

HISTORY & FOLKLORE

Observation of Phenomenon -

Tarkington, Approximately 1:20 a.m., August 27, 1984

by Wiley Smith

I was driving south on Texas Highway 321 on a starry but moonless night at about 1:20 a.m., Monday, August 27, 1984, when a bright light caught my eye at "nine-o'clock high." As a former WWII bomber pilot, I systemized whatever I observe in the sky.

My first impression was that it was the most gigantic meteor I had ever seen but when I looked directly at it, I saw that it was descending too slowly to be a meteor. Then I realized that it was an object, shaped like a Christmas tree decoration or a child's elaborate top, roughly triangular with the point toward the ground.

The initial impression was that it was paralleling my movement to the south, but then I realized that the "multi-plane" effect of the trees passing between me and the object gave the false idea of lateral movement to the bright object. It was in fact descending vertically.

Altogether, I could not have had the object in view more than six or eight seconds. In that time it descended from about 35 degrees elevation to the ground or near it out of my vision. I continued to drive and observe the location when it had disappeared - about in line with a tall, red-light-topped radio tower.

The object was altogether yellow-white lighted, with panel-like ribbed patterns around its mid-section. There was no rotation observable. It simply came down like an amusement park parachute.

As to its size, I can only guess. It was the apparent size of a B-17's wingspan at a distance of 2,500 feet, something I am accustomed to judging. Or it could have been much larger at a greater distance. There is no way I can judge. I felt it was no closer than a quarter-mile but no farther than two miles. At two miles, it would have been huge. After it passed from view, near or on the ground, there was no afterglow that I could see. There was no car's headlights anywhere ahead or behind me. Visibility was excellent.

I am writing this in Liberty within the hour so as to get fresh impression down without rethought or forgetting. I have never observed anything out of the ordinary in my 59 years nor on any of the 34 missions I flew as a copilot on a B-17 in the Eighth Air Force in England. This object, however, was bright and clear against a velvety backdrop of stars. What was it? Who knows.

Attested:
Wiley Smith

Texas Illustrated
Magazine of History and Folklore

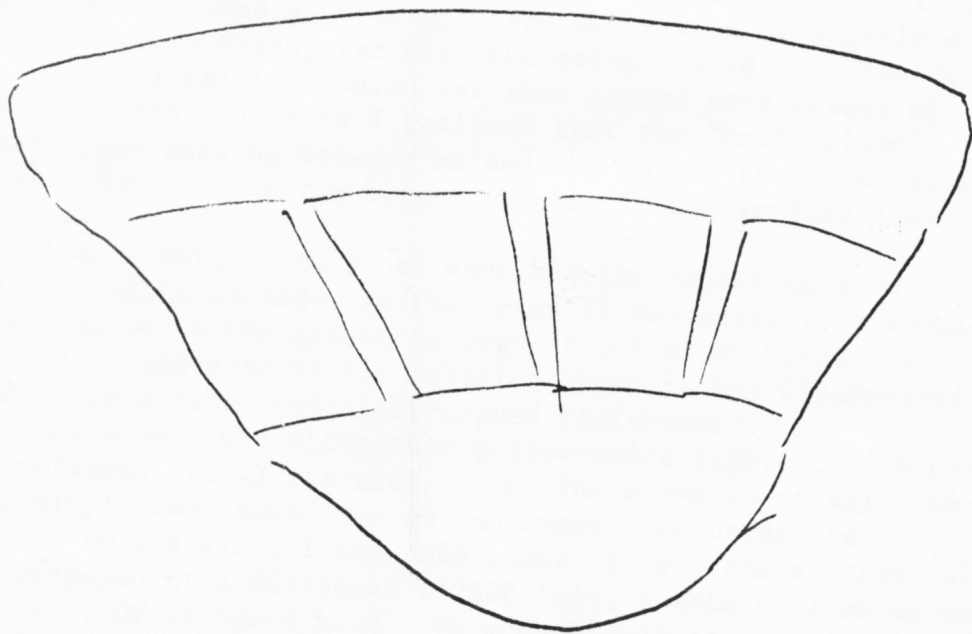


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TOTALLY LIT, LIKE
LIGHT BULB,
YELLOW-WHITE LIGHT.
NO ROTATION.

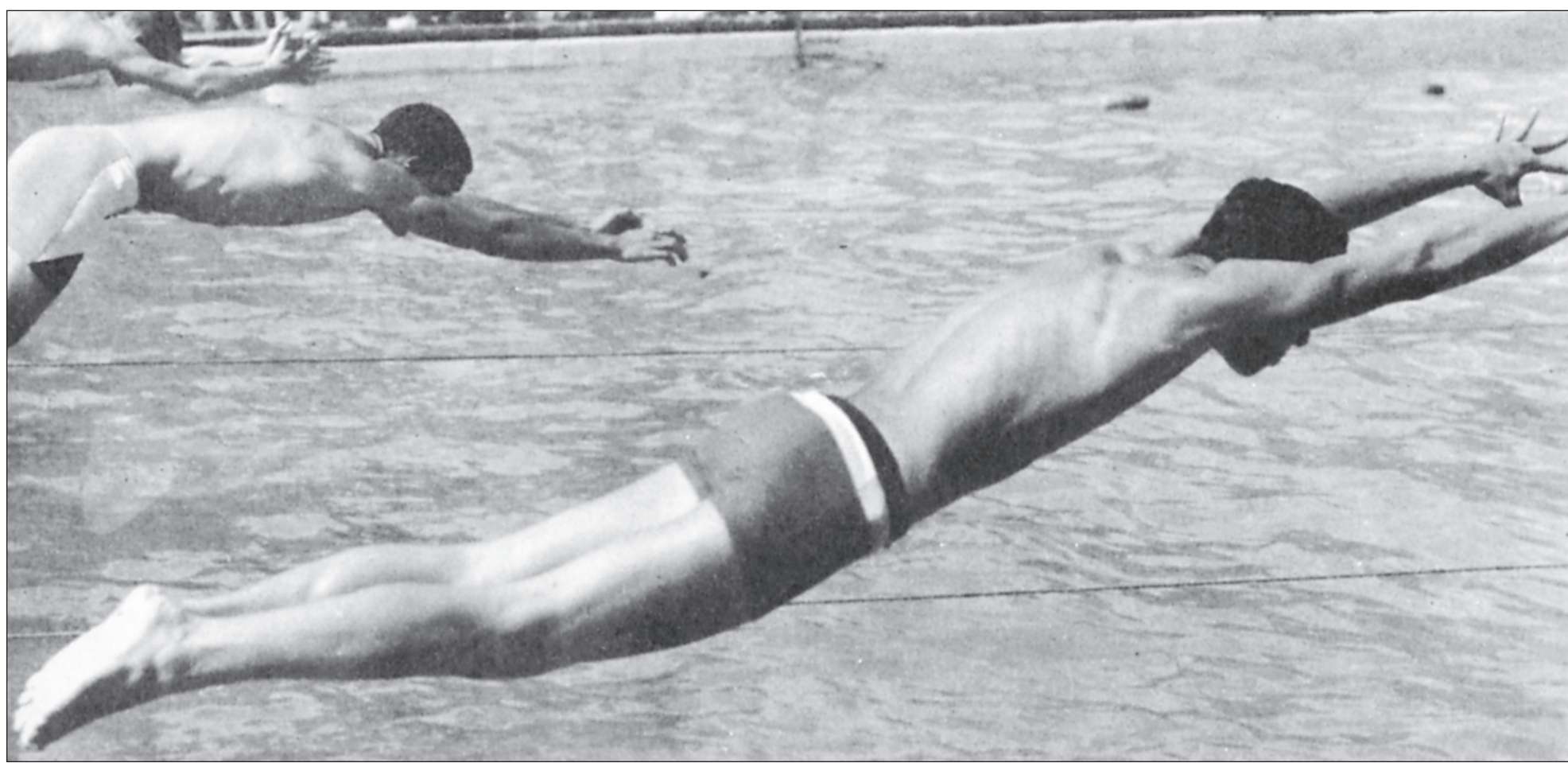
DESCENDED
IN 6-8 SECONDS,
VERTICALLY.



FIRST SEEN AT ABOUT 35° ELEVATION,
IN APPROXIMATE POSITION OF PLEIADES.
1:20 AM, AUG. 27, 1984, TARKINGTON, TX.
WIDE-AWAKE - NOT SLEEPY.

Wiley Smith

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of Liberty County,
Thursday, July 18, 1963 -

Several hundred people observed the events of the swimming meet in Dayton Saturday between Dayton, Anahuac, Humble, Cleveland and Hardin-Jefferson. Anahuac won it with Dayton coming in second. The event pictured was won by Liberty's Jimmy Clark, one of three independent entries from there. He is in the second lane from the foreground.

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