

## A Night to Remember

I cannot recall just when the witchery of flight ensnared me as it roots seem to precede my earliest memories. My wife is fond of telling all and sundry that at least she comes second to aeroplanes in my life. No matter what situations I find myself in the roar of a piston engine or the whine of a jet turbine moves to centre stage in my consciousness.

A natural adjunct to this love of flight is the lure of the bird kingdom. I have spent more hours than I care to admit trying to identify some high flying aircraft or timid bird shyly creeping about the shrubbery.

Aircraft and birds inhabit a fairly lonely realm, one which holds a strong attraction for my personality. I fulfill this need for aloneness by my nightly walks with the dogs. Well do I remember one of these walks many years ago.

The late May sky had a clarity and a brilliance about it seldom seen in an urban environment. Jupiter and Saturn stood out clearly among the visible stars despite the radiance of the Gemini full moon arcing towards the horizon.

Flotsam, Jetsam and I wandered aimlessly across the wide-open spaces of the Oval, happy to be alive on such a night. Dew was forming on the grass and the reflection of the moonlight from the dew was in stark contrast to our moon shadows that mimicked our every move. The chilly South Easter whipped across the Oval pushing bits of wispy, ghostlike stratus before it.

The rustle of the wind, playing around cold ears, was briefly overshadowed by the warning tik-tik of the plovers, alarmed by the shadowy figures of the hounds as they coursed across the field from smell to smell.

Briefly the sounds and sights of the plovers, the wind and the planets were challenged by those of a 747 as she clawed her fully laden way into the moonlight.

Her flashing beacons remained visible long after increasing distance had enfolded the roar of her motors.

Suddenly silence returned, broken only by the wind playing around cold ears and the regular breathing of the hounds. The sheer magic of the aloneness and quietness of the moment flooded my being and I stopped, staring at earth's close companion, her visible sisters and the distant stars, cousins to her own.

Flotsam and Jetsam, true to sheep dog tradition, came to chivvy me on and nuzzled my hand.

"Wow dogs, what a magical night this is, let us just sit here for a while," I said and received the acknowledgement of a couple of sighs as they plopped down beside me.

Eventually I rose, "Come on girls," I said.

They scrambled eagerly to their feet and we three wandered distractedly on our way.

Finally, having crisscrossed the Oval several times, I called out, "Home time."

The neighbourhood was unusually quiet and no sound came from the distant highways, no whirr of machinery from the nearby light industrial area rent the air,

not even a car seemed to move in the quiet suburban streets. Unusually, not a single dog barked at us as we strolled along the seemingly deserted streets populated only by the autumn leaves, stirring occasionally in response to each tiny gust.

“I wonder where all your friends and antagonists are tonight,” I said.

Not that it bothered them, reacting to the local canine cacophony was far beneath their dignity.

I was almost unwilling to leave the vast cathedral that swung high above our heads as we walked up the driveway.

“The wind is dropping,” I thought as I entered the front door.

After such an invigorating outing, sleep came easily and brought with it an old “friend.” Ever since early childhood I had a dream that kept returning time and time again. Thief-like, it would steal back in the night. In the dream I am gazing at the night sky when, suddenly, triangular groups of stars begin to move around in a random yet structured way, backwards, sideways, forward.

As the groups of stars began to move about in this dream I woke myself and lay there in the soft darkness thinking, “This is the umpteenth time in my life that this dream has recurred and it is always exactly the same and I wake myself at exactly the same point in the dream. I wish I knew what it meant.”

Suddenly there was a faint movement in the dark and Flotsam nudged my shoulder.

“Come on old girl,” I said.

I shuffled out of bed, unlatched the front door, let the two of them out into the garden and sat down on the step of the patio.

I looked up, enchanted once more by the beauty and brilliance of the night sky.

The wind had dropped, the moon had set and the silence was palpable.

Light pollution and her dark sister, noise pollution, both lay asleep. It was a perfect night and the very air seemed breathless confronted by such beauty.

I leant back and stretched out on the patio in order to see the stars directly above me and lay gazing at the near-perfect sky while I listened to Flotsam and Jetsam’s sniffs as they prodded around the flower bed some thirty feet away. Their sniffs carried quite clearly on the still air while I continued gazing at the stars, entranced by their brightness because of the lack of haze.

Suddenly they came!

Directly above me two objects swept majestically across my field of view. They moved in close and perfect formation travelling from northeast to southwest.

They were shaped like equilateral triangles with the vertical sides bent inwards about two thirds of the way up to form a shortened apex, a sort of five sided triangle, and appeared to be black with an outline of pale blue, neon-like light. They sailed silently overhead, blocking out the stars as they moved. Beyond their blue outlines the stars remained visible which seemed to indicate that the blue was indeed the outer shape of the objects.

Just as suddenly they were gone!

Intensely calm, I lay there for a long while thinking about what had just happened.

"Let's get back to sleep," I said eventually and the dogs scampered keenly inside for by now there was a distinct chill on the May night air.

I slid into bed, placed my hands under my head and lay there in the comforting warmth of the room abandoned by sleep and assailed by questions. "How high were they?" "How big were they?" All my aviation and bird identification skills together could not assist me in gauging either the height or the speed of these objects.

They could have been fighter jet size at one thousand feet moving at three hundred knots yet they could equally have been the size of a city block at forty thousand feet and moving in excess of two thousand knots. I can clearly remember them blocking out the stars as they moved but this did not assist my judgement of their speed and size.

During the objects' flight I continued to hear Flotsam and Jetsam snuffling around the flower bed, a fact which clearly indicated that the objects were not emitting any sound that reached my ears. Obviously UFO's crossed my mind but I was intrigued by the fact that these objects did not look like the traditional flying saucers that I had either seen pictures of or read about.

Suddenly I thought, "I wonder if there is a connection between the triangular shapes of the objects and the groups of stars in my recurring dream."

Many years passed before I shared this experience with anyone knowing that people are usually either completely gullible or totally sceptical about any such occurrence.

I eventually discussed this with a friend and while we covered all sorts of possibilities we came to no rational conclusion. I can only reiterate that these objects were not like any aircraft known to me - and no, they were not the plan form of the now familiar stealth fighter.

Still later I contacted a local ufologist and to my surprise she said, "Just a few weeks ago two similar shaped objects were videotaped over Brussels." She invited me to come and view the tape but strangely enough, to this day, I have not had the slightest inclination to accept her offer.

Nothing in my life has rivalled that experience, for here I was face to face with something that was greater than our small existence on this isolated little planet. The sighting pointed to a greater reality than I had ever dared to imagine.

Perhaps fifteen years have passed since that almost mystical night but the experience is as real now as it was at that moment.

I now suspect that the sighting of those five sided triangles was in some mysterious way foretold by my dream since from that unforgettable night to this, the dream has never returned!

**Ray Hattingh**