

'IFO'S,' NOT 'UFO'S,' AT BETHEL

Bethel Tweaks Noses Of UFO Believers By Flying an IFO

Flying saucers are being reported all over the United States, and there are those who believe that they are piloted by visitors to this planet.

When these Unidentified Flying Objects appeared over Bethel recently, Alaskans tracked them down, interviewed their builder, learned the secrets of their operation-

and tweaked the noses of the believers of the "visiting beings" theory.

This year, a number of UFO's have been seen in various Alaskan communit-

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ies. These include Barrow in February, where the visitors had red-and-green blinking lights, and Bethel in March, where the objects were disks with pink-red to orange lights.

On April 11, several Bethel residents were startled by a large object hovering over the treeline across the Kuskokwim. What was most strange, they said, was the way it turned all-red, then black with small lights, then brilliant red again.

Upon investigation, it turned out that the "flying saucer" had been constructed

out of tissue paper by "fleet commander" Don Johnson, a former Peace Corps volunteer who learned to build the "invaders" while serving in Guatemala.

Johnson, now regional coordinator for ASCAP at Bethel, calls his vessels IFO's or Identified Flying Objects.

These mystifying flying objects are constructed by gluing pieces of red tissue paper into a seven by three-foot balloon. A wire-mesh frame is placed in the bottom.

A kerosene-soaked rag is put in the frame and lighted. This provides hot air to lift the balloon and also gives the light for the UFO.

The balloon bobs up and down in flight. When down, the fire appears below the balloon, which is black, when up, the entire balloon bursts into brilliant red.

The spectacular sight of a UFO bursting into light and then vanishing can also occur—if the tissue paper catches fire during the flight.

An IFO has about a 15-minute fuel supply and a range of several miles, depending on the wind.

It can even show up on a radar screen, if the builder will attach tin foil to the tissue paper.

Other members of the Johnson fleet have visited Nunapitchuk and Hooper Bay. He says, however, that he has not visited Barrow.

Asked why he flew his IFO's Johnson commented "they're just fun to make and fun to send up."

There is a great fire danger, however, if an IFO is sent up close to a building or when there is much of a wind. A wind can upset the balloon in flight, setting the paper on fire and causing the object to fall.

Because of this danger, he urges that children not send them up. If one does come down, they might not be able to get to it before it starts a fire.

The discovery of these construction secrets may clear the air (literally) in regard to some of the Alaskan UFO's.