PANORAMA
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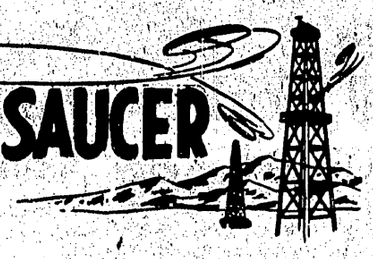
San Francisco Chronicle

THE GREAT FLYING SAUCER BUNCO



New Twist for Newton's Old Swindle

THIS IS THE THIRD PART of the story of how Silas Newton and Leo GeBauer, a pair of bunco men, were tripped up by Chronicle Reporter J. P. Cahn, assigned to check into Frank Scully's best seller, "Behind the Flying Saucers," the original story of the little men from Venus.

Newton, the man who told Scully the flying saucer story, showed Reporter Cahn a pair of disks, supposedly of unknown metal. Newton said the disks were taken from a grounded saucer by a mysterious super scientist identified only as Dr. Gee, an ex-Government wizard now in the laboratories of the Newton Oil Co. developing oil locating instruments.

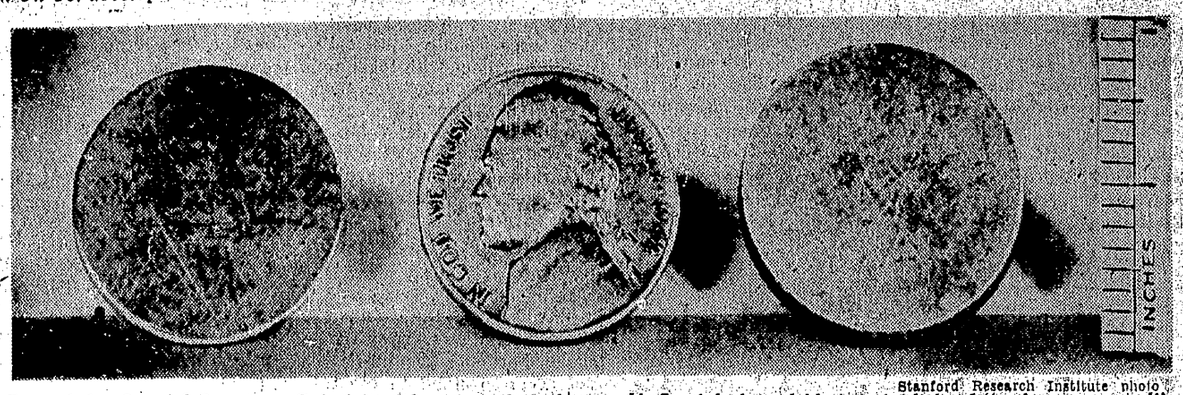
When Newton, negotiating to sell The Chronicle the whole flying saucer story, refused to submit the disks for analysis, Cahn went to Denver, headquarters of the Newton Oil Co., where he found Newton's reputation did not glitter so brightly as it did in Scully's book.

Back in San Francisco, Cahn found in old newspaper files that Newton had been arrested many times on complaints filed by people who claimed he had swindled them. For some strange reason, however, Newton had never been brought to trial.

Additional checking disclosed that Newton was very close to Leo GeBauer, a radio parts man in Phoenix, Ariz. Cahn's hunch was that GeBauer had played the role of Dr. Gee.

When Newton continued to refuse to allow his disks of unknown metal to be analyzed, Cahn substituted a duplicate disk for one of Newton's.

Five minutes after the switch, Cahn was on his way to Stanford Research Institute to have the unknown metal from the flying saucers analyzed.



Stanford Research Institute photo

From left: One of Reporter Cahn's steel counterfeit slugs, a U. S. nickel, and Newton's disk of "unknown metal"

By J. P. CAHN

THE SCIENTISTS at Stanford Research Institute are a methodical lot.

They gave Newton's disk of unknown metal the full treatment; gravimetric, microscopic, and spectrochemical analysis.

As it turned out, it was a shame to have gone to all that trouble. The disk wasn't made of anything that couldn't be analyzed by a 12-year-old with a $4 Chem-Craft set.

The unknown metal that Dr. Gee had supposedly taken from a flying saucer, the same disk 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 made of aluminum, 99.5 per cent pure, a quality known commercially as Grade 2S and used in the manufacture of nothing more cosmic than pots and pans.

Build-Up for Bunco

The SRI analysis plus what I had found out about Newton's past brushes with the law made it a good bet that the little men in the flying saucers story was the build-up for some kind of bunco.

But how was it going to pay off? Who was going to get the valise full of worthless stock certificates this time? Was Leo GeBauer, the man I had located in Phoenix, Dr. Gee, or was Dr. Gee made of the same star dust as the little men from Venus?

There was one man who might give me some answers: Frank Scully.

I flew to Hollywood and showed Scully what I had.

He was staggered, but he went along with everything until I told him his super scientist, Dr. Gee, was really Leo GeBauer of Phoenix, Ariz.; an ex-laboratory maintenance man turned radio parts dealer.

Scully just couldn't get used to that idea.

It wasn't a matter of identity. Scully admitted the real name of the man he called "Dr. Gee" was Leo GeBauer all right. But Scully couldn't believe GeBauer wasn't one of the world's great scientists. GeBauer had told him so, personally.

I suggested Scully fly to Phoenix with me and see for himself.

That, Scully said, was out of the question. He was a sick man. He would never be able to stand the heat in Phoenix.

Instead, Scully suggested I get a written statement from GeBauer that he was NOT Dr. Gee. If I did Scully would help me find out what Newton and GeBauer were really up to.

GeBauer's Store

That afternoon I was on my way to Arizona.

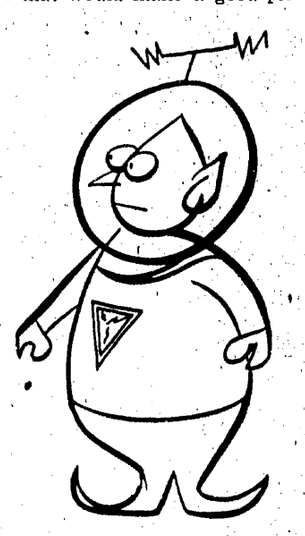
Scully was right about the heat. It was only the middle of June, but the air conditioning machines were already feeling the strain in Phoenix.

GeBauer's radio parts store, Western Radio and Engineering or WRECO, was in a flat-roofed building in a treeless section of town. There was no air conditioning. Inside I got a first hand impression of what makes the Thanksgiving turkey such a nice golden brown.

Leo GeBauer, the great Dr. Gee, turned out to be a blocky 200-pound man in his fifties with deep-set, pale eyes, so pale they look dusty.

Heat Treatment

I had made a deal with a photographer from the Phoenix Gazette to come along in case something might happen that would make a good pic-



ture. Or just in case something might happen.

The deal was the photographer was supposed to follow me . and stroll around looking like a customer.

And the first time GeBauer gave me those dusty eyes I decided it was the best deal I ever made.

Mrs. GeBauer and what looked like about ten too many employees for the size of the place were up in the front part of the store. GeBauer took me into a little office he had in the back.

It was even hotter in there.

I told GeBauer who I was and that I understood he was Dr. Gee in Scully's book.

GeBauer was rolling a big steel bearing around on the glass top of his desk.

He gave me the eyes.

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

Sweat was running down his face and making detours around his jaw.

I was sweating some myself and it wasn't all on account of the heat.

"If you're not Dr. Gee," I said, "let me have a written denial. The papers will carry it and it will take a lot of pressure off you."

GeBauer wanted to talk the deal over with his wife before he signed anything.

I waited in the back office maybe five minutes and then went up to the front of the store.

Mrs. GeBauer had a piece of stationery in the typewriter.

After half a dozen false starts, GeBauer gave me the denial Scully wanted. On a Western Radio and Engineering letterhead it had a nice documentary look.

When I got to San Francisco I phoned Scully and suggested he come up where it was nice and cool so we could get to work.

Scully seemed to have forgotten our bargain.

As far as he was concerned now, there wasn't any bargain in the first place. He wouldn't tell me why he had changed his mind, but he had — definitely.

For the moment it looked as if I were stymied.

I had tipped my hand and Newton had vanished like the folding bird cage in a magic act.

The Pieces Fit

Then Thor Severson, the reporter on the Denver Post, paid off by sending me the back issues of Petroleum Review — the ones with the articles written by Si Newton. They were like money from home.

As reading material the Newton articles were terrible. They were just propaganda telling you that Newton was a red-hot operator when it came to discovering oil and that anyone who disagreed with him was a blockhead.

I didn't really get interested until I discovered that some of the phrases had a familiar ring.

When I checked back into Scully's flying saucer book I found out why. Here's just one example:

Petroleum Review (1946-47): "Microwaves (are) 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."

I checked the statements with Dr. Thomas C. Poulter, a world authority on geophysics working at Stanford Research Institute.

"As far as I know," he said, "petroleum in place doesn't radiate anything. If it did all the world's oil fields would have been discovered long ago."

The Bunco Pitch

There was another point I got cleared up, too. While there are instruments, like the magneto meter, that are used in making surveys for likely oil bearing geological structures, no instrument has been developed that can actually locate oil.

Not that there aren't plenty of men around the oil fields who will swear that their little black boxes can tune in a gusher every time.

But accredited petroleum engineers, who call the black boxes or other oil witching devices "doodlebugs," regard them in about the same way a licensed physician regards

Old Doc Zipp and his Vitalized Essence of Okeehobee Snake Oil.

After almost a year's digging I was beginning to see what was behind, "Behind The Flying Saucers."

Newton had apparently tired of plugging his phony microwave radiation theory to the specialized readership of magazines like Petroleum Review, mostly oil men who knew a great deal more about oil than Newton and just laughed at his doodlebug and microwave theory.

By taking advantage of the enormous interest in flying saucer reports, which couldn't be proved nor disproved at the moment, Newton saw a chance to apply that old bromide, "it pays to advertise" and reach a huge, new audience.

In Newton's mind, "Behind The Flying Saucers," was just a sales brochure for Newton's old microwave bunco.

Bill of Goods

Newton had slipped the pitch for his magnetic oil locating machine into the little-men-from-Venus story. It tied in beautifully with the theory that the flying saucers were powered magnetically.

With GeBauer posing as Dr. Gee, the scientific wizard, and building the phony machines and "evidence" taken from the flying saucers, the set-up was perfect.

All Newton had to do was give Scully, an established author, the story, compile a sucker list from the fan mail that resulted from the book—and Newton and his old bunco game were into the mass market; just like breakfast food and powdered soap.

Now, all I had to do was prove it.

The only trouble was all my leads had clammed up.

Continued tomorrow

Joseph Henry Jackson

Bookman's Notebook

Don't Miss Uncle Daniel Ponder

PERHAPS in her other books and magazine stories there have been clues to the fact that Eudora Welty has a magnificent sense of the comic.

If so, most readers have missed them. Miss Welty has been hailed as a notable prose stylist, which she is. She has been dissected in the quarterlies as one who writes always on several levels of meaning, each more profoundly symbolic than the last, and she is this too. But comic? Not many have realized this vein in her, doubtless because she has never chosen to mine it in more than occasional pockets.

A month ago The New Yorker took up almost an entire issue to run her new novelette, *"The Ponder Heart"* (Harcourt; $3) now out as a book. For sheer imagination and comedy, for sustained narrative power and for its miraculous reproduction of the rhythm of Southern small-town speech — often amounting to outright poetry—the story represents Miss Welty at her magical best.

The tale is told as a long, folksy monologue by Edna Earle, proprietress of the Beulah Hotel.

Edna Earle's story centers around Uncle Daniel Ponder, tall, white-haired, pink-cheeked with bright blue eyes, always dressed in immaculate white with a sweetheart rose in his lapel.

Uncle Daniel is special; as Edna Earle puts it, "He loves society and he gets carried away."

His form of being carried away is to give things to people. Edna Earle, for instance, runs the Beulah because Uncle Daniel just gave it to her. Once he tried to give away his own cemetery lot, though nobody would accept it.

Uncle Daniel was a great trial to Grandpa, who regarded property as sacred. If Uncle Daniel was going to act like this about property, who knew what would come next?

Grandpa tried. Once he had Uncle Daniel committed, though it didn't work out. Once he tried marrying him off—to Miss Teacake Magee. That didn't work either; Uncle Daniel said afterward that what he couldn't stand was hearing her spool-heels go back and forth on the hard floor.

Then Uncle Daniel—getting on for 50 by this time—chose his own bride, a little bit of a stupid thing named Bonnie Dee Peacock, just 17.

Edna Earle tells you about the Peacocks, and this paragraph will show you how Miss Welty handles her dialogue:

"The Peacocks are the kind of people keep the mirror outside on the front porch, and go out and pick railroad lillies to bring inside the house, and wave at trains till the day they die. The most they probably hoped for was that somebody'd come find oil in the front yard and fly in the house and tell them about it."

What comes of this odd marriage furnishes the narrative meat of the story, which gets into a murder trial before it's finished, with Uncle Daniel in the dock. In spite of his eccentricities, Uncle Daniel has the Ponder heart and then some.

Eudora Welty

Now, of course, Miss Welty's simplicity is a surface affair, a question of utter mastery of technique, of enormous ability to write, of a sure ear, and a genius for selecting the telling bit. Below this surface there is meaning enough; there are symbols and significances enough for those who want to look for them. There is directness, too.

For example:

"I don't know if you can measure love at all. But Lord knows there's a lot of it . . . What Uncle Daniel did was just bestow his all around quick—men, women, and children. Love! There's always somebody wants it. Uncle Daniel knew that."

But you can search for meanings or not, as you like. The thing is to absorb this little book at a sitting, to relish the beautiful comic gusto with which it is written, to experience the delight of the story itself, and to admire the skill and beauty of its writing. You owe it to yourself not to miss it, that's all.

Drew Pearson

Merry-Go-Round

The Air Force and Flying Saucers

IT ISN'T being advertised, but the Air Force will send high-flying observation planes and guided missiles into the upper atmosphere for a closer look at the planet Mars in June when Mars will approach nearer to the earth than at any time in the last 13 years.

Flying-saucer enthusiasts claim that the elusive saucers have always been spotted in greater numbers when Mars is close to the earth. The Air Force is skeptical about this, since no evidence has been uncovered linking flying saucers with other planets.

However, astronomers have noticed straight lines across the face of Mars, leading down from the polar caps. These could be canals, dug by intelligent beings to carry irrigation water from the melting glaciers to warmer regions, they admit.

In any case, the Air Force will co-operate with scientists by sending up observation planes and guided missiles for a closer look, while Mars is near the earth this spring. The missiles will be equipped with special instruments trained on Mars, and will be shot into the stratosphere. In addition, a scientific expedition will journey to Bloemfontein, South Africa, which will be the closest point on earth from which to observe our neighbor planet.

Meanwhile, the Air Force has compiled a special report, as yet unpublished, summing up its findings on flying saucers. This acknowledges that 20 per cent of the flying-saucer reports "cannot be definitely associated with familiar things.

"The difficulty in evaluating these unexplained reports," according to the Air Force document, "is based largely upon the insufficiency of accurate basic data such as size, shape, composition, and flight characteristics of the objects . . .

"The majority of reports of aerial phenomena have come from civilians," continued the document. "About 8 per cent come from civil airlines pilots, while approximately 25 per cent are reported by military personnel. Reports have been received also from highly qualified scientists."

The Air Force adds that it "has received many reports of unusual images of radarscopes," but points out that "it is fairly well established that some of these images are ground objects reflected from a layer of warm air above the earth."

"No orders have been issued by the Air Defense Command to its fighter units to fire on unidentified aerial phenomena," states the flying-saucer report. "The Air Defense Command is charged with air defense of the United States, and its mission is to attack anything airborne which is known or appears to be hostile. This should not be interpreted to mean that our pilots will fire haphazardly on anything that flies."

In an attempt to photograph a flying saucer, the Air Force will set up diffraction-grating cameras at various air towers and also use "a continuously operating Schmidt telescope equipped with a camera. This telescope has a wide aperture lens and is capable of covering a cone of 150 degrees or nearly the whole sky from horizon to horizon. This equipment will make it possible to get on a series of photographic plates a complete record of what happens in the sky at night."

Morning Report

By Abe Mellinkoff

I SUPPOSE a quiver of terror went through the local underworld last week when that poker game was broken up out on Sanchez street. Two police officers, loaded pistols on their hips, broke up a friendly game being played by six ladies, ranging up to 67 years old.

The wheels of justice moved swiftly—for a change. The six ladies were arrested Thursday, and the very next day they were tried, found guilty and sentenced. The white-livered Judge let them off with a suspended sentence.

There were no motions for delay, no protests about jurisdiction or statute of limitations, no postponements, no pleas that some of the defendants were sick or anything else. None of the foot-dragging, evasion, tackling from the bench, or broken-field running usually attendant to criminal cases.

Wham, bam, you're guilty mam.

If this could happen in a quiet residence on Sanchez street, the police probably will move in with machine guns if they ever find commercial gambling in other less-respectable quarters.

Furthermore, if poker is going to be illegal in a private house, what about gambling in the basements of a good number of churches? Or some of the better clubs in town? If it weren't for the danger of self-incrimination, I know persons who could report the case of two San Franciscans who once played dominoes for two-bits a hand at the old

Press Club on Powell street.

Before any one gets jumpy, let me hasten to add that the club has since moved and that time has since run out on the violation.

There was a time when San Francisco liked to be called the "Paris of the West." That day has passed and the last candidate to run on that platform didn't attract enough voters to fill the restrooms at Kezar Stadium.

Still I don't think the city is yet ready to be known as the "Paducah of the Pacific."

Marjorie Trumbull

Exclusively Yours

Life on a Floating Hospital

Aboard the U. S. Hospital Ship, Haven

THE LADY from Texas was playing the organ in the Nurses' Mess Room. The two ladies from Boston were taking a siesta in their deck chairs. The lady from Philadelphia was still incommunicado in her stateroom . . .

And the rest of the 16 feminine guests of the Navy, aboard this Island-bound vessel, had gone about important business of their own.

But the boy from Oklahoma and I were standing watch at the "Man Overboard Station." Both of us were being rather philosophical. Somehow, the sea does that to you.

The boy was being faced with a reality and showing a slight tendency to brood about it. According to him, it was "a funny thing, but when you see the ocean in the flesh, like this, it don't look a bit like the colored pictures on the posters . . ."

"Better, or worse?" I asked.

"Bigger," was his reply.

Standing a few minutes later on the deck below him, I had a chance to think a few fragmentary thoughts of my own, involving the day just about to end with the sun's dramatic disappearance over the edge of the big, inky-blue expanse which was causing his slight uneasiness.

We'd had a planned tour of the hospital facilities aboard in the morning. We'd had an unplanned but spectacular encounter with a rainbow in the afternoon. We'd had a visit from half a score of albatrosses, who swooped, dived and performed unbelievable aeronautical feats for our wide-eyed benefit.

And we'd had the experience of witnessing a Navy court-martial aboard ship.

The hospital tour was most enlightening and reassuring. To see the airy, spacious wards, the specially built bunks, the detailed planning for every physical comfort and medical aid that is incorporated into the Haven's operation, made each of us imagining those bunks filled with sick and wounded servicemen feel comforted.

Every facility found in a hospital ashore is compactly, scientifically available in this seagoing (or off-battle station-anchored) hospital ship. Treatment rooms, X-ray laboratories, respirators, fracture beds, operating rooms, isolation wards, diet kitchens, stock-filled pharmacy, and a blood bank—they're all here. They've all proved themselves efficiently adequate in the not-too-recent past, when doctors and nurses aboard have worked in 72-hour sessions to take on from helicopter and boat sick, wounded and mentally shattered patients.

Only two of the 800 beds were occupied when we made our morning rounds. In them were two very seasick sailors to whom, undoubtedly, the ocean also looked very, very big.

One other seaman was having a wisdom tooth pulled in the sleek and shiny dentist's office.

What activities the future holds for the Haven, only our own imaginations can picture. But to see her readiness for duty, I'm quite certain, made an indelible impression on the 16 ladies. Unquestionably, it did on me.

As for the court-martial—we watched six young naval officers hear a plea of guilty from an AWOL seaman. We listened to the tense young man explain the extenuating circumstances (an ill, house-bound wife), and we heard sentence passed: two hours extra work for 28 days.

My "on-watch" friend was still eyeing the sea a bit suspiciously, but another loquacious lad came along to tell me that, 1200 miles out, one of the ship's engineers had picked up a television program from Los Angeles.

Life on land is going to seem strangely predictable, I decided, as I stood there—trying to figure out which was port, which starboard, and in what possible direction I should start to find my way back to the stateroom designated as mine!