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AN OCTOPUS IN THE HAND-

(is worth any number of them in the Smithsonian)

INFO JOURNAL, N^o 8, WINTER-SPRING 1972

In November of 1896, at St. Augustine Beach, Florida, a huge lump of organic matter washed ashore.

The first scientific observer on the scene was Dr. DeWitt Webb, a local physician and President of the St. Augustine Scientific Society. Dr. Webb examined the remains and pronounced them to be that of an octopus.

Measurements of the carcass gave these figures: size of the body as 18 to 22 feet long and 6 to 7 feet wide; estimated original weight of the head and body as at least four to five tons; the arms an estimated 75 to 100 feet long and 18 inches in diameter at the base. (The vagueness of the measurements arose due to the facts that the carcass was originally partially buried in the sand of the beach, and that it is somewhat difficult to measure an octopus under any circumstances -- and if you can't understand that, just try it some time.)

The case was brought to the attention of Prof. A. E. Verrill of Yale, at that time one of the world's leading authorities on cephalopods (or, to be pedantic, teuthologist -- another cute trick: try asking your friends what an expert on cephalopods is called.)

Verrill, having received descriptions and tissue samples from Webb, concurred in the identification of the creature as an octopus. A new biological species was created: Octopus giganteus Verrill.

This was in the early part of 1897. Verrill wrote his judgement for The New York Herald, The American Naturalist, and The American Journal of Science. He was an authority on the giant squid -- he had been the man who made the kraken scientifically respectable (after so many of them had washed up in Newfoundland waters in the 1870s that they could no longer be explained away) -- and he gave his considered opinion that the Florida monster was indeed a cephalopod: not a giant squid, but an incredibly large octopus.

But we all know that there ain't no such animal.

And so it was that a voice spake unto Verrill: "thou shalt have thy giant squid, but thou shalt not have thy giant octopus."

Verrill, harkening unto this voice, recanted.

In The New York Herald, The American Journal of Science, and Science, Verrill now declared that he had been mistaken and that the Florida carcass was actually that of some not-readily identifiable portion of a whale.

"But I am unable to refer this immense, closed, pouch-like mass to any part of any known whale, or, in fact, to any other animal..."

Tissue specimens from the carcass revealed "very little oil" -- a most atypical circumstance to be expected in any kind of cetacean remains.

It must be interjected at this point that we have not done any research on this case ourselves, but that all our information comes from "An Octopus Trilogy", by F.G. Wood and Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., Natural History Magazine, March, 1971. We wrote Dr. Wood and obtained a print of the photograph appearing on our cover. (We assume that this was taken on Dec. 7, 1896 and that the gentleman in the picture is Dr. Webb. The photo is credited to the American Museum of Natural History.)

To continue: Verrill at first agrees with Webb, who was apparently the only knowledgeable person ever to inspect the carcass, then he decides to disagree with Webb, and moreover to become inconsistent with himself. At first Verrill examines the tissue specimens and finds them un-cetacean in nature. Then he looks at them again and "rejects them as having come from a cephalopod." Perfect logic: since the carcass must be that of a whale, or some part of same, the samples that are clearly from a cephalopod must not be from the same carcass.

F. A. Lucas, then Curator of Comparative Anatomy of the National Museum, was less circumspect than Verrill, and less scientific: "The substance looks like blubber, and smells like blubber and it is blubber, nothing more or less."

Whether or not he had a nose for blubber, Dr. Lucas certainly had a nose for knowing when to say the safe thing. That, after all, is the whole point of being a Curator.

Webb describes the integument (covering) of the creature as muscular. Verrill says that it "shows a lack of muscular tissue." Webb describes the carcass as "simply a great bag." Verrill calls it a "great bag-shaped mass."

Agreement and Disagreement.

But we somehow find ourselves assuming that Verrill should be able to tell the difference between the tissue of a whale and that of a cephalopod. At least as well as anybody could -- he is an expert, remember?

What accounts for the change of opinion? An Associated Press release dated April 10, 1971, reports Dr. Gennaro as saying, "We could find no scientific evidence that accounted for his switch. Presumably he was under a lot of pressure from the scientific community because of the controversy it caused."

It seems to us that we've heard that remark before.

The last official document in Round One of the Great Octopus Battle is a letter to W.H.Dall, Curator of Mollusks at the National Museum, from his superior, Prof. F.W.True (marvelous name!). It begins, "I am sorry to say that the secretary does not see his way clear to have the cuttlefish examined..."

Cuttlefish.

The cuttlefish is a cephalopod, no species known to exceed five feet in length, neither a squid nor an octopus. If there were a better way of signifying a complete lack of conception as to what problem was involved, or of showing a greater lack of interest, we might have expected a reference to "the whale blubber"...

Sufficient unto the day is the disinterest thereof.

In 1962, Dr. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., was allowed to take a sample from the specimen material of Octopus giganteus Verrill in the Smithsonian. Photomicrographs revealed the tissue to be that of an octopus.

Afterwards the remaining material in the Smithsonian's jar was lost.

So now the giant octopus is respectable. Even if the Smithsonian did lose what was left of the 1896 specimen. ... We're prepared to admit for once, perhaps, that the Smithsonian can sometimes lose something not as the result of being too organized (organization equals incompetence), but simply out of a normal and routine incompetence.

The Natural History article ends with a section on tales of sightings of giant octopi by Bahamian fishermen. (Octopi have a fascinating colloquial name in those waters: scuttles.) This brought to mind a couple of curious items relating to cephalopoid creatures, mythical or otherwise, from the Pacific -- where the previously officially-largest octopus lives.

Jorge Luis Borges, in his The Book of Imaginary Beings, describes under "The Fauna of Chile" the hide.

"The Hide is an octopus that lives in the sea and has the dimensions and appearance of a cowhide stretched out flat. Its edges are furnished with numberless eyes, and, in that part which seems to be its head, it has four more eyes of a larger size. Whenever persons or animals enter the water, the Hide rises to the surface and engulfs them with an irresistible force, devouring them in a matter of moments."

Borges' source for this was the Myths and Superstitions of Julio Vicuña Cifuentes.

We know of one alleged modern report of a hide-like organism from the Pacific. In Eric Frank Russell's Great World Mysteries he cites an account by an Australian diver in the South Pacific:

"All the way down I was followed by a fifteen foot shark which circled around full of curiosity but made no attempt to attack. I kept wondering how far down he would go. He was still hanging around some thirty feet from me, and about twenty feet higher, when I reached a ledge below which was a great, black chasm of enormous depth.

"It being dangerous to venture further, I stood looking into the chasm while the shark waited for my next move. Suddenly the water became distinctly colder. While the temperature continued to drop with surprising rapidity, I saw a black mass rising from the darkness of the chasm. It floated upwards very slowly. As at last light reached it I could see that it was of dull brown colour and tremendous size, a flat, ragged-edged thing about one acre in extent. It pulsed sluggishly and I knew that it was alive despite its lack of visible limbs or eyes.

"Still pulsating, this frightful vision floated past my level, by which time the coldness had become most intense. The shark now hung completely motionless, paralysed either by cold or fear. While I watched fascinated, the enormous brown thing reached the shark, contacted him with its upper surface. The shark gave a convulsive shiver and was drawn unresisting into the substance of the monster.

"I stood perfectly still, not daring to move, while the brown thing sank back into the chasm as slowly as it had emerged. Darkness swallowed it and the water started to regain some warmth. God knows what this thing was, but I had no doubt that it had been born of the primeval slime countless fathoms below."

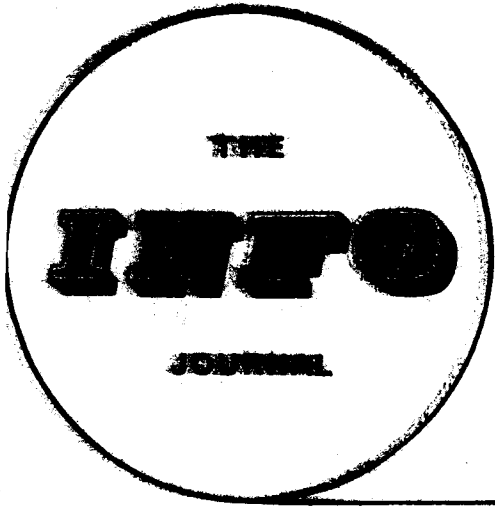
The date was 1953, but unfortunately the INFO copy of the Russell book is a paperback with the original reference editorially chopped out. So the locale of the report isn't known to us.

The hide sounds rather like an enormous version of the umbrella-like octopi of great depths. Perhaps it isn't altogether imaginary?

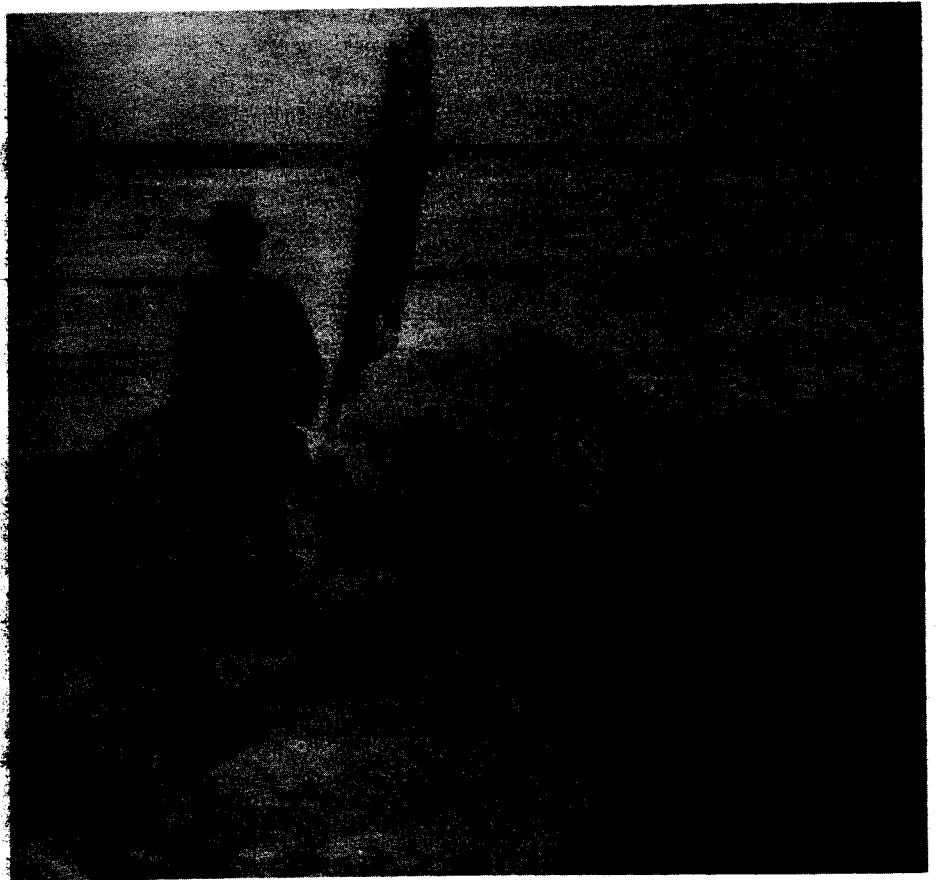
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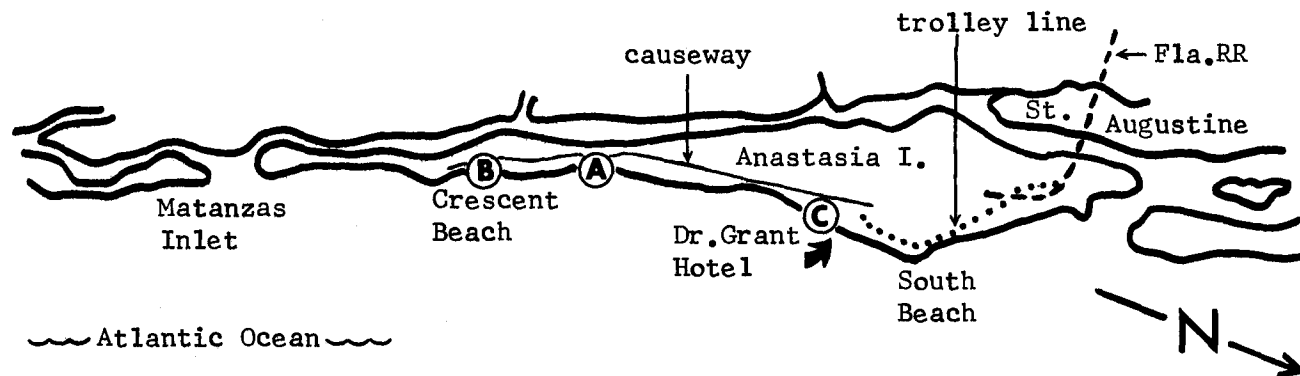


Giant Octopus — Florida, 1896

Monster on the Florida Beach

Part I by Gary S. Mangiacopra

INFO JOURNAL, No 17, MAY 1976



- A = Original position of octopus, Dec. 1896.
B = New position, Jan. to Mar. 1897.
C = Final position, Mar. 1897.

Map prepared by the author based on one drawn for the St. Augustine Historical Society in 1916, and showing the various locations of Octopus giganteus from December 1896 to March 1897.

The lead article of the INFO Journal #8, dealt with the discovery of a beached sea monster that upon examination in 1896, and later examination in 1963 of the preserved tissue samples was identified as a gigantic octopus of 100 feet in length. (1)

The following account is a personal investigation and reexamination of the facts and a vindication of this discovery, which is still considered by science as a joke.

THE STORY

The discoverers of the giant resident of the seas were two young bicyclists, Herbert Coles and Dunham Coretter of St. Augustine, Florida, who were cycling along Anastasia Beach towards Matanzas Inlet (see map) on the evening of November 30, 1896. Their trip ended abruptly when they came upon the remains of an immense carcass that was deeply embedded in the sands. (2)

News of the two boys' discovery would have been quickly consigned to the obscurity of brief newspaper mentions if not for the intervention of a local and remarkable citizen, Dr. DeWitt Webb. By profession a medical doctor, by avocation a local historian and amateur naturalist,

Dr. Webb would become the leading figure in this controversy, as he solely undertook the responsibility of collecting and recording the facts. (3)

Due to the distance and the lateness of the day it was not until the next evening, December first, that Doctor Webb along with several others was able to examine the beached carcass. Due to the isolation of the beach at that time of year, the carcass was probably beached for several days before its discovery and its weight of five tons had caused it to sink into the sand to a considerable depth. The dimensions of the visible portion measured 23 feet in length, 4 feet high, and 18 feet across the widest part of the back. It was much mutilated at one end and in an advanced state of decomposition. The hide was of a light pink color, nearly white, with a silvery appearance. But the most startling fact, Webb concluded, was that the remains were not those of a supposed beached whale, but of a monstrous octopus! (4)

Cloudy weather and rain prevented Webb from reexamining the octopus until Dec. fifth, but during the days of waiting he had the foresight to realize the importance and uniqueness of this chance dis-

covery.

Revisiting the site with two amateur photographers two days later, photographs were taken showing different views of the octopus as originally found. Drawings later published show a pear-shaped body with the largest section near the broadly rounded posterior end and flatter toward the smaller mutilated end. The head is almost unrecognizable due to mutilation and decay, but the most important feature visible in the foreground is what looks like the remains of the stumps of five arms.

Several days after the photograph session, a Mr. Wilson claimed to have dug around the carcass and found the fragments of the arms, stating, "one arm was lying west of the body, 23 feet long; one stump of arm, west of body, about 4 feet; three arms lying south of body and from appearance attached to same, longest one measured over 32 feet, the other arms were 3 to 5 feet shorter." (5)

Shortly after Mr. Wilson's excavation a severe storm had washed the carcass out to sea, to be cast ashore again two miles farther south. When later reexamined the reported arms were missing, probably the result of wave action on the carcass. Doubt as to the verification of the reported arms would later cast suspicion

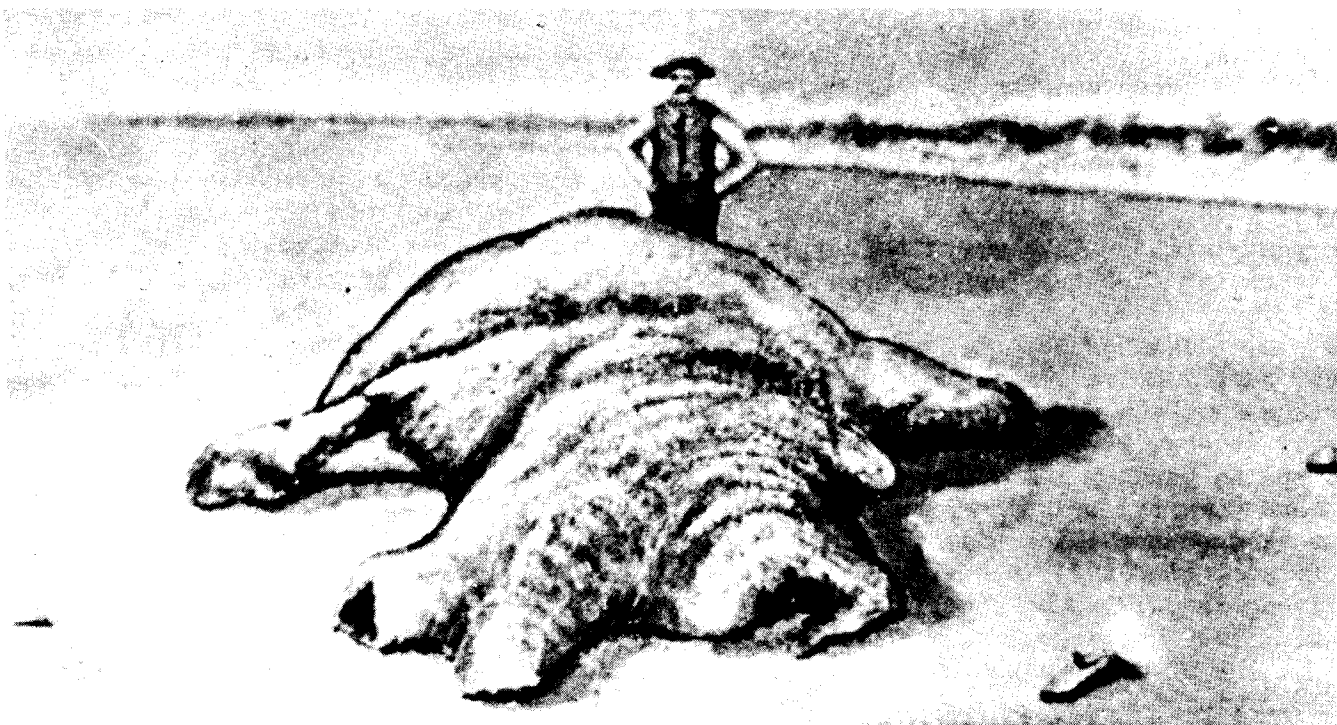
upon other data obtained by Webb.

Webb began a series of letters in hopes that others more qualified would personally examine the octopus. A letter dated Dec. 8, telling of the discovery of the body, passed through several hands until it was acquired by A. E. Verrill, Professor of Zoology at Yale University, best known for his work on the legendary sea monsters now recognized as the giant squids.

Verrill published a brief notice in the American Journal of Science for Jan. 1897 of this discovery. Based upon the dimensions given in the letter, he concluded that it indicated a giant squid, rather than an octopus, but a squid larger than the specimens he had studied in the 1870's. (6)

Verrill's position was that there had never been a scientific examination of an octopus of the dimensions of the giant squids (60 feet in length). Though he did not consider the possibility that there could always be a first time, Verrill quickly reversed his opinion after receiving additional information and photographs from Webb. (7)

Verrill's first article in his revised opinion was as a Sunday supplement for the New York Herald of Jan. third. Recounting the facts of this monster



The carcass, end view, drawn by A. Hyatt Verrill, from a photograph taken Dec. 7, 1896. From the American Naturalist, April 1897.

and based on the information of a reported fragment of arm 36 feet long by 10 in. at its broken extremity, the length of the arms would have been from 75-100 feet by 18 inches at the base, reaching an area 200 feet in diameter. (8)

He formally presented this new species of giant cephalopod in the following Feb. issue of the Am. Journal of Science, with additional information and based especially on photos sent by Webb, showing an eight-armed cephalopod, probably a true octopus of enormous size.

Officially the new species was named Octopus giganteus Verrill, though there was criticism at his failure to name the species in honor of Dr. Webb, since he was the person who identified and recorded the facts at considerable time and expense to himself.

Concluding that this was the first giant octopod described from an actual specimen, Verrill at a later date would question the correctness of the information he obtained, for he had based his published statements entirely on the facts gathered during the early part of December.

Due to the distance and stormy weather, Dr. Webb was unable to revisit the octopus until the second week in January. During this interval the monster was washed from the place originally found, and when located, had suffered further mutilation, especially the loss of the alleged fragments of arms.

Though in correspondence with Prof. Verrill about his new findings, Webb wrote a series of seven known letters to W. H. Dall, Curator of Mollusks at the National Museum at Washington, D.C.

In early January Webb wrote of his efforts at trying (and failing) to turn the monster over. No less than a dozen men with strong tackle could not turn it over and only partly raised it. Photographs were taken and Webb was trying to raise the money to draw it out of the pit it was in and up the bank by means of horses and tackle and then try to spread the hood out and cut through the thick hide that measured in some places $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick.

Writing Jan. 17, Webb records, "Yesterday I took four horses, six men, 3 sets tackle, a lot of heavy planking, and a rigger to superintend the work and succeeded in rolling the Invertebrate out of the pit and placing it about 40 feet higher upon the beach where it now rests on the flooring of heavy plank...on being straightened

out to measure 21 feet instead of 18...A good part of the mantle or head remains attached near to the more slender part of the body...The body was then opened for the entire length of 21 feet...The slender part of the body was entirely empty of internal organs. And the organs of the remainder were not large and did not look as if the animal had been so long dead...The muscular coat which seems to be all there is of the invertebrate is from two and three to six inches in thickness. The fibers of the external coat are longitudinal and the inner transverse...no caudal fin or any appearance if there had been any...no beak or head or eyes remaining...no pen to be found nor any evidence of any bony structure whatever."

This lack of a pen (cartilage material that is shaped like a quill pen), found in all the squids, gave support that it was probably not a squid, and the lack of bony structure would eliminate its having been some mammal, such as a whale, added support to the octopus identification.

Webb continues, "It is still in a comparatively good state of preservation and so would it not be a good thing for yourself or Prof. Verrill of Yale or both of you to come down and examine it for yourself and so determine its exact place better than I can...."

"If you think of coming at all you ought to come at once. I have written a similar letter to Prof. Verrill. You see I have said invertebrate rather than a squid because that is entirely safe."

But neither Dall nor Verrill would take the advice to personally examine the octopus. Perhaps due to Verrill's busy schedule and the possibility that Yale could not afford to send him to Florida at that time, he remained at home.

The same reasons may have prevented Dall, for a letter to him from Y.A. True reads, "I am sorry to say that the secretary does not see his way clear to have the cuttlefish examined at the cost of the Institution and the Museum can scarcely afford the expense at this time.

"Could not measurements etc., be made by Dr. Webb and some specimens saved?"

A brief letter of the 18th from Webb adds, "...I think I made one mistake in my description. The external muscular layer is circular and the internal longitudinal."

But Webb's revision to his description of the musculature is not character-

istic of either the whale or the octopus.

A brief article in the local St. Augustine newspaper based on information supplied by Webb contains the only printed reference that Dall acknowledged with Verrill that the remains were those of an invertebrate animal, the largest one ever recorded. (10)

Three weeks passed before Webb wrote on February fifth, "I made another excursion to the invertebrate and brought away specimens for you and for Prof. Verrill... Although strange as it may seem to you I could have packed them in salt and sent them to you at once although the creature had been lying on the shore for more than two months. And I think that both yourself and Prof. Verrill while not doubting my measurements have thought my account of the thickness of the muscular, or rather tendonous husk pretty large so I am glad to send you the specimens and express them in salt in a day or two... My time has been so limited when I have gone down that I have been unable to make a satisfactory examination of the viscera...."

On February 10th: "...I will ship the specimens to you tomorrow... I expect to have the creature moved up in a day or two when it can be put in better shape for examination. Prof. Verrill had decided to call it the *Octopus Giganteus*.

"I wrote to Prof. True to the expense of formalin in quantity as there will have to be a good deal used in the attempts to have the creature preserved. It will be worth while to make a good deal of effort if it is the 'only one.'"

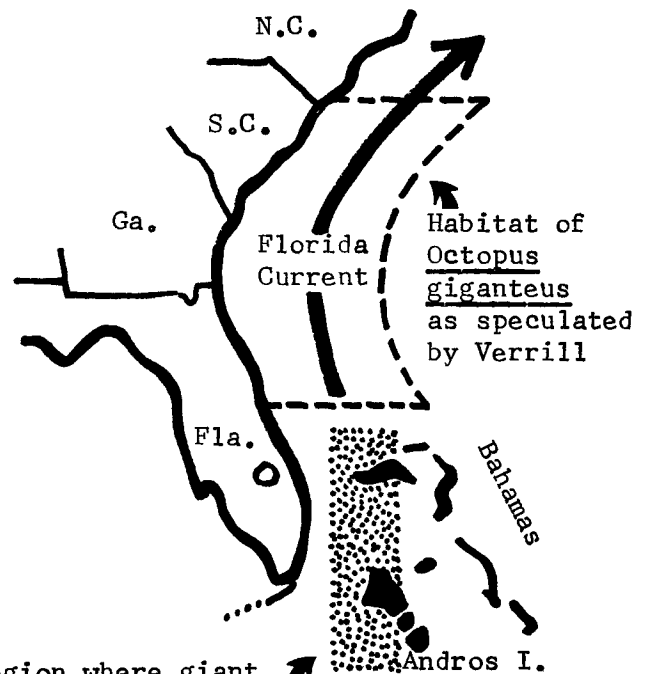
February 12th: "The box with the specimens from the '*Octopus Giganteus*' was shipped this afternoon by Express to Mr. True who as the Curator in charge was I thought the proper person to send it to..."

This letter marks the beginning of the controversy as to the correct identification of the animal's carcass.

While the specimens were in transit, Verrill published a second Sunday supplement for the Herald of February 14th and speculated on the size, habitat, and population density of these creatures. (11)

He estimated the live weight at 18-20 tons, with arms in length of more than 100 feet with hundreds of suckers; eyes a foot in diameter, and 10 gallons of ink in its ink bag.

Speculating that there must be thousands of others of equal size, their habitat would be the broad plateau that ex-



Region where giant octopus sightings have occurred as noted by Dr. F. G. Wood

tends out to sea 200 miles off South Carolina, Georgia, and north Florida, where in depths of 200 fathoms they would crawl on the bottom. (see map)

This region was the feeding ground of the sperm whale and the octopus was probably killed and partly eaten, with the remnants washed ashore in a storm.

On this same date, the New Haven, Conn., Evening Register published "Octopus for Yale." This would add something to the controversy at a later date, for it was written by Prof. Verrill's son, A. Hyatt Verrill, praising his father for his work on proving the Viking legends of the Kraken, giant squids, and saying that not until this present winter had anything approached the Kraken in size. (12)

Preservatives were forwarded to Dr. Webb to save as much as possible of the carcass, as portions of the body were awaited in New Haven.

On February 23 the specimens arrived at Yale.

On February 23 Verrill wrote the first two letters of retraction, subsequently published in Science, March 5th, and the Herald of the 7th, stating that he had just received some large masses of exterior integument, elastic, very tough and hard to cut, composed mainly of tough cords and fibers of white elastic connective tissue, much interlaced and bound together with irregular cavities and canals in some pieces. Little oil was present, though

whale blubber contains significant amounts of oil, even when beached for long periods of time. He concluded that these structures resembled those of blubber of some whales and that the creature could not have been an octopus but was a vertebrate animal! (13, 14)

But Verrill was unable to refer this bag-like form to any part of any known whale or any other organism that was large enough to have such a massive covering, and was puzzled as to how it could have been attached to any whale. His supposition originally that it was the body of an octopus was based entirely upon its general form and appearance as shown by photographs and on the reports of alleged stumps of arms.

(to be continued in next issue)

* * *

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the CABRERA ROCKS

by Ryan Drum

Some of us do not accept in any way the Bering Strait land bridge means of people coming to the Americas. Cold sober investigators are working slowly but surely to reveal carefully excavated and dated finds and sites presenting wild and exciting evidences for the long inhabitation of the Americas by people. In many ways the most extravagant claims and data are those presented by Dr. Javier Cabrera, an MD specializing in circulatory ailments, who lives and digs in Ica, Peru. Cabrera is a hyperkinetic, chain-smoking, dashing man in his early fifties; overtly brilliant, he has amazing ideas about cancer, genetics, religion, nutrition, and mortality. He is a much respected surgeon and physician in Ica (by the assertion of patients and associates), and the picture of fitness: in essence a delightful and convincing human who, unlike so many pushy inventive folks, is neither fat nor misshapen nor ugly or otherwise messed up so that he uses his scholarship act as compensation for personal inadequacy. We first learned of Cabrera from Maria Reiche (Mystery in the Desert - an amazing tri-lingual account of the Nazca Lines) who suggested that no greater marvel occurred in Peru. The "marvel" consisted of petroglyphs with strange scenes. When we got to Ica we asked for Dr. Cabrera; most knew him and his rocks, and told us that we "could judge for ourselves." We made an appointment one day for 1 p.m. and kept it as did Cabrera. As soon as he learned that I was a biologist and well-educated, his enthusiasm knew no bounds. We asked to see the petroglyph and he went into a sort of histrionic trance during which he mentioned that we were going to see the impossible, that we should be careful to whom we revealed the things, and that unregistered artifacts were liable to government seizure and he feared for his collection of rocks.

News From Another World: The Nebraska UFO-Cryptozoology Conference

reported by Michael D. Swords

November 11, 12, 13 of 1983: Ray Boeche, Nebraska State Director for the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), engineered one of the finest Fortean conventions in recent years. Big Guns, J. Allen Hynek (Center for UFO Studies), Walter Andrus (MUFON), and Roy Mackal (International Society for Cryptozoology), headed a sparkling cast of experts who kept the audience and the press crackling with interest. ABC television featured the activities nationwide.

The mysteries of living dinosaurs, out-of-place animals, lake monsters, spontaneous human combustion, UFO abductions, crashed saucers, and cattle mutilations paraded before the conferees in an inspired format: four speakers per day, scheduled half-hour question and discussion sessions behind each talk, and one and a half-hour discussion sessions for all speakers at the end of the day. The interchange was dynamic and intimate. Everyone shared in the exchange. Even the experts learned some things. Thank you, Ray, for an extremely good show.

And, now to business...

Part One: Cryptozoology and Combustion, a Cabinet of Curiosities.

For this reporter, the presentation of Dr. Mackal (University of Chicago) was the outstanding example of solidity and excitement of the three days. Extant Dinosaurs! This dream of *SITU* founder Ivan Sanderson may be about to materialize. As *Pursuit* readers realize, there have been stories and folklore from central Africa for many years, alluding to the big beasts "head-like-serpent, body-like-elephant, tail-like-crocodile" that inhabit the great untracked swamps of the Congo and Rhodesian areas. Dr. Mackal and explorer-friends James Powell and Richard Greenwall have twice ventured into extremely difficult terrain in the Eastern Congo. To the west of the great Ubangi River lie regions nearly untouched. Here remain tropical swamps, similar to the domains of the Cretaceous dinosaurs. As the world entered the modern (Cenozoic) age, these regions may have remained stable, stable enough to allow a species of nature's most startling creations to survive. The names in the great quest are properly exotic: the village Impfondo, the river Likuoala, the village Epena, the river Bai, further and further removed from biology labs in Chicago and the support systems of civilization. What did they find?

Many biological samples were taken, including the tough Molombo fruit which is the alleged primary food source of the animals. Witnesses were quizzed by the animal flash-card method, with internal checks of cards of animals known *not* to be in the region included. Saurians were identified as the nearest to "mokele mbembe" by the natives. Lake Telle was said to be a recent haunt. Breaks or possible trackways in the bush were investigated. What were the preliminary conclusions?

1. stories describing the animals got vaguer going both North and South along the Likuoala; leading them to believe they were "in the vicinity."
2. witnesses passed the flash-card test with consistency; they didn't identify "ringer" cards like bears, they *did* recognize something like suariano.
3. descriptions of the animals as herbivores are not only consistent palaeontologically, but would seem unlikely for a

mere folkloric fantasy relating to religion (such creatures usually are *directly* involved with humans in some more sinister way).

4. a "trackway" seemed consistent with a large animal with a massive tail, but which also stood several feet high. Neither elephants nor crocodiles seemed to have all the necessary tools.
5. the Molombo fruit, analyzed in the States, had the nutritional value of a low-fibre content pear, rather low in protein content but judged "marginal" for an adult ruminant. Maybe the animals have another food source to supplement their diet in protein.
6. After Mackal's expeditions left the Congo, local explorer-scientists penetrated to Lake Telle and photographed the animals; these films are being processed in Paris. The cryptozoologists of the world anxiously await, and Dr. Mackal is poised to return.

As related side-issues to the great Saurian-hunt, the good doctor revealed that the notorious *That's Incredible* film of mokele mbembe by Kevin Duffy was a hoax of the crudest sort. Local villagers in Impfondo carved the head and the son of the local dentist-missionary strapped it on for the swimming scene. That, indeed, is incredible. Another claimant, the Regusters expedition, penetrated to Lake Telle and may have observed the animals. Unfortunately, the films were lost or incorrectly produced. Some taped materials survived and will be reported upon soon in the *Journal of Cryptozoology*.

Dr. Mackal also reported on Loch Ness and the northern "lake monsters." His studies show correlations between sightings and salmon influx from the sea. He feels that ocean-going animals, primitive whales or Zeuglodonts, follow the salmon run into the cold lakes and are then occasionally seen. Some individuals may remain behind if the lake is rich enough in fish, and be witnessed elsewhere in the year.

Another mystery involved *Octopus Giganteus Verrill*, the monster of the St. Augustine, Florida beach of 1896. Photos still exist as does *tissue* from the beast held in the Smithsonian Institution. Examination of the tissue shows the same alternating bands of connective tissue and protein-collagen characteristic of smaller well-known octopi, and the amino acid content of the species is comparable only to the smaller octopi, (*not*, for instance, to whale, dolphin, or squid). Photo analysis of the stumps of the octopus' arms indicate tentacles which would have stretched to great length, giving the creature a 150' spread tip-to-tip. So where is this denizen from Jules Verne today? The folklore tradition would indicate south of Andros Island in the Bahamas. Jacques Cousteau, where are you?

Two quick South American possibilities: 1) sightings of "Loy's Ape," the "impossible" large primate of northern South America, were confirmed by Danny Liska of Bogota, Colombia in the discussion period; also 2) Dr. Mackal mentioned another "hot" dinosaur possibility on the Bolivian-Brazil border. Pack your bags and go South!

Next up on the Fortean part of the program was the youthful but veteran cryptozoologist writer, Loren Coleman. Loren decided to try out some experimental ideas on the audience: at-



Photo of "sea monster" taken in January 1897 on beach near St. Augustine, Fla., shows creature's massive muscles.

Octopus Giganteus Verrill

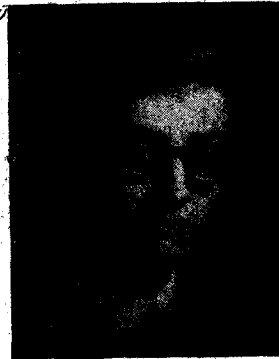
GIANT OCTOPUS or WHALE?

By Gary Mangiacopra
Reprinted by permission from OF SEA AND SHORE

For half a century marine biologists have dismissed Verrill's "giant octopus" as remains of a whale—but modern research indicates he may have been right.

REPORTED REMAINS of "sea monsters" found washed ashore on beaches usually turn out to be mutilated carcasses of sharks, whales, oarfish or other known denizens of the deep. But occasionally an unknown animal—one whose existence is not even suspected—is discovered by chance in this way. Such a chance discovery, made in 1896, still is the subject of controversy in marine zoology.

The story began unexpectedly on the evening of November 30,



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GARY S. MANGIACOPRA was born in Bridgeport, Conn., in December 1950. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in biology from the University of New Haven in June 1975.

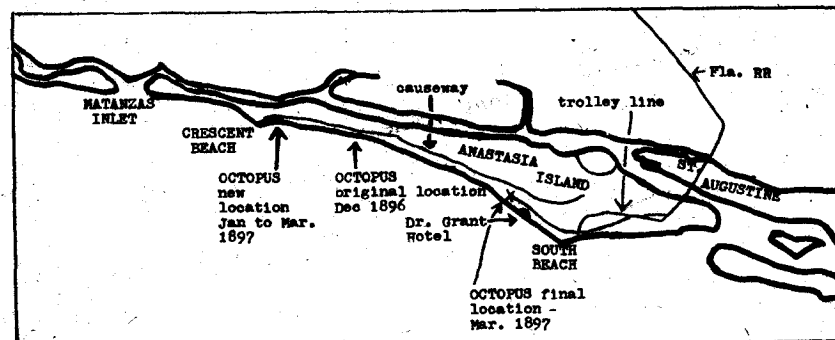
He decided to use Verrill's giant octopus as the topic for his thesis in the spring of 1972. He reasoned that since Professor Verrill was associated with Yale University, only a few miles from his own school, he could easily acquire the original references in a few months; the few months expanded to nearly three years!

He presented his findings on the giant octopus at the International Fortean Organization's 1975 Fortfest.

1896, when two young bicyclists, Herbert Coles and Dunham Cor-etter, pedaled along Anastasia Beach near St. Augustine, Fla. Their planned trip to Matanzas Inlet at the far south end of the beach ended abruptly when they came upon the remains of an immense carcass embedded in the sand.

The two boys immediately notified Dr. DeWitt Webb, St. Augustine's leading naturalist. A medical doctor by profession, Dr. Webb's interests in both local history and natural history had led him to found the St. Augustine Historical Society and Institute of Science, which he served as president for 34 years. During

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Author's map shows the St. Augustine, Fla., beach area where the giant octopus was found in December 1896 and its later locations after storms moved it.

JL-76



Drawing published in "The American Naturalist" in April 1897 was based on the only photograph that clearly indicates stumps of five arms in the foreground.

those years he devoted considerable effort and money to maintaining and expanding the society.

So the next evening, December 1, Dr. Webb along with several others examined the beached "whale." Their first examination revealed that due to the isolation of the beach during the winter months the carcass probably had lain there several days before its discovery. They estimated its weight at five tons as it had sunk into the sand to a considerable depth. The carcass was much mutilated at one end and in an advanced state of decomposition. That portion visible above the sand measured 23 feet long, four feet high and 18 feet across the widest part of the "back." The outer surface of the

hide was light pink, nearly white, and had a silvery appearance. Dr. Webb's startling conclusion was that the remains were not of a beached whale as originally supposed but of a monstrous octopus!

Rain prevented Dr. Webb from examining the carcass again until the fifth of December and during this wait he must have realized the importance and uniqueness of the chance discovery and the need for accurate records. On December 7, 1896, Dr. Webb revisited the site with two amateur photographers, Edgar Van Horn and Ernest Howatt, who took several different shots of the octopus where it lay embedded in the sand. Unfortunately these photographs now are missing but two drawings based

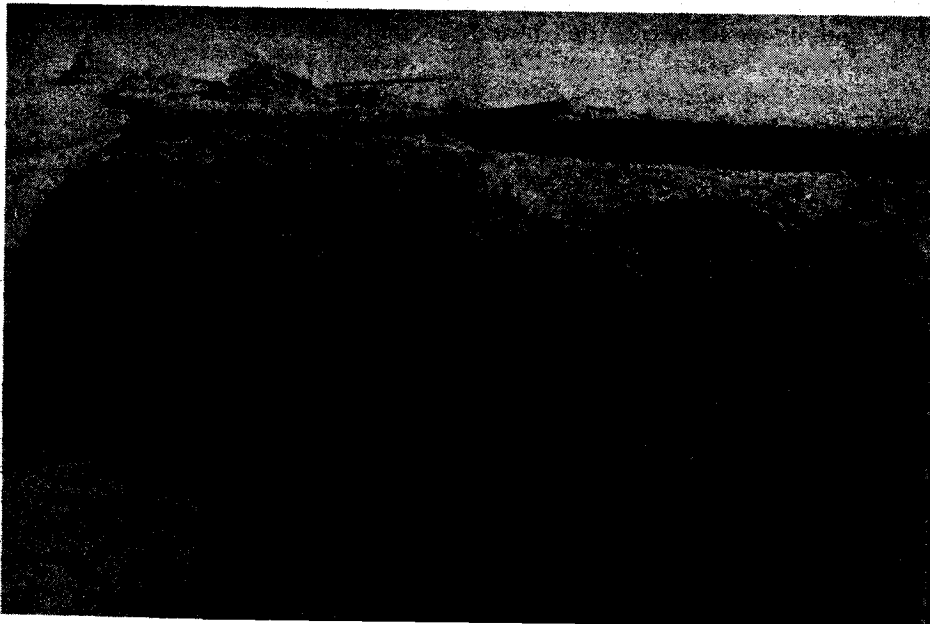
on them appeared in *The American Naturalist* in April 1897.

The more important drawing shows a pear-shaped body with the largest section near the broadly rounded posterior end. Due to mutilation and decay the head is almost unrecognizable but in the foreground appear what look like the stumps of five arms. The figure in the background, probably Dr. Webb, gives us some indication of the size of the carcass. The second drawing shows a side view with the thicker posterior end gradually tapering to the stumps of the arms, two of which are discernible.

Several days after these photographs were taken a Mr. Wilson claimed he excavated in the sand and found the fragments of the arms. He wrote Dr. Webb, "One arm was lying west of the body, 23 feet long; one stump of arm, west of body, about four feet; three arms lying south of body . . . longest one measured over 32 feet, the other arms were three to five feet shorter."

Soon after Mr. Wilson's examination a severe storm washed the carcass out to sea and cast it ashore again two miles farther south near Crescent Beach. The reported arms now were missing and, of course, this cast doubt on

When this January 1897 photograph was taken, the monster's carcass already had suffered extensive mutilation from storms and was in an advanced state of decay.



ished speculation on the size, habitat and population density of these sea creatures. Verrill estimated that "the living weight of the creature was about 18 to 20 tons. When living it must have had eight enormous arms, each 100 feet or more in length, each as thick as the mast of a large vessel and armed with hundreds of saucer-shaped suckers, the largest of which could have been at least a foot in diameter.

"Its eyes would have been more than a foot in diameter. It would have carried 10 or 12 gallons of ink in the ink bag. It could swim rapidly, without doubt, but its usual habit would be to crawl slowly over the bottom in deep water in search of prey.

"We must reflect that wherever this creature had its home there must be hundreds or thousands of its kind, probably of equal size, otherwise its race could not be kept up. Its habitat is probably the broad plateau that extends out to sea about 200 miles off the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and North Florida, on which the water increases very gradually down to 200 fathoms."

* * *

ON FEBRUARY 23, 1897, the specimens forwarded by Dr. Webb reached Yale University. That same day Verrill wrote two

letters in which he retracted his earlier identification. He states that he had received "some large masses of exterior integument preserved in formalin, in size from three to 10 inches thick, elastic, very tough and hard to cut, composed mainly of tough cords and fibers of white elastic connective tissue that were much interlaced and bound together with irregular cavities and canals in some places." Verrill concluded that the samples resembled the blubber of some cetaceans and that the creature could not have been an octopus but must have been a vertebrate animal!

The specimens sent to Smithsonian's National Museum were examined by Prof. Frederic Augustus Lucas who wrote in *Science Magazine*, "Professor Verrill would be justified in making a much more emphatic statement that the structure of the masses of integument from the 'Florida monster' resembles blubber and the creature was probably related to the whales. The substance looks like blubber and smells like blubber and it is blubber, nothing more nor less. There would seem to be no better reason for supposing that it was in the form of a 'baglike structure' than for supposing that stumps of arms were present." Professor Verrill had difficulty

Dr. Webb's original description.

Dr. Webb wrote a series of letters to various scientists telling of his discovery. One of these was forwarded to Prof. Addison Emery Verrill of Yale University, New Haven, Conn. A systematic zoologist, Dr. Verrill was the author of over 350 scientific articles and had described more than a thousand new species. Of his numerous accomplishments in zoology he is best known for his research on cephalopods, the mollusc group to which the squids and octopuses belong. In the 1870's he had proven the legendary sea monster, the Kraken, was in fact the giant squid.

Professor Verrill consequently was much interested in the discovery of a huge octopus and published a brief report, based on information contained in Dr. Webb's letter, in the January 1897 issue of *American Journal of Science*. He tentatively concluded that the carcass must be a giant squid as no known octopus reached such gigantic size. But Verrill quickly reversed himself when Dr. Webb sent further details and photographs of the animal.

In the Sunday supplement for the *New York Herald* for January 3, 1897, Verrill published the first description of the unknown creature and called it a gigantic octopus. By comparing its pro-

portions with smaller species, he estimated the arms must have reached 75 to 100 feet. The creature's 200-foot diameter would exceed the size of the largest known giant squids. He repeated this description in the February issue of *American Journal of Science* and formally named the beast *Octopus giganteus*.

During the second week of January 1897 Dr. Webb relocated the carcass in the new location to which the storm had moved it. With the aid of "four horses, six men, three sets of tackle, a lot of heavy planking and a rigger," he succeeded in freeing the monster from the sand and placing it on planks about 40 feet higher up on the beach. This permitted more careful examination and measurement of the specimen and a new set of photographs. He tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Professor Verrill and Prof. William Healey Dall, Smithsonian's curator of molluscs, to come and study the creature where it lay. On the fifth of February Dr. Webb wrote that he visited the monster to collect samples of the flesh to send to Dall and Verrill for study.

While the specimens were in transit, Verrill published another article in the Sunday supplement of the *Herald*. It was a popular account based on Webb's letters and contains Verrill's only pub-

relating the large mass of tissue to any recognizable part of a whale. His best guess was that "it came from the head of a creature like a sperm whale in structure. . . ." But Verrill's son A. Hyatt Verrill mentioned the creature in his 1916 book, *The Ocean and Its Mysteries*, and stated that no scientist could guess as to what animal it came from. Since young Verrill was well-acquainted with his father's articles on the monster and his father was still living, we can suspect that Professor Verrill still was unsure about the creature's identification despite his earlier conclusion that it was a whale.

Except for Hyatt Verrill's mention of the creature in 1916, the only attention it received in the half century following its discovery was given it by the late Charles Fort, who included the find in his list of sea monsters in his 1931 volume, *Lo!* Not until 1957 was any further serious research done. In that year Dr. Forrest G. Wood, Jr., Curator of the Research Laboratories of Florida's Marineland, came upon a yellowed clipping while researching octopus behavior. His interest was aroused and Dr. Wood began to investigate the reported find. Unfortunately, no records report the disposition of the creature after Dr. Webb suc-

ceeded in dragging it up from the beach. The specimens sent to Yale have disappeared. When Peabody Museum's original building was torn down in 1911 the specimens housed there were widely scattered until the new museum was completed in 1926. Presumably the monster specimens were lost during this period.

In 1962 Dr. Wood discovered that the other two specimens of preserved tissue still existed at the Smithsonian Institution. The following year he persuaded a colleague, Dr. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., to cut away and examine a small piece of the preserved tissue for identification. Dr. Gennaro prepared microscope slides of the monster flesh and also slides from octopus, squid and whale. Using polarized light and comparing the connective tissue patterns Dr. Gennaro concluded the Florida creature slide resembled the octopus slide, had no similarities to the connective tissue of the squid and absolutely no structure pattern in common with any mammal including whales. His verdict was that the tissue had come from an octopus!

Unfortunately, shortly after Dr. Gennaro's examination the container holding the original specimens of tissue was misplaced during a move at Smith-

onian and suffered a fate identical to that of the Yale specimens which had been lost some 10 years before. Because an article concerning the giant octopus written by Dr. Wood and Dr. Gennaro and published in *Natural History* in 1971 was met with scorn and derision, Dr. Gennaro later analyzed the last remaining fragment of tissue he had saved for further chemical examination. He concluded "the chemical constituents of the monster's collagen were of the type found in the octopus and that none of this type of tissue exists in the squid at all."

* * *

NOW, MORE THAN half a century after the unidentified carcass was found on the Florida beach, what do we know about giant octopuses? That one existed in 1896 and that its size, based on its mutilated remains, indicated an overall length of 100 feet is all we know. Anything more is speculation.

In the *Natural History* account Dr. Wood cites reports which suggest that such octo-

puses may have been sighted in 600-foot-deep waters off of Andros and Grand Bahama Islands in the Bahamas. If we assume the creatures are restricted to the Bahamas, then the Florida current that flows from the tip of Florida to Cape Hatteras, N.C., might have carried the carcass that washed ashore at St. Augustine in 1896. Or Professor Verrill may have been correct when he speculated that the creatures live off the southern coast of North America.

We are left with this question: Why haven't there been more reported sightings of these animals? Of course, if we do not recognize the possible existence of such an animal, then when they are sighted they may be mistakenly identified as known animals in the reports.

And yet 80 years have passed since the only representative of its kind was found and examined. Perhaps the words Dr. Webb wrote to Professor Dall were prophetic, "It will be worthwhile to make a good deal of effort if it is the 'only one.'"

THE COOKS' TOURS

ARRIVING for duty with the Fifth Organizational Maintenance Squadron, Minot Air Force Base, N. Dak., Master Sgt. Kenneth Cook discovered he was replacing another master sergeant named Kenneth Cook. Both men are married to women whose first names are Jo Ann. Each couple has four children, a girl and three boys, and two of the boys in each family are named Kenneth and Michael.

— Clarence E. Drumheller.

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THE MONSTER FRONT

IT BOGGLES the mind to consider the many kinds of monsters one reads about in the papers—giant eels and other sea creatures, abominable snowmen, the Loch Ness monster and unknown animals from bottomless pits. For this issue we have a full house.

Perhaps the most exciting, because it's the best documented, is the account of a giant octopus 200 feet in diameter—about two-thirds the length of a football field. The Associated Press dredged up the report and although it is 75 years old it's a doozy.

The story begins in 1896 when a giant sea animal washed up on the beach at St. Augustine, Fla. On hand to examine it was A. E. Verrill, a Yale professor and marine life expert, who identified it as an octopus and named it *Octopus giganteus* Verrill. Later on

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of a whale and (2) "that left
open the possibility that it was
either a huge octopus or a squid.
Based on the general pattern of
connective tissues, it was far
more similar to an octopus."



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Verrill changed his opinion and said it probably was part of a whale, although the flesh "contained very little oil."

However, two marine biologists now have concluded that Verrill probably changed his mind under the pressure of ridicule by the scientific community and the controversy that resulted. They have good reason to believe the gigantic creature was indeed an octopus — even though the largest known giant cephalopod is only about 60 feet long.

For one thing, measurements of the 12,000-pound carcass found at St. Augustine indicate arms 70 to 100 feet in length and 18 inches thick at the base. Very few whales have such arms.

For another thing, a pretty substantial chunk of the creature was preserved in formaldehyde at the Smithsonian Institution. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., associate professor of biology at New York University, and Dr. F. G. Wood, senior scientist and consultant at the Naval Undersea Research and Development Laboratory, studied this chunk and collaborated on an article published in the March 1971 issue of *Natural History*.

Among the evidence they reported, as a result of Gennaro's study of the Smithsonian preserved tissue, is (1) the tissues were "with certainty" not those

IS THERE A BRITISH MONSTER OCTOPUS?

by

Ulrich Magin

At the end of the 19th century, science accepted the existence of the giant squid, but rejected that of the giant octopus. The big octopus of the Northwest American Pacific coast is still the only scientifically recognized species of that kind. The "octopus giganteus" of the Bahamas and Bermudas is still much doubted, despite good and recent evidence (1). In an earlier article I investigated the chance that big unknown octopi also live in the Mediterranean (2), a suggestion that has been verified by the find of a monstrous dead octopus near Sapri in Italy (3).

In this paper I will examine the evidence for a monster octopus in the British Isles.

We should note first that the biggest accepted octopus found in British waters was a "specimen with a radial spread of just over 6 feet and weighing 7 pounds" that was "spear-gunned by a member of the Brighton Swimming Club near the Palace Pier, Brighton, Sussex in September 1960, but spans up to 8 feet and a weight of 10 pounds have been claimed for other individuals." (4)

Bearing this in mind, let us now look at claims or sightings of such animals of bigger or monstrous proportions.

A Scottish newspaper, the Inverness Courier, reports the most northern story of that kind: "Skye Policeman's 'Capture' - Struggle with Giant Octopus at Broadford - Constable Ian Morrison, of the Inverness Constabulary, who killed an octopus on the shore at Broadford, Skye, on Saturday, believes that the beast might be a giant squid. Its identity should be soon established, however, as it is to be examined by experts of the Scottish Marine Biological Station and the Royal Scottish Museum. The creature measured 4 feet across the body, with eyes 4 inches in diameter, and it had eight tentacles each 6 feet in length.

"Constable Morrison had a narrow escape when he went to examine the object he saw lying half in the water. A tentacle shot out from the seaweed and gripped him by the left ankle. Fortunately, the Constable was wearing Wellington boots, and was able to withdraw his leg from the boot. He got clear, and later dispatched the huge brute by throwing stones at it, and belabouring it with a five-foot piece of wood.

"Marine experts are very interested in the Constable's 'capture.' Dr. A. C. Stephen, of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, said that it was most unusual to find an octopus of such a size nearer Britain than Madeira" (5).

This story would be a good beginning for the article, but alas! the brute was simply a big squid. Dr. Stephens later identified it as a Stenoteuthis caroli, a big squid that has been stranded upon British shores more than once (6).

But we do not know what the monster "Kraken" was that was observed at Rothesay on the Isle of Bute in 1775 (7). The description of the animal is far too short, and it could have been a giant squid, a whale, an optical illusion or a vegetable mat -- as in that time "Kraken" simply meant "a monster as big as an island."

The last Scottish case involves a mysterious rotten carcass with very big eyes that was cast ashore at the Mull of Kintyre, near the Isle of Bute, in 1944 (8). The description sounds a bit like the 1896 St. Augustine monster, identified now by many as a giant octopus. It sounds even more like any of the 'globsters' found on beaches all over the world, which have proved mainly to be decomposed basking sharks or whales; and so an identification of the creature as a basking shark is very likely.

Moving south to Cornwall, we find that fishermen there know the giant octopus well: "The belief in a huge octopus-like creature still lingers in the

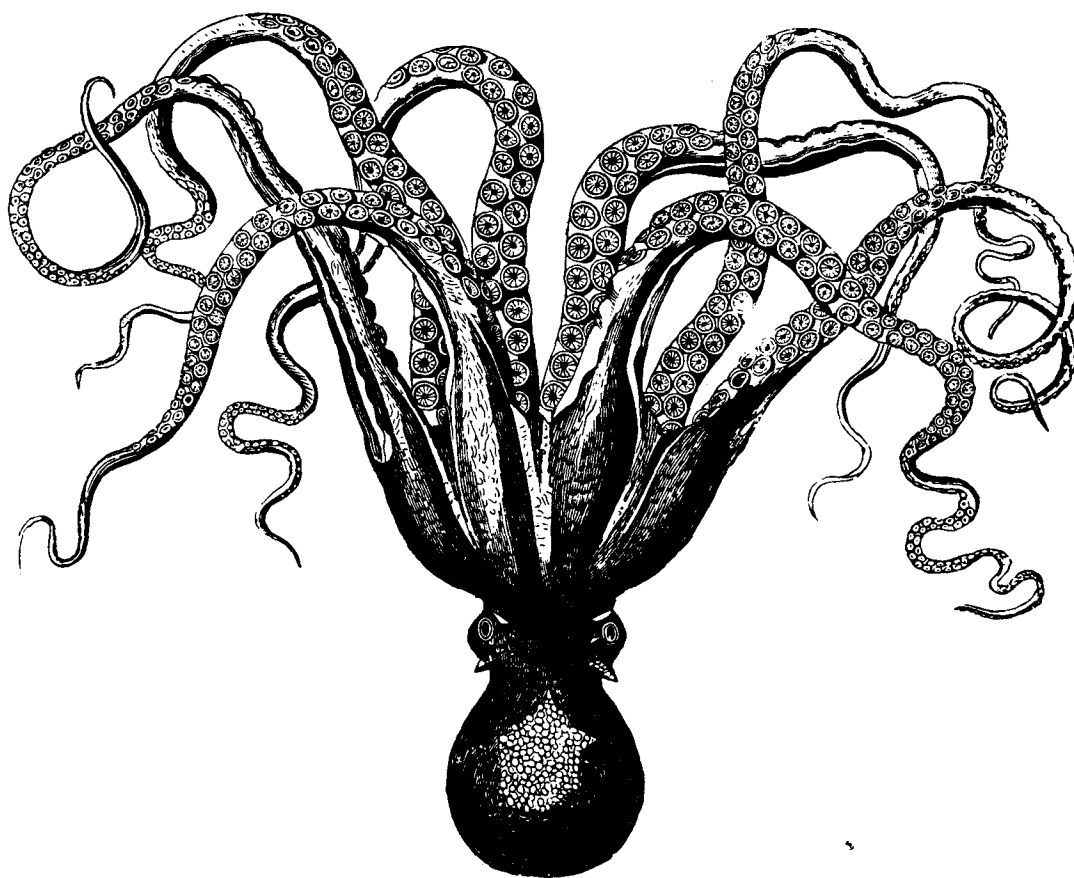
district around Godrevy and Portreath on the North Coast. Here the sea bed shelves steeply and the old sailors explained the sudden depth as the monster's lair" (9).

There is in fact one occurrence which could show that these fishermen's superstitions are based on fact: the French magazine Yachting Gazette wrote on December 16, 1899, that a Mr. Fison was attacked in 1897 by several monstrous octopi near Sedmouth, Cornwall. Fison escaped, but about a dozen other people fell victim to the beast (10).

An interesting story, but, as the French cryptozoologist Michel Raynal discovered, not based on truth, but upon an 1897 short story by H. G. Wells called "The Sea Raiders." In this novel, as in many others, Wells sells fiction as fact. He mentions not only Fison's octopus attack, but the stranding of a giant octopus near Land's End in 1896 (11). Obviously, the French editor did not recognize the fiction as such, or he consciously sold his readers a hoax.

The last Cornish report is about a "tentacled seamonster," published in the Falmouth Packet in 1977: "A new menace threatens the local coastline, a 20 foot long monster with Fongs that entangle boats and bathers." The paper then explains that this monster is an aggressive form of Japanese seaweed that threatens the local flora (12). Our last chance to find a real British monster octopus is the Channel Islands (British territory, although geographically they belong to France).

Victor Hugo's novel Toilers of the Sea describes the fight between a local and an awesome octopus that takes place in a grotto. This fight has become the stereotype for many other less ingenious adventure stories in books about diving and cheap horror novels (13). Hugo, however, claimed that his description of the monster was based on fact and not purely imagined. He knew a shrimp fisherman from Brecq-Hou, on Sark, who had been attacked and was drowned by a giant octopus some years before 1866 (13).



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Debunking the Debunkers

of the Giant Octopus

In a 1994 paper for *Fortean Studies*,¹ I told the story of the huge mass of organic tissue found on the Florida coast in 1896 and thought to be the remains of a gigantic species of octopus, named *Octopus giganteus* by Professor Addison Emery Verrill in 1897. My colleague and friend Gary Mangiacopra and I are also in the process of publishing a detailed account of the same affair in a four-part article for *Of Sea and Shore*.² Our conclusion, based on an in-depth analysis of the huge mass of documents, articles, photographs, and modern analyses then available, was that the "Florida monster" was indeed the remains of a gigantic octopus, possibly belonging to the cirrate sub-order of the octopods.

In the past few months, however, several articles have tried to debunk this "sea monster." Although they were published in scientific journals, they are full of inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and mistakes, not surprisingly from authors with preconceived ideas, if not overt hostility, against cryptozoology.

The first of these "scientific" articles,³ on the history of the discovery of the giant squids (*Architeuthis*), appeared in the *Archives of Natural History* in January 1995. The author, Australian biologist W. R. A. Muntz, also mentions the case of *Octopus giganteus*, about which he writes:

"A statement by a Mr. Wilson, one of the first people to see the carcass, says that the arms were *not attached to the body* [my emphasis] but were found some distance away. On microscopical observation, Verrill found that the integuments sent to him were blubber, and concluded that the carcass most probably came from a sperm whale. The detached arms could plausibly be those of a squid, eaten by the whale, which spilled out of the whale's body

when this broke up on the beach."

Apart from the fact that Verrill only made a visual—not "microscopical"—observation (as far as we know from his articles), it requires a lot of cheek to assert that the arms were not attached to the body, in order to prove that they came from a giant squid vomited by the sperm whale. Because Mr. Wilson never said such a thing! He wrote in his report:

"One arm was lying west of body, 23 feet long; one stump of arm, west of body, about 4 feet; three arms lying south of body and from appearances attached to same (although I did not dig quite to the body, as it laid down in the sand, and I was very tired), longest one measured over 32 feet; the other arms were 3 to 5 feet shorter."⁴

If there is still any doubt that these arms were attached to the body, it will suffice to read Verrill again:

"Dr. Webb writes that a few days after the photographs were taken (Dec. 7th), excavations were made in the sand and the stump of an arm was found, still attached, 36 feet long and 10 inches in diameter where it was broken off distally."⁵

And what about those photographs, which Muntz certainly did not study, which show that the arms and the body belong to one and the same animal?

Muntz's attack against the giant octopus was generally ignored, but the controversy recently resurfaced, as new tests on the remaining samples of the "Florida monster" and the "Bermuda blob" (a similar looking mass found on the Bermuda coast in 1988) purportedly showed that they have nothing to do with a giant octopus. This new chapter of the saga was published in the *Biological Bulletin* of April 1995,⁶ and comments on the results appeared in various scientific magazines, such as *New Scientist*

Michel Raynal

This unpublished photo (opposite), found in the files of the Smithsonian Institution, shows the huge carcass that washed ashore on Anastasia Island, near St. Augustine, Florida, in 1896.

and *Science*⁷—a favor not given to the previous works by Wood and Gennaro (1971),⁸ Mackal (1986),⁹ Mangiacopra (1976),¹⁰ and myself (with Dethier, 1991).¹¹ In the *Biological Bulletin* article, Sydney K. Pierce, Timothy K. Mangel, and Eugenie Clark, of the University of Maryland at College Park, and Gerald N. Smith, of the Faculty of Medicine at Indianapolis, begin with methodological criticism of Gennaro's and Mackal's works (my own contribution on iron and copper measurements is ruled out in one word as "inconclusive," without any other trial). They remark that Gennaro did not give references for the samples of the "contemporary octopus and squid" he used for his histological tests. But it should be remembered that the results were published in *Natural History*, a popular magazine where this kind of detail is never given. On the other hand, there is much to criticize about the methodology of the paper in *Biological Bulletin*, despite its "serious" appearance.

1. Pierce, *et al.*, speak of the "complete lack of suitable test of taxonomic relationships in Mackal's data," a statement that could itself be challenged (Mackal analyzed samples from an octopus, a giant squid, and various cetaceans). But Pierce and company have chosen the most unlikely candidates for their samples:

- A rather obscure abyssal octopus (*Bathypolypus arcticus*), the biology and physiology of which is certainly poorly known. If comparisons are to be made, they should be with the largest known species of octopus (*O. vulgaris* and *O. dofleini* for instance), and with the cirrate octopods such as *Cirrotheuthis*, *Grimptoteuthis*, *Cirrothauma*, etc., as only these groups of octopods have been proposed to account for the Florida monster as a giant octopus.

- The humpback whale (*Megaptera novae-angliae*). Comparisons should have been made with the sperm whale (*Physeter catodon*), as suggested by A. E. Verrill's conclusion that the Florida monster came from the spermaceti tank of this toothed cetacean. By the way, the scientific name of the humpback whale is *Megaptera novae-angliae* ("the one from New England with large flippers," from Latin *nova-anglia*, genitive *novae-angliae*), and not "novaeangelae," as it is printed twice in their article.

- The completely irrelevant rat tail tendon collagen!

2. Nothing is said about the *range* of the different concentrations of amino acids, banding pattern of the collagen fibers, and so on. Pierce and fellows claim that the results are significant for a warm-blooded vertebrate, but we have to accept this as if they were Bible verses.

3. Strangely enough, for such an important controversy, they did not make a "blind test." Mackal and myself, with regard to methodology, worked on anonymous samples (1M, 2M, etc.), the identification of which was

given *after* the results were obtained.

Let us see now what Pierce and colleagues did.

First of all, they present electron microscopy photographs. They show that the samples of the Florida monster are mostly collagen fibers arranged in layers that are perpendicular to each other, a structure found also in the blubber of the humpback whale. On the other hand, the mantle of *Bathypolypus arcticus* is mainly composed of muscle, with only a small amount of collagen. Also, the banding periodicity of the collagen fibers was 54.3 nm (nanometers: 1 nm = 10⁻⁹ meter) in the Florida monster, and 54.6 nm in the whale sample, compared to 46.6 nm in *Bathypolypus arcticus*.

These observations seem to be definitive, but as Mackal emphasized in his 1986 article, a *huge* octopus *should* possess a huge mass of collagen, for biomechanical reasons.¹² The low amount of collagen in a *small* octopus such as the one curiously chosen by the four authors is thus not at all surprising, and the enormous amount of collagen in the Florida monster should not be considered as evidence for it not being an octopus: quite the contrary!

As we have no data on the range of the banding periodicity in various cephalopods and cetaceans, what is the significance of a difference of only 16%? Measuring the collagen fibers from the dorsal aorta of *Octopus dofleini* (the largest known species of octopus), Gosline and Shadwick found an axial periodicity of 600-640 Å (Angström: 1 Å = 10⁻¹⁰ m) or 60-64 nm.¹³ Hunt, Grant, and Liebovich even find a 680 Å periodicity in the mantle collagen of the squid *Loligo peallii*.¹⁴ And what about a species (*Octopus giganteus*) of which we know nothing? Moreover, the width of the fibers may have been slightly altered after almost 100 years of storage in organic solvents.

Concerning the perpendicular pattern: rather than a genetic difference, it is probably a biomechanical necessity in order to reinforce the structure when a great quantity of collagen is present. A giant octopus should therefore be expected to have the same pattern as a large whale. It is interesting that the electron micrographs published by Gosline and Shadwick show a tendency to a much greater amount of collagen in *Octopus dofleini* than in Pierce's sample from *Bathypolypus*, as well as a tendency to a perpendicular pattern. Also significant is Pierce and fellows' comment on the presence of fat deposits in the cetacean blubber they used as a reference sample; this is quite unlike the Florida monster sample, which shows a lack of any fat tissue, in agreement with a cephalopod!

Our four biochemist musketeers then discuss an amino-acid analysis that, as they conclude, shows that the samples of the Florida monster are almost pure collagen. As a matter of fact, this "discovery" was already demonstrated and published by Mackal nine years earlier.¹⁵

Regarding the detailed results of the concentration of each amino acid, the four Dalton brothers of "scientific" debunking give great value to the imino acids (a peculiar

Another Response to the Giant Octopus Controversy

Keith L. Partain

The largest species of octopus known to me is *Octopus dofleini*, the Pacific Ocean octopus, which can reach a length of ten feet. Octopi are characteristically benthic (bottom-dwelling) cephalopods, and a large octopus would require large subterranean caves for concealment as well as a rich fauna to sustain its bulk. In this situation, the controversy regarding *O. giganteus*, we are discussing a mollusk over an order of magnitude longer than, and probably three orders of magnitude bulkier than, *dofleini*.

It is in ignoring the fundamental ecology of such a hypothetical creature that one sees the almost invariant, narrow focus of some debunkers. There is no *a priori* reason to deny *O. giganteus* a niche in nature. Although giant octopi are generally thought to flourish only in the fecund imaginations of Victor Hugo and Jules Verne, some evidence of them has come to our attention. The 1896 *O. giganteus* remains are just such possible evidence, as well as a bone

of contention.

Or perhaps I should say "collagen

of contention," inasmuch as octopi are invertebrates, and it is collagen that Sydney K. Pierce, *et al.*, concentrate on in *Biological Bulletin*. I tend to agree with *INFO Journal* editor Michael Shoemaker (private communication, Aug. 13, 1995) that far too much emphasis was placed on collagen (connective tissue) and too little on other relevant factors. Although Pierce insisted that bacterial action removed all but collagen from the carcass, there was no reported search for any muscle proteins or enzymes. Alfred S. Romer noted in *The Vertebrate Body* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1971, p. 26) that arginine is used for phosphorus metabolism in invertebrate muscle. The question is: could any traces of arginine (or creatine, the vertebrate muscle counterpart) survive? As many observers have noted, samples were kept in different solutions and were stored (in the Florida octopus case) for many decades. Preservatives or not, some degradation of the samples is possible. To be fair, however, I agree with Shoemaker that Pierce's Table I (p. 228)—the amino acid ratios—was

the most pertinent evidence. Nevertheless, why should we assume a member of an unknown genus or species, however closely allied, should have a similar amino acid content or collagen fiber configuration? Entomology teaches one to be wary of just such generalizations!

Dismissal of Gennaro's work (due to the specious reasoning that it was too popular, lacking in rigor and methodology) and Mackal's work (no doubt due to prejudice against the journal involved, *Cryptozoology*) was clearly, as Charles Fort would put it, *exclusionistic*. Add to this the eyewitness reports of probable tentacles and viscera (augmented by suggestive photos), and I really would prefer to leave options open for *O. giganteus*, pending new data.

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group of amino acids), whereas Mackal noted that no conclusion (in any direction) could be made from the results of serine and threonine, due to the sample's long storage in formaldehyde.¹⁶

Although the collagens are not too different from species to species, there *are some* differences, mainly in the acidic acids (aspartic and glutamic acids): according to Pikkarainen and Kulonen, there is an increase from 110 per 1,000 residues in the homeothermic (hot-blooded) animals, up to 150 per 1,000 residues in invertebrate collagens.¹⁷ With a concentration for aspartic plus glutamic acids of 13.1% (14.7% or 15.9%, depending on the samples, according to Mackal's measurements¹⁸), the results are more indicative of an octopus than a cetacean, whatever Pierce and colleagues claim, for the results of the other samples in Pierce, *et al.*, are: Bermuda blob 13.5%, squid 14.4%, carp 11.7%, whale 11.6%, shark 11.1%, but only 11.7% in *Bathypolypus* (which can be explained by the storage of the sample in isopropyl alcohol, a powerful organic solvent). Significantly, the highest concentrations are found in the Florida monster, the Bermuda blob, and the squid, in agreement with Pikkarainen and Kulonen scale for invertebrates!

Finally, they conclude that the collagen is skin collagen from the blubber of a cetacean. This is complete nonsense: blubber is only a layer of fat tissue (and let us remember that no fat tissue was found in the Florida monster), the shape, the thickness, the size, and the weight of which can by no means explain the Florida monster—unless one speculates that it came from a skin tumor never reported. As they also conclude that the Bermuda blob, a similar-looking mass of collagen, came from a cold-blooded vertebrate, we thus have not one, but *two* unexplained cases of anomalous, unrelated animals.

I would like to recall a significant anecdote about Pierce. In reply to my letter, he wrote:

"The photo you sent is the same that Richard Ellis published in his book.^[19] In the figure caption, he says that the structure extending *to the right* [my emphasis] of the carcass appears to be a tentacle. Unfortunately for Ellis, other photos taken at the same time clearly show that the structure he refers is a wooden pole, undoubtedly part of the rigging Webb used to unearth the carcass."²⁰

In fact, Ellis writes, "... something that appears to be an arm extending from the body of the creature *at the*

right [my emphasis].”²¹ So, Pierce is now caught short, mistaken preposition in support. Ellis clearly writes that the body (not the arm) is on the right of the photograph!

Bernard Heuvelmans here drew attention to the fact that cryptozoology is a multidisciplinary science that uses all the available data: witnesses’ accounts, native traditions, photographs, anatomical fragments, etc.²² Biological tests are of course welcome, but they only constitute additional evidence, certainly not the sole evidence, and not necessarily the best. There are definitely many reasons to think that the Florida monster was indeed a giant octopus. For instance, at least three witnesses (Dr. Grant, Mr. Wilson, and Dr. Webb) saw and described stumps of arms, which can be seen on several photographs taken in 1896-97 (some of them unknown to Verrill). Webb also noticed the presence of “organs” or “viscera” in the stranded mass (which do not exist in cetacean blubber)—this, among many other points analyzed in my articles already cited, should be taken into account.

I have, however, imagined three other tests that could give more certainty on the nature of the Florida monster, in order of increasing precision.

1. An electrophoresis of collagen, compared with known collagens. The electrophoretic mobility (speed of the protein in an electric field) will depend on the mass of the protein, hence of its zoological affinities.

2. Decoding the *sequence* of amino acids of the collagen (and not only measuring their concentrations), and comparing it with known collagens, should provide information on the substitutions in the chain of amino acids of the collagen protein.

3. An immunological test: a solution of the monster’s collagen is injected into a rabbit, which will make antibodies against it. The rabbit’s plasma is tested with known collagens through radio-immuno assay (RIA). One would expect the following result:

Vertebrates —→ Squids —→ Octopuses
 weak reactivity greater reactivity high reactivity

Until these tests are made, I remain convinced that the Florida monster actually was what its scientific name of *Octopus giganteus* suggests it is, a gigantic species of octopus.

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Another view of the Florida carcass. Author Richard Ellis interpreted the horizontal material in the center foreground as an appendage, extending from part of the body at lower right. Debunker S. K. Pierce imagined that Ellis was referring to the vertical pole with attached cables seen at upper right. Another pole appears in the upper right corner.

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¹⁹ Richard Ellis, *Monsters of the Sea* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp. 303-322, 362-363 concern the Florida monster.

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FATE, Nov. -85

Cattle-Killing UFO of 1896

The object we saw that night was the most terrifying thing we'd ever seen—until the next day's sickening surprise.

By Pearl Chenoweth as told to Shannon Graham

I WILL never forget the terrifying experience my family and I had with a UFO in Missouri when I was nine years old. Our sighting took place, as I recall, in August 1896.

My parents Ezra and Serepta Vickers, my brother Ben and I lived on a farm in Howell County and had lots of cattle and horses. We worked hard and in the evening, when the chores were done and supper was over, we would sit in the yard resting and trying to pick out the different constellations like the Big and Little Dippers. It was a favorite game for Ben and me.

The night we saw the UFO, the sky was clear and a million stars were twinkling. It had been a hot, dry summer and we needed rain.

All at once we saw flashing lights. At first we thought they were a star shower. But the "stars" stayed in a circle as if they were all strung together like beads. Meteors scatter when they fall, so we soon realized we were seeing something else. The circle of lights just kept whirling and falling toward us. In my mind I can still see those bright lights.

They were brighter than any star.

As small as I was, I remember thinking there was nowhere to run or hide from this thing. What was it going to do to us? For some reason I thought it was unfriendly, that it meant only to do us harm.

I ran to my mother and clung to her skirts, crying and shaking so hard that I could barely stand. I'm sure she was as frightened as I but she tried to comfort me.

At that time I had never seen a balloon, airplanes were in the future and nothing belonged in the sky but the sun, moon and stars. We watched fascinated. We could not take our eyes off the object as it moved west right toward us, turning and falling out of the night. Just when we thought it would crash in the yard, it stopped and hovered over the barn. We could now see it was a large saucerlike shape. Its lights were blinding. The whole barn lot lit up like day.

My father grabbed up the baby who was sleeping on a pallet and we fled into the house. None of us dared voice our fear that God had returned, that this

as the end of the world. My father handed the baby to my mother and went into the kitchen to look out the window. The lights were still hovering there. We could see no sign of life, no forms moving out of the object. If there was a door, it was on the other side.

My parents gathered us children in the living room and we huddled together absolutely terrified, waiting for a knock at the door or for the door simply to burst open. My father started to pray, tears running down his cheeks as he hugged all of us. It was one of the few times I ever saw him cry.

I don't know how long we knelt there. All I know is that it seemed like hours. Except for my father's voice murmuring in prayer, there was no sound. The silence was the worst of all. We waited helplessly, not knowing what was going on outside, wondering what might happen to us at any moment.

At last my father got up the courage to go back to the kitchen and look outside. The thing had gone.

We slept very little that night. Was the saucer gone for good? Would it come back? Lying wide-awake in my bed, I could hear my parents downstairs as they talked far into the night. Every so often my father would go to the door and look out. And the horror was not over.

The next morning when Ben took his dog Cappie and went out to the pasture to bring up the milk cows, as he always did, he came running back to the house scared out of his wits.

Mother and I were getting breakfast when he appeared in the kitchen door so pale I thought he was going to faint. He kept pointing toward the barn, stammering words that made no sense.

Finally Mother got him seated in a chair and bathed his pale little face with cold water. Then he told us what he saw.

As he and Cappie neared the gate that opened into the pasture, Cappie stopped in his tracks, whining and barking. The grass was almost knee-high to the cows, so the animals were not immediately visible to a 10-year-old boy. But in a large patch of burned grass were three of our steers lying dead on the ground. Their bodies were beginning to bloat from the heat; their legs were poking out stiff as boards. Cappie snarled, showed his teeth and refused to go near them. That was when Ben ran back to the house.

Father, who had come into the kitchen while Ben was talking, ordered us to stay in the house while he went out to the pasture. When he came back he was as shocked as Ben. He told us he had examined the steers and as far as he could see there was only one thing wrong with them: they had been completely drained of blood. The only marks on them were some dried blood on their throats from two puncture holes in the jugular vein; these looked as if they had been made by a two-tined fork.

The idea that something or someone had dropped out of the sky to take the blood of animals sickened us. Had they drunk the blood, put it on their food, used it for medicine? What might have happened if they had found us? Would we too have been killed? We were too frightened and nauseated to eat the breakfast sitting on the table in front of us. In those days you didn't waste good food but we could not eat.

Father tried to assure us it was

nothing to worry about. He said that probably some wild dogs or wolves had done it. We didn't believe it and we could see he didn't believe it either. We had seen too many animals attacked by dogs and wolves. They always tore the animals apart. They didn't drink their blood.

I was always a nosy child, always eavesdropping when the grown-ups thought I was somewhere else, so I listened to my parents talking about the possible ways the steers could have been killed.

Had a neighbor killed them and been frightened away by the lights before he could cut it up? A neighbor would have had to shoot the animals and in that isolated country a shot could be heard half a mile away. If someone had punctured or cut the animals' throats, he first would have had to tie them up. There were no ropes. In any case, animals don't die at once when their throats are cut; the wounded animals would have bawled their heads off. The other cattle would have stampeded and made a terrible racket. We had heard nothing.

America was in the middle of a depression that summer and nobody would have left the animals' hide. A cowhide was worth about 50 cents—a day's wages for a man that year. If a neighbor had killed a steer, it would have been to feed his family. These carcasses were just left.

Furthermore, a beef has to be hung up in order for the blood to drain, not

left lying on the ground. That's what was so strange. How did the aliens, that's what they were, drain the blood? There was no blood anywhere; every drop was gone. Had this happened only to us or had they killed other stock in the area?

Later that week, when the newspapers came from St. Louis, we had our answer. There were several stories of just such incidents all over Missouri that night.^{*} People had seen the hovering lights and in each case only three animals were drained of blood no matter how many cattle were in the pasture. Where the saucers had hovered, grass was burned away by the heat of the object. In our pasture where the ground was burned, nothing ever grew again. The patch was bare. It still is as far as I know.

My father never spoke of that night again and he did not let the rest of us speak of it either.

A note from Shannon Graham:

I am certain that my grandmother Pearl Chenoweth's account of her 1896 UFO experience is an accurate one. At the time she related this story, she was dictating her memoirs for the Missouri Historical Society and was helping people with genealogical research. Everyone who worked with her was amazed at her accurate recall of dates, places and people. She was alert and active until her death in 1984.

^{*}A check of St. Louis newspapers for August and September 1896 uncovered no UFO-related stories.—*The Editors.*

A REAL SPEED FREAK

DRIVING AT speeds approaching 200 mph helped Al Unser, Sr., take eighth place August 19, 1984, in the 500-mile CART auto race at Pocono International Raceway. The next day the racing great won an \$82 ticket for speeding 75 mph on Interstate Route 80 in Pennsylvania.

was explained that fish in northern Wisconsin lakes grew fur like that to protect them from the cold weather. I think that I believed the story at the time. Some years later I ran across the same exhibit, or something very like it, and by then I had caught on to the joke.

MUTILATIONS

The creatures that populate American tall tales have many sources. Some are the products of original imagination, and others are borrowed from far older legends, probably passed on as folk tales in Europe and then brought to the New World.

Typical of the genre of monster is the hodag, a man-eater of the Wisconsin swamps. The creature had huge claws, bulging eyes, large horns, and a line of sharp spikes which ran down its back. But the most unusual feature of the hodag was that it could never lie down, for it had no joints in its legs. It slept by leaning against a tree and the best way to catch one was to cut into its favorite tree so that when the hodag leaned against it to sleep, both monster and tree fell over.

This last characteristic was also attributed to the achlis, a creature mentioned in the works of the ancient Roman naturalist Pliny. Pliny had tried to be factual, but his works contain descriptions of many creatures that turned out to be mythical. Pliny's beast, unlike the man-eating hodag, was an inoffensive vegetarian. Whether the characteristic of being unable to lie down was carried straight from the pages of Pliny to the swamps of Wisconsin, or whether the hodag received his jointless legs as the result of independent invention is unknown.

A real live hodag was supposedly captured near Rhinelander, Wisconsin, in the late nineteenth century. The whole hodag capture was a hoax planned and executed by a

man named Eugene S. Shepard, who threw a spike studded horsehide over a large dog and then charged admission to see the "hodag" that was housed in a dimly lighted cage. When the story of the hodag's capture was sent to the newspapers the theory was advanced that the hodag was "the long sought missing link between the ichyosaurus and the mylodon of the Ice Age" -- a statement that is simply double talk.

According to Curtis D. MacDougall in his book *Hoaxes*, "after the original hodag's death a stuffed successor was exhibited at fairs for two years. Whenever a convention meets at Rhinelander the fame of the monster lives anew, stuffed hodags being manufactured for floats and other displays. Luke Sylvester Kearney in 1928 published a book *The Hodag*. W.J. Lemke, head of the news bureau of the University of Arkansas, states that during his boyhood at Wausau, Wisconsin, 'large photographs of the hodag on a fallen log, surrounded by a group of his captors armed with axes, pitchforks, etc., were fairly common. Many of them were used as decorations in the saloons.'"

Lemke could have found a very hardy monster in his own adopted state of Arkansas. This was the gowrow, so named because of the horrible growling noise it made. A copy of the *Arkansas Gazette* of Little Rock in 1897 mentions the killing of one of these creatures by a posse in Search County, Arkansas, after the monster had terrified the countryside, and killed off a large number of cows and horses. According to the paper, the creature was twenty feet long, with a ponderous head, two enormous tusks, short legs, webbed feet with claws, green scales, a back bristling with short horns, and long thin tail.

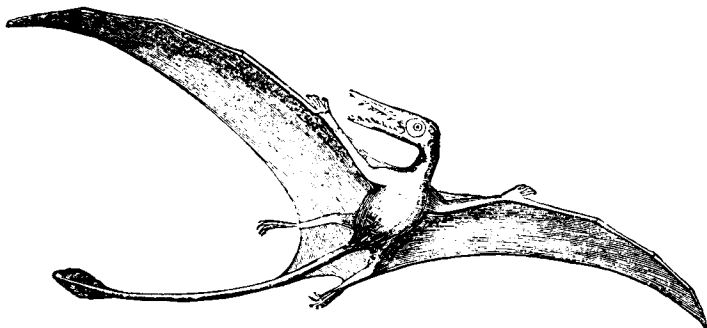
More widespread in America was belief in the hoop snake. This was

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DE → "ANIMALS"

showed the Africans a book with pictures of pterodactyls, they "immediately and unhesitatingly" identified them as kongamoto.

Chief Kapiji Mpangu Mwandwe assured Melland that one of these animals had been shot by a sportsman on safari, a "George Grey," in 1897 near Fort Jameson. While Melland does not identify "George Grey," perhaps thinking it unnecessary, the chief was probably referring to Albert Henry George Grey, the fourth Earl Grey, Administrator of Rhodesia from 1896 to 1897, and later Governor-General of Canada. If the Chief was "putting one over" on the Magistrate, he would hardly have implicated such an important person as the Administrator of the Colony.



The animal's habitat was alleged by the Africans to be the Jiunda Swamp, a desolate region shunned by Africans and Europeans alike. Melland wrote, "I have mentioned the Jiunda Swamp as one of the reputed haunts of the kongamoto, and I must say that the place itself is the very kind of place in which such a reptile might exist, if it were possible anywhere. Some fifty miles of swamp, formed by an inland delta... The whole of the swamp is covered with dense vegetation: big trees that grow to a great height, tangled undergrowth with matted creepers... Nowhere else on high well-drained ground have I seen such a morass: nor could one conjure up a more perfect picture of a haunted forest."

In size and appearance, Sanderson's olitiau matches Melland's kongamoto. Even the reddish color of kongamoto is suggestive, for Sanderson saw his animal in poor light and in darkness red can appear black, accounting, for example, for the blaze-orange clothing now required for hunters in many American states rather than the traditional red.

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The great distance between the Cameroon and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) poses little problem, for an animal such as kongamoto would be most likely to occur in small, concentrated, and widely dispersed populations, hanging on in those few isolated spots where environment and proximity were suitable and far from human settlements or activity.

At the end of the last century, a young Englishman, H.G. Seeley, attended a lecture on fossil pterodactyls. He was so fascinated that he abandoned a promising legal career and devoted himself to the study of these creatures. The result was *Dragons of the Air*, published in New York and London in 1901.

Seeley set down all that was known of the pterodactyls in his day. Of the appearance of these creatures would present in life he wrote, "If this series of animals could all be brought together they would vary greatly in aspect and stature, as well as structure... These flying reptiles frequently have the proportions of the limbs similar to a bat." So, a living pterodactyl need not present the classic form we are used to from museum displays and horror films and might look much like a bat — accounting neatly for the vivid impression Sanderson received of the animal he saw in the Assumbo Mountains in 1932.

Seeley may have harbored some hope that pterodactyls could still survive, for he included in *Dragons of the Air* the following strangely prophetic words: "The final disappearance of these animals from the Earth's history... may yet be modified by future discoveries." Some future explorer of the Jiunda Swamp or the Assumbo Mountains may yet prove him right.

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spaventato il bestiame ed alcuni animali domestici. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucer on the Moon, p. 207).

4 - Robertson County, Tennessee, U.S.A. tra il 1817 e il 1821.

La fattoria di John Bell era, si dice, infestata dagli spiriti, con fenomeni di « poltergeist » e di « luci vaganti ». Tra i numerosi visitatori che si recarono a vedere la « casa degli spiriti » ci fu anche il generale Andrew Jackson. Quando egli si avvicinò alla casa su una carrozza tirata da cavalli, le ruote sembrarono immobilizzarsi all'improvviso e i cavalli furono incapaci di muoversi fino a quando una voce metallica e acuta non si fece sentire da dietro i cespugli: — Benissimo, generale. Che la carrozza avanzi! — e in quel momento le ruote si rimisero in movimento. (F.S.R. nov.dic. 1968, p. 16, John Keel: Is the « E.M. » effect a Myth?).

5 - Horton, Wiltshire, Inghilterra Giugno 1857.

Il giornale « Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette » del 2 luglio 1857, riferisce che un fattore, certo W. Brown, si stava dirigendo verso un « mulinello ». Non c'era alcun soffio d'aria, e le condizioni meteorologiche non erano tali da determinare un vero « mulinello ». Il cavallo ne fu ugualmente atterrito, si diede alla fuga e il Sig. Brown fu quasi gettato a terra. (F.S.R. nov.dic. 1966, p. 18).

6 - Swaffham, Norfolk, Inghilterra 15 genn. 1869.

Qualcosa veduto nel cielo e delle misteriose esplosioni, che non erano di origine meteorica, atterriscono centinaia di pecore. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

7 - Bonham, Texas, U.S.A. 1873.

Alcuni raccoglitori di cotone sono stati terrorizzati da un oggetto splendente come l'argento, piombato su di loro. — « Esso serpeggiava nel cielo come un grande rettile d'argento, dichiarò uno dei testimoni, e picchiava su di noi senza interruzione, continuamente ». — Un tiro di cavalli si diede alla fuga e il conducente fu gettato sotto le ruote e ucciso.

7bis - Fort Riley, Texas, U.S.A. 1873.

Lo stesso giorno, circa un'ora dopo

cosa o un oggetto simile piombò dal cielo sulle truppe di cavalleria a Fort Riley, mentre erano in piena parata. I cavalli ne furono terrorizzati a tal punto che la rivista terminò nel più grande caos. (Frank Edwards: Stranger Than Science, p. 198).

8 - Berkshire, Inghilterra, 20 nov. 1887, 20,20.

Un oggetto sconosciuto nel cielo e delle misteriose esplosioni provocarono la fuga di greggi su una superficie di circa 210 miglia quadrate. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

9 - Valle del Tamigi, Inghilterra, notte del 13 novembre 1888.

Alcune greggi si diedero alla fuga su un territorio di circa 22 mila miglia quadrate. Esse furono ritrovate la mattina seguente in lontane fattorie, ancora ansimanti di terrore e ammucchiate sotto alcune siepi. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

10 - Chiltern Hills, Inghilterra, 25 ottobre 1889.

Su una zona di circa 40 miglia quadrate alcune centinaia di pecore fuggirono contemporaneamente da alcuni recinti chiusi e da alcuni ovili. Il panico fu contagioso quantunque le fattorie e i recinti non fossero vicini, ma al contrario sparsi su diverse miglia. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

11 - Leroy, Kansas, U.S.A. 19 aprile 1897, 23,30.

Gli Hamilton furono svegliati dal trambusto del loro bestiame e dei cani della casa. Essi uscirono e videro sopra le loro teste il « Vascello del Texas », che aveva legato con una corda una delle loro giovenche. (J. Vallée: Anatomy of a Phenomenon, p. 16).

12 - Rockland, Texas, U.S.A. 22 aprile 1897, 23,30.

A Rockland, Mr. John M. Barclay, essendosi ritirato per dormire, sentì il suo cane abbaiare furiosamente e nello stesso tempo con un tono lamentoso. Diede un'occhiata fuori e vide una grande macchina (il Vascello del

terra. Uscendo dalla macchina, un uomo s'avviò verso di lui chiedendogli dell'olio lubrificante, uno scalpello temprato e del solfato di rame. Barclay gli domandò da dove venisse e dove andasse. « Da ogni dove, ma saremo in Grecia dopodomani », fu la risposta del misterioso essere. (D. B. Hanlon and J. Vallée: Airships Over Texas, F.S.R. gen.-feb. '67, p. 23).

13 - Dallas, Texas, U.S.A. aprile 1897.

Il « Dallas News » del 28 aprile 1897 ha pubblicato un articolo di un testimone anonimo (un uomo di legge), che stava per mettersi alla guida del suo calessino tirato da un cavallo, di notte, allorché il « Vascello » gli passò sopra la testa. Il cavallo sbuffò, indietreggiò e caracolò pazzamente, rovesciando quasi la vettura; poi rimase immobile, tremando come una foglia. (D. B. Hanlon: Texas Odyssey of 1897; F.S.R. set.-ott. 1966, p. 8).

14 - Hot Springs, Arkansas, USA; notte del 6 maggio 1897.

Due ufficiali di polizia, Sumpter e McLemore, provarono ad avvicinarsi ad un U.F.O. che era atterrato, ma i loro cavalli rifiutarono di avvicinarsi oltre i cento metri. (Jerome Clark: The strange case of the 1897 Airship, F.S.R. luglio-agosto 1966, p. 15).

15 - Seal Rocks, Sutro Heights, San Francisco, U.S.A., 22 novembre 1897.

Il « Vascello » è passato sopra la Cliff House ed ha proiettato un potente fascio luminoso su Seal Rocks (Le Rocce delle Foche); le foche furono prese dal panico e si gettarono in acqua. (Lore and Denault: Mysteries of the Skies, p. 7).

16 - Marais, sull'estuario del Tamigi, Inghilterra 1901.

Ancora panico tra le greggi. Esse partirono tutte verso Ovest, allontanandosi dal Mar del Nord. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on the Moon; p. 311).

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L'AERONAVE E LA VACCA

di robert j. m. rickard

Una delle storie più importanti del catechismo ufologico è quella dell'aeronave che si librò sulla fattoria di Alexander Hamilton, nel Kansas, la sera del 19 aprile 1897.

Riproduciamo integralmente il resoconto apparso sull'edizione del 23 aprile del settimanale Farmers Advocate, pubblicato a Yates Center.

"L'Onorevole Alexander Hamilton di Vernon è venuto in città mercoledì scorso /il 21 aprile/ creando una certa agitazione con l'annunciare d'aver avuto un'esperienza con l'aeronave, di cui si parla molto. Il signor Hamilton è un vecchio colono, è stato membro dell'assemblea legislativa in passato ed è noto per tutte le contee di Woodson, Allen, Coffey ed Anderson. L'onorevole ci ha raccontato la seguente storia:

"La notte di lunedì scorso, verso le dieci e mezza, venimmo svegliati da rumori provenienti dalla mandria. Io mi alzai pensando che forse il mio bulldog ne stava combinando qualcuna delle sue, ma arrivato alla porta osservai con mia indicibile sorpresa un'aeronave che stava scendendo lentamente sulla mia mandria, a circa 40 metri dalla casa.

"Dopo aver chiamato il mio aiutante Gid Heslip e mio figlio Wall, brandendo delle asce corremmo al corral. Nel frattempo l'aeronave era dolcemente scesa fino a circa 30 metri da terra, e a non più di 50 metri da noi. Consisteva d'una grande porzione sigariforme lunga forse 100 metri e di un carro attaccato sotto.

"Il carro era fatto di pannelli di vetro o di qualche altra sostanza trasparente, divisi da strisce sottili di qualche altro materiale. L'interno era brillantemente illuminato e si vedeva chiaramente tutto. C'erano tre luci: una come un immenso riflettore e due più piccole, una rossa ed una verde. Quella grande poteva essere fatta ruotare in tutte le direzioni.

"Era occupato da sei degli esseri più strani che io abbia mai visto. C'erano due uomini, una donna e tre bambini. Stavano ciarlando fra loro ma non riuscimmo a capire una parola di ciò che dissero. Tutte le parti del vascello aereo che non erano trasparenti erano d'un colore rossastro scuro.

"Rimanemmo ammutoliti per lo stupore e la paura, finché un qualche rumore attrasse la loro attenzione ed essi puntarono il

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riflettore su di noi. Appena ci videro, misero in moto una qualche ignota forza ed una grande ruota di turbina di circa 10 metri di diametro che stava girando lentamente sotto l'aeronave cominciò a ronzare con lo stesso suono del cilindro d'una scrematrice, e l'apparecchio si sollevò con la leggerezza d'un uccello.

"Quando si trovò a circa 30 metri sopra di noi, sembrò fermarsi, e si librò proprio sopra ad una giovenca di tre anni che mugiva e recalcitrava apparentemente imprigionata in una staccionata. Dirigendosi verso di lei scoprimmo che aveva un cavo dello spessore d'un dito, della stessa sostanza rossa, annodato a capio intorno al collo dell'animale, e proveniente dall'aeronave e impigliato nel filo spinato.

"Tentammo di spezzare il cavo o di liberarlo, ma non ci riuscimmo, così tagliammo il filo spinato e rimanemmo a bocca aperta a guardare nave, vacca e tutto sollevarsi lentamente ed allontanarsi scomparendo verso nordovest. Tornammo a casa, ma ero così spaventato che non presi sonno, e martedì mattina mi alzai, montai a cavallo ed uscii in cerca di qualche traccia della mia bestia. Tornando da LeRoy a sera scoprii che Lank Thomas, che vive nella contea di Coffee a circa tre o quattro miglia ad ovest di LeRoy, aveva trovato la pelle, le zampe e la testa nel suo campo, quella mattina.

"Pensando che qualcuno aveva macellato una bestia rubata e aveva gettato via la carcassa, egli aveva portato i resti in città perché fossero identificati, ma era rimasto molto sorpreso di non trovare alcuna traccia sul terreno soffre tutt'intorno. L'altra notte son tornato a casa ma tutte le volte che sto per addormentarmi vedo di nuovo quella cosa maledetta con le sue grandi luci e quelle orrende persone. Non so se erano diavoli o angeli o cose d'altro, ma noi tutti l'abbiamo vista e tutta la mia famiglia ha visto la nave e non voglio aver più a che fare con loro."

Il resoconto del Farmers Advocate continuava:

"Il signor Hamilton ha tutta l'apparenza di non essersi interamente ripreso dallo shock e tutti quelli che lo conoscono sono rimasti convinti che è stato sincero in ogni parola.

Ma dal momento che ci sono ora, come sempre ci sono stati e sempre ci saranno, scettici ed increduli ogniqualvolta viene esposta la verità su qualcosa che confina con l'improbabile, sapendo che qualche persona ignorante o sospettosa dubiterà della sincerità della dichiarazione sopraesposta;

quindi, noi, i sottoscritti, facciamo la seguente dichiarazione firmata:

che abbiamo conosciuto Alex Hamilton chi per quindici chi per trenta anni, e che per quel che riguarda la sua sincerità e verità non abbiamo mai sentito mettere in dubbio la sua parola, e che noi crediamo fermamente che la sua dichiarazione sia vera

ed esatta.

E. V. Wharton, Ispettore Petrolifero Statale

H. H. Winter, Banchiere

H. S. Johnson, Farmacista

Alex Stewart, Giudice di Pace

F. W. Butler, Droghiere

H. C. Rollins, Direttore dell'Ufficio Postale

M. E. Hunt, Sceriffo

E. K. Kellenberser, Dottore

J. H. Sticher, Droghiere

Jas. L. Martin, Direttore dell'Ufficio del Registro

"Sottoscritto e giurato davanti a me questo ventunesimo giorno di aprile, 1897. W. C. Willie, Notaio Pubblico".

Dopo aver riprodotto integralmente la storia di Hamilton, il Daily News di Burlington pubblicò un'altra dichiarazione firmata:

"Noi, i sottoscritti, residenti di Burlington nel Kansas, certifichiamo con la presente che abbiamo conosciuto il signor Alexander Hamilton fin da quando venne espulso dal Missouri in quanto coinvolto nella controversia tra schiavisti e antischiavisti; che egli è stato il primo Cancelliere della Contea di Coffee; che egli è sotto tutti i punti di vista un uomo perfettamente sincero e credibile. E nessuno che sia amante della verità metterà mai in dubbio una qualsiasi dichiarazione di lui.

J. M. Lane, H. E. Cowgill, Orson Kent, Wm. Manson, M. E. Grimes, J. M. Baldwin, David Grimes.

"Sottoscritto e giurato davanti a me questo ventinove d'aprile, 1897. H. B. Cheney, Notaio Pubblico".

A parte il vigile occhio di Charles Fort, che scrisse anche una lettera ad Alexander Hamilton, chiedendo ulteriori dettagli, senza ricevere alcuna risposta, nessun altro studioso dell'insolito ha disturbato il sonno di questo rapporto, nei polverosi archivi della redazione del Farmers Advocate.

Ma col nascere del fenomeno "dischi volanti", sempre maggior interesse venne prestato dagli "ufologi" ai casi del passato che sembravano implicare una presenza extraterrestre in tutta la storia del nostro pianeta.

Il primo riferimento al caso Hamilton lo troviamo in una conferenza tenuta nel 1960 dal dottor Joseph Allen Hynek. Ma il vero scopritore del "calf-napping" è senz'altro stato il dottor Jacques Vallée, che pubblicò per intero la storia nel suo secondo libro (1). La storia destò l'interesse d'un gruppo di ricercatori, e portò alla "scoperta" di tutto il flap del 1896-97.

Da allora, la storia è sempre stata ritenuta di grande importanza nello studio dell'aspetto ufologico delle "aeronavi", sia per la correlazione UFO-rapimenti d'animali (di cui questo caso sarebbe il predecessore) sia per la descrizione dei "sei esseri

dei più strani mai visti".

La maggior parte degli studiosi, da quelli cautamente scettici a quelli apertamente e acriticamente 'credenti' nel racconto, è poi sempre rimasta impressionata dai dettagli della storia, dal l'imponente dichiarazione firmata da una decina delle persone più in vista della contea, e dal fatto che la storia è stata apparentemente investigata e riportata tante volte senza che mai nessuno abbia mai trovato un motivo fondato per dubitare della sua veridicità, data anche la posizione di grande rispetto di cui godeva Hamilton nella sua comunità. (2)

Affascinato, come molti, dalla storia dell'aeronave, Jerome Clark, uno dei più noti esponenti dell'ufologia americana, fu spinto a rintracciare qualche parente di Alexander Hamilton (deceduto nel 1912), e trovò Elisabeth Hamilton Linde, figlia del Wallace che secondo l'Advocate era presente al fatto.

La signora Linde gli disse che alla sua famiglia piaceva credere che la storia fosse vera, che erano a conoscenza dei resoconti pubblicati e che tutti si ricordavano di Alex come d'un uomo dotato d'una straordinaria immaginazione. Benché non avesse mai sentito parlare né il padre né il nonno della "leggenda di famiglia", Elisabeth ricordava d'aver sentito dire parecchi anni prima da amici del nonno che la storia era stata architettata da Alex e dal direttore del Farmers Advocate.

Le cose rimasero comunque com'erano, e la storia del "rapimento della vacca" continuò ad apparire su giornali, riviste e libri specializzati. (3)

All'inizio del 1976, uno studioso inglese, Robert Schadewald, scrisse alla Kansas State Historical Society a proposito del caso e ricevette in risposta un ritaglio del Buffalo Enterprise (un settimanale del Kansas) del 28 gennaio 1943. La settimana precedente lo Yates Center News aveva riproposto ai suoi lettori la storia di Hamilton, ed in seguito a ciò l'Enterprise ricevette una lettera da Ben Hudson, direttore del Fredonia Daily Herald e figlio di F. Hudson, amico intimo di Hamilton e direttore del Farmers Advocate nel 1897. Nella lettera l'Hudson figlio affermava che "Hamilton e papà inventarono la storia durante una discussione, un sabato", ed includeva la seguente dichiarazione firmata da suo padre:

"Avevo acquistato un motorino a benzina, il



Una delle ricostruzioni in chiave ufologica del caso Hamilton. La vignetta fa parte d'una popolare storia dell'ufologia a fumetti distribuita (dietro abbonamento) ai giornali americani col titolo di "Our Space Age" dall'ufologo Otto Binder. La vignetta qui riprodotta apparve nella settimana del 26 febbraio 1968.

primo, credo, che si fosse mai visto a Yates Center, e l'avevo installato al giornale per far andare le rotative. Invitai alcuni amici a vederlo funzionare, e fra loro era Hamilton, il quale vedendolo esclamò: "Ora si potrà volare", e di qui venne fuori la storia che ci inventammo. Dopo che io la pubblicai, fu ripresa dai più importanti giornali sia americani che europei, alcuni dei quali la illustrarono con disegni immaginari. Ci furono poi centinaia di richieste d'informazioni provenienti da tutto il mondo. Qualche anno dopo ci furono i primi esperimenti di volo, ma io ho sempre reputato Alex Hamilton il vero inventore del volo umano".

Il ritaglio venne passato a me, ed io lo inviai a Jerome Clark, che fece pubblicare una lettera sullo Yates Center News il 16 settembre 1976, chiedendo informazioni sul caso.

In risposta, Jerry ricevette una lettera dalla signora Donna Steeby, di Wichita, la cui madre 93enne, Ethel Howard Shaw (amica d'una delle figlie di Hamilton, Nell) ricordava d'aver sentito raccontare la storia da Alex Hamilton in persona. In una seconda lettera la Steeby inviò la seguente dichiarazione firmata dalla madre:

"Ricordo benissimo quello splendido pomeriggio, come se fosse stato ieri. Allora aveva 14 anni, ed ero in casa Hamilton con la moglie e la figlia di Alex, quando egli tornò dal paese, mise il calesse nella stalla, si sedette nel soggiorno e incominciò subito a raccontare alla moglie: "Ho inventato una di quelle storie... e l'ho raccontata ai ragazzi, giù in città; verrà fuori sull'Advocate di questa settimana". Sembrava parecchio eccitato da ciò che aveva fatto, ma la moglie era piuttosto scandalizzata mentre lui raccontava, e di tanto in tanto diceva "Oh, Alex!" e "Perché, Alex?", ma noi ragazze non ci facemmo molto caso, dato che in fondo era una bella storia.

"Mentre tornavo a casa però ci pensai un po' sopra e raccontai tutto ai miei, che non ci diedero peso e mi dissero: "Non farci caso; è solo un'altra delle sue storie". Si diceva infatti che avessero formato un club fra amici e l'avessero chiamato "Ananias". Si riunivano di tanto in tanto e ciascuno raccontava la storia più grossa che s'era inventato dall'ultima volta. Per quel che mi ricordo, il club venne sciolto subito dopo che la storia dell'aeromane e della vacca venne fuori. Credo proprio che li abbia battuti tutti, ed in ogni caso gli Hamilton s'acquistarono un posto nella storia della contea".

Clark informò della cosa la nipote di Hamilton, chiedendo il suo parere. La signora sembrò riluttante a smentire la divertente "leggenda della famiglia", ma disse: "Se lei dice che è così, deve essere così".

Alcuni ufologi hanno obiettato che queste dichiarazioni sono a loro volta un falso, ma Jerome non lo crede. "E' straordinariamente improbabile che la signora Shaw ed il signor Hudson abbia-

no mentito entrambi. A che scopo poi? Un corrispondente mi ha suggerito che l'hanno fatto per "salvare il buon nome degli Hamilton". Ma, come dice mia moglie, non sarebbe un po' tardi farlo adesso? E se poi fosse proprio così, perché a farlo dovrebbero essere il defunto Hudson e la Shaw, e non un discendente diretto come la signora Hamilton-Linde, la quale vorrebbe invece credere all'"incidente"? Per di più, che razza di tentativo di salvare il buon nome della famiglia sarebbe, se si ammette che il patriarca era un bugiardo?"

Inoltre ci sono troppe persone, troppo lontane fra loro nel tempo e nello spazio, coinvolte in questo "smascheramento". La verità è che molte persone sono arrivate ad avere un'incrollabile fede in quella che è stata definita "la storia più convincente di tutta la saga ufologica", e si rifiutano di credere che possa essere un falso.

Un esempio di questa tendenza è la reazione di John Keel: "Adesso siamo proprio nei guai. E' sempre stata la storia migliore di tutte quelle del 1897. Se crolla questa, possiamo seriamente mettere in dubbio tutti gli altri casi".

A mio parere, questo dovrebbe essere fatto comunque, se veramente vogliamo approssimarci alla verità.

Basta guardare Hamilton: con credenziali impeccabili, amante degli scherzi, e capace di convincere 10 dei suoi amici, tutte persone di grande responsabilità di Le Roy e Yates Center, a firmare una dichiarazione sulla sua veridicità.

Possiamo ben dire che lo scherzo è stato fatto a tutti noi che ci abbiamo creduto.

Ed è stato uno scherzo riuscito.



Disegno di C.B.Vos da UFO Information n.1, 1973

NOTE

1. Jacques Vallée, "Anatomy of a Phenomenon", 1965.
2. Per un "curriculum" completo delle referenze e delle credenziali di Hamilton vedere Gordon Lore & Harold Denault, "Mysteries of the Skies".
3. Fra le innumerevoli fonti ufologiche da notare Frank Edwards "Flying Saucers - Serious Business" (tr.it. "La verità sui dischi volanti"); Lucius Parish su Fate, aprile 66; Jerome Clark su FSR vol.12 n.4, agosto 66; J.Clark su Fate, febbraio 77.

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brightly lighted within and everything was plainly visible - it was occupied by six of the strangest beings I ever saw. They were jabbering together but we could not understand a word they said.

"Every part of the vessel which was not transparent was of a dark reddish color. We stood mute with wonder and fright. Then some noise attracted their attention and they turned a light directly upon us. Immediately on catching sight of us they turned on some unknown power, and a great turbine wheel, about thirty feet in diameter, which was revolving slowly below the craft, began to buzz and the vessel rose lightly as a bird. When about three hundred feet above us it seemed to pause and to hover directly above a two-year-old heifer, which was bawling and jumping, apparently fast in the fence. Going to her, we found a cable about half an inch in thickness made of some red material fastened in a slip knot around her neck and going up to the vessel from the heifer tangled in the wire fence. We tried to get it off but could not, so we cut the wire loose to see the ship, heifer and all, rise slowly, disappearing in the northwest.

"We went home but I was so frightened I could not sleep. Rising early Tuesday I started out on my horse, hoping to find some trace of my cow. This I failed to do, but coming back in the evening found that Link Thomas, about three or four miles west of LeRoy, had found the hide, legs and head in his field that day. He, thinking that someone had butchered a stolen beast, had brought the hide to town for identification, but was greatly mystified in not being able to find any tracks in the soft ground. After identifying the hide by my brand, I went home. But every time I would drop to sleep I would see the cursed thing, with its big lights and hideous people. I don't know whether they are devils or angels, or what; but we all saw them, and my whole family saw the ship, and I don't want any more to do with them." Dated April 2, 1987

There follows the affidavit signed by 10 prominent citizens of the county as to Hamilton's veracity and that Hamilton had been a member of the House of Representatives.

What better eye-witness could any court ask? Farmers also are good judges of size and distance because of constant observation of fields, animals and wildlife.

The case is somewhat like the celebrated Snippy the horse's death in Colorado a few years back, and also a series of incidents near the author's hometown of Hartington, Neb., a few years ago. Farmers found dead cattle with strange mutilations, and also observed strange lights in the sky at night.

The mutilations were never solved. People thought weird cultists from Sioux City or Omaha killed the cattle, and the

lights were on helicopters, which have been used here for cattle rustling. But thinking back now, I'm not so sure.

The year 1897 continued active for sightings, every night in May bringing reports from somewhere. Near Aurora, Tex., one airship supposedly crashed. Recent investigations of fragments of metals found near the site brought forth nothing strange about the metal.

What and who were in our skies in 1897 is uncertain; what is certain is that it was the first "UFO flap" in American history.

1890s

(Continued from Page One)

watch. Observers on the hills nearby saw fins on the craft, estimated its length at 180 feet, its diameter at 50 feet and said red, white and green lights flashed on and off as the ship sped up.

Meanwhile, the most fantastic of all observations was occurring outside the little eastern Kansas town of LeRoy. LeRoy is 220 miles south of Villisca, Ia., and 240 miles southeast of Clay Center, Neb.

A prominent farmer, Alexander Hamilton, in a sworn statement co-signed by 10 prominent citizens, said:

"Last Monday night about 10:30 we were awakened by a noise among the cattle. I arose, thinking that perhaps my bulldog was performing his pranks, but upon going to the door saw to my utter astonishment that an airship was slowly descending upon my cow lot, about forty rods (660 feet) from the house.

"Calling my tenant, Gid Heslip, and my son Wall, we seized some axes and ran to the corral. Meanwhile the ship had been gently descending until it was not more than thirty feet above the ground, and we came within fifty yards of it.

"It consisted of a great cigar-shaped portion, possibly three hundred feet long, with a carriage underneath. The carriage was made of glass or some other transparent substance alternating with a narrow strip of some material. It was

The 1890s "Flap"

By Jerry Mathes

(Continued from the
December, 1976 issue)

Then came sightings in Perry, Okla. and many cities in Texas, while other ships were seen in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and West Virginia.

The night of April 16, for example Benton, Tex., citizens saw a cigar-shaped ship cross between them and the moon.

On April 19 at Sistersville, W. Va., bit past 9 p.m., a luminous red object shaped like an immense cigar approached from Ohio (to the northwest). When it flashed at least two extremely brilliant searchlights on the little town, the sawmill whistle brought everyone out to

(See 1890s - page Five)

APRO, JAN-77

1.896-97

(H)

Saucer Reader. The final two chapters deal with the famous (?) Capt. Peter Killian sighting, Feb. 24, 1959 (14 years ago). He was told it was a tanker re-fueling operation. He claimed the three objects he saw over Ohio were 3 TIMES THE SIZE OF ANY TANKER OR BOMBER.

Your article claiming the "saucers" are domestic products, piloted by midgets, IS AS ABSURD AS ALL THE OTHER "SECRET WEAPON" EXPLANATIONS. Argosy magazine showed what I consider extremely bad taste when they ran a similar article last summer while our boys were on the moon.

The author's listing of patent numbers means nothing. We have a 15 year old lad here in town who built his own laser this winter, with \$75 worth of equipment. All these TV movies are preceded by a long list of names also, in case an Oscar is mentioned. I saw a "toy flying saucer" on the Johnny Carson show, that just barely cleared the floor with an adult riding it.

I remember Henry J. Taylor on the radio, reassuring the God-fearin' people they were built in Maryland, No sane man "swallowed" it then; even less so the past two decades. How many midgets would have to be employed to account for the MILLIONS of sightings, over a MILLENIUM of time?

WE HAVE NO TROUBLE

"CRAMMING" THREE MEN IN OUR SPACE CAPSULES.

A bright light was seen high in the sky on the eve of my last birthday, over the Ohio River. TV weather men attributed it to the setting sun (7:30 P.M.) on two layers of clouds—seen over a 4 state area? Another miniature sun was seen on the Louisville to Chicago flight, a few nights later. (Another "interstate meteor"?)

That elderly lady's "flying cucumber" report in FATE, isn't too far removed in time and space from my own father's sighting at the turn of the century. He was watching his mother hang out a wash, when this little frame-work contraption, resembling a garage that hasn't been sided yet, WITH A LITTLE GUY HUDDLED IN ONE CORNER AT THE CONTROLS, come gliding silently over the old homeplace.

The surviving witnesses of the '97' flap must all have vivid memories of those unforgettable days. The sense of "awe and wonder" was still strong in men, then. It's hard to excite anyone with something worthwhile, anymore.

Reese Mikel
P.O. 92
Alexandria, Ind.

Dear Mr. Palmer:

On the night of the moon launch, April 16, 1972, there occurred a particular phenomenon which might interest you or your readers. The

FS, SPRING-73

AP 61

Ne fa fede la seguente dichiarazione sotto giuramento rilasciata davanti a un notaio il 21 aprile 1897:

"Hamilton risiede da molto tempo nel Kansas ed è conosciuto dappertutto nelle contee di Woodson, Allen, Coffery e Anderson. Egli è stato membro della Camera dei Rappresentanti. Ha giurato sull'onore che la sua storia è vera.

"Siccome vi sono, vi sono stati e vi saranno sempre degli scettici e degli increduli per mettere in dubbio la verità di tutto ciò che rasenta l'inverosimile, e sapendo che ci saranno ignoranti e sospettosi che dubiteranno della veridicità della suddetta dichiarazione noi sottoscritti facciamo qui appresso la dichiarazione sotto giuramento:

"Che noi conosciamo Alessandro Hamilton da uno a trenta anni e che per quanto riguarda la verità e la veridicità noi non abbiamo mai inteso mettere in dubbio la sua parola e che noi siamo veramente convinti che la sua dichiarazione è vera ed esatta, firmato: E. W. Wharton, ispettore dei petroli dello Stato.

M. H. HUNT, sceriffo

W. LAUBER, sceriffo aggiunto

H. H. WINTER, banchiere

H. S. JOHNSON, farmacista

J. H. STITCHER, avvocato

Alexander STEWART, giudice di pace

F. W. BUTLER, droghista

James W. MARTIN, cancelliere

e H. C. ROLLINS, ricevitore postale (vedi an. citata)

ATTERRAGGIO IN AMERICA IN UNA FATTORIA NEL 1897

1.896-97

Un ricco coltivatore di Le Roy (Kansas), Alessandro Hamilton, in una dichiarazione fatta sotto giuramento il 21 aprile 1897, racconta:

La sera di lunedì scorso, verso le 10,30, eravamo stati risvegliati dalle bestie che facevano rumore. Pensando che era, senza dubbio, il mio bulldog mi alzai, ma, aprendo la porta, io vidi, con mio grande sbalordimento, un vascello aereo discendere lentamente nel mio prato, a circa 200 metri dalla casa.

"Chiamai il mio fattore, Gid Keskip, e mio figlio Wall e, impugnando delle asce, corremmo verso il cortile. Nel frattempo il vascello era disceso dolcemente fino a una decina di metri dal suolo. Noi ci avvicinammo a meno di 50 metri.

"Esso era a forma di sigaro di cento metri di lunghezza circa, con un carrello al di sotto. Questo carrello era di vetro o di un'altra materia trasparente con alternate strette bande di materia opaca. Era brillantemente illuminato nell'interno e tutto era perfettamente visibile: era occupato da sei esseri, i più strani che io abbia mai visti. Parlavano fra loro, ma io non potetti capire una parola di ciò che essi dicevano.

"Tutte le parti del vascello che non erano trasparenti erano di colore rosso cupo. Restammo muti dallo stupore e dalla paura. Poi un rumore attirò la loro attenzione ed essi diressero un faro dritto su di noi. Appena ci videro, essi accesero non si sa quale fonte di energia ed una grande ruota di turbine, di circa 10 metri di diametro, che girava lentamente al di sopra dell'ordigno, si mise a rombare e il vascello si alzò lentamente come un uccello. Quando fu a un cento metri sopra di noi, sembrò fermarsi e restare sospeso proprio al di sopra di una giovenca di due anni che muggiva e saltava e che sembrava attaccata al recinto. Andammo verso di essa e notammo una fune, spessa circa un centimetro, di una materia rossa che faceva un cappio intorno al collo della bestia e aveva l'altra estremità legata al vascello. Noi tentammo di cacciar fuori la bestia dal nodo, ma, non riuscendovi, tagliammo il filo dal recinto e vedemmo il vascello e la giovenca elevarsi lentamente e scomparire verso nord-ovest.

"Rientrammo, ma io ero così spaventato che non potetti dormire. Il martedì mi alzai presto e mi recai a cavallo per tentare di ritrovare la mia bestia. Non trovai nulla ma, rientrando la sera, scoprii che Link Thomas, che abita a cinque o sei chilometri da Le Roy, aveva trovato lo stesso giorno, nel suo campo, la pelle, i piedi e la testa. Pensando che qualcuno avesse sgozzato una bestia rubata, egli aveva portato la pelle in città per farla identificare, ma era rimasto assai sbalordito di non trovare alcuna impronta sul suolo morbido. Avendo identificato la pelle grazie a un mio contrassegno, rientrai a casa mia. Ma, ogni volta che mi addormentavo, vedevo questa dannata cosa con le sue grosse luci e gli esseri orribili. Non sapevo se questi sono dei demoni o degli angeli, ma noi li abbiamo tutti visti e tutta la mia famiglia ha visto il vascello ed io non voglio più

"CUATRO" 1.897 CELESTES EN EL S.

Un interesante caso, que destaca entre los avistamientos de naves extraterrestres sobre Estados Unidos durante 1896-97, es el de un supuesto robo de ganado efectuado desde una nave suspendida sobre LeRoy, Kansas. Durante el incidente un prospero granjero, llamado Alejandro Hamilton, y otros dos testigos, presenciaron cómo un gigantesco Objeto Volador No Identificado descendía sobre su granja la noche del 19 de abril de 1897. Los ocupantes del vehículo lanzaron una vaquilla y luego la nave se elevó y alejó flotando con su presa. Al día siguiente se encontraron pedazos del animal en un campo cercano.

Esto fue ampliamente divulgado por revistas y periódicos especializados en el asunto de los platillos voladores. Durante mucho se supuso que era el único suceso de tal naturaleza en ese tiempo, pero actualmente ya se tiene noticia de un suceso similar.

UN INCIDENTE SIMILAR

A principios de 1978 quien esto escribe comenzó a coleccionar informes de naves extrañas como parte de un proyecto de investigación conjunta con el ufólogo canadiense Howard Gontovnick, de UFO Canadá, organización especializada en el fenómeno. Mientras revisaba un montón de viejos periódicos maltratados y sin encuadernar, descubrí un relato muy similar al episodio de LeRoy, Kansas. El artículo se encontraba en la edición del 20 de mayo de 1897 del *Minonk Dispatch*, un pequeño semanario del centro de Illinois.

El encabezado era "Nave Espacial que Roba un Novillo", y decía: "Un vagabundo que fue encarcelado la otra noche relató que una nave espacial robó un novillo de dos años en la granja de John Geisert, en Peoria. El vagabundo, que estaba pasando la noche con los Geisert dijo que el bramido del ganado los despertó. Cuando salieron vieron un gran objeto, con luces brillantes, suspendido sobre el corral de las vacas. Geisert y su hijo corrieron hacia él, gritando y hacha en mano.

"La nave se elevó llevándose un novillo atado al extremo de una cuerda. Al día siguiente Geisert

encontró la piel del animal como a diez millas al sur de su granja. El dice que la nave era como de 300 pies de largo*, y a bordo se encontraban tres hombres y mujeres y dos niños.

"Evidentemente había sido día de lavado a bordo de la nave pues las mujeres estaban recogiendo ropas de un tendedero. Uno de los hombres tenía un acordeón y estaba tocando".

Este artículo apareció en un periódico de poca circulación, el *Pekin Times* que se editaba en Pekin, Illinois, que ya no existe.

ENORMES COINCIDENCIAS

La información es menos detallada y más reducida que la del relato de LeRoy aparecido en el *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* el 21 de abril de 1897. (Dos días después apareció en el *Yates Center Farmer's Advocate*), pero los dos artículos coinciden en varios puntos importantes.

Los tres testigos del incidente de Peoria fueron despertados por "los bramidos del ganado"; de la misma forma, hubo "ruidos entre el ganado" como a las 10:30 de la noche que pusieron sobre aviso a los testigos, que también eran tres, en el episodio de LeRoy, Kansas.

Las descripciones de los vehículos aéreos son prácticamente idénticas. El relato de Illinois habla de "un objeto largo con luces brillantes... como de 100 metros de largo"; Alexander Hamilton testificó que la nave vista sobre su granja en Kansas estaba "brillantemente iluminada", con "una parte en forma de puro, posiblemente de 100 metros de largo", que llevaba una "canastilla" en la parte de abajo. Las dos naves llevaban pasajeros.

El suceso de Peoria terminó cuando "la nave se elevó llevándose a un novillo de dos años atado al extremo de una cuerda". En Kansas, "una vaquilla de tres años" fue levantada con un cable como de media pulgada de diámetro... amarrada con un nudo corredizo alrededor del cuello, e introducida dentro de la nave. Hamilton y los testigos vieron desaparecer la nave en el oscuro cielo de la noche.

Un conocido del señor Hamil-

*Unos cien metros.

ton recobró "piel, patas y cabeza" de la res robada la noche anterior, como a "tres millas al oeste de LeRoy". Los restos fueron localizados en un campo de tierra suelta en, el que no se apreciaron huellas o pisadas: De acuerdo al resumen del *Minonk Dispatch*, la "piel" del novillo robado apareció como a diez millas del condado de Peoria.

LA MUSICA DE LOS CIELOS

Incluso las reacciones de los observadores fueron similares. En ambos relatos las personas empuñaban hachas. Posiblemente éstas fueron las armas que encontraron más a mano al salir de la casa.

De la extraña música de acordeón que se menciona en el incidente del condado de Peoria no se tiene noticia en el relato de Kansas. Sin embargo, los lectores familiarizados con los avistamientos de 1890 saben que las melodías de los navegantes de las alturas son un aspecto misterioso, y muchas veces importante, dentro de las características de esas naves.

Finalmente, los relatos coinciden en que son el único caso conocido de robo de animales vivos desde objetos voladores. El relato del condado de Peoria fue descubierto por casualidad; tal vez otros relatos similares se encuentren escondidos entre montones de periódicos viejos esperando sólo ser descubiertos.

No se conoce la fecha exacta del incidente de Peoria. La noticia sugiere que probablemente sucedió en la primera mitad del mes de mayo, pocas semanas después del incidente de Kansas, como a 350 millas de distancia.

Con el paso de los años resulta extremadamente difícil declararse a favor o en contra de la validez de estos relatos, especialmente cuando sólo se cuenta con una publicación y sin ninguna otra clase de evidencia; testigos presenciales, relatos verbales —cualquier cosa— que refuerza la investigación. Los intentos para localizar a alguna persona del clan Geisert han sido infructuosos. Los Geisert, el vagabundo desconocido y el objeto volador, se han desvanecido en el tiempo.

Sólo nos queda un testimonio de prensa, amarillento, y su susurro de misterio.

1.896-97

MYSTERIOUS AIRSHIPS: COMMENTARY II

By Louis Winkler, Ph. D.*
(MUFON Consultant in Astronomy)

The commentary made by Don Berliner (No. 169, March 1982) regarding my article on the Mysterious Airships of 1896-7 is instructive and stimulating. Both of our write-ups appeared in the March issue. His comments provide an aviation history reference which is needed in this most complex UFO flap.

Although Berliner indicates the article was "thorough," this is not the case. As I mentioned, it is only a

*Research for this commentary was supported in part by the Fund for UFO Research

sampling of the mountain of data appearing in newspapers regarding balloons and airships. Much of these data concern accidents and deaths resulting from experiments, and are presently ignored both by ufologists and historians of aviation. From the dozens of articles I found in just the *New York Times* and *New York Tribune* over the period 1887-1897, I estimate the general data on balloons and airships are at least ten times more abundant than the data on the 1896-7 airship sightings.

It is important to note that Berliner and I have different perspectives in

our discussions. While he is concerned with details of the technical and logistical aspects of the craft, I am only concerned with demonstrating that a number of craft were in the air for sustained periods and over many places during 1896-7 period. In this way I hope to show that some of the 1896-7 airship sightings were man-made, rather than conclusively established details of the complex early stages of aviation history in America.

It appears that Berliner chooses to disbelieve or ignore the vast majority
(Continued on next page)

Oregon, Continued

nocturnal lights several times near Gray Butte. Often a single very bright, whitish light with a reddish glow to it would appear toward or in front of the crest of the butte, hover, move up and down, and then travel straight up and angle off, streaking over the horizon. Sighting duration—approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Hawkins' brother checked with the Redmond, Oregon, air center several times to determine if aircraft activity was a source for the lights; however, no helicopters were reported operating in the area.

At this time, Hawkins also learned that other law enforcement officers had encounters with UFOs. During these sightings, the officers' automobile engines stalled, undergoing electromagnetic effects. Additionally, cattle mutilations were reported between 1974 and 1977 in Prineville, Madras, and Burns, Oregon. According to Hawkins, the brand inspector for the Jefferson County sheriff's department inspected several mutilated cattle found in isolated, inaccessible rural areas that could be entered only by horseback or on foot. The inspector believed that UFOs were involved.

Jack Hawkins and his brother also

witnessed a bright nocturnal light near Madras off Highway 26 during a year that Jack cannot remember. Reported initially by a deputy as a bright light hovering and maneuvering in a canyon, the Hawkins brothers raced to the scene and observed a light above the rimrock of the canyon, which they pursued off the highway. When they arrived where the light was last seen, the hair stood up on their necks and they were assailed by a "terrible smell" as if of something dead. Unsettled, they left the scene, giving up their pursuit of the light. The next day they checked the area for rotting carcasses but discovered none.

Comment

We often read that the sighting of a UFO is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Yet the stories described above (although dated) indicate otherwise. At least with some law enforcement personnel, the sighting of several UFOs over a span of a few years during flap periods, or over one or two decades during an officer's career, can be a commonplace experience. Yet Jack Hawkins, like so many UFO witnesses, stated that I was the first person (outside his immediate family) that he ever confided in regard-

ing his UFO sightings. I emphasize that I never met Hawkins before. His September 1961 sighting was referred to me through a MUFON investigator who, although he knew Hawkins for several years, had never told him (Hawkins) of his interest in the UFO subject. Conversely, Hawkins never spoke to the MUFON investigator about his sightings.

How many law enforcement personnel hold secretly within themselves countless UFO experiences that they dare not relate to outside observers for fear of ridicule and the threat to their jobs? How much valuable scientific data has been lost during isolated UFO sightings or flap periods when several law enforcement personnel have witnessed UFOs, communicated the sightings to each other or to their superiors, and then have fallen silent through fear or pressure, thus preventing accurate documentation of the sighting and immediate followup? Could a central key to an explanation of the UFO phenomenon lie with officers who patrol potential UFO "hot spots" a night and who, because of their nearubiquitous presence in primary UFO flap locales, could serve as the most "ideal" witnesses to ongoing UFO activity?

Airships, Continued

of technical and logistical accounts of craft reported in newspapers. However, from my extensive use of newspapers in the field of seismic histories and the history of astronomy I choose to believe the vast majority of what I read. It is much more reasonable to believe that nearly all the newspapers in the country are reporting what the populous believes rather than stories conceived in the minds of newspaper employees.

An example of an airship which far exceeds what Berliner is ready to accept is found in the *New York Times* of December 2, 1897 with technical and logistical detail. The Atlantic and Pacific Navigation Company of San Francisco was organized to manufacture an airship basically like the one Hiram S. Maxim flew round-trip between San Francisco and Cleveland in three days during the summer of 1897. Maxim indicated he could achieve 100 m.p.h. with his 105 h.p. naptha engine without straining it. The airship consisted of a 90 ft long and 38 ft diameter cylinder with a 50 ft cone up front and a 40 ft cone in the rear. The ship weighed 5,000 lbs and could carry a 1-ton cargo. It was controlled up and down with a "tail like that of a bird" and from left to right by a rudder. A "big order of aluminum" had been placed with the Pittsburgh Reduction Company for the double-layered skin which would enclose hydrogen gas. The president, C. A. Smith, and secretary, M. A. Terry, of the company noted that many people observed the ship in its cross-continent voyage. Smith is also the officer of the company who in November of 1896 indicated an airship would soon be sent from San Francisco to the east coast (April 12, 1897 *New York Herald*).

The problem of navigation at night or even day doesn't seem as critical as Berliner suggests. The objective of these pioneers presumably would be just to stay aloft and cover as much ground as they could, rather than navigate from point to point. If they did navigate it could be done with compass and recognition of natural and man-made features. Errors in-

CRITIC'S CORNER

By Robert Wanderer

There are general theories. And there are specific theories. Each needs to be judged by its own standards.

A general theory takes in a large area of subject matter, like the theory that seeks to explain the broad experience of UFO close encounters and "missing time" by suggesting that these people are "abducted" onto a UFO and later returned.

A specific theory zeroes in on a particular aspect of a larger situation. Like Alvin Lawson's hypothesis that "missing time" people who are hypnotized and tell "abduction" stories may be reflecting primarily the memory of birth trauma rather than anything in the "objective reality."

Both kinds of theories are useful. General theories give us an overview that covers the entire sweep of a problem. Specific theories hone in on one point, and provide something that can be tested.

The "abduction" theory is based, almost entirely, on what people say they think they experienced—and what they say may be distorted by

hypnosis or by some unusual state of consciousness following the strangeness and shock of a UFO close encounter. As far as I know, there is no generally accepted physical evidence of any "abduction"—no one has brought back an artifact from the UFO they believe they were on, nor has there been a case where a "neutral" witness, not involved in the close encounter incident, happened to come on the scene while the subject was being taken onto the UFO, and who could testify about this later. The "abduction" theory depends on the numbers of verbal reports; there are no experiments to test this theory.

Lawson's specific theory, however, gives us something testable. He has conducted studies, including one of a group of people born by cesarean section who told "abduction" stories which lacked the tube/tunnel imagery which is characteristic of hypnotized subjects born in the conventional manner. He invites others to conduct

(Continued on page 18)

roduced at night could be corrected during the day with greatly improved visibility or even a landing if necessary. Because the duration of daylight in the summer is more than twice the duration of night, Maxim may have chosen summer for his voyage partly for this reason.

Examples of airships flights of appreciable length associated with the 1896-7 sightings briefly involve the following:

1. The pilot-inventor Wilson from New York who landed at Lake Charles, Beaumont, Uvalde, and Kountze during the period of April 19-23 (April 21, 25 *Houston Post*; April 24, 28 *Galveston Daily News*; April 26 *San Antonio Daily Express*; May 16 *Dallas Morning News*).

2. Airship Pegasus which dropped letters in the states of Kentucky, Ohio, and Wisconsin describing its construction and travel plans (April 14 *New York Herald*, April 15 *Milwaukee Sentinel*; April 25 *Cincin-*

nati *Commercial Tribune*).

3. Barnard's trips in Tennessee on May 6 of 15 miles in 1½ hours and on May 13 of 12 miles in ¾ hours, being described as achieved or exceeded by at least "fifty other contrivances" (May 7, 15 *New York Tribune*; May 11 *New York Times*).

Unfortunately I have provided little for a definitive solution to the mysterious airships of 1896-7. All I have shown is that there were numerous airships about, and therefore the 1896-7 sightings were probably in part due to nan-made objects. The impact of this is then simply that it is less likely that the 1896-7 sightings are something exceedingly interesting or important such as being extraterrestrial in origin. Perhaps Robert G. Neeley, who is conducting a systematic collection and analysis of airship accounts, state by state, will be able to provide a better explanation of the sightings. □

1.896-97

In Others' Words

By Lucius Farish

MUTILATIONS

The **NATIONAL ENQUIRER** for October 29 carries a report by Henry Gris, stating that a fleet of seven UFOs were observed over the city of Kiev, USSR on May 26, 1985. A Soviet jet fighter, dispatched on an intercept mission, suffered engine failure upon nearing the UFOs. The pilot ejected as the plane spiraled downward and crashed.

The October issue of **OMNI** reviews Betty Hill's story of her 1961 UFO abduction and subsequent UFO experiences in the Anit-Matter/UFO Update section of the magazine. **JOURNAL** editor Dennis Stacy contributes an article on the financial perils of UFO research in **OMNI's** November issue.

A fascinating-if-true story of a cattle-killing UFO can be found in the November issue of **FATE**. The report

alleges that a large disc-shaped UFO was seen at close range on a Missouri farm in August, 1896. When the UFO departed, three steers their bodies completely drained of blood, were found in a patch of burned grass. Several other such incidents are claimed to have occurred in the state at the same time although preliminary newspaper research has failed to substantiate this claim. The same issue of **FATE** also contains Part 2 of Hilary Evans' article on "balls of light."

Bob Girard of Arcturus Book Service has recently published a small booklet detailing his own thoughts on UFOs and the human race's place in the cosmic scheme of things (perhaps with an emphasis on "scheme"). Is "the entire human life cycle...subordinated to the needs of an unperceived macrospecies"? Is there some sort of

conspiracy to "keep us human," as Girard speculates? This is all quite interesting food for thought, even if nothing can be proven, pro or con. In the final chapter of his booklet, Girard makes some very telling points, reminding us of the insanities we take for granted in our "normal" lives. As he says, the "true human" strives to leave the herd and to experience life from a "cosmic perspective."

Agreement with all of Girard's premises is not necessary in order to enjoy reading **THE COSMIC SHEEPDOG**. It will give you something (else) to think about, at the least. Copies are available for \$5.95 (plus 85¢ postage & handling) from Arcturus Book Service - P.O. Box 2213, Scotia, NY 12302.

LETTERS

OPEN LETTER

Dear Jenny Randles:

I just finished reading your last exchange with Ian Ridpath in the September, 1985, issue of the MUFON UFO Journal, and I feel compelled to ask you to refrain from pursuing this matter any further.

There is no purpose in attempting to have a rational and logical discussion of issues with Mr. Ridpath, as his interest does not lie in finding the truth, but in creating as much controversy and confusion as possible. Like other pseudo-debunkers, he uses whatever information he can think of, banking on the ignorance of the public, which cannot distinguish between milliroentgens per hour and

milliroentgens, and finds nothing suspicious if Venus is in the sky after midnight. He operates by innuendo, changing even the dates of events ("clearly in error") to suit his purposes, ignoring the data that demonstrates the lack of substance of his ideas.

It is a waste of time to reply to his letters and to the specious arguments put forward in his papers, as this will only provide him with new material to harp on. Like all the other members of the CSICOP club, he will never answer a point directly but will labor around it to fire the argument; and under no circumstances will he admit to having been wrong, even if he has to fib a little — to put it nicely.

So, Jenny, I strongly suggest that you ignore his barbs and use your

valuable time for your UFO research. Mr. Ridpath and his fellow club members will get what is due them without any help, as has already happened in the cases of the "Mars connection" and the "flying fishing boat" of New Zealand fame. It is bound to happen to Mr. Ridpath also, unless he sees the light — which I doubt — and realizes that one does not investigate a UFO report by visiting the place years later to play tricks with a TV camera, by not talking to the witnesses and by ignoring all significant information.

Sincerely,
Dr. Willy Smith
CUFOS, UNICAT
Project

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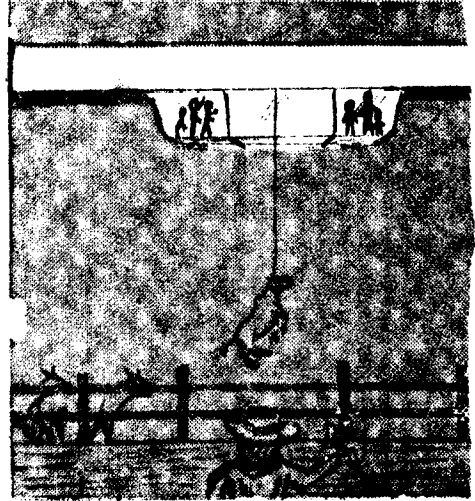
AIR SHIP TAKES COW

The Thrilling Experience of a Woodson Stockman

Hon. Alex Hamilton of Vernon, Kansas, came to town last Wednesday (April 21, 1897) and created quite an excitement by announcing that he had been having some experience with the much talked about airship. Mr. Hamilton is an old settler, was a member of the legislature in the early days and is known all over Woodson, Allen, Coffey and Anderson counties. He stakes his sacred honor upon the truthfulness of the story. Mr. Hamilton said:

“Last Monday night about half past ten o'clock we were awakened by a noise among the cattle. I arose, thinking perhaps my bull dog was performing some of his pranks but upon going to the door, saw to my utter amazement an airship slowly descending over my low lot and about 40 rods from the house. Calling Gid

Heslip, my tenant, and my son Wall, we seized some axes and ran to the corral. Meanwhile the ship had been gently descending until it was not more than 30 feet above the ground



came up to within 50 yards of
consisted of a great cigar-shaped
portion possibly 300 feet long with a
carriage underneath. The carriage was
made of panels of glass or other
transparent substance, alternating
with a narrow strip of some other
material. It was brilliantly lighted
within and everything was clearly
visible. There were three lights; one
like an immense search light and two
smaller, one red the other green. The
large one was susceptible of being
turned in any direction. It was
occupied by six of the strangest beings
I ever saw. There were two men, a
woman, and three children. They were
jabbering together but we could not
understand a syllable they said. Every
part of the vessel which was not
transparent was of a dark reddish
color. We stood mute in wonder and
fright, when some noise attracted
their attention and they turned their
light directly upon us. Immediately
upon catching sight of us, they turned
on some unknown power, and a great
turbine wheel about 30 feet in
diameter which was slowly revolving
below the craft, began to buzz,
sounding precisely like the cylinder of
a separator, and the vessel rose as
lightly as a bird. When about 300 ft.
above us it seemed to pause and hover
directly over a three year old heifer
which was bawling and jumping,
apparently fast in the fence. Going to
her we found a cable about half an

inch in thickness, made of the same
red material, fastened in a slip knot
about her neck, one end passing up to
the vessel and tangled in the wire. We
tried to get it off but could not, so we
cut the wire loose and stood in
amazement to see ship, cow and all
rise slowly and sail off, disappearing in
the northwest. We went home but I
was so frightened I could not sleep
but arose early Tuesday morning,
mounted my horse and started out
hoping to find some trace of my cow.
This I failed to do but coming back to
Leroy in the evening found that Lank
Thomas who lives in Coffey county
about three or four miles west of
Leroy had found the hide, legs and
head in his field that day. He, thinking
some one had butchered a stolen beast
and thrown the hide away, had
brought it to town for identification
but was greatly mystified in not being
able to find a track of any kind on the
soft ground. I went home last night
but every time I would drop to sleep I
would see the cursed thing with its big
lights and hideous people. I don't
know whether they are devils or
angels or what but we all saw them
and my whole family saw the ship and
I don't want any more to do with
them."

Mr. Hamilton looked as if he had
not entirely recovered from the shock
and every one who heard him was
convinced he was sincere in every
word.

ARE PSYCHIC PEOPLE MORE LIKELY TO SEE UFOs?

A case history, in the witness's own words with commentary

Janet Bord

1.896-97 ←



Our grateful thanks to Lucius Farish for introducing us to the story and claims of Charlie Jones. At our suggestion Mrs. Bord corresponded with Mr. Jones and obtained much additional information. Recently married, our contributor was well-known to readers as Miss Janet Gregory.

NOW that more and more UFO researchers are beginning to consider the possibility of a link between UFOs and a whole range of occult phenomena, it is interesting that deeper investigation of UFO witnesses quite often reveals that a witness has had more than one UFO sighting, and has also experienced what are generally termed psychic phenomena. It would appear that a certain "sensitivity" is in operation, and those who have it are likely to see all manner of strange things invisible to most human eyes.

One man who comes into this category is Charles Jones. He lives in a pleasant, rural area of Indiana, U.S.A., and has seen UFOs fairly frequently during the last twenty-four years. "My first observation of UFOs was early in 1947, which was a huge, dark orange-coloured sphere which flew around Indianapolis, Indiana, three times before it began to turn red and quickly sped off to the south-east. From then up into 1952 I watched several bluish-white UFO light streaks in the western sky flying south. I did not pay much attention then until sometime in 1964 . . . During 1966 and 1967, several UFOs flew by our house over our neighbour's field (to the east) to around 1,000 feet. At

the north end of our woods, they would turn west. The turns which I observed were of a high degree radius turn, never sudden 90 degree angle turns. Once in a while one would have trouble and zigzag some before proceeding on west."

During the 1960s, Charlie took some photographs of the lights he saw at night. The area was especially rich in sightings during that decade, with a flap lasting from the end of 1965 until 1969. Several different types of UFO were seen, including the frequently observed disc-shaped craft, one of which flew over Charlie's house just above tree-top height, on November 13, 1965.

UFO and humanoid sighting near Sheridan

It was only a month later that Charlie had his most spectacular sighting. He saw a UFO at close quarters, and a "man" sitting inside it. It was Saturday, December 11, 1965, shortly after 1.00 p.m. Charlie was driving home from Sheridan where he had been Christmas shopping, and was travelling south along the Lamong Road. The weather was overcast with a white cloud cover at the time, and it had rained before noon. "What caught my attention," he said, "was a small white light

(Continued from page 19)

pointed toward the earth. A similar object was observed twice over Cruz Alta, Brazil, in December of the same year. When it reappeared in July 1937, its "head" had become a ball of fire.

Then there was the great scare of 1857-58, when in the late dusk one evening a giant serpent hovered above a steamboat slowing for a landing along the Missouri River in Nebraska. It seemed to be breathing fire, say accounts, and it had "lighted streaks" along its sides. Sightings must have continued, for some years later a song passed into local folk tradition:

'Twas a dark night in Sixty-six

When we was layin' steel.

We seen a flyin' engine come
Without no wing or wheel

It came a-roarin' in the sky
With lights along the side . . .

And scales like a serpent's hide.

By the turn of the century Nebraskans were no longer confusing serpents and UFOs. In February 1897 "airships" started flying over the state and in the years ahead stories of a giant creature in Alkali Lake near Hay Springs, first told by Indians to the first white settlers in the area, were revived. One alleged observer said

that "its head was like an oil barrel, shiny black in the moonlight. Its flashing green eyes were spitting fire."

With incidents like those recounted above, we are moving into new and uncharted territory, where the line between "machines" and "animals" becomes blurred; so does the line that divides the various types of Fortean phenomena. The moral may be that research which concentrates on UFOs alone, ignoring the other mysteries of the physical world, is pointless. Perhaps what we need in the meantime is a report of a UFO dumping large, moving objects into the waters of Loch Ness!

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ANO 1972

MES MAY-JUN

MES MAY-JUN

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1897

on Animals and Birds" crops up in the discussion. The "E.M. Effect" does not in fact worry them too badly, because their stock explanation is that the engine was not stopped by a UFO, but was stalled by a neurotic or psychotic driver who *imagined* that he was seeing a UFO. They have a point, which we can willingly grant them in a few cases at any rate. But they remain far less happy about the birds and animals, for here no such easy escape solution is at hand. The only safe position for our opponents is consequently to maintain resolutely that no such weird and abnormal behaviour by animal or bird can ever be proved to have occurred except where there is a good cast-iron explanation. Thus squawking chickens are always squawking because there is an eagle or a sparrowhawk overhead. Panicking sheep have been set in motion by that ubiquitous agency the common dog. Cattle are rushing about because maddened by bot-flies. And so on.

THE CATALOGUE—(i) B.C. TO 1946 A.D.

1. **Middle East** (*Reign of Alexander the Great*, 356-323 B.C.) A historian of the reign of Alexander the Great allegedly tells of two strange craft that dived repeatedly at his army, until the war elephants, the men, and all the horses panicked and refused to cross the river where the incident occurred . . . The historian describes the objects as "great shining silvery shields, spitting fire around the rims . . . things that came from the skies and returned to the skies."

Frank Edwards: *Stranger Than Science* (Pan Books, London), p. 198.

2. **Rutland, England** (September 15, 1749) Fiery object like a waterspout, whirling and roaring, frightened cattle and rustics.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 207.

3. **Robertson County, Tennessee, U.S.A.** (between 1817 and 1821)

The farm of John Bell seemed to be haunted, with typical poltergeist phenomena occurring and "flying lights" being seen.

One of the many visitors who came to see the haunted house was General Andrew Jackson. When he was approaching in a horse-drawn wagon, the wheels of the wagon suddenly seemed to "freeze", and the straining horses were unable to move it until a "sharp metallic voice" from behind some bushes cried: "All right, General. Let the wagon move!", whereupon the wheels began to turn again.

FSR, November/December 1968, p. 16.

(See notes.) John Keel: *Is the "E.M." Effect a Myth?*

4. **Horton, Wiltshire, England** (June 1857) The *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* of July 2, 1857, reported farmer Wm. Brown rode towards a "whirl-puff". There was no rush of wind, and the conditions did not resemble a real whirlwind. Horse was terrified, staggered, and Mr. Brown almost lifted out of the saddle.

FSR, November/December 1966, p. 18.

5. **Swaffham, Norfolk, England** (January 15, 1869) Something seen in sky, and "mysterious explosions not of meteoric origin", stampeded hundreds of sheep.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

6a. **Bonham, Texas, U.S.A.** (1873) At Bonham, Texas, in 1873, workers in a cotton-field were terrorised by a shiny, silver object that came streaking down from the sky at them. It swung around, like a great silver serpent, said one witness, and dived at them again and again. A team of horses ran away, and the driver was thrown under the wheels of the wagon and killed.

6b. **Fort Riley, Kansas, U.S.A.** (1873) And on the same day, an hour or so after the incident at Bonham, the same or a similar thing swooped down from the skies at some Army troops on the cavalry parade ground at Fort Riley, Kansas, and terrorised the horses to such an extent that cavalry drill ended in tumult.

Both from Frank Edwards: *Stranger Than Science*, p. 198.

7. **Berkshire, England** (8.20 a.m., November 20, 1887) An unknown something in the sky, and mysterious explosions, stampede sheep over an area of 210 sq. miles.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

8. **Thames Valley, England** (night of November 13, 1888) Sheep stampeded over area of 22 square miles. Found panting in terror and crowded under hedges, on widely scattered farms next morning.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

9. **Chiltern Hills, England** (October 25, 1889) Over a region of about 40 square miles, sheep in hundreds burst simultaneously out of folds and barns. The panic was contagious, though the farms and folds were not adjoining, but miles apart.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

10. **Leroy, Kansas, U.S.A.** (April 19, 1897) The Hamilton household were aroused by a commotion among their cattle and household dogs. Going out, they found overhead the "Texan airship", which had lassoed one of their heifers.

Jacques Vallée: *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, p. 16.

11. **Rockland, Texas, U.S.A.** (11.30 p.m., April 22, 1897) At Rockland, Mr. John M. Barclay, having retired for the night, heard his dog barking furiously, and also a whining noise. He went out to look, and saw a great machine stationary (the "Texas Airship") a few feet from the ground. A man from the machine, asked him for lubricating oil, cold chisels, and bluestone. Asked where they were from and whither going, the man replied: "From anywhere, but we will be in Greece the day after tomorrow."

D. B. Hanlon and J. Vallée: *Airships Over Texas*, FSR, January/February 1967, p. 23.

12. **Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.** (April 1897) The *Dallas News* of April 28, 1897, had a report of an anonymous witness (a lawyer) who was driving his horse and buggy at night when the "Airship" passed overhead. The horse snorted, reared, plunged madly, nearly overturned the buggy, and stood trembling like a leaf.

Donald B. Hanlon: *Texas Odyssey of 1897*, FSR, September/October 1966, p. 8.

13. **Hot Springs, Arkansas, U.S.A.** (night of May 6, 1897) Two law officers, Sumpter and McLemore, tried to approach the landed UFO on their horses, but the animals refused to go nearer than 100 yards or so.

Jerome Clark: *The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship*, FSR, July/August 1966, p. 15.

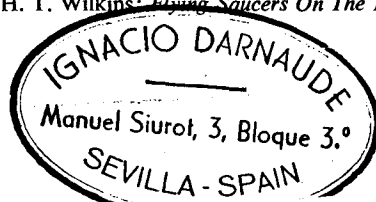
14. **Seal Rocks, Sutro Heights, San Francisco, U.S.A.** (November 22, 1897) The "airship" flew over the Cliff House and projected its powerful beam on Seal Rocks, causing the seals to dive frantically into the water.

Lore and Deneault: *Mysteries of the Skies*, p. 7.

15. **Thames Estuary Marshes, England** (1901) Another stampede of sheep. All fled westwards, away from the North Sea.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

FSR, J-F 1970



Encounters with
the MATAH KAGMI

YETIS

(H)

39

My Grandfather was born in upper California Country near the mountain of Shasta. This was in the year of 1853. He fought in the Modoc Indian War (1872-73) in defense of his homeland, however, it was the same old story-- defeat, and being sent to a reservation.

Grandfather did not like the white man's reservation however, and soon returned to the part of the country that he loved. It was by some very good luck and the help of a white friend in Yreka, California, he was able to buy some land near Tululake up in the mountains. He then built a cabin there, and lived there from then on until his death. He died in 1935. He fell asleep on a river bank and never awakened again.

Grandfather lived a long and eventful life, but not always a happy one.

He told me this story as a child, and I never tired of hearing it.

His first contact with the Sasquatch was one evening in the summer of 1897. He was walking along a deer trail near a lake just about dusk, when he saw up ahead something that looked like a tall bush. Upon coming a little closer he became aware of a strong odor, sort of musky. He then gave a close look at the bush, and suddenly realized that it was not a bush at all, for it was covered from head to foot with thick coarse hair, much like horsehair. He took a step closer, but the creature made a sound that sounded like "Nyyaaaah!" Grandfather now knew that this was one of the ones that he had heard the old ones tell about, a Sasquatch!

Although it was growing darker, Grandfather was able to see quite clearly two soft brown eyes through the hairy head part, then the creature moved slightly, and Grandfather made a motion of friendship and laid down the string of fish that he had been carrying. The creature evidently understood this, as it quickly snatched up the fish and struck out through the timber nearby. It stopped only for a moment and made a sound that Grandfather never forgot--a long, low "Aaagoooooooooummmm!"

Grandfather never told anyone outside the family this story, and he called them people. He referred to them as people called MATAH KAGMI. Now here is something that is most interesting, and doubtful that it could be by chance, and that is that the people in Tibet call the so-

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I. SPRING-70

... much alike.

BELLY ACHES

(The following items were located by researcher Angelo Capparella III.)

Charlotte, N.C. Daily Observer, July 24, 1897.

(Philadelphia Record) "Authentic stories of the ejection of live lizards from the human stomach aren't of infrequent occurrence, but by his performance in that line on Friday last Morris Collins, of Angora, has certainly become a record-breaker. After an ill-duration Collins suddenly became on Friday and vomited no less in size from 3½ inches to ½ lizards Collins rapidly in now able to be about. That can be little doubt, as the several persons who were in the time, and as additional reptiles, which he has pre-bottle. Besides the 36 whole heads and tails of several however, are quite small.... when informed of the number the specimens in the bottle, the most remarkable that had ation. How the reptiles got mystery to Collins, who can presence upon the theory that of their spawn when quenching health has been on the mend covering lost weight rapidly.

Statesville, N.C.

(Testimony of James O. Lack-
" I for several years have in my stomach, and the longer treated by some as good phy-versed with a dozen or more, agree....It seemed that there at length one day I took about three-quarters of a box of Dr. Bachmann's Vermifuge confections. The next day I took a full box, then I was afterwards taking Dr. Dunlap's Liver Regulator and Blood Cleanser for some days after. I passed something of the spring lizard tribe, it being somewhat decayed, so its size around I could not get, but its length was exactly ten and three-quarters inches. Its color was near perfect white, and I am happy to say to you today that since then I have not had any more spells and have not even felt the symptoms but am not stout by any means and never will be again."

March 1972

Hanoi: Monster Removed From Man

Reuter

HONG KONG, March 17—North Vietnamese doctors have killed a ten-inch long "monster" with head, tongue, teeth and legs growing inside a 22-year-old man, the North Vietnamese news agency reported today.

"The monster was located between the liver, the right kidney and the right lung," the news agency said.

"It weighed 1.5 kilograms (3 pounds, 5 ounces) and measured 25 centimeters (10 inches) in length. It had a monstrous tongue capping the head which had a cyclopic eye and vestiges of the jaw with well-formed teeth," the agency said.

The agency did not identify the patient, nor did it say whether he was feeling any better.

ness of several weeks came sick at the stomach than 36 lizards, varying inch. After vomiting the proved in health, and is the case is genuine there lizards are vouched for by the house with Collins at proof the man exhibits the served in alcohol in a reptiles, there are the others, all of which, The attending physician, of lizards, and when shown pronounced the case to be ever come under his observ- into his stomach is a only account for their he must have swallowed some his thirst at a spring. His since Friday and he is re-

Landmark, May 27, 1886.

ney; Alexander County, N.C.) been suffering with a pain the worse. I have been sicians as we have and con- and it seemed as if none would was no relief for me...when

A. SUMMER - 72

"One of our aldermen from the fifth ward said to him it bore a resemblance to a big frog, all aglow with irridescent fire. A popular musician saw it but to him it bore the appearance of a translucent bee hive, lighted with electric lights. Now what on earth did these good people see?"

A couple of days after the object's initial appearance, "The Elgin Evening Dial" came out with perhaps the most objective story about the mystery and offered what appears to be a plausible explanation:

"Men who claim to have seen the 'air ship' with its colored lights that has appeared simultaneously over Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska were again numerous in Elgin last evening and who would laugh at the idea had an argument on his hands immediately.

"The light that was seen by men who believe it is an 'air ship' is described as having an indulating motion. It moved off toward the northeast vanishing by degrees. Red, white and green colored lights were displayed.

"Astronomers laugh at the idea and Professor George Hough of the Dearborn Obser-

vatory in Evanston has an outline of the course of the star Alpha Orionis. He said.

"This is the air ship. It has been roaming through its regular course in the firmament these 10,000,000 years and why it should have been settled upon these last three weeks and pointed out as the headlight of a mysterious aerial vessel is a thing hard to explain.

Alpha Orionis appears on the meridian at five o'clock and becomes visible at eight o'clock. At that time it resembles a strong white electric light. It first becomes noticeable in the central southwest portion of the sky. At an unusual rapid rate for a star it takes its course toward the northwest, finally disappearing in that corner. As the star begins to sink, the atmospheric conditions cause it to appear to be of a reddish hue on the under side and green on the upper portion when seen through a glass. The center of the body is white."

End of the mystery? Well, not quite. According to Don Tuttle, director of the Elgin Planetarium, Alpha Orionis

would not be a suitable explanation for those objects spotted in the eastern sky. He suggested that the Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin could help find the answer to the riddle, but John Lester at the observatory reported that it would be hard to mistake a planet for an air ship on this particular date.

"There was nothing extraordinary on this date," Lester said after reviewing planet positions for April 16, 1897. He added that Venus, often mistaken for an unusual celestial object, was pretty well out of site. He did mention reports of an extremely bright meteor shower in the earlier part of the year.

Tuttle also said it could have been a special case of a large meteor coming very close to the earth "but there's no way of checking."

John W. Gunderson of 525 South Commonwealth Ave., Elgin, 17 years old at the time, cannot recall the specific commotion about the mysterious object. He was living on a farm just five miles south of Elgin in 1897.

But Gunderson, extremely alert for a man of 92, does re-

member a heavy amount of meteor activity during the late 1890's and says the objects could very well have been these meteors.

Another long time Elgin resident, Elmer Gylleck, was born in 1898 but speculates about the likely cause of all the strange sightings.

Gylleck says many youths used to launch paper balloons filled with hot air by a small torch.

"The hot air would fill the balloon and lift it high in the sky," Gylleck explained. "They were especially popular around the Fourth of July, but they were very dangerous to play with and the farmers didn't like them."

He said from a distance people could not identify these floating balloons and they were easily mistaken for strange floating objects.

Stars, air ships, hot air balloons or meteors? Nobody will ever know what Elgin residents saw during those April nights of 1897. But it sure gave the people plenty to talk about those days.

Wilkesboro, N.C. Chronicle, October 13, 1897

STOLE A STONE WALL

Two of the most unique cases of thieving on record are being investigated in Haverhill, Mass. One is the stealing of 15,000 live fish and the other is the theft of a big stone wall surrounding the cemetery of the Hebrew Burial Assoc. This is the first instance ever chronicled of the larceny of a stone wall from a graveyard. Last fall Charles Goodrich constructed an artificial lake on his estate, and stocked it with "shiners" which he intended to sell this winter. Yesterday he had a sale and went in search of the fish but found that they had all gone. The lake was still there, and as there is no outlet there was only one explanation of the mystery.

The Hebrew Burial Association purchased twenty acres of land near the Whittier homestead two years ago. It inclosed the lot with a stone wall. The wall has taken wings just as mysteriously as did the fish in the artificial lake. The members of the board, however, deny that they touched the stones at all, and say that they got their stone from a lot of land which they purchased. The stolen wall was about a half mile long. It is estimated there were nearly 1000 cords of stone in the wall.-- New York Press.

LETTERS

1.895

U.S.O.s

Dear Editor,

My attention has recently been drawn to the UFO report made by Betty Cash and Vickie Landrum (after an alleged incident near Huffman, Texas, on 1980 Dec. 29). My source of information is John Schuessler's article "Blind terror in Texas" in *The Unexplained* 9(107) 2121-25, (1982).

Looking for an astronomical explanation I noticed that the given time (9 p.m.) could not be correct; the witnesses reported seeing the Moon, but the Moon did not rise until just after 1 a.m. Nor is it likely that, after dining out, they were returning home as early as 9 p.m. A more likely time is near midnight.

Just after midnight Canopus, the second brightest star in the whole sky (magnitude -0.71), lay at only 7° altitude directly south (180°). Highway FM 1485 runs in a dead straight line almost due south for 4 miles on a slight downward gradient (1 in 621 on average). With forest on either side of the road, this would have given the travelers a head-on view of Canopus if they were on that road at the time Canopus was lined up with it.

At that low altitude, the light from Canopus would have been both refracted (into spectral colors) and distorted (with streamers to the ground). The description given is consistent with other accounts of stars seen at low altitude. The conclusion must be that Cash and Landrum, not knowing that they were looking at a star, concluded that it was a UFO, ideas about which influenced their perception. Their conclusions that the car became hot and that they suffered burns must be the result of hysteria.

One would have liked to know how much alcohol they had consumed and what UFO lore they had already absorbed. One would also have liked to know whether or not the road surface (where they imagined the UFO to be) was affected by heat. I predict that no

such damage will have been found.

Although it is alleged that the object later moved "away over the tree tops" it must be concluded that this later object was not Canopus, which would have disappeared behind the forest. It is not clear from Schuessler's article exactly where subsequent objects were seen, but Jupiter (at magnitude -1.8) later rose in the west (accompanied by Saturn in close conjunction). The witnesses may have thought that Jupiter was the same UFO.

Yours faithfully
Steuart Campbell
Scotland

TO ALL OF THE MUFON GROUP,

Just a note to thank all of you for your very hard and time-consuming work that you have done for Vickie, Colby (Landrum) and myself. Without each of you, I really don't know what we would have done.

Please accept my apologies for such people that you have to listen to such as Steuart Campbell. People like that are to be pitied. He said he even doubted our credibility — well I doubt his mentality. All I can say is that it is such a shame it was us. It should have been him and then we would see if he would have said it was a star. Just one day of what we have suffered would have been too much for him — not even speaking of the years.

May God bless each and everyone of you for your great work.

Betty Cash
Alabama

Dear Editor,

Thought you might be interested in this passage I came across in Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (London, Virago Press, 1982, from a turn-of-the-century original edition), p. 254. Ms. Kingsley was on an 1895 exploration at Lake Ncovi between the Ogowe and Rembwe rivers, then in the

region of the Niger Protectorate and Gabon, when she went out at night alone to bathe and canoe on the lake waters. Then:

"...I saw a strange thing happen. Down through the forest on the lake bank opposite came a violet ball the size of a small orange. When it reached the sand beach it hovered along it to and fro close to the ground. In a few minutes another ball of similarly colored light came towards it from behind one of the islets, and the two waver to and fro over the beach, sometimes circling round each other. I made off toward them in the canoe, thinking — as I still do — they were some brand new kind of luminous insect. When I got onto their beach one of them went off into the bushes and the other away over the water. I followed in the canoe, for the water here is very deep and, when I almost thought I had got it, it went down into the water and I could see it glowing as it sunk until it vanished in the depths."

Later, on asking the natives in this very remote region, they explain it as an "Aku" — a devil. There is no further explanation or discussion of the incident.

I'd tend to dismiss it as an insect too, except for its underwater dive. Ms. Kingsley is an eminently practical, matter-of-fact, not in the least fanciful observer and a highly intelligent and perceptive travel writer. This incident recalls other "tiny UFO" oddities of the sort reported by Fort and others.

One more point: the use of the word "aku" in West Africa — there's the same correspondence noted in other vocabulary to similar terminology in Polynesia (and elsewhere??). One might speculate about possible widespread dissemination of the same or similar names for spirits in prehistory. But that's really getting into deep waters!

-Robert Coltman
S. Chelmsford, MA

M, JN-PC

of a heavy artillery salute, and was heard for twenty miles. The cylindrical shaped ball of fire was forging along in a south-westerly direction when first discovered. The hissing sound of the fire could be heard for miles, and the smoke gave the meteor the appearance of a burning balloon.

When the meteor exploded the pieces flew in all directions, like a volcanic upheaval, and solid walls were pierced by the fragments. David Letsure was knocked down by the force of the air caused by the rapidity with which the body passed before it broke. The blow rendered him unconscious. One horse had its head crushed and nearly torn from the trunk by a fragment of the meteor, and another horse in the next stall was discovered stone deaf.

The coming of the meteor was heralded by a rumbling noise, followed in an instant by the hissing sound, and immediately the ball of fire, spitting and smoking, burst into full view, and before the people had time to collect their senses, the explosion occurred.

New York Times, March 11, 1897.

1. MAY-74

Remarkable Atmospheric Manifestation in the South of Russia.

The superstitious peasants of the Ukraine were lately terribly alarmed by an unusual atmospheric phenomena which appeared two hours before sunrise in a village called Loomlino, situated near the river Don. Many of those who were awake at the early hour stated that the "apparition" was of a brilliant red color, and assumed the shape of a crescent. It only lasted a few minutes and gradually faded away into a light blue color. Many of those who witnessed this remarkable appearance in the heavens state that it was accompanied by a loud rumbling similar to thunder. Others, who have more imagination, aver that the red crescent resembled a large dragon in its shape, and that it is a sure portent of a coming war or a great plague.

"Miscellany," Eclectic Magazine, March 1890, pp. 431-32.

1. MAY-74

Atmospheric Phenomenon.

Oshkosh, Wisc. March 19th. A most remarkable atmospheric phenomenon occurred here at 3 P.M. The day was light, though cloudy, when suddenly darkness commenced settling down, and in five minutes it was as dark as midnight. General consternation prevailed, people on the streets rushed to and fro, teams dashed along, and women and

children ran into cellars, all business operations ceased until lights could be lighted. No a breath of air was stirring on the surface of the earth. The darkness lasted from 8 to 10 minutes, when it passed off, seemingly from west to east, and brightness followed. News from cities to the west say the same phenomenon was observed there in advance of its appearance here, showing that the wave of darkness passed from west to east. Nothing could be seen to indicate any air currents overhead. It seemed to be a wave of total darkness passing along without wind.

PAGE 34

from: Daily Republican, La Crosse, Wisc., March 20, 1886.

On Monday, September 24, about 9 P.M., a remarkable phenomenon occurred at Karingon, in the province of Bohus, Sweden. During a perfect calm a violent whirlwind suddenly arose from the south-east, carrying with it a quantity of sand, earth, and straw, when suddenly a bright light lit up every object and made the night as clear as day. This was caused by a magnificent meteor, egg-shaped in form, which appeared in the zenith and which at first seemed to consist of myriads of large specks, gradually changing into a star shining with a blinding lustre, and which burst, with all the colors of the rainbow, in the north-west, four to five metres above the horizon. When the meteor had disappeared the wind suddenly fell, and it was again perfectly calm. The phenomenon lasted about sixty seconds. The wind had throughout the day been south and very slight.

from: Nature, Nov. 1, 1893, vol. 29, p. 15.

A Remarkable Meteor.

A remarkable meteor was seen in Western Australia on Feb. 1 this year. The following account has been forwarded to me by Mr. S. Worsley Clifton, Collector of Customs at Freemantle:

"A small black cloud on a clear day appeared in the east, travelling not very swiftly towards the north-west, which burst into a ball of fire with an apparent disk the size of the full moon, blood-red in colour; it left a train of black or dark-coloured vapour across the heavens which was visible for three-quarters of an hour. No sound was heard, sky perfectly clear, and thermometer 100° F in the shade."

Observatory, Melbourne, April 16
Robt. J. Ellery

from: Nature, June 5, 1879, Vol. 20, p. 121.

Z

1.896-97

of a heavy artillery salute, and was heard for twenty miles. The cylindrical shaped ball of fire was forging along in a south-westerly direction when first discovered. The hissing sound of the fire could be heard for miles, and the smoke gave the meteor the appearance of a burning balloon.

When the meteor exploded the pieces flew in all directions, like a volcanic upheaval and solid walls were pierced by the fragmen David Letsure was knocked down by the force of the air caused by the rapidity with which the body passed before it broke. The blow rendered him unconscious. One horse had its head crushed and nearly torn from the trunk by a fragment of the meteor, and another horse in the next stall was discovered stone deaf.

The coming of the meteor was heralded by a rumbling noise, followed in an instant by the hissing sound, and immediately the ball of fire, spitting and smoking, burst into full view, and before the people had time to collect their ~~senses~~, the explosion occurred.

New York Times, March 11, 1897. 1. MAY-1

for an unscheduled explosion. The view of the intelligence agencies in the United States was that either Pakistan or South Africa had exploded a test weapon, but owing to the location of the explosion South Africa was blamed. News of the South African flash did not reach the public until late October, but the United States was unable to produce any substantial evidence of an atomic explosion when the South African government denied having tested such a device.^{42 43}

On October 30th, 1979, the South African Embassy in Ottawa was furnished with information indicating other electrical phenomena, such as that at Lance Cove, had been similarly registered by Vela satellites. Superbolts of lightning had been detected on 17 occasions from January 21st, 1972, up to April 13th, 1975.⁴⁴ Two days later, the New York Times also suggested that "superbolts" might have been responsible. The leading proponent of the "superbolt hypothesis" was Dr. Gordon J. MacDonald of the MITRE Corporation. He suggested that an explosion heard over Long Island, New York, on October 10th was the result of a superbolt. The weather conditions near South Africa were "not very different" from those associated with the destructive superbolt at Lance Cove, according to Dr. MacDonald; but he offered no particulars as to what conditions were conducive to the generation of superbolts.⁴⁵

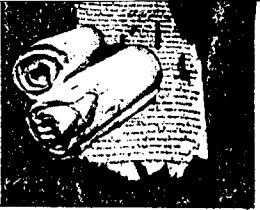
The Ministry of Transport may not have taken note of the discussion by scientists in the United States concerning superbolts, for on October 31st and November 1st of 1979, Neil Standen was in Filton, England, to discuss the measurement of sonic booms produced by the Concorde. British Airways, Air France, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, Transport Canada, and other agencies were concerned with reducing the sonic booms experienced in New England and Nova Scotia. The British and French representatives were puzzled by the number of "startle complaints" in North America when similar conditions in Cornwall, England, elicited very few complaints.⁴⁶ Earlier, Standen had announced in January 1979 that 77% of the booms reported by way of a "toll-free boom line" in Nova Scotia started in October 1978; but in September 1978 Standen had already announced that the source of the mystery booms was the Concorde.⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸ Even

though the study was publicly said to seek the identity of the mystery booms, its true purpose was to keep track of where sonic booms from the Concorde were still disturbing Nova Scotia communities.

The Ministry of Transport received more than telephone calls from Nova Scotia residents and radar tracks of Concorde from NORAD. Only the Halifax office of Emergency Planning Canada retained a letter to the editor in the St. John Telegraph-Journal of 1 June 1978.^{50 51} Once before, on 3 December 1973, Truro, Nova Scotia was shaken by a "loud noise" which was first thought to have been a boiler explosion. Telegraphic enquiries failed to locate its source, but revealed that it had been heard in many surrounding communities. The event was considered to be an earthquake although the noise came from above.⁵² In the Bay of Fundy area, "remarkable sounds, like gun reports" were recorded by naturalist W.F. Ganong and Samuel W. Kain at the turn of the century. Their mysterious origin was a subject of speculation in Scientific American and the Monthly Weather Review (U.S.).⁵³⁻⁵⁵ Kain's record of earthquakes in New Brunswick contain a number of claims of cannonading sounds preceding earthquakes including those of 14 February 1897 and 28 February 1904.^{56 57} Other newspaper reports provided to Standen included more current booms over the skies of Montreal and Mississauga. On August 2nd, 1952, a blast shattered windows in Montreal setting off fears of an earthquake. Although blame was directed towards a sonic boom, one woman reported seeing a "ball of fire" coming down out of the sky.^{58 59} On August 8th, 1974, the switchboards of the Peel and the Halton Regional Police were swamped with calls about a loud explosion at 5 a.m., but no cause for the blast could be found. One man claimed to have seen "a white fluorescent, oval-shaped disc" speeding across the sky at the same time.^{60 61} Whether the mystery booms were the result of earthquakes, exploding meteors, or UFOs —or if they happened away from the Atlantic near Cornwall— all data involving aerial detonations where Concorde was not flying were kept out of the Ministry of Transport study.

The most puzzling aspect of the Lance Cove phenomena was the electrical disturbance and flash of light, but twice in the next few

1, J-Feb 84 DE → "UFOCATS = SONIC BOOMS"



UNA CIUDAD RETRATADA EN EL CIELO

Como dijimos en el número anterior, los "espejismos celestes" tal vez fueron los misterios espaciales más impresionantes que documentó para la posteridad el inefable Charles Fort. Luego de recopilar cientos de casos de este tipo en varias partes del mundo, Fort especuló que podría tratarse de visiones (hoy diríamos "avistamientos") de "ciudades" o "islas" (hoy diríamos "colonias espaciales") que se desplazan a través del espacio sideral, y que algunas veces pasan muy cerca de la Tierra, por lo que pueden ser observadas por nosotros.

La explicación de Fort pecaría de ingenua si no estuviera apoyada por la casuística con que siempre acompaña sus especulaciones. Respecto al rigor con que documentaba e investigaba sus casos, basta como ejemplo el pasaje de Nuevos Mundos (New Lands) que hemos seleccionado para este número, y que se refiere al avistamiento y a la fotografía de una "ciudad suspendida en el cielo", en 1908.

"En *English Mechanic* del 10 de septiembre de 1897, es citado un corresponsal de *Weekly Times and Echo*. Apenas acababa de llegar de Yukón En los primeros días de junio de 1897, vio una ciudad retratada en el cielo de Alaska. Nadie de nosotros podía saber ni remotamente en qué parte del mundo podría estar esa ciudad. Algunos creyeron que era Toronto, otros Montreal, y alguien sugirió que se trataba de Pekín. Pero aunque esa ciudad exista o no en algún mundo desconocido al otro lado del Polo Norte, el hecho es que este espejismo maravilloso aparece de tiempo en tiempo cada año, y no somos los únicos que hemos visto este espectáculo. Por ello, evidentemente debe ser un reflejo de un pueblo construido por la mano del hombre'. Según este corresponsal, el espejismo no se parecía a ninguna de las ciudades mencionadas, sino que era 'una inmensa ciudad del pasado'.

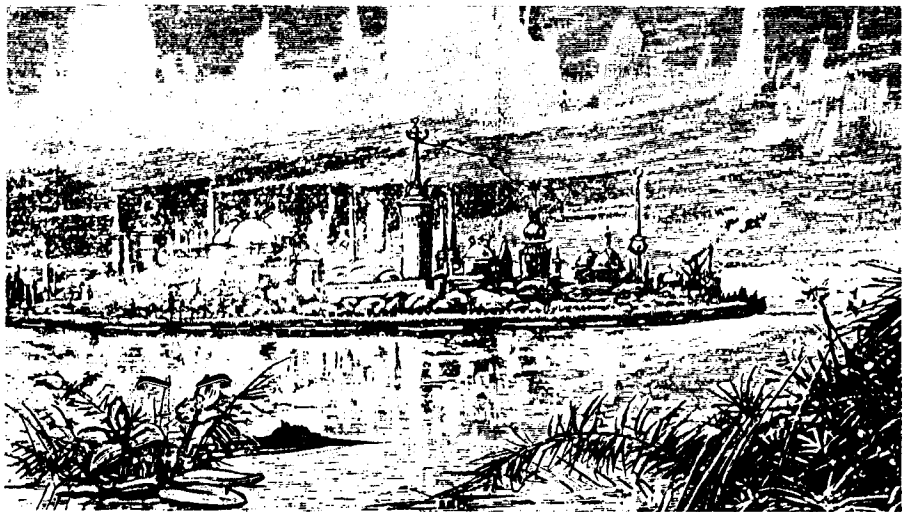
"En el *New York Times*, del 17 de febrero de 1901, se afirma que los nativos de Alaska relataban que

ocasionalmente se aparecía una ciudad suspendida en el cielo, y que un explorador, llamado Willoughby, que había oído los relatos, investigó y vio el espectáculo en el año de 1887. Se dice que, después de intentar fotografiarlo varias veces, Willoughby finalmente mostró una toma de una supuesta ciudad aérea. En su obra *Alaska* (pág. 140) Miner Bruce dice que Willoughby, uno de los primeros exploradores de Alaska, y quien le dio su nombre a la Isla Willoughby, le habló de este fenómeno, y en los primeros días de 1899, acompañó a Willoughby al lugar en que afirmaba que se repetía el espejismo. Parece que no lo vio, pero cita a un miembro de la expedición del Duc d'Abruzzi al Monte San Elías, realizada en el verano de 1897; el señor C. W. Thornton, de Seattle, que vio el espectáculo y escribió: 'No se necesitaba hacer un esfuerzo de imaginación para comparar esto con una ciudad, pero era algo tan claro que se requería tener mucha fe para convencerse de que no era una ciudad real'. Bruce publicó una reproducción de la fotografía que tomó Willoughby, y dice que la ciudad se identificó como Bristol, Inglaterra. Esta reproducción es tan clara y tan diferente a un espejismo

(muestra detalladamente árboles y muchos edificios) que se puede creer que el original haya sido la fotografía de una gran ciudad terrestre, quizá Bristol, Inglaterra.

"En el capítulo décimo de su libro, *Maravillas de Alaska*, Alexander Badlam ha tratado de explicar el asunto. Para ello publicó una reproducción de la fotografía tomada por Willoughby, que es la misma de Bruce, excepto porque todos los edificios están invertidos, o en la posición de un negativo. Badlam no quería acusar de fraude a Willoughby: creía que algún bromista desconocido le había venido una placa fotográfica a Willoughby, que en parte representaba a la ciudad de Bristol. Creo que algo así ocurrió, y esta fotografía, muy involucrada en los relatos de los espejismos repetidos, no tiene relación con éstos. Badlam muestra otra fotografía. Cuenta que dos hombres, cerca del Glaciar Muir, en una cacerola con mercurio vieron el reflejo de una ciudad desconocida, y creyeron que se encontraba en el fondo del mar cerca del glaciar, que se reflejaba en el cielo y que el reflejo regresaba y se reproducía de nuevo en el mercurio. Esto es muy complejo. Un fotógrafo llamado Taber

Continúa en la pág. 49



"La primera identificación de la fotografía de Willoughby como representación de una parte de la ciudad de Bristol, aparece en el *New York Times* del 20 de octubre de 1889. Me parece que esta fotografía fue para engañar a alguien.

Pero no era similar al panorama frecuentemente contemplado en el cielo de Alaska, según las descripciones. En el *New York Times* del 31 de octubre de 1889, el señor L. B. French, de Chicago, hace un relato de esta aparición espectral, como él la vio, cerca del Monte Fairweather: 'Pudimos ver claramente las casas, las calles y los árboles. Aquí y allí se levantaban altos capiteles sobre grandes edificios, semejantes a mezquitas o catedrales antiguas. . . No parecía una ciudad moderna, sino una antigua ciudad europea'.

"Cada año, entre el 21 de junio y el 10 de julio, una 'ciudad fantasma' aparece en el cielo, sobre un glaciar en Alaska; sus edificios parecen ser los de la ciudad de Bristol, Inglaterra; por ello se supuso que era un 'espejismo' de Bristol. Se dice que durante generaciones los nativos de Alaska han conocido estas representaciones repetidas y que, en mayo de 1901, una expedición científica partió de San Francisco y fue a investigar. Se dice también que, excepto por ligeros cambios, año tras año el panorama es siempre el mismo. Jour. Roy. Met. Soc. 27-158.

"Varios científicos salieron de Victoria, B. C., al Monte Fairweather, en Alaska, a estudiar un espejismo repetido de una ciudad en el cielo, que fue descubierto por el Duc d'Abruzzi, quien lo vio y lo dibujó. *La Nature*, 1901-1-303".

Viene de la pág. 14

APOYO DE...

me tomó muchos años convencer a las personas del CNES para que ~~le temo~~ran en cuenta, por eso me ~~temo~~ que no podemos esperar ver ~~los~~ resultados el día de mañana".

LOS CIENTIFICOS:
LA MEJOR CARTA
DE PRESENTACION

Jacques Vallée expresó su opinión en los siguientes términos: "Pienso que la reunión fue muy

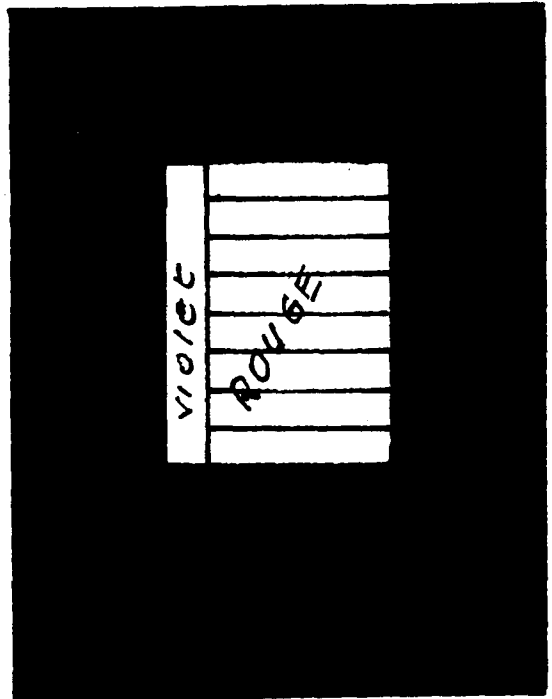
Un curieux Phénomène

Consultant une ancienne revue des Sciences et de leurs applications : «COSMOS - LES MONDES», j'ai eu la surprise de découvrir dans le n° 712 du 17 juillet 1898, une curieuse observation, dont je vous donne le texte, ci-dessous, ainsi qu'une reproduction que j'ai faite du dessin qui l'accompagnait.

CURIEUX METEORE

Le 4 septembre 1897 au soir, sortant de chez moi à 8 h 35 (20 h 35 sans doute) je découvrais entre la Grande Ourse et la Petite Ourse, une étoile rouge de l'apparence de Mars. La lumière était tranquille. Sachant que cela ne pouvait être une planète, je pris une jumelle qui me montra un disque bien conformé de 1 millimètre au plus. Cela me fit supposer que ce point lumineux devait être assez près de la terre. A l'aide de ma lunette astronomique, et avec un grossissement de 75, le disque disparut et fit place à une partie lumineuse rectangulaire. Sur un côté existait une bande couleur violette, et le reste était rouge avec des raies noires, assez régulièrement espacées. De chaque côté on devinait une partie noire sur le fond du ciel. Pendant que je plaçais un grossissement de 150, le point lumineux diminuait d'intensité. Lorsque la lunette fut au point l'étoile jeta encore quelques éclats et disparut. Il était 8 h 45. Je vis ce phénomène pendant dix minutes. Il était certainement visible depuis quelques temps, mais non la veille. Ce n'était point un bolide, car il resta stationnaire le temps de mon observation. Sa distance était plutôt dans les espaces planétaires : le grossissement de 75 fois le montrait un peu plus gros que Jupiter. Le peu de durée du phénomène ne me permit point de faire d'autres remarques. Je vous signale ce fait, espérant que d'autres personnes l'auront vu dans des meilleures conditions.

CHUSTREMAN



Dessin d'un phénomène observé vers 20 h 35 entre la Grande et la Petite Ourse par M. CHUSTREMAN le 4 septembre 1898 à Lille (France).

M. FIEFFE a fait des recherches mais n'a rien trouvé qui correspondait au phénomène observé. Il est à signaler cependant que des recherches sur des ouvrages de 1897 à 1899 ne manqueraient pas d'intérêt car de nombreuses observations d'objets étranges ont été relatées à cette époque, tant en France qu'à l'étranger.

Suite de la p. 21 :

Nos activités

Nous serions reconnaissants aux lecteurs qui voudraient nous aider en nous adressant :

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Il ne sera plus adressé de plans ou répondu au courrier qui ne respectera pas les consignes ci-dessus.

Responsable «Techniques et Recherches» :
Christian De Zan - 53, le Parc - 78540 VERNUILLET.

FIDUFO (Fichier Informatique de Documentation sur les UFO a besoin de nombreux participants pour l'établissement de fiches et leur traitement sur ordinateur : travaux de secrétariat, traductions toutes langues, analyse programmation, perfo-vérif. Quelques heures de travail chaque moi suffisent. Ceux qui peuvent aider à l'élaboration de cet outil indispensable pour la recherche seront les bienvenus, Secrétariat, FIDUFO, 5 Villa Chateaubriand 94230 CACHAN (timbres réponse S.V.P.)

RECHERCHES D'ARCHIVES : Ceux qui y participent sont souvent émerveillés en constatant tous les frais méconnus que l'on trouve en fouillant systématiquement la presse. Responsable : Mme GUEUDELLOT, 133, rue Léo-Bouys sou, 40000 Mont-de-Marsan. (Timbre réponse S.V.P.) Tél. (58) 75-59-19

L, Feb -81 23

LDLN

La «nube» luminosa sobre Madrid en 1.896

arturo gómez villalba

Dentro de la investigación histórica y precediendo a la gran oleada de 1897 se presenta este caso, casi desconocido en la Ufología hasta el momento, que tuvo lugar en Madrid el día 10 de febrero de 1896 y que fue interpretado por algunos de los más destacados científicos de la época como fenómeno natural, entre ellos José de Castro Pulido, Catedrático de la Universidad Central (que expondría curiosamente una explicación por los rayos globulares), pero el caso, ciertamente no da síntomas de ello como tal fenómeno natural. Se publicó un boletín al respecto, reflejándose la noticia en algunos periódicos locales, así como en una revista de divulgación científica denominada «La Naturaleza» (febrero 1896), siendo estas las fuentes de investigación.

El suceso se desarrolló de la siguiente forma, tal como nos lo describe un testigo presencial:

«...El testigo, persona de buen criterio y gran ilustración que se hallaba en aquel mismo instante mirando a Oriente en el Paseo de Santa Engracia de esta corte, se anunció a las 9 h. 29 m. 30 s. de la mañana con un resplandor vivísimo, cuya intensidad competía con la luz solar, y que iluminó fuertemente las fachadas de los edificios que a la sazón estaban en sombra. En aquel momento vio por su derecha, como en medio de la calle, a la altura de un tejado (efecto de la perspectiva) un cúmulo de nubes casi redondo de unos tres decímetros de diámetro aparente, blanquísimo y de materia muy densa, del cual seguidamente empezó a desprenderse por la parte superior izquierda un como rizo, que terminaba en forma redonda y ensanchaba; este fue alargándose juntamente con otro que después apareció por la derecha, y al cabo de pocos segundos formaba ya él toda una masa nublosa en forma de pera invertida, que tendría una altura aparente de un metro, poco más o menos; continuó creciendo en todas direcciones, aunque más en la vertical que en la horizontal, al mismo tiempo que marchaba hacia Oriente, hasta que llegó a su desarrollo máximo, tomando una apariencia fantástica y siniestra. Entonces conservando siempre la forma antedicha, alcanzaba ya una altura aparente quizás superior a tres metros, y terminaba en una aureola espléndida, en cuyo centro se veía un disco blanquísimo de dos a tres decímetros de diámetro. La trepidación de la atmósfera (explosión) llegó a tierra en ese momento (9 h. 30 m. y 45 ó 50 s.) seca y terrible al principio, más suave y acompasada después, obligando al testigo a dar, a pesar suyo, uno o dos pasos hacia la izquierda. Desapareció con esto el globo interior, y la nube se diluyó y empezó a teñirse de escarlata y violeta, produciendo un efecto encantador (véase lámina adjunta), palideciendo al mismo tiempo que se deformaba y adelgazándose hasta llegar a conseguir unos seis grados en el sentido longitudinal y

uno y medio aproximadamente en el de su anchura, mostró en su extremidad S. E. un pequeño apéndice oscuro como de denso humo, que se asemejaba en su color sombrío a las nubes de tempestad. Empujada por los vientos superiores, pues la región inferior estaba en calma, dicha nube única que se destacaba sobre la bóveda celeste, a la sazón purísima orientada de N. E. a S. S. O. desde el punto correspondiente al S. S. O. y a unos 11 grados de distancia cenital en que se hallaba situada, caminó muy lentamente hacia el E. N. E., disolviéndose a medida que avanzaba y quedando bastante después del mediodía con la apariencia de un cirrus ligero, a unos 65 grados del cenit.»

Posteriormente a la explosión se encontraron supuestos fragmentos, de pequeñas dimensiones encontrados en sitios diferentes. El primer fragmento tiene un volumen de 20 cm.³, siendo encontrado cerca del Hipódromo e incrustado en el suelo, la superficie externa era lisa e irregular, de color oscuro. Un segundo grupo compuesto de dos fragmentos encontrados en el km. 7 de la carretera de Madrid-Castellón y en la calle Serrano, fueron adquiridos por el Observatorio Astronómico, el primero pesaba 19 gramos y el segundo 52 gramos, ambos estaban cubiertos de una capa negro mate delgada.

Haciendo referencia al análisis de los datos meteorológicos, el día 9 de febrero, a las 9 de la mañana, la altura barométrica era de 777,3 mm., la temperatura de 2'5 °C sobre O. El día 10, día del suceso, a las 9 de la mañana la altura era de 772,6 mm. y la temperatura de 4'5 °C, aunque hubo un hecho extraño a la misma hora, primeramente una repentina subida en el barómetro de 1 mm. y 7 décimas, pasando posteriormente a situación normal y bajando más tarde a 7 décimas de mm. El día 11 la altura fue de 777,1 mm. y la temperatura de 4'9 °C. Dato en común a los tres días era una pequeña fuerza de viento E. N. E., así como el cielo totalmente despejado.

Así pues, aquí se presenta un caso más de sustento a las bases del fenómeno, cuya principal particularidad es la fecha aproximativa a la oleada de 1897. Puntos a destacar en el caso es el rizo desprendido, la forma de pera invertida, el disco blanquísimo, la explosión y ante todo ese camuflaje en forma de nube que ya ha sido observado desde siempre a lo largo de toda la casuística.

Los fragmentos son otro dato importante, pero desgraciadamente no queda prueba patente de su evidencia física.

Por fin, como indudable prueba de carácter científico, nos encontramos ante ese extraño cambio brusco de altura barométrica.

Madrid, 12 de diciembre de 1979.

And now we can complete the transition by considering a case which by no stretch of the imagination can be explained away as a slow moving green fireball, and is even less like ball-lightning.

Case 7. On the morning of December 20, 1895, a strange appearance in the sky was observed from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. A brilliantly white luminous body passed overhead from west to east, until at about 15 degrees above the eastern horizon it seemed to stand still in the skies for about fifteen minutes or more. Some descriptions referred to "an enormous wheel"; according to others, whatever it was, appeared to be the size of a table. The noise of its passage through the air was reported to be heard, and eventually it just disappeared without any audible or visible explosion.

This last case is as unlike the familiar flying saucer reports as it is unlike ball lightning or green fireballs, and it may be some entirely new phenomenon. This is the important thing to note. It is quite certain that many UFOs are lenticular

clouds, others are motor car headlights, Will-o-the-Wisp, Venus, Jupiter, slow moving green fireballs, or ball lightning. This does NOT, however, mean that all sightings can be reduced to this, or any other circumscribed list of standard 'explanations'. It is even more fatuous to attempt to reduce the extraordinary variety of appearances, conveniently lumped together under the heading of UFOs, to any one of these categories.

Almost all scientists now admit the overwhelming probability that life of some kind is widely distributed throughout the entire Universe, and although it is only about ten years since space flight was described as "utter bilge", it is also widely admitted that manned spacecraft will explore the solar system, and unmanned probes reach for the nearer stars, within the next twenty years. In these circumstances, it is far more "unscientific" to try to dismiss all unexplained aerial appearances as familiar phenomena than it is to hold the open minded view that some of them may be the artefacts of extraterrestrial communities.

1895

CONGRATULATIONS

Our readers will be pleased to learn that our valued friend and contributor, Jacques Vallée, has successfully concluded his latest university course, and has been awarded his Ph.D. in Computing Science.

Dr. Vallée has now taken a post at an important computing centre in Chicago.

PIECE FOR A JIG-SAW

L. G. CRAMP, M.S.I.A., A.R.Ae.S.

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6

Manos de fuego

1.897

IGNACIO DARNAUDE ROJAS-MARCOS

Cabeza del Rey Don Pedro, 9 - 2.º B
41004 - SEVILLA (Spain)

por **Elsie Dubugras**
Brasil

D-109

El sello del purgatorio

A partir de la devoción y piedad por las almas del purgatorio, ocurrieron los fenómenos que se conocen como "manos de fuego". Las almas, invitadas por los fieles a manifestarse, provocaron la aparición de pequeñas manos impresas como si fuese al fuego en tejidos y papel, pañuelos y libros. Algunos intérpretes dicen que este fuego, aunque sea purificador, no es de la misma naturaleza que aquél que conocemos aquí en la Tierra.

A mediados de 1893, el padre misionero Vittore Jouet, devoto de las almas del purgatorio, erigió en Roma un pequeño oratorio donde se celebrarían misas y oraciones en sufragio de tales espíritus en sufrimiento. Cuatro años más tarde tendría lugar allí el primer fenómeno que, en la interpretación del padre y de los fieles, comprobó la existencia de aquellas almas y la certeza de que ellas conocían y sentían los efectos benéficos de sus trabajos espirituales.

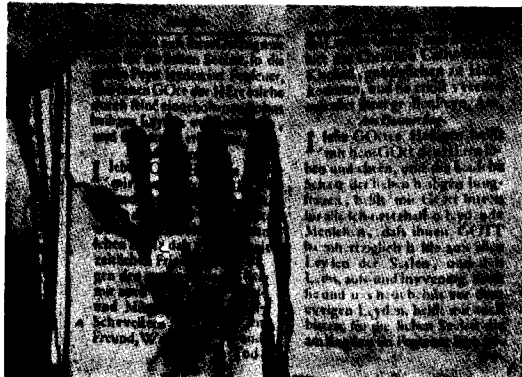
El fenómeno ocurrió de la siguiente manera: el día 15 de noviembre de 1897, fecha escogida para una fiesta de beneficencia, la pequeña capilla estaba repleta de fieles. El servicio religioso ya había comenzado cuando, en el altar adornado para tal ocasión, irrumpió una llama. Una vez apagada ésta se vio en el lateral izquierdo, claramente impreso, el rostro de un sufridor. Esta interesante pieza, que fue conservada cuidadosamente, se puede ver en el Museo del Purgatorio, en Roma. Sin embargo, las autoridades eclesiásticas nunca se pronunciaron a favor o en contra de su autenticidad, dejando que cada cual lo interprete a su manera.

El Padre Jouet, intrigado con el fenómeno, emprendió viajes por Italia, Francia, Alemania, y Bélgica para descubrir si comprobaciones semejantes existían en otros sitios. Sus viajes fueron exitosos ya que dio con las más diversas pruebas.

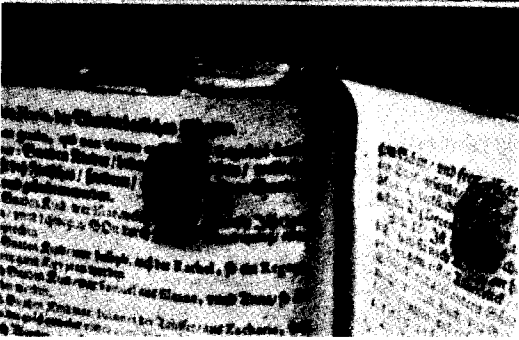
Las visiones de la vieja beata

Una de las más curiosas se relaciona al caso de una beata de la ciudad de Geilaschein, cerca de Baden, en Alemania. Margarete Schaeffner, según sus conocidos, era una mujer profundamente mística que mantuvo contacto, durante sesenta y ocho años con las almas del purgatorio. Estos contactos no eran sólo místicos. Ella veía los espíritus en sufrimiento, y los describía tan minuciosamente que las personas que habían conocido a los muertos se sorprendían de su exactitud. También tuvo pruebas materiales, manos que dejaron señales de fuego en objetos que le pertenecían.

Margarete, según declaraciones de personas del lugar, era católica ferviente y acostumbraba a narrar sus experiencias al cura de la iglesia, pero ni éste ni los misioneros que pasaban por allí, otorgaban la menor importancia a lo que ella relataba. Muy por el contrario. Decían que todo no iba más allá de su propia imaginación, estimulada por la superstición popular. Llegaron a prohibirle que repitiera sus historias a otra gente y, en cierta ocasión, incluso le impidieron comulgar por un período de tres meses. Desgraciadamente para Margarete, ni siquiera aquellos con quienes convivía creían en lo que ella hablaba. Estos hechos la entristecieron profundamente, haciendo que finalmente le



¿Fuego de remordimiento? ¿Fuego purificador? ¿O simplemente un fuego corriente?



Los viejos libros sagrados de oraciones son objeto preferido para las marcas de las manos de fuego.

pidiera a las almas que le diesen una prueba concreta de su existencia, del sufrimiento del purgatorio, y de que las oraciones y las misas a su favor las ayudaban. Con tal evidencia esperaba convencer a los incrédulos de que los relatos no eran fruto de su imaginación y de que tampoco era víctima de influencias demoníacas, como pretendían algunos.

Emma Schubert, una enfermera que conoció a Margarete muy de cerca, presenció una prueba y supo además de otras.

Schubert relata que una de las pruebas tuvo

lugar durante un servicio religioso. Margarete fue a misa y, en profundo recogimiento, se arrodilló para aguardar la comunión. Sostenía un pañuelo entre las manos y, cuando el padre se acercó con la hostia notó una mancha oscura en el mismo que aumentaba de tamaño. Margarete no percibió nada, por estar con los ojos cerrados. Después de comulgar, volvió a su sitio y, arrodillada, continuó rezando. El padre, impresionado con la mancha en el pañuelo, buscó a Margarete después de la misa, pidiéndoselo para examinarlo. El pañuelo estaba en su bolso y cuando fue abierto ambos vieron con gran sorpresa que una mano de fuego estaba impresa en él. Margarete sabía que esto era la respuesta a su oración y pensó que el sacerdote se convencería de la verdad. Pero no ocurrió tal cosa. La duda del sacerdote persistió, incluso después que fuesen exhibidas semejantes pruebas.

Margarete recibió otras pruebas además de la del pañuelo. Una de ellas es especial y digna de tener en cuenta ya que fue presenciada por Emma Schubert. Cuenta ella que Margarete, al sentir que las almas necesitaban oraciones y misas, volvió a pedir nuevas pruebas, pues con ellas esperaba convencer a otros de que hicieran intercesiones y misas. Después de algunos días obtuvo la respuesta. Debía colocar un trozo de cuero sobre una mesa en otra sala. Cuando, siguiendo siempre las instrucciones de las almas, fue a buscar el trozo de cuero, vio que dos manos estaban impresas en fuego. Esta prueba fue enviada a las autoridades eclesiásticas de Friburgo, en presencia de Emma Schubert. El cuero grabado se encuentra hoy en la parroquia de Gerlachsheim (Alemania), donde ha sido fotografiado varias veces. El pañuelo impreso durante la misa estaba en los archivos eclesiásticos de Friburgo, pero fue devuelto posteriormente al Museo por el arzobispo Grobes.

Libro de oraciones del siglo XVIII

Otra prueba que debería constar en el acervo del Museo del Purgatorio, como se le conoce hoy, se encuentra en la Baja Baviera, en poder de la familia Hackenberg. Es un pequeño libro de oraciones del siglo XVIII. Tiene 10 centímetros de largo por 6 cms. de ancho. Está bien conservado, a pesar de haber servido como "prueba de fuego" para un caso semejante al de Margarete. Se observa en las páginas 12 y 13 la impresión de

dos pequeñas manos. Se pueden distinguir los cinco dedos, la pequeña palma y parte de la muñeca. Un detalle interesante es que los dedos dan la impresión de estar descarnados, de que son manos de un minúsculo esqueleto.

Respecto a este caso se cuenta la siguiente historia: Cierta vez, un miembro de la familia Hæckenberg hizo una peregrinación a Grulich, un gran centro religioso. La peregrinación fue hecha en homenaje a su fallecido padre que el romero sentía que necesitaba oraciones. Después de cumplir la promesa, el joven regresó a casa, volviendo por un atajo a través del bosque. Cuando estaba a medio camino, se le apareció la figura del padre, que agradeció las oraciones y la intención con que habían sido hechas. Como prueba de su gratitud, grabó dos pequeñas manos en el libro que su hijo llevaba.

Existe otro caso semejante, mucho más reciente. El libro forma parte del acervo de una iglesia en la región del Sarre, en Alemania Federal. Se cuenta que durante una misa en sufragio de un alma, un fiel —que debía ser clarividente— vio aproximarse a un espíritu. El espíritu, una vez cerca, señaló el misal con un dedo y desapareció. Después de la misa, movido por un impulso que no supo explicar, la persona volvió a abrir el libro para examinarlo y vio, en la página en la que se implora misericordia e indulgencia divina para las almas sufridoras, que se encuentran en las profundidades del infierno, la impresión en fuego de una mano. Pero hay otro aspecto del fenómeno que debe observarse. El misal estaba en latín, lengua poco conocida por los legos pero muy familiar al clero. Sólo un sacerdote conocería además el lugar preciso donde se implora el auxilio que las almas necesitan para su sufragio.

Cuernos en la peluca negra

Otro investigador interesado en fenómenos de esta naturaleza descubrió uno de los casos más curiosos. Bajo una placa de vidrio colocada para protegerla, se ve una mano estampada en fuego. Está en una mesa que debe haber pertenecido al Palacio de Justicia, en Lublín (Polonia). La mano es excepcionalmente grande, no muestra señales de falanges y da la impresión de estar esquemmatizada.

Según la leyenda, hubo en aquella ciudad un litigio entre una viuda pobre y un rico magnate. Este reclamó para sí los bienes de

la viuda y, habiendo sobornado a los jueces, ganó el juicio. La viuda, desesperada por perder todo lo que poseía, levantó la mano en dirección a un crucifijo colgado en la pared y gritó: "Si Satanás hubiese dictado sentencia, ésta habría sido más justa".

Los que se encontraban presentes vieron enseguida a algunos jueces de extraña apariencia entrando en la sala. Sus pelucas eran negras con dos pequeños cuernos. Atemorizado, el secretario volvió a convocar la sesión y el abogado del diablo, con una exposición corta y sobria, dio una explicación respecto de los derechos de la viuda a la fortuna de su difunto marido. El tribunal, en vista de las pruebas presentadas, sentenció a favor de la viuda... sentencia mucho más justa que la anterior.

Fue sólo al día siguiente del juicio que el escribano notó que, en la mesa del Tribunal, había la impresión de una mano descomunadamente grande, todavía visible hoy.

Son variadas las hipótesis para explicar cómo estos y otros fenómenos de dicha naturaleza han tenido lugar. Los libros sagrados hablan de "fuego del infierno". En el Nuevo Testamento está la parábola del hombre rico que murió y, abrasado por las llamas, pidió una gota de agua a Lázaro. Los teólogos y los místicos indagan sobre la naturaleza de dicho fuego, sin llegar a un acuerdo. Todos concuerdan, sin embargo, que el fuego es el elemento purificador. Pero según el pensamiento moderno sería el fuego del remordimiento, del arrepentimiento, del dolor, y no el fuego tal como lo conocemos en la Tierra. Con todo, el fenómeno está allí para ser visto. Manos impresas en fuego o, como ha ocurrido en San Pablo, ropas y muebles incendiándose. Un investigador opina que tiene lugar una materialización rápida, pero no explica cómo la materialización imprime su mano ardiente en objetos.

