

1948

JULY 24
Clip from Mass. paper sent Feb. 1950 by

ALA

Mrs. Ann Garvey
11 Japonica
Salem, Mass.

Eighteen

'Buck Rogers'-Like Plane Passes 2 Airline Pilots

ATLANTA, July 24 (AP)—Two Eastern Airline pilots said they saw a wingless two-deck plane early today southwest of Montgomery, Ala. They said the strange ship, shooting red flames and with a blue glow underneath the fuselage, passed the E. A. L. ship at 5000 feet headed toward New Orleans.

The pilots said the stranger looked like a "Buck Rogers rocket ship." The pilots—Capt. C. S. Childs, co-pilot J. B. Whitted—were flying the Houston-to-Atlanta-to-Boston run. They left Houston at 8:30 p. m. (C. S. T.) last night. This morning at 2:45 o'clock 20 miles southwest of Montgomery they sighted the strange ship.

"It was in line almost with our flight," Capt. Childs said. "We veered off to the left and this object turned to its left. When it

came nearer to us, within better sight, its fuselage appeared to be about 100 feet in length and about four times the circumference of a B-29 fuselage.

Shoots Flame

"It had two rows of square windows, an upper and a lower. Out of the rear of the ship red flames were shooting 25 to 50 feet, and there was a blue glow underneath the fuselage. The ship appeared to be doing between 500 and 700 miles an hour, heading toward New Orleans.

"When it got alongside of us it pulled up with a tremendous burst of flame out of the rear. Then the ship disappeared into the broken clouds. The moon was shining intermittently and the ship could be seen for a few seconds and would

then be obscured. It had no wings. It seemed to have an upper deck and a lower deck and was fully lighted inside. We saw no occupants.

Passenger Awake

"Of the 20 passengers on board, Childs said only one was awake and saw the other ship. He gave this passenger's name as G. L. McKelvie, Henelton Pike, Columbus, O.

(The United Press reported that McKelvie said he saw a flash of light "but no space ship" at the time.)

(McKelvie, assistant manager of the American Education Press, Columbus, was wide awake on a flight from Guatemala at 2:45 o'clock this morning when he saw the light.)

"I did not see any form of a ship as the light streaked up into the cloud," he continued. "But then, I'm not very well versed in aeronautics, and certainly was not looking for any space ship."

The EAL ship went on from Atlanta to Boston today on its regular run.

AT SANTA MONICA, Calif., Gen. George C. Kenney, chief of the Strategic Air Command, said "the Army hasn't anything like that."

"I wish we did," he told interviewers. "I would sure like to see it."

Both pilots live in Atlanta and both served in the Army Air Corps as fighter pilots during the war. Childs, a native of Knoxville, Tenn., has been with the Eastern nine years, and Whitted, of Durham, N. C., has been with the company two years.

Could Be Balloon

At Montgomery, Maxwell and Dannelly Army fields said they knew nothing about the report. The Civil Aeronautics Administration at New Orleans said it had no report on the incident.

(The United Press reported that in Washington, the Air Force suggested that the pilots may have seen an air radar weather observation balloon which has a square, tinfoil box fastened to it. The box reflects light and gives strange illusions as it twists and turns, the Air Force said.)

(In Montgomery, the Weather Bureau reported that such balloons, of 10-foot diameter, were sent up every six hours from Maxwell Field. But an observer said he didn't think the balloon "could possibly be mistaken" for such an aircraft as described by the pilots.)

(The United Press also reported that William M. Allen, president of the Boeing Airplane Co., said he knew of no aircraft under construction in this country similar to the one which the pilots said they met in flight.)

(He said he was "pretty sure" that the giant aircraft was "not one of our planes.")

(Allen said he believed the mystery craft was a "missile of some sort." He said Boeing technicians are experimenting with guided missiles in New Mexico, but that they were not as large as a plane and would not be seen in Alabama.)

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Atlanta (Ga.) Journal, Sunday, July 25, 1948 - p. 1:

SKY 'DEVIL-SHIP' SCARES PILOTS: AIR CHIEF WISHES HE HAD ONE
Plane Makers Dubious About Alabama 'Thing'
By William Key (Includes photo of Chiles & Whitted)

What was that "Thing" that scared the daylights out of two Atlanta Eastern Airlines Pilots in the spooky hours Saturday (7/24) morning?

Is there some stratospheric Loch Ness, fire-breathing monster on the Milky Way run between Atlanta and New Orleans?

The pilots, Captain C. S. Chiles, of Atlanta, and Co-Pilot J. B. Whitted, of Hapeville, would like to know. Big airplane manufacturers also are curious, but slightly dubious.

Pilots Chiles and Whitted told their thrilling story upon arriving here Saturday on the Houston-Atlanta-Boston run. Here is what they say they saw near Atlanta:

A gigantic plane without wings, black against the night sky, streaking through the heavens at 5,000 foot altitude with a fiery comet's tail 25 to 50 feet in length.

It had a 100-foot fuselage, and was about four times the circumference of a B-29's, and had two rows of brilliantly lighted square windows. Creepiest of all, it was a veritable Flying Dutchman of the Skies. Nary a living soul was seen on board.

Continuous Light

The pilots admitted they had goose pimples riding pick-a-back on goose pimples. What's more, they said one of their 20 passengers -- C. L. McKelvie, of Columbus, Ohio -- was awake and saw the same thing.

Reporters nailed Mr. McKelvie at Kennett Square, Pa. How about it, they asked him -- had he seen what the Atlanta pilots said he saw?

Well, now, said Mr. McKelvie, not exactly. He said he saw a "continuous light speed past" his window.

"But," added Mr. McKelvie, "I'm not very well versed in aeronautics and certainly I wasn't looking for any Buck Roger's space ship."

(The rest of this most unsatisfactory local interview with the witnesses is given over to useless commentary by various persons: General George M. Kenney, at Santa Monica, Calif: "I wish we had one. . ."; William M. All (?), president of Boeing Corp. in Seattle: "Sure it isn't one of our planes"; and statements from the Air Force in Washington, the weather bureau at Montgomery, and officers at Maxwell Field, Alabama. None of them very useful.)

TB/LCC

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Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, Sunday, July 25, 1948 - p. 1:

COLUMBUS MAN TELLS OF SEEING BRILLIANT FLASH

"I saw a brilliant flash of cherry red fire streak across the sky. . .but I saw no shape or form."

That was the report of Clarence L. McKelvie, 25 Mamilton Park, a passenger on the Eastern Airlines plane which encountered what its pilots described as a "strange aircraft."

EDUCATORS
Mr. McKelvie, assistant managing editor of the American Educational (Educationer*s?--sorry, my notes were abbreviated--TB) Press, had been in Guatamala and was returning to the states. Reached by telephone Saturday at Kennett Square, Pa., where he is visiting his mother, he said he was puzzled by the experience.

"We left New Orleans Friday night," he said, "and were not quite to Atlanta at the time. It was a brilliant moonlit night, with some scattered clouds. I was not sleeping, but was watching the brilliance of the night. I was on the right side of the plane, and suddenly saw this strange, eerie streak outside my window. It was very intense. . .not like lightning or anything I had ever seen.

"I could discern nothing in the way of a definite shape or form, but I was so startled that I could not get my eyes adjusted to it before it was gone.

"The pilot buzzed for the steward and asked him if anyone had been awake. Told that I was, the pilot came back and asked me what I saw and entered it on his log.

"He told me what he and the co-pilot saw and while I do not know how much validity to give it, I do know it was a strange thing, and they were in much better position and had a better and longer opportunity to observe it. They were much concerned about it."

(Same source, under lengthy and detail UP dateline, gives account of the Eastern Airline report.)

TB/LCC

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ALA.

From Herald-Tribune, Sunday, July 25, 1948

Flame Shooting Wingless Plane Reported Met in Alabama Skies

Atlanta, July 24 (AP)-- Two Eastern Air Lines pilots said they met a two-deck plane early today southwest of Montgomery, Ala. They said the strange ship, shooting red flames and with a blue glow underneath the fuselage, passed the E.A.L. ship at 5,000 feet headed toward New Orleans. The pilots said the stranger looked like a "Buck Rogers" rocket ship."

The two pilots - Captain C.S. Childs (sic) and Co-pilot J.B. Whitted - were flying the Houston-to-Atlanta-to-Boston run. They left Houston, Tex., at 8:30 o'clock last night. They sighted the strange craft at 2:45 o'clock this morning 20 miles southwest of Montgomery.

After reaching Atlanta at 3:49 a.m. they told of their strange experiences. Captain Childs said they first sighted the object up ahead when nearing "ontgomery.

"It was in line almost with our flight," he said. "We veered off to the left and this object turned to its left. When it came nearer to us, within better sight, its fuselage appeared to be about 100 feet in length and about four times the circumference of a B-28 (sic) fuselage.

"It had two rows of windows, an upper and a lower. Out of the rear of the ship red flames were shooting 25 to 50 feet. The ship appeared to be doing between _____ and 700 miles an hour, heading toward New Orleans.

"When it got alongside of us it pulled up with a tremendous burst of ~~enormous~~ flame out of the rear. The flames were so bright they blinded us for a second. Then the ship disappeared into the broken clouds. The moon was shining intermittently and the ship could be seen for a few seconds and would then be obscured. It seemed to have an upper and a lower deck and was fully lighted inside. We saw no occupants."

Of the twenty passengers, Captain Childs said only one was awake and saw the other ship!

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VA.

Ref. (A)

Washington (D.C.) Times-Herald, Monday, July 26, 1948 - p. 3:

TWO PILOTS INSIST 'SKY MONSTER' IS MAN-MADE CRAFT

Atlanta, Ga., July 25 (UP) — (Recap of the Chiles and Whitted sighting 7/24 near Montgomery, Alabama--see elsewhere for this--TB).

. . . Both Whitted and Chiles said they talked to another Eastern Airlines crew, which reportedly saw "streaks of light" like the one reported by passenger McKelvie.

Whitted said the other crewmen were aboard a flight southbound from Washington when they saw the streaks at a greater distance, between Blackstone, Virginia and Raleigh, North Carolina.

They checked the time, he (Whitted) said, and the other crew saw the streaks at 2:40 a.m. (Eastern Time??). Chiles and Whitted saw their monster at 2:45 a.m. (Eastern or Central??)

(Note by TB: These two pilots may be Capt. Lou Feldvary and co-pilot A. J. Egger, as mentioned in the N.Y. Herald-Tribune, 7/26; however, there was a second Eastern Airlines plane in the vicinity of Washington, D.C., who also saw something, but the pilots do not seem to have been identified by name in any published accounts I've come across so far.)

another
A/c

Crew

TB/LOG

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Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle, Monday, July 26, 1948 - p. 2:

MYSTEROUS 'PLANE' REPORTED SIGHTED IN NORTH AUGUSTA

First report in the Augusta area of anyone having seen something resembling the "wingless mystery plane" came last night from North Augusta.

Mrs. J. H. Keel, an elderly resident of 310 Crystal Lake dr., North Augusta, told her neighbors three days ago (7/23) about seeing an odd-shaped airplane which appeared to have a double fuselage, one on top of the other, with fire shooting out of the rear.

One of the neighbors called The Chronicle last night commenting that he had given Mrs. Keel's story little thought until reading Sunday morning's paper (describing the Giles & Whitted report of 7/24).

Mrs. Keel was reported last night to be visiting in Monetta and was not available for comment.

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7-24-48 GA

Atlanta Constitution, Monday, July 26, 1948

Seen July 24, ca. 3 am

Hunters Abet Story of Wingless Craft

A flame-shooting, wingless mystery aircraft reported seen by two Eastern AirLine pilots Saturday morning was linked yesterday with a strange sight observed in the sky about the same time by two Atlantans who were fox-hunting near Covington.

J. V. Morris, of 1092 Wyley Street, S.E., said he and a friend, Lindsay Fall, of 1309 Metropolitan Avenue, S.E., were fox-hunting around Snapping Shoals on the Yellow River about 3 a.m. Saturday when they saw "an unusually bright light -- as bright as a room," which appeared to be speeding westward. Morris said it was gone in a few seconds.

The time coincided with the hour the Eastern Air Line pilots reported seeing the "Buck Rogers-like" craft. They reported seeing it at 2:45 a.m.

(From same item)

Seen around midnight(est.), July 22-23

Indianapolis -- An Indianapolis housewife reported that she and her son and daughter saw a similar flame-spurting aircraft Thursday night (July 22-23) more than 24 hours before it was seen by the two E.A.L. pilots. She described it as a ball of fire which shot two jets of flame downward at regular intervals. She said she watched it for three minutes.

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VA.
(+ ALA.)

Tell Of Sky Monster

(From N.Y. Herald Tribune, Monday, July 26, 1948)

Atlanta, July 25 (UP)-- Two Eastern Air Lines pilots who reported seeing a huge flame shooting sky monster near Montgomery, Ala., yesterday, maintained that what they saw was a "man-made gadget." Captain C. S. Chiles of Atlanta, and co-pilot John Whitted, of Hapeville, Ga., said they saw the huge ship, a wingless affair four times circumference of a B-29 fuselage, during an E.A.L. flight from Houston, Texas, early yesterday.

In New York, Captain Lou Feldvary, pilot of another E.A.L. plane, said he and his co-pilot, A. J. Egger, had seen what appeared to be a rocket trail going very fast along the horizon in a southwesterly direction. Captain Feldvary said visibility was excellent. He said ~~his~~ his co-pilot was a Navy veteran and a rocket expert but had never seen anything similar to the trail.

Pilot After Pictures of "Space Ship"

(From San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, July 26)

Atlanta, July 25 (UP)-- (Rehash of sighting details; Chiles to carry camera in future, etc. etc.)

...Two other E.A.L. crews reportedly saw "streaks of light" like the one reported by Passenger McKelvie Saturday morning, but said nothing because the four flyers didn't expect anyone to believe them. One was near Blackstone, Va.; the other south of Washington D.C., and the "streaks" reportedly passed them at a considerable distance, heading in the same southwesterly direction as the "monster" reported by Chiles.

Atlanta Constitution, Tuesday, July 27, 1948

Mysterious 'Ball of Fire' Trailing Tail of Flame Sighted Over Atlanta

A mysterious "ball of fire" trailing a short tail of flame was reported seen in two (or ~~probably~~ ^{possibly} three--TRB) appearances over Atlanta last night (July 26).

The strange apparition, observed by 15 different persons in different sections of the city, was seen first shortly before 8 p.m., (at about 9 p.m.,) and again at 9:45 p.m.

And at the same time (which time?), an unidentified flame-like object was sighted over Augusta by numerous residents of that city, including newsmen.

In Virginia, two E.A.L. pilots (not Chiles & Whitted) and C.A.A. radio station operators at Lynchburg, Pulaski and Roanoke reported what they described as a falling meteor, seen in the southern skies about 9:45 p.m. last night. Dozens of telephone calls were received by the C.A.A. and radio and newspapers about the object, described as a bright blue light.

Meanwhile, observers in Atlanta reported seeing the flying "blob of light" moving across the sky near the horizon. The light mass apparently was traveling in a general west-to-east direction.

No one could distinguish any definite form to the "fireball." Most witnesses described it as a small mass of light without shape.

An attendant at the Atlanta Naval Air Station reported he saw the apparition twice. He said he first saw it about 9 p.m. near Stone Mountain. The operator, who asked that his name not be used, said he thought "it was a falling star" until it started climbing and banked sharply to turn away from the City.

He said the "bluish streak of light" was traveling very fast and very high. He added it did not look like any jet plane he has seen in night flight. He said he saw the same bluish light about 45 minutes later.

At the same time (probably 9:45 p.m.), Miss Betty Strickland, of 130 Pecan Drive, Lakewood Heights, reported seeing a "big light bulb with a tail of red fire" outside her window.

"I was brushing my hair," she said, when the strange light passed over the tree tops. "It didn't seem to be very far away," she added.

Mr. & Mrs. Bo Carroll, of Doraville, reported seeing a "big ball of fire with a red tail" as they were driving toward their home. (Probably at 9:45, same as Strickland sighting--TRB). Carroll said the fireball appeared out of the northwest and, moving close to the horizon, travelled more than 30 degrees across the sky. He said the light disappeared behind the horizon.

Close by, at Chamblee, Harold Shaw and five others reported seeing what Shaw described as a "green light with a short tail. I don't know how far away it was nor how large it was, but it moved across the sky rapidly," he said. It was absolutely silent. The five other observers were Shaw's wife, Mrs. Robert Sebring, Mrs. Jeanne Hill, Mrs. Myrtle Renfro and Mrs. John Gail. All agreed that the "object" was "green with a silver tail."

Atlanta Constitution, Tuesday, July 27, 1948 (continued)

And in the downtown section, Mr. & Mrs. Richard P. Sellers, driving south on Spring Street, near the business district, reported seeing a "reddish-white ball of fire about the size of a cantaloupe with a tail on it." Mrs. Sellers said the light appeared from the west and moved across the sky at low level. It would disappear behind a large building, then reappear seconds later. She said it was moving pretty fast.

Forecasters at the Weather Bureau said they had received several calls, but reported seeing nothing. The U.S. Weather Bureau in Augusta was flooded with calls.

About a dozen persons called the Augusta Chronicle to report seeing the object there -- described as a streak of light, a ball of fire, and a rocket ship. City Editor John Battle looked out of the window and spotted the object himself, showing it to other members of the staff.

(Note by TRB: There was have actually been only two appearances, since the 8 o'clock & 9 o'clock report may actually refer only to the report of observer at the Naval Air Station; one or the other of these two alternatives may be a typo, or a difference in Standard time and Daylight time. Perhaps the Station operated on Daylight time, while the town itself was under Standard time, or vice versa.)

Atlanta Constitution, Wednesday, July 28, 1948

Strange Things Ride City's Airways

Weird visitors were in the air over Atlanta again last night. Dozens of Atlantans described to the Constitution the "objects" they saw. One caller described a "jet dirigible" which hung over the southern section of the city. A burning plane which failed to fall was seen by another. Planes trailing long blue flames were seen by others. "Balls of fire" were present. A 12-year-old saw a flame in the sky that "looked like a man riding a horse."

One explanation, which most callers disputed, was Lakewood Park's giant searchlight. The flash of the giant light on the clouds turned them into weird shapes. But only the "ball of fire" editor seemed to hold to this theory.

"No, that's not it," said the excited young lady who called. "I know a burning airplane when I see one and it's up there right now -- burning, but not falling."

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AC

It was 2:45 early one July morning in 1948. An Eastern Airlines DC-3 piloted by Capt. Clarence Shipe Chiles and co-piloted by John B. Whitted, was tooling along at 5,000 feet about 20 miles southwest of Montgomery, Ala., en route from Houston to New York.

The moon was bright and there were scattered light clouds. Thunderstorms had been reported en route and Chiles and Whitted were watching faint flashes of lightning way up ahead.

"We had our eyes focused on the point from which the thing came," Chiles told Louis Blackburn, of the Houston Press. "From the right and slightly above us came a bright glow and the long rocket-like ship took form in the distance.

"It's a jet job," I said to Whitted. "Then it grew larger and pulled up alongside. It appeared to be about 100 feet long with a huge fuselage three times as large as that of a B-29.

"It's too big for a jet, but what the devil is it?" said Whitted.

"There were two rows of windows and it appeared definitely to be a two-decker. The lights from the side were a ghastly white, like the glow of a gas light—the whitest we'd ever seen.

"There was a long shaft on the ship's nose that looked like it might have been part of radar controls. The ship acted that way too, for just after it pulled alongside us it whipped quickly upward at a very sharp angle."

Both craft veered to their respective left. The mystery ship passed about 700 feet to the right and above the airliner. "Then, as if the pilot had seen us and wanted to avoid us, it pulled up with a tremendous burst of flame from the rear and zoomed into the clouds, its prop wash or jet wash rocking our DC-3."

The wingless craft gave the impression of having a pilot's cabin at the front of a cigar-shaped fuselage. The cabin was brightly lighted but the fuselage itself approximated the brilliance of a magnesium flare.

"We saw no occupants," Chiles said. "From the side of the craft came an intense, fairly dark blue glow that ran the entire length of the fuselage, like a blue fluorescent factory light. The exhaust was a red-orange flame, with a lighter color predominant around the outer edges."

Both Chiles and Whitted agreed that the exhaust flame extended 30 to 50 feet behind the object and became deeper in intensity as the craft pulled up into a cloud. They estimated its speed as being about $\frac{1}{2}$ faster than ordinary jets—that is, 700 to 900 m.p.h.

Immediately after the ship disappeared, Chiles turned the controls over to Whitted and rushed into the cabin to find out if any passengers had seen the object. He found all the passengers asleep except C. L. McKelvie of Columbus, O.

"I remembered saying to myself 'That's

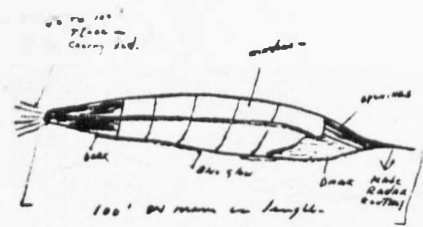
the queerest lightning I've ever seen,' and I pressed closer to the window to see it," McKelvie said. "I was amazed at the brilliance of the flash of light."

McKelvie realized it was not lightning when the "light" flashed past, in an unbroken line to disappear in a cloud. "It was much redder in color than lightning," McKelvie said. He did not, however, see any form of a ship.

The light from the object was so brilliant, indeed, that it caused "lightning blindness" to both pilots. They had to turn up their cockpit lights to read the instruments.

CAPT. C. S. CHILES

The strange object seen by Eastern Airlines' Capt. Chiles is the only one reported by airline pilots that had the traditional rocket shape and appeared to have jet exhaust.



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