



Lawmaker revs up for run at speed limit

SALEM (AP) — Sen. Randy Miller is hoping his latest attempt to repeal Oregon's 65-mph speed limit on rural interstates doesn't idle and die like the first one.

The Lake Oswego Republican on Monday pushed through a bill that would let the 65-mph signs stand, but would let drivers exceed that limit as long as they are driving at a reasonable speed for existing conditions.

The so-called "basic rule" is used mostly to regulate speeds on urban interstates or in more hazardous conditions, such as in darkness or rain. But SB1218 would make the basic rule, not posted limits, the law on rural portions of Interstates 5 and 84.

The current limit on those stretches is 65 mph. Oregon is the only state west of the Rockies that has kept the limit since Congress repealed it in 1995.

"The current limit is unreasonable," Miller said. "It borders on the unconscionable to issue a ticket for going 66 mph on a beautiful clear day on a freeway in Oregon. I don't suggest it's being done, but it shouldn't be possible."

The bill was approved Monday by the Senate, 21-7. But it could hit the slow lane in the House, a fate suffered by Miller's first speed limit bill last month.

SB458 would have repealed the 65-mph limit and allowed the Oregon Department of Transportation to raise the limit to 70 or 75. The bill sailed through the Senate but stalled in the House Transportation Committee.

"We'll have to see where (the new bill) goes over there," Miller said.

Miller said officers should still cite those who drive at dangerously high speeds. But he noted that Oregon Department of Transportation statistics show that 85 percent of drivers on I-5 between Portland and Salem go about 71 mph anyway.

Legislative

Birthplace of the UFO era

Fifty years ago, pilot lands in Pendleton with tale of 'peculiar' aircraft

By the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — In many ways, it all started here — "it" being the "discovery" of flying saucers.

Certainly there had been unexplained sightings before 1947, such as "ghost rockets" spotted in Scandinavia. But before Kenneth Arnold, a 28-year-old pilot and businessman from Boise, no one before had emphatically — and publicly — insisted he had seen, clearly, high-speed aircraft that could not be explained.

At about 3 p.m. on June 24, 1947, Arnold was

flying toward Yakima near Mt. Rainier in southern Washington state "when a bright flash reflected on my plane ... I looked every place in the sky and couldn't find where the reflection had come from until I looked to the left and the north of Mt. Rainier where I observed a chain of nine peculiar looking aircraft flying from north to south at approximately 9,500 elevation..."

Arnold reckoned the objects were about 20-25 miles away and had to be fairly large to be so clearly visible when they passed in front of snow-covered Mt. Rainier.

"I thought it was very peculiar that I couldn't find their tails but assumed they were some type of jet planes," he later related. He'd also never seen a plane flying so close to mountain peaks, and when the sun reflected from the units they appeared to be "com-



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saucer" was created by former EO reporter Bill Bequette, who helped coin the phrase in an effort to describe the now-famous UFO sighting of Kenneth Arnold near Mt. Rainier.

And no one claimed to have actually seen a UFO. But most thought their existence wasn't totally out of the realm of possibility.

Adam Stills of Pendleton said, "I believe there's other things out there. But I'd have

Bequette

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bureau in Portland, by a teletype transmission wire usually referred to as the C wire. Member papers punched their stories onto the C wire ... whatever stories the Portland editors thought had regional or national interest were transmitted on the AP's main, or trunk wire.

What happened then?

When I returned to the office after lunch, the receptionist's eyes were as big as saucers — the kind we use under coffee cups. She said newspapers from all around the country and Canada had been calling. They wanted more details on the "flying saucers." I spent the next two hours with Mr. Arnold in his hotel room. From that interview I wrote a story about 40 column inches long. The story was telephoned to the AP bureau in Portland. Next morning almost every newspaper in the country published the story on Page 1 ... I feel some embarrassment over the original UFO story. My embarrassment is because I failed to recognize what a big story Mr. Arnold brought into the office that day.

Who did coin the phrase "fly-

ing saucer?"

"With some shows, I think people are thinking there might be other things in the universe," he said.

"I think they exist," said Sara Brookshier, 9, of Pendleton, who was walking downtown with a group of children and their babysitters.

She said she'd heard stories from friends of her parents of spotting UFOs while down in Arizona.

Brookshier wasn't the only

ing saucer?"

I don't remember whether or not Arnold used the words "saucer-shaped craft." I am inclined to credit his version (that he only spoke of objects moving like a saucer if you skipped it across the water), knowing the tendency of journalists to rephrase. I'm sure I didn't coin "flying saucers."

What's your feeling about Kenneth Arnold?

Mr. Arnold did not impress me then as a person who "saw things." And Nolan Skiff also believed Mr. Arnold to be an honest and sincere person who was genuinely puzzled by what he had seen that day. Arnold was most cooperative when I went to his hotel room for a follow-up story. He seemed eager, as I remember, to answer all my questions as fully as possible.

Arnold became the butt of many jokes, some of which were not good-natured, in the ensuing days and weeks. When he came into the office a few weeks after the initial visit he was carrying an 8-mm movie camera with a telescopic lens. His intention, he said, was to get pictures of the next "flying saucers" he saw. **What do you think about the evolution of the UFO debate?**

Rainier Wednesday by Kenneth Arnold, Boise, Ida., flying businessman.

Mr. Schuening said he saw "planes" the same day Mr. Arnold reported seeing the so-called "flying discs" whizzing along the Cascade mountains at an estimated 1200 miles an hour.

that we are not alone.

He knew they weren't stars, but he stopped short of calling them UFOs.

"Just about every night, if you get out and study (the sky) long enough, you'll see something," he said.

One Pendleton woman, who asked not to be identified, said she didn't know what to believe.

"It's just one of those things," she said. "I just don't know which way to think."

My skepticism, and the disbelief of many others, does not mean UFOs do not exist, or that what Kenneth Arnold saw was real. And there may be substance to the theory, and theories, that some of the UFOs may be "ultra, super, more-than-top-secret" aircraft tested by my government or some other government. Two years ago, I read a book titled "Above Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Cover-Up." The author is Timothy Good, the publisher is William Morrow & Co., N.Y., and the forward is written by Lord Hill-Norton, former British Chief of Defense Staff. The title is the thesis, but not in all the nearly 600 pages could I find proof of the charge.

We have a saying that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

My dad would have said, "Show me!"

Editor's note: Pierre Lagrange is a reporter from the French magazine "Science & Vie" who has been researching the flying saucer phenomenon for many years, and recently published a book, "The Extraterrestrial Night." He visited Pendleton from Paris while researching this story.

The objects were so high, he said, that he was unable to determine their shape but he said they were "weaving in and out of formation."

Mr. Arnold reported the objects he saw were also weaving "like the tail of a Chinese kite."

And more recently seen in the skies ...

By ANN ARBOR MILLER
of the East Oregonian

ON THE ROAD — Shades of orange rose while the sun began to sink.

My two companions and I were tired from a day exploring fossil beds near John Day. We were anxious to return to Pendleton and we were planning a good feed when we got there.

As we came to the top of a plateau the prominent outlines of Mount Baker and Mount St. Helens appeared.

"Photo stop," Stuart shouted.

He's from Montana and can get a little excited sometimes.

Spread out for miles were nothing but fields, until the mountains seemingly shot up.

Orange began to shift to pink while a watercolor sky unfolded.

A deer bounded across a nearby field. We pushed on.

Other travelers were few and far between.

First encounter

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pletely round."

Arnold first landed in Yakima and told his story, in private, to a couple of acquaintances. They thought it might have been guided missiles.

But en route to Pendleton, Arnold spread out his maps in his cockpit and begin "figuring mathematically miles per hour" on the basis of distance between the mountains. He thought he must be wrong, so when he landed at Pendleton he did "some serious calculating."

He found his story had preceded him to the Round-Up City, and he found "quite a group of people to greet me," and before long "it seemed like everybody around the airfield was listening to the story of my experience."

As they discussed the incident, maps were spread around again and those gathered helped him estimate the speed of the vehicles again. The low estimate was more than 1,300 mph, the high estimate in excess of 1,700 mph.

Armed with his maps and calculations, Arnold headed for the local FBI office. "I thought it was my duty to report these things," Arnold said. The office was closed, so he decided to go instead to the

office of the East Oregonian, then at the corner of Main Street and Emigrant Avenue.

He told Nolan Skiff and Bill Bequette his story, and the two hurriedly wedged a four-paragraph story onto the bottom of the front page just in time for the June 25 edition. Bequette shared the story with The Associated Press wire, and the circus had begun.

By the next day, the story had been picked up literally across the nation. The EO followed the story in the June 26 issue with an extensive interview with Arnold. In the process, Bequette and Arnold unwittingly coined the phrase "flying saucers" when Arnold described the objects appearing "like a saucer if you skipped it across the water."

Arnold soon found himself under siege of sorts from reporters whom, without ever having heard his story in detail, extracted a few juicy points and rushed into print.

"Of course many of these stories were distorted and inaccurate," complained Arnold. "I didn't share the general excitement. I can't begin to estimate the number of people, letters, telegrams and phone calls I tried to answer. After three days of this hubbub I came to the conclusion that I was the only sane one in the bunch."

Maybe it's because it was Saturday night in Morrow County or maybe it's always that way along Highway 207.

"Hey, what's that?" I asked. "Is that comet still around? You know, Hale-Bopp?"

"Nope," said Stuart.

In the northwest sky an object, looking much like a small, slightly smushed boiled egg on its side, hovered.

"It's too big to be a planet," said Genevieve.

"Well, it's not a plane," I said.

It wasn't doing much. No jetting about, flashing lights or funny sounds.

"What about a satellite?" said Stuart.

"If it's a satellite why didn't we see it a minute ago?" I asked.

Stuart finally said what we'd all been thinking.

"Maybe it's a UFO," he said.

Laughter erupted.

Collectively we glanced back at the sky.

"Hey, where'd it go?" I asked.

Arnold never wavered from his story and, with a penchant for accuracy, became a careful investigator in his own right, interviewing dozens of fellow pilots over the years. But when he died in 1984, Arnold was in many ways bitter about the whole episode because of how it was distorted and sensationalized throughout his life.

His daughter, 43-year-old Kim Arnold, still lives in the family home in Boise. She hopes to set the record straight once and for all with a book about her father titled "June 24, 1947, Kenneth Arnold and the Birth of UFOs."

Greg Long, who is ghostwriting the book with Arnold, said he expects it to be on the market in 1998. Long has been interested in UFOs for 22 years, he said, and interviewed Kenneth Arnold several times between 1980 and his death.

Arnold was clearly "doing what he thought was right for the country" by sharing his story, Long said, adding that it was clear "there was no way this guy concocted it."

Pierre Lagrange, who writes for "Science & Vie" magazine in Paris, France, and has traveled to Pendleton to research Kenneth Arnold and the UFO phenomenon, contributed to this article.