for this sort of thing because my voice sounded like I was going to be sick and when I took my hands from my pocket I could see the skin creases shine where the sweat was forming.

I took Newton's disk between my thumb and forefinger, held it up to look at it, and then let it drop into my cupped hand. I gave a kind of feeble cough with the idea that if it clinked against the fake, the sound would be covered. There wasn't any clink.

I went through the motions of hefting the disk in my hand although actually I was holding the two of them tightly palmed to keep them from getting mixed up. Big, single drops of icy sweat were slithering down my sides.

I just sat there for a second or two hefting away and trying to look as if I were pondering some deep interplanetary problem. Then, looking Newton right in the eye as McIntyre had told me, I let the monel fake slide into my other hand and passed it back to him. Keeping my eyes from flicking down at that fake disk as I handed it over was the hardest thing I've ever done.

Newton took it, plunked it down on the handkerchief without even glancing at it, and went right on with his story. All I had to do now was get his disk back into my pocket without his noticing the move. McIntyre had warned me not to do it too soon and above all, not to look at my hand while I put it into my pocket. I didn't, but it was a struggle. Then I tried to sit there and listen to Newton with that disk of his burning a hole right through the side of my suit.

As hard as I tried not to sneak a look at the fake sitting there in the handkerchief alongside of Newton's disk, I couldn't stop it. When I saw the two of them together I almost passed out. The fake was so bad it stuck out like an Eskimo at a Boston social tea party.

Newton never noticed it. When he was through with his African saucer story he wrapped up the disks and gears, stuck them in his pocket and announced that he would take up the offer with Doctor. It might take a little time, Newton warned. The last Newton had heard, the doctor had disappeared into the scientific wilds of Pasadena so thoroughly that even his wife couldn't find him. But Newton would get in touch with me.

Five minutes after he was gone, I was on my way to the Stanford Research Institute with the disk of unknown metal.

Dr. Hobson and his men gave the disk the full treatment. They clipped off a tiny piece and checked its melting point. They did a simple gravimetric analysis. They mounted it in plastic, polished a portion of it to a mirror finish and examined its structure microscopically. They sent another piece of the disk over to Stanford University for a spectrochemical analysis.

It seemed a shame to go to all that trouble. The disk wasn't made of anything that a 12-year-old with a $4 Chem-Craft outfit couldn't have analyzed in twenty minutes.

Newton's precious unknown metal that Dr. Gee had supposedly taken from a crashed flying saucer, the same that had refused to melt in Dr. Gee's laboratory at 10,000 degrees, melted quite nicely at Stanford Research Institute at just 657 degrees, Fahrenheit.

It was plain old aluminum, 99.5 percent pure, a quality commercially described as grade 2S and used in the manufacture of nothing more cosmic than pots and pans.

With that piece of intelligence in hand, I gathered up my notes and headed for Hollywood and Frank Scully. The problem now was to find out whether Scully had known about this state of affairs or, if he had simply been gulled by Newton and Dr. Gee, whether he would be man enough to admit it and help me run down the rest of the story.

Just to be on the safe side, though, I decided to see if I couldn't first get him to identify Dr. Gee as GeBauer. It would be something of a bluff, but, pending my trip to Phoenix, I was pretty sure I had the right man.

The Scully living room hadn't changed. It was still the same cheery bedlam of dogs and children with Scully holding forth as usual on a saucer case flashed to him by an ardent fan who had read his book.

In the relative calm of Scully's cluttered workroom I brought out the laboratory reports on the disk—the film from the spectrochemical analysis, the terse report on the gravimetric, the bleak notes on the microscopic examination.

When Scully got through with them he looked as a man might who had been riding in a flying saucer when the center fell out. After awhile he called in his wife. For Mrs. Scully's benefit the whole file on Newton was hauled out.

When she was through, Mrs. Scully just sat there saying over and over, "How can it possibly be true?" The propitious moment seemed to be at hand to hazard the matter of Dr. Gee.

The first move was to see if Scully still contended, as he had in his book, that he had actually met Dr. Gee. Scully not only said that he had, but that considering the high scientific tone of Dr. Gee's conversation it didn't seem possible that he could be anything but what Newton claimed.

I made Scully a proposition. If he would voluntarily admit who Dr. Gee was, I offered to let him join forces with me publicly in the final stages of smoking out Newton's real motives in perpetrating a national hoax.

Scully refused. He had given his word, he said, not to reveal who Dr. Gee was, and he didn't intend to break his promise. Mrs. Scully tried to convince him that he had been taken in by Newton and was thus no longer obligated to him. Scully wouldn't budge.

I decided to play it the way they do in the movies. With the most indifferent attitude I could muster, I hinted that it didn't

make any difference to me because I knew who Gee was anyway.

I guess I must have sounded pretty indifferent because it worked. Scully promised that if I could prove to him that I knew who Dr. Gee was, he would admit the identification was correct.

It was kind of a lopsided arrangement hanging completely on Scully's word, but at the moment his word seemed like a very rugged institution.

I told Scully the Phoenix address I had for GeBauer.

"You've got the man, all right," Scully said.

"GeBauer, isn't it?" I asked.

"Yes, Dr. GeBauer," he said.

I couldn't have felt better if I had pulled off a merger between Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward.

Right away I wanted Scully to go to Phoenix with me and confront GeBauer. Scully couldn't make it. It was early summer and Scully didn't think he could stand the heat. Nor was Scully sure that he wanted to admit publicly that his book was a hoax. Scully didn't know what he wanted to do.

Finally we made a deal. I would go to Phoenix and talk with GeBauer. If GeBauer should refuse to admit that he was Dr. Gee and would assert this denial in writing, Scully would join forces with me and find out what Newton, who was plainly the moving spirit behind the little-men story, was really up to.

It was a strange, backward kind of arrangement, but it was the best I could do. And I did have Scully's solemn promise made in front of his wife.

When I got to Phoenix I hunted up Lloyd Clark of the *Phoenix Gazette* and recruited him for a little advance work. I wanted to get some photos of GeBauer in his natural habitat and Lloyd thought he knew how it could be done.

Under the pretext of getting a story for the business section of the *Gazette*, Clark took a photographer and moved in on GeBauer at his Western Radio & Engineering Company.

They got the photos all right, but Clark had a strange report to make about GeBauer's reaction to having his picture taken.

Most businessmen will crowd aside a herd of elephants to get their picture in the paper. Not GeBauer. He didn't know if it were really the right thing for him to be photographed or not. He spent quite a little time trying to convince Clark and the photographer that they ought to make their pictures of his shop and his staff but they should leave him out. Very modest gent, this GeBauer.

But newspaper photographers have a way about them, a little harsh sometimes, but effective. Clark and his man came away with a very nice mug shot of GeBauer.

Clark hadn't been able to pry much information out of GeBauer about his past, but he had a pretty good idea of how to get what we wanted.

As soon as the business-news story and the photo of GeBauer ran in the *Gazette*, Clark made a deal with the local Better Business Bureau to do a follow-up.

The Bureau came away with a very interesting notarized report.

Instead of holding degrees from Armour Institute, Creighton University, and the University of Berlin, as Scully wrote, GeBauer only claimed a degree in electrical engineering from the Louis Institute of Technology in Chicago around 1931 or 1932, he couldn't remember which.

From 1943 to 1945, while he was supposed to have been heading up 1,700 scientists doing 35,000 experiments on the land, in the sea and the air and spending one billion dollars in a top-secret government magnetic-research program, GeBauer allowed he was merely chief of laboratories at the AiResearch Company in Phoenix and Los Angeles.

A check on that claim showed that GeBauer had been with AiResearch all right, and had done a most competent job—keeping their laboratory machinery running as a kind of maintenance man.

The Better Business Bureau wound up its report with a quote by GeBauer that ranks as probably one of the world's most heroic efforts at obfuscation. The last paragraph of the report reads: "When asked about further details of his business here and elsewhere he said we could quote him as saying, 'I believe in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness without the interference of man!' "

The time had come to visit Dr. Gee in person.

It was dead-hot in Phoenix. GeBauer's shop, a modest enough establishment despite Newton's glowing descriptions of Dr. Gee's sprawling laboratories, turned out to be a flat-roofed, one-story building in a treeless section of town.

GeBauer is a stocky, middle-aged man with pale, deep-set eyes. I had made arrangements with a photographer from the *Gazette* to park his car across the street from GeBauer's place, leave his camera in it and stroll around GeBauer's showroom posing as a customer, and I was glad there were reinforcements within hailing distance.

We talked in GeBauer's office. While he talked, he toyed with a steel bearing, rolling it back and forth across the glass top in his desk.

I told him who I was and that I knew he was the Dr. Gee in Scully's book.

GeBauer gave me those eyes.

"You're mistaken there, my boy," he said, rolling the bearing around. "I know Newton and I've read Scully's book, but whoever told you I was Dr. Gee is away off base."

Sweat was running down his jaws and making quick little detours around his chin.

I asked GeBauer for a written statement that he wasn't Dr. Gee.

No go.

My line was, "Look, as long as you say you aren't Gee, what harm is there in giving me a statement that you aren't?"

"My bottle."

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His line was, "I don't want to put anything down in writing until I talk it over with my attorney." He had run into trouble with Newton before. Seems as though Newton owed him some money for some equipment GeBauer had built for him. He didn't know if he should sign any statement or not.

GeBauer wanted to talk the deal over with his wife, who was in the shop. I left them talking and made a little tour of the place. In a room that was a combination storeroom, workshop and wrapping room, there was a box of brown rods exactly like the one George Koehler had showed me in Denver claiming it was a Perelite arrow shaft.

I was feeling kind of reckless. Maybe it was the heat. I broke off a piece of rod and took it over to GeBauer. "What's this stuff?" I asked.

"Television antenna separators," he said. He didn't look too happy. Maybe he was sore because I broke that piece off.

I began to push GeBauer about the statement, since he still stuck to his story, and finally he started dictating to his wife. It took several false starts but he eventually produced what I needed as a lever on Scully. It was on his letterhead and it read:

> To Whom It May Concern: I have been asked by J. P. Cahn of the *San Francisco Chronicle* if I were the Dr. Gee in Scully's book. I am making this statement to all concerned: I am not the Dr. Gee mentioned in the book *Behind The Flying Saucer*. I have no knowledge of the flying saucer other than what I have read. . . .
>
> I have in no way any connection with Frank Scully, his books or statements, nor did I at any time give Frank Scully authority to infer that I might be Dr. Gee. The scientific duties and qualifications mentioned in his book in no way describe my activities during the war period.
>
> (signed) L. A. GeBauer.

All Scully had asked me to get was a statement from GeBauer denying the identity by which Scully had admitted to me that he knew him. I had it, and on GeBauer's own letterhead. I certainly figured that would do the trick of unlocking Scully. But it didn't.

Maybe Scully had his fingers crossed when he promised me that if I got such a statement he would admit Newton and GeBauer had chumped him and help me run down the reason they went to all that trouble. Or maybe he only keeps his promises on odd days of the week. It's hard to tell. But Scully knows what he promised and so does his wife. She was there at the time.

First I called him on the telephone and told him what had happened. Scully wouldn't even listen to me.

I had the GeBauer statement photostated and I mailed him a copy by registered mail.

His only reply to that was a violent letter and a phone call that should have short-circuited the entire Bell System. Scully maintained that I was persecuting him, just as everyone else connected with the saucer story was being persecuted, and that he would probably sue someone. To date no one has showed up to serve any papers.

Something else showed up, however, that makes for some interesting speculation. Thor Severseen, digging around in Denver, finally found copies of the publication called the *Petroleum Review* that R. D. White of the California Company had suggested I read. It was a good suggestion.

In the 1946–47 *Petroleum Review* you will find three long articles written by Silas M. Newton. In all of them Newton expounded the merits of his geological theories about Rangely and denounced the United States Geological Survey and "bureaucratic Washington."

Newton further distinguished himself by introducing to his *Petroleum Review* readers none other than the noted author Frank Scully whom he incorrectly claimed "served several times (as a) member of the California legislature."

Scully's contribution to that issue of the *Petroleum Review* was an article entitled "Notes on Building a City" that was certainly helpful to Newton's promotional pitch. The article predicted that the town of Rangely "can become a city of 50,000 in the next five years." That would be in 1952. Scully's prediction is a little high unless something unusual happens in Rangely in the next few months. The latest population figures, gathered in 1950 and printed in the Rand McNally Road Atlas, shows Rangely's population hovering at the 5,000 mark.

There is other remarkable cooperation between Newton and Scully. In the subsequent *Petroleum Review*, for 1947–48, Newton blossomed into print again with "a new exploratory method . . . (a) revolutionary new technique (that) may end the specter of 'dry holes.'" Some phrases from the article and the magazine's explanatory squib will ring familiar to readers of Scully's book. For example:

Petroleum Review: "Certain it is that petroleum in place radiates energy . . . microwaves can be caught and measured."

Behind the Flying Saucers, page 36: "Petroleum in place . . . radiates magnetic energy and this is measurable."

Petroleum Review: "Microwaves being broadcast constantly by petroleum deposits hidden deep in the earth. . ."

Behind the Flying Saucers, page 36: "Petroleum deposits hidden deep in the earth were constantly broadcasting . . . magnetic microwaves."

Scully could have checked the worth of such claims as easily as I did by querying any authority in the subject. Dr. Thomas Poulter of the Stanford Research Institute examined Newton's statements and told me, "As far as I know, petroleum in place doesn't radiate anything. If it did, all the world's oil fields would have been discovered long ago."

The practical value of Newton's theories was already on record. The same *Petroleum Review* issue of 1946–47 that carried Newton's articles contained, on page 88, a resume by the editors of the year's drilling operations that noted, "One hundred and forty . . . wells . . . were added to the forty wells producing on January 1, 1946, in Rangely Field, and its first duster was drilled—the Newton Oil Company's Government D-1 on the southern edge of the field. . . ." Perhaps it was this dry hole, which is not the best of recommendations for an oil promoter, that made necessary Newton's "revolutionary new technique" which he proclaimed the following year and the theory of which Scully glowingly quoted.

Only the ultimate question remained to be answered. Why did Frank Scully write *Behind the Flying Saucers*—a book now proved to be, in effect, one of the greatest scientific hoaxes to hit the country since the old Cardiff Giant was rooted out of the soil of the Onondaga Valley in 1869.

I'm sorry that I don't know the answer. I don't know it because I think there is no single answer. Beyond the immediate and obvious one that the book was highly profitable lies a tangle of intangibles—the motives of the various individuals who were involved in fostering the story.

I believe that Frank Scully allowed himself to trust sincerely what was told him by others, although I'll agree that that takes some believing about Scully. "I have tried to the best of my ability to find flaws in their stories," he wrote in his preface. You can charitably form a low opinion of his ability, or you can generously suppose that he may have been blinded by his long friendship with the man who emerges most impressively from the book—that wizard among ore and oil explorers, the scientist whose geophysical acumen as described by author Scully would certainly merit any investor's interest, Silas Mason Newton.

I'd give a good deal to know what led Newton to concoct the Little-Men-in-Flying-Saucers-from-Venus yarn and get other people to go along with it. I've been meaning to ask him, but he hasn't come around lately.

I've been meaning to ask him, too, if he has figured out a magnetic story to explain the fact that one of those disks of unknown metal in his handkerchief is so much heavier than the other one.

If I know Newton, I'll bet that he has.—J. P. Cahn

A True Book-Length Feature