

BIG BIRDS



Downtown Kittanning, Pa., where *The Mothman Prophecies* was filmed. Note Christmas decorations (in March). The cafe on the corner plays a role in the movie.

Mothmania

by Robert A. Goerman

West Virginia drama filmed in Pennsylvania

Fiercely-eyed demons prowled the haunted hills of West Virginia in 1966. On the evening of Tuesday, November 15, Salem resident Newell Partridge was watching television at his home.

"It was about 10:30 that night, and suddenly the TV blanked out. A real fine heringbone pattern appeared on the tube, and at the same time the set started a loud whining noise....It sounded like a generator winding up.

"The dog was sitting on the end of the porch, howling down toward the hay barn....I shined the [flash]light in that direction, and it picked up two red circles, or eyes, which looked like bicycle reflectors. I certainly know what animal eyes look like...these were much larger. It's a good length of a football field to that hay barn... still those eyes showed up huge for that distance."

Partridge described an unbelievably intense, morbid fear that swept over him as a "cold chill." His dog snarled and ran toward the eyes. Newell hurried inside to get a gun but decided not to go back outside. He slept with his shotgun all night.

The next day, he and his six-year-old son went searching for their dog, Bandit, a large and muscular German shepherd. They found Bandit's tracks in a cir-

cle, as if the dog had been chasing his tail. But there were no other tracks of any kind. Bandit was never seen again.

At 11:30 that same night, a classic 1957 Chevrolet slowly drove around a deserted World War II ammunition dump, known locally as the "TNT Area," six miles north of Point Pleasant. The West Virginia Ordnance Works had once been the site's official name. The WVOW was created to supply TNT for the war effort.

In the earlier part of the 1900s, an area outside of Point Pleasant was set up as the McClintic Wildlife Preserve. It was, among other things, designed as a bird sanctuary. During World War II, more than 2,500 acres of this area were ripped up in order to construct about 100 "igloos" laid out in a grid-like pattern to keep the entire complex from being destroyed during a possible enemy attack. These large mounds of earth were made to be unnoticed from the air. Deep inside each, cement and steel protected the explosive contents. Twin coal-fired power plants were constructed to supply power for the manufacturing facility. A series of underground bunkers, tunnels, and sewers connected the entire complex. Grass was allowed to grow high enough to camouflage the operation. After the war, parts of the preserve were sold off or leased to companies like the Trojan-U.S. Pow-

der Company, the LFC Chemical Company, and American Cyanamid.

The TNT Area is a large tract of land. The entire area was sparsely populated and covered with dense forest, steep hills, and riddled with tunnels. Its remote location became a popular hangout for local youth. "Parking" and "partying" at the TNT Area became a norm.

Inside the '57 Chevy were two young married couples, Roger and Linda Scarberry and Steve and Mary Mallette. They were looking for friends who might also be out that cold, winter night.

Their search paused at the old generator plant on the nature preserve.

Mothman Rising

"It was shaped like a man, but bigger. Maybe six and a half or seven feet tall. And it had big wings folded against its back," Roger Scarberry told reporters.

"But it was those eyes that got us. It had two big eyes like automobile reflectors," added Linda Scarberry. "They were hypnotic. For a minute, we could only stare at it. I couldn't take my eyes off it."

The creature slowly turned toward the door of the abandoned generator plant. The door was open and apparently ripped off its hinges.

Roger Scarberry, who was driving,

BIG BIRDS

jumped on the accelerator and took off, claiming the Chevy at one point reached "better than a hundred miles per hour." To everyone's horror, the creature spread its wings and flew after their car. It didn't seem to flap its wings at all, and the wingspan was over ten feet. Mary Mallette said that it made a squeaking sound, "like a big mouse." The four also noted that a dead dog had been lying by the side of the road, but was gone when they returned.

The creature followed their car to the Point Pleasant city limits before it broke off its pursuit.

They terrified couples never stopped until they arrived at the offices of the Mason County sheriff and reported their sighting. Deputy Millard Halstead was on duty in the Mason County Courthouse that evening.

"I've known these kids all their lives. They'd never been in any trouble and they were really scared that night."

Deputy Halstead returned to the TNT Area with the four, to the spot where they had initially seen the figure, to locate the cause of their fear.

As Halstead switched on his police radio, a loud screech came out of the speaker—a garble, like a tape recording being played at very high speed. Noticeably shaken, the deputy quickly turned off the radio. He left soon after that and reported the incident to his department.

Mason County Sheriff George Johnson called a press conference the very next day. All the witnesses were interviewed by reporters. It was staffed by local journalist Mary Hyre, Point Pleasant correspondent for the *Messenger*, out of Athens, Ohio. Hyre produced a story that was picked up by the Associated Press. Another reporter dubbed the creature "Mothman."

"Everybody in Point Pleasant knew Mary," recalled Roy Cross, her boss in the bureau. "She ran that town." Hyre died February 15, 1970. Cross was one of her pallbearers, along with several West Virginia state troopers, the Mason County sheriff, and the *Messenger's* publisher.

The now defunct *Pittsburgh Press* gave the United Press International version front-page coverage on its November 16



"Otto's Gas"—Note West Virginia automobile inspection shingle, although the real location is Kittanning, Pa.

edition with the headline: "Red-Eyed 7-Footer: 'Bird' Flaps Scare Into W. Va. Couples."

"That Fear Gripped You"

The reports—ultimately over one hundred total—continued long into 1967. Descriptions of the creature were consistent. It stood taller and broader than a man, walked in sort of a halting shuffle on humanlike legs, and emitted a squeaking sound. The red, glowing eyes, set into the shoulders, seem to have been more terrifying than either the size of the creature or span of its batlike wings. More than one witness mentioned hearing a mechanical humming as the creature flew above them. Witnesses reported feeling an uncontrollable, indescribable terror: "I've never had that feeling before. A weird kind of fear. That fear gripped you and held you."

One of the families living in the desolate TNT area was that of Ralph Thomas. At about 9:00 P.M. on November 16, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Wamsley, with Mrs. Marcella Bennett and her infant daughter, Tina, were ending a social call and walking back to their car when they disturbed something much too close to them on the Thomas property. That something seemed as if it had been lying down.

"It rose up slowly from the ground. A big, gray thing. Bigger than a man, with ter-

rible, glowing, red eyes," reported Marcella Bennet, who became so terrified that she dropped her baby. As the creature unfurled its huge wings, Raymond Wamsley snatched up the child and the witnesses ran back to the Thomas home, where they were let in by the three children. The figure shuffled along behind them, coming onto the porch and looking through the window. Mr. Wamsley called the police, but, as is so often the case, the creature had vanished by the time help arrived. Marcella Bennett was so traumatized that she eventually sought medical attention.

Inside the TNT Area, hundreds of visitors streamed in every night. It became a media event with television crews reportedly set up at the old generator plant for a glimpse of the nightmarish creature.

Richard West, of Charleston, called police on November 21. A winged figure was sitting on the roof of his neighbor's house. The six-foot tall figure had a wingspan of six or eight feet and red eyes. It took off straight up, he said, "like a helicopter."

On the morning of November 25, Tom Ury was driving along Route 62, near the TNT area. He saw a gray figure standing in a field. Then it spread two large wings, lifted straight into the air, and flew over Ury's car at an altitude "three telephone poles high."

November 27, on the way home from church, Connie Carpenter saw a grayish

Everyone heard that low moaning of metal...and then the metal screamed.

The Silver Bridge ripped free of its moorings, and severed electrical lines whipped across the traffic like fire-breathing serpents. Cars and debris tumbled into the icy black water. Screams of tortured souls arose to deafen helpless bystanders. Christmas packages floated for a time among the frigid waves.

Forty-six people plunged to their frozen deaths. According to some writers, many of these had previously reported sighting the Mothman.

The bridge was constructed in 1928 as an "eyebar" suspension bridge, meaning that in place of wire cables such as those found on the Golden Gate Bridge, the bridge used eyebars linked in a chain from which the bridge deck was suspended. An eyebar resembles a dogbone with a hole—or "eye"—in each end. These eyebars ran in pairs linked by massive pins.

In the months following the collapse, the pieces of the bridge were recovered and laid out like a massive jigsaw puzzle; everything but the roadbed was recovered. The final analysis conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation ruled that the number 13 eyebar pin (on the upriver or north side of the bridge and west of the Ohio tower) had failed, causing the eyebar chain to drop below the roadway. The down-river eyebar chain was unable to support the weight of the entire structure, resulting in immediate, complete failure of the span.

The Silver Bridge had a twin structure upriver in St. Marys, West Virginia. That span was immediately destroyed and replaced. In 1969, a new bridge was completed just south of Point Pleasant. It was an oversized and massive structure to reassure a traumatized populace.

Enter Mr. Gere

Now, Hollywood will resurrect this 35-year-old mystery. *The Mothman Prophecies* is a spooky tale of the paranormal that is loosely based on events that transpired in Point Pleasant between November 1966 and December 1967, as chronicled by John A. Keel. The story has been updated and



Design for packaging of Mothman action figure.

now happens over the course of a few weeks during the present.

Lakeshore Entertainment is producing the film with Sony's Screen Gems serving as its distributor. The film is scheduled for release in fall 2001.

According to a 120-page script by Richard Hatem:

Washington Post reporter John Klein (Richard Gere) is an up-and-coming journalist. He has a lovely wife named Mary (Debra Messing is best known as the ditsy interior decorator on "Will & Grace") and life just gets better every day. A car accident befalls the Kleins, leading to an X-ray of Mary's skull that reveals a terminal brain tumor. One day during her hospital stay, Klein discovers a bizarre drawing of a winged "man" that his wife had inexplicably sketched. This grotesque image is burned into his memory. Mary dies and Klein is devastated.

One year later, while driving at night, Klein's car breaks down during a storm. He approaches a rural home for assistance and is startled when its owner pulls a gun on him and calls the police.

The homeowner explains to the police that Klein has come to his door for the past three nights at exactly the same time asking for help. It turns out that Klein is not where he should be. He has somehow trav-

eled 400 miles out of his way to Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in less time than was possible.

Curiosity gets the better of Klein and he soon learns of other bizarre happenings in Point Pleasant. Homes are plagued with unearthly noises and apparitions, while mysterious aerial lights drift silently over the Ohio River valley. A malevolent winged entity terrifies the population as automobiles stall and telephones and televisions run amok. A drawing of this creature stuns Klein when he realizes this is the same image Mary drew before she passed away. Innocent people now live in fear, haunted by this demonic "Mothman" and besieged by legions of strange beings which often arrive in ordinary-looking automobiles.

Laura Linney represents today's Point Pleasant law enforcement. She was an ex-CIA agent searching for a flawless diamond in *Congo* and played a prosecutor opposite Gere in *Primal Fear*. Burly British actor, Alan Bates, plays a burned-out paranormal investigator. Will Patton portrays the local resident most plagued by visions. Lucinda Jenney plays the wife to Patton's character. Curiously enough, they also were a couple in *Remember the Titans*.

The Mothman Prophecies is more about human beings than beings from beyond. It becomes a lesson in "be careful what you

Big Birds



Christmas decorations in March; Kittanning Citizens Bridge in background.

wish for" as John Klein is drawn into an increasingly harrowing examination of the paranormal and races toward a terrifying conclusion as the prophecies of a disaster in Point Pleasant come true.

"We're looking at [Mothman] as a presence....Ours is much less obvious and more creepy," says producer Richard S. Wright, "It's a classic problem. Once you see the monster, it's almost always a let-down. It's never as frightening as when you don't see it."

Wright says the movie is avoiding aliens and flying saucers but keeping events that "we find more interesting" such as people seeing lights in the sky and getting phone calls featuring strange voices. "Like any good mystery, there are red herrings, surprises, and plot twists."

Wright warned that bringing kids along to see it might be ill-advised. "It's a very moody, dark movie thematically about a character's descent into hell, in mythical terms, and his return and redemption from that."

Point Pleasant's Double

The town of Kittanning, Pennsylvania (population 4,780), landed the honor of portraying Point Pleasant.

"In our film, we feature the town a lot, we did a ton of shooting on Market Street," said Wright. "Part of what's important in the film is that the community doesn't understand what's happening, they're trying to be just a normal, functioning town, and in our estimation, that will make the movie scarier."

Why Kittanning? The terrain could pass

for West Virginia. Nearby Pittsburgh had a good crew base and the necessary services that a film shoot requires. But the main reason the producers decided on Kittanning was because it had a 1933-built steel bridge across the Allegheny River that emptied right out onto the main street of town, and they were going to get permission to close it for the filming.

Movie crews built "Otto's Gas" at Market and South Streets. Motorists pulled in for a fill-up, mistaking Otto's for a real station. Store fronts along Market Street retained their Christmas decorations after producers made the request in December. Workers put up even more holiday lights and covered signs.

The town's transformation into Point Pleasant reached its peak on March 9. *The Mothman Prophecies* hired hundreds of local extras to appear in the Christmas pageant street scenes. It turned away several hundred more, some of whom joined the additional throngs who came just to watch. Hundreds of people loitered on Market Street. A huge decorated tree stood in front of the county courthouse; decorations hung from utility poles; little wire reindeer with lights perched on fire-truck ladders meeting in midair to form an arch over the street. Armstrong County Commissioner James Scahill, dressed as Santa Claus, greeted everyone with a "Ho, ho, ho."

Police officers from the West Virginia town came to "stake out" the set. Accompanying Point Pleasant Police Chief Dale Humphreys were Captain John Sallaz and Lieutenants Ron Spencer and Dave Downing. The officers toured the set re-creation of their police station set up at the Alexander Hotel, complete down to the Point Pleasant police forms hanging on the wall.

"It was kind of strange and eerie to see our police forms on the wall," Humphreys said. Signworks, now owned by Jim Durst of Middleport, Ohio, designed the official shield logos actually used in Point Pleasant. Durst recreated the logos, with permission from the city, to be used on the movie set.

Captain Sallaz said Point Pleasant is ex-

cited about the movie. "It's been the big talk of the town," Humphreys added.

The Kittanning Citizens Bridge was closed March 15-April 2.

"I think everybody was pretty much prepared for it. From the first day, they felt it was important to have someone from Kittanning police there, someone who is familiar with the traffic patterns," said officer Pete Harmon, who also directs traffic during the annual folk festival when streets are blocked.

For the key bridge collapse scene, which Wright said will last 10 minutes in the movie: "We bought 25 cars, and we're renting 125 cars, and we're going to smash them down to bits," said Wright. "Making a movie is a very expensive proposition."

Film publicist Michael Umble said that Kittanning has been more than cooperative. "This community has been great," he said. "Beyond my wildest dreams."

Mothmania Sweeps America

Nevermore Creations is launching a new toy line entitled "Legendary Monsters," based on monsters of urban legend, alien sightings and folklore. Each "action diorama" will be packaged with a victim figure, diorama base and appropriate bio explaining the victims experience with the creature. (For more information, see www.legendarymonsters.com.) One of the initial offerings will be a Mothman action figure. Todd Broadwater, President/Director of Product Development, offers, "I strongly support research into the paranormal and unexplainable. I myself have always held a keen interest in those fields. *FATE* is a very informative and respected publication. I am familiar with John Keel and *The Mothman Prophecies* and look forward to the film with Richard Gere."

Can John Keel action figures be far behind? **I**

Robert A. Goerman is a lifelong resident of New Kensington, Pa. His writings have appeared in FATE, UFO Report, Beyond Reality, and Official UFO, among others. FATE readers are invited to visit Goerman's FATEreader online at <http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/FATEreader>.

GREAT BIRDJ

INVADING WEST VIRGINIA'S SAUCER LAIRS AND MONSTER HIDEOUTS



By Gray Barker

Although I have criss-crossed the nation to investigate dramatic UFO reports, some of the most inaccessible areas where these encounters have taken place have been in my own Mountain State. I have backpacked for miles on sparse trails to reach isolated farmers who have been visited by the unknown; I have camped out in the vast national forests with witnesses who were certain a "saucer" would return. But my West Virginia investigations have usually paid off. Though mountain people may be reluctant to discuss the horrors they've seen on dark and rainy nights, they seldom lie. West Virginia sightings convinced me early in my investigative career that UFOs—whatever they are and wherever they come from—are real! A typical case involves coal miner Jennings H. Frederick of Grant Town. Although the case is admittedly bizarre, it is supported by a host of other documented sightings of bigfoot, "little men," robot-like beings, and even huge flying creatures—all closely associated with UFO appearances.

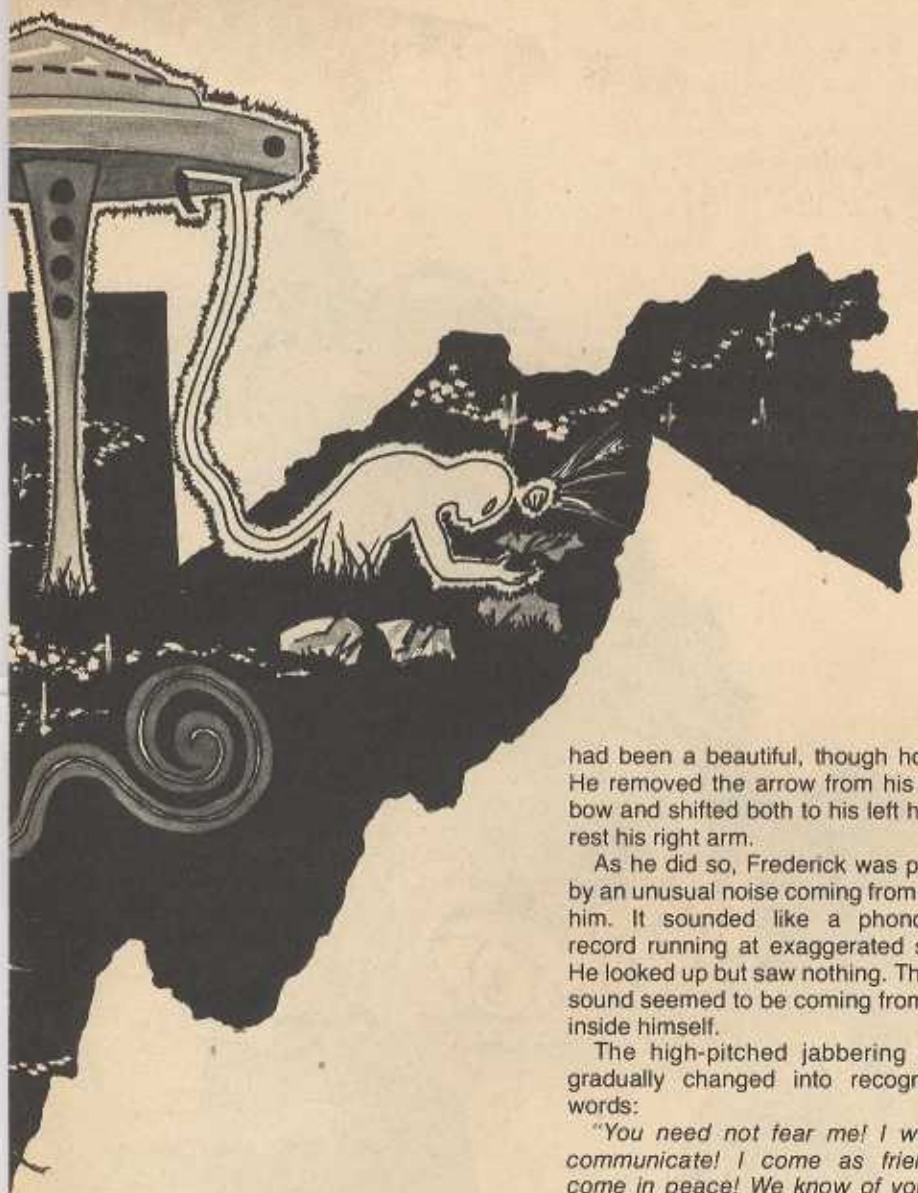
Frederick, a young, husky man in his late 20s, has an excellent reputation in his small community and told me, "Mister, there isn't any point for me to lie. When you're working down there in that deep mine, you've got to keep God on your side all the time!"

During July 1968, just two weeks before he entered the Air Force, he went hunting on his father's farm where he had grown up. As he returned homeward he stopped under some trees to rest and to admire the sunset. It



Illustration PETER JEZORSKI

P. Jezorski



had been a beautiful, though hot day. He removed the arrow from his heavy bow and shifted both to his left hand to rest his right arm.

As he did so, Frederick was puzzled by an unusual noise coming from above him. It sounded like a phonograph record running at exaggerated speed. He looked up but saw nothing. Then the sound seemed to be coming from deep inside himself.

The high-pitched jabbering sound gradually changed into recognizable words:

"You need not fear me! I want to communicate! I come as friends! I come in peace! We know of you all! I wish medical information! I need your help!"

Puzzled and perspiring, Frederick reached for a handkerchief in his hip pocket. He winced, thinking his right hand had become entangled in a wild berry briar, and he quickly drew back his arm.

Attached to his wrist was what appeared to be a thin, vine-like flexible hand and arm, green like a plant. The weird-looking hand, which terminated with three fingers about seven inches long, with needle-like tips and suction cups, grasped his arm more tightly and punctured the skin.

"It didn't seem to have a really strong grip, and I must have been paralyzed, for I could scarcely move," Frederick said. "I remember that it took real effort just to turn my head and body so I could see what was attacking me."

Frederick saw a terrifying creature with semi-human facial features, but there the resemblance ended. Its slanted eyes were yellow and luminous and it had pointed ears. Its thin green body reminded him of the stalk of some overgrown plant. It must have been at least seven feet tall for it towered over Frederick who is six feet tall.

The needle-like fingers were now buried deep in his arm. He heard a suction sound and knew it was drawing blood as he cried out in pain and fright.

Suddenly the creature's eyes, from which he was unable to remove his stare, changed from yellow to red and seemed to rotate. Spinning orange circles emerged from them and moved toward him. His pain immediately ceased and he became less frightened.

"The spinning circles were no doubt part of a hypnotic trance this thing was inducing," he believed. "I didn't completely lose consciousness, for I remember everything. It seemed to last a minute or two, but I really can't be certain."

The creature suddenly released Frederick's arm, as abruptly as it had seized him. It turned and ran up the hill in great leaping jumps, covering at least 25 feet with each stride. He later estimated the height of the leaps by noting that the creature had cleared a five-foot fence with about three feet to spare.

At the hilltop it vanished into the woods. The pain in his arm returned, along with his terror, but the sight of the leaping, retreating figure so intrigued him that he just stood and watched.

Suddenly a loud humming and whistling sound came from the woods and a bright silvery object rose swiftly and took off across the sky with great speed.

"I knew then that this thing had something to do with UFOs, but remembering the experience my mother had three years before and the ridicule she suffered, I decided to keep quiet about it."

Frederick stumbled the remaining distance to his father's house, washed the wound, treated it with an antiseptic and bandaged it. He told his family he had been injured while climbing over a barbed wire fence, and did not see a doctor. The small puncture wounds healed rapidly.

The experience of his mother, Mrs. Ivan Frederick, fits in not only with other West Virginia creature sightings, but also with many documented cases from around the country, including the 1975 George O'Barski sighting of small creatures taking soil samples in New Jersey's North Hudson Park.

Early in the morning of April 23, 1965, Mrs. Frederick had just got Jennings and

two younger children off to the school bus. Her husband left a few minutes later for the day shift at the coal mine and she was washing the breakfast dishes.

She started as she glanced out a kitchen window and saw what she thought to be a small child standing in a nearby pasture. Fearful that the child might be attacked by the cattle or wander into the electric fence, she ran out onto the porch to shout a warning.

There her concern turned to amazement—and shock. A saucer-shaped craft had landed in the field and from a doorway in its side she saw what looked like a long, dark, green colored cable attached to a small black or dark green creature. It was bent over, collecting grass and soil and stuffing them into a bag.

"It wasn't human," Mrs. Frederick declared. "It appeared more like an animal or what you'd think Old Satan would look like. (Mrs. Frederick is deeply religious.) It had pointed ears and a tail, and it wore no clothes of any kind."

She did not see any mouth or other facial features, although the creature was about 200 yards away, and she watched it for only a few seconds, being disoriented and frightened.

"I ran back into the house, got into bed, and pulled the covers over my head. I was alone in the house and the nearest neighbor lived a mile away. I lay there hoping it would go away!"

After a few minutes Mrs. Frederick regained some of her composure and ventured back into the kitchen. Cautiously peering again through the window she saw the occupant step back into the machine. The door closed and the craft began to rotate. She heard a loud buzzing sound and the thing rose rapidly out of view, "like a feather."

Despite her terror the witness remembered additional details. She estimated the craft was about 10 feet in diameter and about five feet in height. It was cream and silver colored, with rows of windows underneath a dome on the upper surface which sparkled in the morning sun. The craft had rotated slowly while on the ground and gave off a low humming sound which changed to the loud buzzing as it took off.

Jennings Frederick came home from school to find his mother still very frightened and upset.

"I first thought she had fallen asleep while resting from the morning housework and had dreamed it. But when I went into the field and investigated I knew it had been real. I found a depression in the ground obviously

caused by an object that weighed at least a ton. Then I found the claw-like tracks."

Frederick, an outstanding science student at Rivesville High School, believed they were made by a creature weighing about 45 pounds. While making plaster-of-paris impressions (a technique he had learned on school field-trips) he discovered two hairs in the footprints. He photographed the entire area, then gathered all his evidence, including the casts, and sent it, along with a letter, to the Air Force. Weeks passed, then to his dismay he

were discussing, one could assume this had something to do with UFOs, and also that it may have had some connection with yet another mysterious experience which he related:

About four months after his discharge Frederick was living with his parents and sleeping on a cot near a window.

"One night some time between one and four a.m. I was awakened by a red flash. I thought the gas furnace had exploded, so I sat up in bed and looked into the living room. I saw a small cannister about the size of an apple come bouncing across the living room

The entities appeared hostile when all three began climbing the tree as if to get at Donald. "Unable to get a good grip, the third creature floated up to the now terrified man, and began billowing smoke from its mouth"

received a Project Blue Book printed news release, along with a short letter suggesting that his mother had seen a weather balloon. The Air Force never returned his evidence.

Mrs. Frederick's firsthand report was convincing, even without her son's documentation. Although she impressed me as being highly intelligent, the complexity of the technology she described was obviously far beyond her limited education and experience. As far as could be determined she had heard virtually nothing about UFOs prior to her sighting, and she gave the experience a partial religious connotation. But her description closely corresponded with many other cases I had investigated.

Many UFO investigators, including author John Keel, believe there is a direct connection between alien occupants of UFOs and so-called "Men In Black" (MIB) who, following the reporting of many sighting cases, visit, and intimidate witnesses. Keel has investigated many such incidents in West Virginia, confirming my own findings. There seems to be a definite pattern involved and it is typical that Jennings Frederick also was visited by these mysterious persons.

Following his encounter with the vegetable-like creature, Frederick entered the Air Force. Near the end of his enlistment he was assigned to temporary duty with NASA. Although he did not disclose the nature of that duty, he mentioned he had a security clearance. He did state, however, that an apparent lapse of security had occurred and that inadvertently he had access to information above his classification. Taking this within the context of the subject we

floor. It was giving off a red colored vapor.

"I instinctively reached for a .38 pistol, which I always kept loaded under my pillow when living in the country, but a hand stopped me and I felt the prick of a needle in my arm. I saw three men dressed in black turtleneck sweaters, dark slacks, and ski masks entering the room through the window. I assume there was a fourth, the one that gave me the needle."

He heard one of the men say, "The dogs have been darted and everybody gassed!" One of them asked, "What about this one? Will he remember?" The other replied, "He's going out soon—he's half asleep! Don't worry about the needle! It will make his arm sore for a day or two, that's all."

Frederick was aware of the conversation for only a few moments before the injection took effect. He remembered, however, that just before the red gas from the cannister was about to reach him the men put on gas masks and placed one over his face. One of them opened a briefcase containing a tape recorder and another grabbed the cannister and stuffed it into his jacket pocket. As Frederick was losing consciousness, he remembered answering their questions about his UFO sightings and his opinion as to what the UFOs actually were.

He awakened as the family was arising. They complained of headaches and unusual drowsiness, though they hadn't been awakened by the strange visit, obviously because of the gas. Frederick noted soreness and a slight swelling in his arm, which confirmed the experience had not been a dream.

Although the MIB usually appear to

be nonhuman, Frederick's visitors had displayed no characteristics, either in appearance or equipment, that indicated they were other than possible intelligence operatives from some unidentified agency. Although one can only speculate about what the witness may have inadvertently learned at NASA, a good guess is that the MIB in this case were trying to determine what he had found out while with the space agency, and may have had nothing to do with his creature contact experience.

That experience is not incredible when compared to recent UFO abduction cases, in which the victims have been subjected to medical examinations, usually including extraction of blood samples. Frederick's case becomes even more believable when it is studied in connection with many other well documented events I have investigated and researched in West Virginia.

The most dramatic of these is substantiated by seven eyewitnesses and a great deal of corroborating data. My own documentation has been substantiated by one noted scientist, investigative reporters, and other civilian UFO investigators.

At about 7:15 during the evening of September 12, 1952, several youths were playing football on the Flatwoods School playground. Darkness was approaching (this was before national daylight savings time) and they were ready to abandon the game.

Suddenly one of the younger children yelled and pointed at the sky. There, traveling rapidly across the horizon in an apparent landing approach rushed a huge silvery object with a fiery tail.

"It looked like a big silver dollar," Neil Nunley, a 14-year-old, explained.

As the object neared the horizon it slowed down, moved in an arc, then seemed to fall or settle rapidly behind a nearby hilltop.

Nunley thought it was a meteor, and he remembered that his teacher had given the class an address where meteorites should be reported. Nunley urged the other boys to come along with him to investigate. Most of them were too frightened to accompany him, but about a dozen, all younger than he, followed him. They jumped across a creek and ran along a railroad track toward a small road which led up the hill. On the way the two May children insisted that the group stop at their mother's house and ask her to come along.

Mrs. May, busy preparing dinner, discouraged the group. "It must have been a shooting star, and they always look as if they're landing right behind

the next hill. It probably is a thousand miles away by now!

She walked onto the porch, looked up toward the hill, and suddenly stopped protesting.

They noted a new development. An eerie light now appeared on the hilltop, pulsating slowly from dim to bright and from a deep cherry red to a brilliant orange.

"Come on, let's go!" Nunley pleaded. "It's really landed up there!" He told them about a boy who had won a scholarship when he discovered a large meteorite.

By that time it was dark and the unearthly glow on the hill had become more distinct. Mrs. May grabbed a flashlight, called to Gene Lemon, a 17-year-old youth who was listening to the radio in the house. Some of the children, now frightened, stayed behind, leaving a party of seven, including Nunley, Lemon, and Mrs. May.

Near the top of the hill the party opened and then carefully closed a large wooden gate, a farm tradition carefully drilled into all young people to prevent runaway livestock. This small action clearly contrasted by a later part of their account, proved they had little fear at the time, or else they would have hesitated to close it. This may be understandable in that apparently only one of the group had ever heard of UFOs, when a teacher read a brief article in school.

As they closed the gate they became aware of an acrid odor which they described as "like burning metal," and as they walked up the hill they next encountered a strange mist descending around them.

As they reached the hilltop they were startled by the sudden yelping of the May family dog which had run ahead of them. It bounded through the group, and retreated down the hillside, still howling loudly.

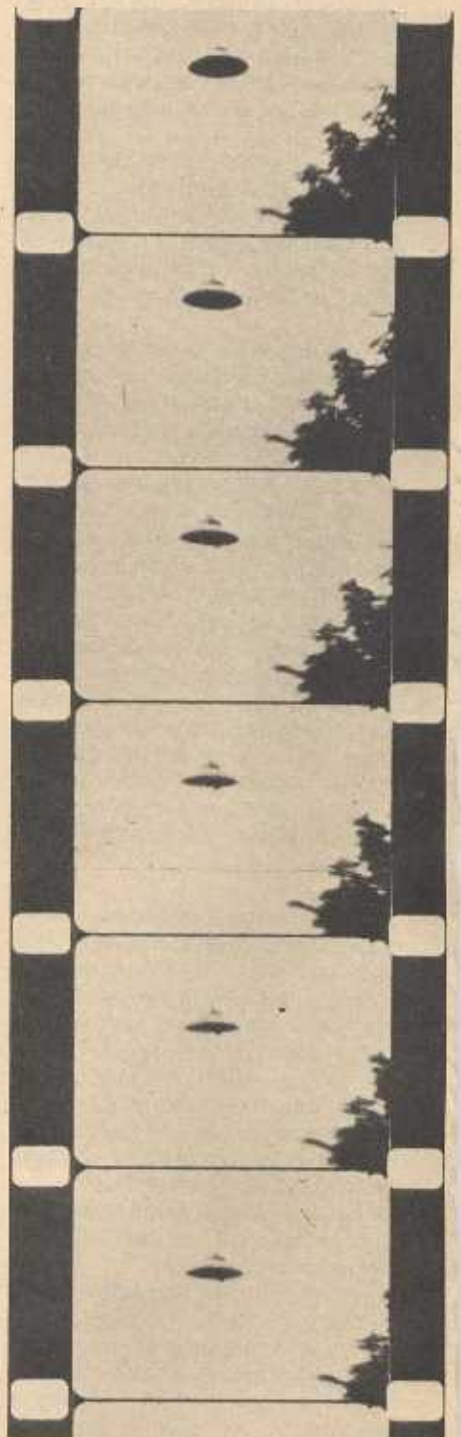
Then, to their right, resting near a ravine, they saw the object of their search. Not everyone's account agreed on its size. Some said it was as big as an airplane, others "as big as a house." But all agreed it was a large, glowing, spherical object. From it came a sound "like canvas flapping."

By now terror was overcoming the group and they were ready to bolt. Suddenly Lemon saw what he thought were animal eyes near a large tree to their left, grabbed the flashlight from Mrs. May and shone it in that direction.

As if responding to the beam a huge figure seemed to light up "like a neon sign." Although its immense body was still in shadows and not clearly distinct,

a huge lighted "head" surmounted a dark, cape shrouded object. A round orange "face" was apparent, topped by a headdress which looked like a dunce cap or, as they described it, "an ace of spades." Eye-like openings appeared in the orange "face," from which greenish-orange beams of light shot out over their heads through the strange mist. Almost at the same moment they began coughing and their eyes started to tear.

"It was like hell I once dreamed about when I had a high fever," Nunley said. "Cold chills came over me and I began to shake! It felt like something was tearing my body apart!"



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Yet, for the sheer number of witnesses observing a creature at different locations and times, another Mountain State anomaly is even more firmly established as fact—thought it was even more bizarre than the Flatwoods "monster."

It was the horrifying, bird-like creature that terrorized residents of Point Pleasant, W. Va., during November 1966, just a year prior to the collapse of the great Silver Bridge during rush hour traffic. The creature was given a bizarre name—"Mothman"—by a Channel 13, Huntington, news editor, partly in jest because the station was carrying the "Batman" TV program at that time. The catching name, like the term, "Flying Saucer," caught on with the public and, unfortunately, added a note of derision to the cases backed up by the testimony of dozens of reliable witnesses.

Like my involvement with the Flatwoods incident, I began my investigations with skepticism. But the very first case, involving six small children who lost their family dog to some glowing-eyed predator from the winter sky, eliminated my disbelief.

"Old Bandit's gone!" a small boy told me sadly as I entered the home of Newell Partridge, a building contractor in Wallace. "Bandit" was the German shepherd pet and the subject of a news story declaring the dog had been snatched away by "Mothman."

Like hundreds of witnesses I have questioned, Partridge impressed me as a sober, reliable man. He recounted, slowly and carefully, just what happened the night of November 15th.

He and Mrs. Partridge were watching a TV movie after putting the children to bed. At about 10:30 the television screen blanked out and a loud whining noise of varying volume and pitch startled them. Partridge, also an electronics technician, was convinced the trouble was not caused by ordinary interference: "There would have to be a powerful electronic blanket of almost unbelievable intensity to cause that effect."

Between the ebbs and peaks of the noise they heard the German shepherd howling on the porch and believed the high pitched sound had irritated the dog. But after turning off the set they still heard Bandit's howling, so Partridge got a flashlight and went outside to investigate.

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suggesting a winged creature, float past. She heard high pitched beeping sounds, "somewhere between the cries of a bird and electronic noises," which seemed to swirl "all around" her. Her house was on a back road, and she was often left alone when her husband's job took him out of town. Because of these incidents she had moved into Point Pleasant.

Sightings of the bird creature were accompanied by innumerable UFO reports in the area. Near Parkersburg salesman Woodrow Derenberger reported that a cylinder-shaped craft swooped down in front of his van on Interstate 77 and forced him off the road. As he parked on the shoulder a swarthy man in shiny, yet ordinary looking clothing, emerged from the craft and conversed with him telepathically. The visitor questioned him about his work and the nearby city, while volunteering very little information about himself, except to state, "My name is Cold and I come from a country much less powerful than yours." After the brief conversation the craft descended from its hovering position above the highway, "Cold" reentered it, and it sped away into the darkness.

Maynard Fox and William Singleton were returning to Point Pleasant from Apple Grove when an odd-shaped UFO, which they described as "like a Volkswagen," landed on the rural road in front of them. At the same time the motor coughed and stopped. A family dog which had a habit of riding in the open back of the pickup truck, became greatly agitated and jumped into the cab through the open window and cowered at its owner's feet. Soon a second object, displaying blinding lights, appeared and circled them, at which time the craft in the road rose to join the other. As both objects left the area the driver was able to restart the engine. The dog continued to display intense fear and refused to leave the house for several days.

Like the Flatwoods incident, I had the good fortune of being joined in my investigation by John Keel, a highly respected and objective writer on UFO phenomena. He spent many days in the Point Pleasant area gathering and evaluating the same data. Later each of us devoted an entire book to the incidents, and both works, while differing in theories and approaches, agreed on the authenticity of our data and the reliability of the witnesses.

When one examines the extensive files of West Virginia UFO activity one is tempted to select the spectacular humanoid and creature sightings for review. Yet these same files contain more than 100 close-up sightings of "hardware," or obviously intelligently guided machines. One of these reports,

involving two witnesses and film documentation, is an example:

On July 3, 1966, John Sheets, a house painter, accompanied his employer who had taken movies of a Little League game in Weston. They left Route 19 near Lost Creek for a short cut to Clarksburg on their way home. Sheets, looking out the car window for deer that abounded in the wild rural area, was puzzled and startled when he spotted a dish-shaped flying object, surmounted by a dome with portholes, following them. He shouted for the driver to stop as the object disappeared behind a hill. His employer remembering he had unexposed footage left in his 16mm Bolex movie camera, reached for it on the back seat. As he did so the object returned and swooped down toward them, then retreated and repeated the maneuver. Despite his excitement and fright the amateur photographer managed to shoot several feet of film, with many sharp frames, some of which, when enlarged, display a recognizable antenna, and ball-like "landing gear," similar to many still photographs taken by other witnesses.

And these West Virginia encounters with creatures and UFOs continue with alarming regularity. Even as this was

At the drive-in theatre they asked the manager to call the Lewis County sheriff's department which made a brief investigation but was unable to search the woods because of a sudden thunderstorm. They found no tracks, but the storm had probably washed away such evidence.

While trying to locate the witnesses I learned of another case. Kenneth Britton, a teacher in the Wood County school system, was driving from his home in Parkersburg to Sutton to visit relatives. He and his wife were on little-traveled Route 47 near Burnt House, when Kenneth noticed a brilliantly-lighted object on a hill top about 300 yards off the road. He stopped to get a better look.

"It was tremendous," he told me. "It was circular and had a row of lighted windows all around it. It certainly was at least 60 feet in diameter, and it could have been 100 feet."

As the object sat there a searchlight from above the row of windows swept the slope leading to the hill top. Britton wasn't frightened, "Just intensely curious. I had read about these things but had never seen one. It was sort of thrilling. I wanted to get closer, possibly sneak up on it under cover of some

John Keel in *The Mothman Prophecies* observes that UFOs concentrate in areas containing mysterious Indian mounds of prehistoric origin

being written I received two recent dramatic reports.

In Interstate 79 slices north-south through the heart of the state, but in Braxton County it winds tortuously through the hill country, and curves within sight of the hilltop where seven people saw the Flatwoods creature. Then the highway straightens out as it passes through a gentle farming area until it reaches Weston, where motorists exit on a twisting strip of macadam, the narrow Skin Creek access road into town.

It was just getting dark on Aug. 17, 1976, as Braxton County residents Ronald Stark and Clifford Barnes, both 18, came down the ramp onto the desolate road in a rush to catch the first movie at a Weston drive-in theatre. Suddenly Stark hit the brakes and skidded to a stop with burning rubber. There, blocking the road, crouched a huge black *thing*. Ape-like in appearance, it straightened up and stood about eight feet tall. It seemed to be watching them with curiosity and remained in the middle of the road for about 30 seconds, while the two youths, now near panic, wondered what to do. Then the creature waddled off into the woods and they gunned the car out of there.

brush, but my wife became very frightened at my suggestion. In fact she became so hysterical that I reluctantly drove on."

(Later, while arranging to meet the witness at the site to investigate the hill top, I learned of an odd coincidence during our phone conversation. Back at their Parkersburg home about one week later Mrs. Britton and another housewife were startled to see a brightly-lighted object travel down a nearby valley and swoop over her house. She told me it looked exactly like the object seen at Burnt House. Was this indeed a coincidence, or what some UFO investigators claim to be a pattern representing a continuing relationship between witnesses and the phenomena? Was the UFO seeking out Mrs. Britton to investigate her in some strange fashion? This of course is speculation, but I find it quite interesting—G.B.)

Even though, on a population basis, recorded UFO sightings in West Virginia far exceed those of any other state, it is very likely that such activity exceeds the known cases by a thousand fold. Most of the state's population is concentrated in the southern tip

and the northern panhandle. The rest of West Virginia is composed of large stretches of mountainous terrain unsuitable for farming or habitation, the great national forests of the southeast sector, and semi-deserted rural areas broken up by small widely dispersed hamlets. Indeed, West Virginia, because of these factors alone, would seem to present a logical area for UFO operations to be carried out undiscovered. Yet the recreational habits of its populace, which loves the outdoors, could account for the many accidental encounters with the intruders.

There could be other reasons for this intense concentration. Nationally, UFO sightings tend to concentrate in regions pockmarked by limestone caverns, and southeastern West Virginia has plenty of these natural features. Few of these underground openings have been explored and only two have been developed commercially. At Lost River a large stream disappears into the earth and surfaces several miles away. Dozens of the caverns must be immense and contain long networks of underground chambers. Whether UFOs might use such caverns for underground bases or hideouts, or whether the rock formations might contain gravitational or magnetic anomalies that are linked to their methods of propulsion, are intriguing questions that demand additional investigation.

Aircraft gyroscope expert Dominick C. Lucchesi points out the excessive number of small plane crashes in this southeastern section of the state. He refers to instances of private pilots complaining by radio of instrument failure before crashing. Due to the rough terrain in the sector, such crashes are nearly always fatal and involve small aircraft that carry no flight recording equipment. Lucchesi suggests that an area comprising Preston, Tucker, Randolph, Grant, and Pendleton Counties may represent "a miniature Bermuda Triangle."

Indeed, Civil Aeronautics Board regulations require the filing of special flight plans as a means of discouraging private air travel over parts of this sector, such as the desolate Cranberry Bogs—though ostensibly these are unnecessary because of the near-impossibility of rescue operations in the wilderness area.

Sterling Queen, a Major in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), told me of an incident which could suggest a relationship between these crashes and UFO activity. Queen, a Clarksburg resident, was with a ground search party working a grid in a desolate mountain area and conducting interviews with the few scattered residents.

One such person, an elderly woman who lived alone, aroused his curiosity when she asked, "Are you looking for

that thing that landed in my garden last night?" She then related how a huge circular object had landed and then rapidly taken off after resting on the ground a few minutes.

"Frankly I thought she either had been drinking or was out of her mind," Queen told me. "Then we followed the dirt road to the next house, about a mile away, where we interviewed a farmer. We were amazed when he reported that a large silver-colored lighted object had flown low over his house, without any sound, at about the same time his elderly neighbor had seen the 'thing' land in her garden. We still thought these people might be kidding us, but our doubts vanished completely when we learned neither one had a telephone. Since it was very early in the morning and both persons had just arisen, they had no opportunity to talk with each other and make up a story."

With this confirmation they returned to the first house to investigate. There, in the garden area, they discovered flattened grass and three holes in the tightly packed soil. The holes were

"I reached for a pistol but a hand stopped me, and I felt the prick of a needle in my arm. I saw three men dressed in black entering the room through the window"

about 12 inches in diameter and indicated what could have been a triangular landing gear supporting something that measured about 20 feet across. Considering the firmness of the ground and the indentations that were at least three inches deep, Queen concluded the object had been of considerable weight.

The search party was unable to conduct further interviews, for all the other houses in the vicinity were abandoned. The small valley ended abruptly against a towering cliff.

"While we wanted to make a careful investigation, we couldn't—for after all, we were searching for a downed aircraft, not a flying saucer. We routinely wrote this up as a part of our report but never received any comment or feedback from it. The aircraft was found in another grid about 50 miles south of our search area."

Although the officer would not officially connect UFO activity with plane crashes, he did observe that search crews constantly get UFO reports from witnesses while interviewing them for sightings of missing aircraft.

Another CAP officer (who requested anonymity) told me that he privately questions official explanations given for the many incidents of planes breaking apart in the air before crashing in that part of the State.

"Sometimes we find the tail section on one mountain, wreckage strewn through the valley between, and the cockpit and dead pilot on another mountain top. Turbulence could account for some of these incidents, but explanations of lightning bolts do not satisfy me—for in these cases I have noticed no fusing of metal, and they have occurred in places and at times when turbulence would have been highly unlikely."

John Keel in *The Mothman Prophecies* observes that UFOs concentrate in areas containing mysterious Indian mounds of prehistoric origin. Some of these are laid out and constructed with the same kind of mathematical precision found in the pyramids of Egypt, and often they are constructed in the shape of elephants, sea serpents, or other animal outlines recognizable only from the air. His book suggests ancient relationships between the unknown mound builders and the UFOs, which still mysteriously hover over them today. Although Keel utilized this theory to help explain the Point Pleasant UFO activity, such mounds exist throughout the state and one city, Moundsville, is even named after the ancient sites.

Whatever may be responsible for the concentration of spectacular UFO and related events in West Virginia, it, like the mounds, is not a modern phenomenon. Extensive research reveals that the vast areas of dark, brooding forests, the prehistoric constructions, and craggy mountains have been haunted by unexplained visitors since the first settlers penetrated the region.

Such an intruder was the legendary "Wampus Cat," an almost mythical creature alternately feared and joked about by mountaineers. Generally it was described as an exaggerated version of the native wildcats, cougars, and mountain lions. But it possessed powers to appear and disappear at will, take off in flight, and to breathe fire.

I am indebted to the late Earl Sizemore, educator and folklore specialist, who directed me to search for an item in the archives of the Braxton Historical Society involving the legendary animal.

It appears in a thick ledger which combined farm bookkeeping, sermon notes, and an intermittent diary of John Hatfield, a Methodist clergyman who served a half dozen small, isolated churches at the turn of the century. On the evening of June 18, 1907, Reverend Hatfield experienced what may have been a close encounter with the

(Continued on page 80)

UFOs, Mothman, and Me



The infamous Mothman.

by John A. Keel

excerpted from a publication of the New York Fortean Society, 1980, 1991

I was pushed into the flying-saucer fracas in 1966 by a *Playboy* editor who wanted a "definitive" article on the subject. The first logical step was to seek out experts. I quickly discovered there weren't any. There were people who called themselves experts, all wallowing in egocentric delusions of self-importance, all feuding with their fellow experts. Paranoia was rampant in the field and every teenager and little old lady in tennis shoes involved in UFO hunting was convinced the government, and particularly the Air Force and CIA, was spending millions to mess up their personal mail and telephones. There was a big overlap, too, of wild-eyed right-wingers, and many of the more bizarre beliefs of the John Birch Society and even the KKK were absorbed into the UFO lore.

Air Force Lies

A few UFO books, mostly in the crackpot category, had been published in the 1950s, but copies of them were now almost impossible to locate. (The average UFO book sells about 3,000 copies, even today—a pathetically small number when you consider how much publicity UFOs have received.) Ivan Sanderson, zoologist, author and well-known TV personality, had a library of some of the better books. He lived on a farm in the wilds of northern New Jersey. A charismatic Briton usually surrounded by hordes of visitors, Ivan had single-handedly introduced the subject of the Abominable Snowman and Bigfoot to the American public. We met originally because I had once tracked the elusive Abominable Snowman in the Himalayas and Ivan was preparing to write a massive book on those hairy horrors. He was also a longtime observer of the UFO scene and at the beginning of my quest he gave me the best advice I would receive. "Don't take this flying saucer business too seriously," he warned me. "Just think of the whole thing as an intellectual exercise."

I made several trips to Washington and the Pentagon in an earnest effort to present the Air Force's side of the controversy fairly. The various Air Force officials openly and repeatedly lied to me about several things. Their biggest fears were that the public would discover that they didn't know a thing about flying saucers and that the scope of the phenomenon was much broader than any casual observer might think. UFOs were, and are, successfully

eluding our defensive systems and landing frequently in farm fields, on highways, and even—believe it or not—on airport runways. They have been causing considerable damage to property for many years.

A Pentagon officer once told me that it cost \$10,000 to investigate a single UFO sighting. I tried for a long time to get the Project Bluebook budget but it was buried in the general public-relations budget and couldn't be extricated. According to a secretary, their biggest task was answering "kiddie mail." However, one day when I was visiting Lt. Col. Maston Jacks, a girl came into the office and put a newspaper clipping into a big red folder marked Top Secret, so maybe a clipping service was part of their expenses.

My brushes with civilian experts, Air Force apologists, and scientists convinced me there was only one way to find out what was going on. I would have to go into the field and investigate some fresh sightings firsthand.

Enter the Mothman

In November 1966 four young people in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, reported a chilling encounter with a seven-foot-tall monster with glowing red eyes and a ten-foot wingspan. The press labeled it Mothman, and during the next year more than 100 West Virginians would see it. If it had been just another ten-foot-tall hairy monster I would have ignored the report. After all, Bigfoot sightings were superabundant. But the West Virginia critter had wings, could take off straight up like a hel-

icopter, and was fond of pursuing automobiles at 90 miles an hour. In short, he was my kind of weirdie.

I found Point Pleasant was a quiet little town of 6,300 people, dozens of churches and no public bars. The Mothman sightings had taken place in a desolate World War II ammunition dump on the edge of town. More intriguing, there had been countless UFO sightings up and down the Ohio River all year. Eerie diamond-brilliant lights passed over Point Pleasant every night at 8:30 on a regular schedule. I decided to do something that the Air Force and the loud-mouthed UFO buffs had never thought of doing. I decided to investigate the situation instead of just holding conversations with the witnesses.

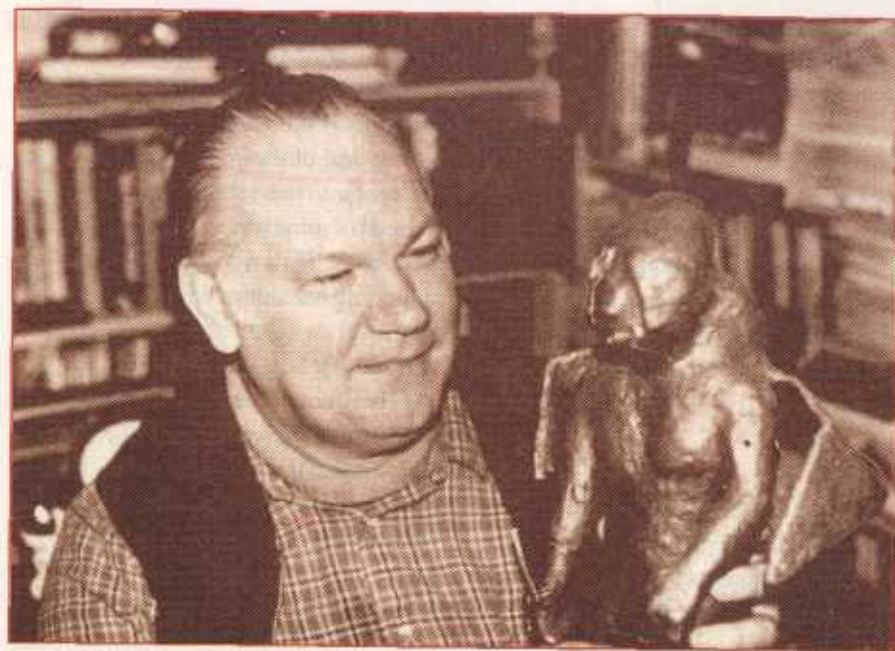
Within a few days a much bigger picture began to evolve. The region was not only haunted by strange aerial lights, the homes of the witnesses were plagued with poltergeists and other supernatural phenomena. Television sets were burning out at an alarming rate. Telephones were going crazy, ringing at all hours of the day and night with no one on the other end. Some people were getting calls from mysterious strangers speaking a cryptic language. Black Cadillacs bearing Oriental-looking gentlemen were cruising the black hills of West Virginia.

Mothman assumed minor importance as I uncovered all these other things. I had been investigating psychic manifestations all over the world for years and I recognized the pattern here. Some UFOs

were directly related to the human consciousness, just as ghostly apparitions are often the product of the percipient's mind. There are deeply rooted psychic and psychological factors in the UFO phenomenon, and the sudden appearance of a light in the sky triggers and releases the human energy that stimulated seemingly supernatural events. We cannot define the exact nature of those lights, but we can catalog the many manifestations that accompany them and we can demonstrate how identical manifestations occur in many different frames of reference. Religious apparitions are kissin' kin with the tall, stately Michael Rennie types that claim to come from Ganymede, Uranus, Clarion (an unknown planet on the other side of the sun) and a dozen other absurd places. The "miracle" at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917 was undoubtedly the best-documented UFO sighting of all time (70,000 witnesses) and certainly the most thoroughly investigated.

Men in Black

Unfortunately, those interested in flying saucers had no interest at all in psychic phenomena, and vice versa. Those who were busy trying to trap a Bigfoot frowned upon all other forms of the weird and supernatural. Yet sea serpents, Abominable Snowpersons, poltergeists, frog rainfalls, and UFOs are all interrelated. You can't possibly investigate one without some knowledge of the others. For example, the Men in Black (MIBs) so well known in UFO lore are even better known in the histories of



John Keel with Mothman statue, 1984.

witchcraft and black magic. These mysterious gentlemen have been reported for a thousand years. The UFO buffs decided they were CIA agents. But another group known as superbuffs thinks the whole world is run by a secret league of wealthy men and that the MIBs are their minions. In the Far East, where belief in a "king of the world" still rides high, people think the MIBs are agents from the secret underground cities of the king. In West Virginia the MIBs passed themselves off as everything from Bible salesmen to census takers.

When I returned to New York City from that first trip to West Virginia my own

telephone went beserk. At first I only had problems when I was speaking to Ivan Sanderson in New Jersey. He was on one of those freak pseudo-independent phone company lines and it was common to be drowned out by static, or have the call suddenly cut off. Ivan solved the problem by shouting obscenities into the phone. Strangely, it worked. It was not uncommon to be having a conversation with this dignified Briton when clicks and other noises would cause him to pause and then bellow, "Get off this line, you goddamned son of a bitch!" The line noises would cease abruptly.

My problems soon escalated. Someone

would interrupt my conversations with a sound like a one-stringed guitar. The sound of an extension being picked up could be clearly heard. The telephone company ignored my complaints, naturally, until I wrote directly to the president of the company. Then fur flew. They checked out my line and happily reported that I did not have one tap on my wire—I had two! I demanded that they find out who was tapping my phone but they said they couldn't do that.

Moronic Harassments

I lived in a large apartment building and there was a telephone room in the basement where thousands of wires converged and connected to underground cables. Somehow someone managed to get into this locked room, search out my wires from all the thousands of others and cut them with a pair of pliers. This someone accomplished this not once, but twice. I went with the repairman when they checked my line and the second time I demanded that the whole matter be put in writing. So someone in the main office sent me a letter stating my phone had been out of order because a piece of solder had come loose in the main installation!

Ma Bell wasn't the only member of the flying-saucer conspiracy. My mailman was in on it, too. Suddenly my letters were going astray or were being mysteriously opened. Just so I would know my mail was being monitored, someone would Xerox letters sent to me, keep the originals and reseal the

Xerox copies in the envelopes. Even letters from my mother were Xeroxed!

Now I began to understand why so many UFO buffs were paranoid. Obviously, a great deal of money, time and personnel went into these moronic harassments. A friend of mine who once served in Army Intelligence tells how his unit was kept busy tailing and harassing completely innocent victims. I suspect that some worthless bureaucratic boondoggle was assigned the UFO beat, not out of maliciousness but just to give them something to do. I eventually discovered that another phone was hooked up to my line and had been getting my calls while I was getting their bills—as much as \$400 a month. And my mail was going first to another address before it was passed on to me. What stunned me was that the other address was a building housing Ma Bell's long-distance equipment! Proof positive that the telephone company was plotting to take over the world.

Meanwhile, back in West Virginia, Mothman was continuing to chase automobiles. I returned to Point Pleasant several times in 1967, learning more about the phenomenon with each trip. Several contactees (people who thought they had met the flying-saucer occupants) had emerged and I was hypnotizing them and studying them carefully. I found these people had two levels of memory. The first level, the surface level, recalled under hypnosis a fascinating adventure, usually of being taken aboard a wonderful flying saucer. But the hidden level, which was difficult to

get at and usually took several hypnotic sessions before it could be reached, rejected the false memory (confabulation) and painted a different picture. Most of these contactees had been transported to a van or house where they were subjected to brain-washing techniques and injected with an unknown substance. Then they were given a confabulation to remember and were released.

But no matter how hard I tried I couldn't find out who was doing this. The whole contactee syndrome was a fraud, but the contactees were innocent victims. Why was anyone going to all the trouble to create these contactees? Many people in West Virginia told me of seeing strange, unmarked vans cruising the back roads at night.

Another thing that bothered me was the widespread slaughter of domestic animals during the UFO waves. The animals, usually cows, sheep, and dogs, had all the blood drained from their bodies and their sex organs removed with surgical precision. I saw one cow cut in half as cleanly as if it had been done with a giant pair of scissors. These animal mutilations were at first confined to the Northeast in the 1960s, but in the 1970s they spread to the Midwest.

Simpleminded Games

I spent many miserable days wading around farm fields in West Virginia to in-



John Keel with Doug Skinner.

spect mutilated animals, and many cold and scary nights on hilltops watching funny lights cavort in the sky. When I signaled them with a flashlight in Morse code they actually responded. If I flashed the word *descend*, they would drop downward in the falling-leaf motion made famous in so many reports.

Were they spaceships from another world? Not very likely. They seemed like mischievous masses of energy playing simpleminded games with a simpleminded human. As a professional simpleton I have seen so many of these strange lights that I have actually lost count. The sheer quantity of these objects and the frequency of their appearances negates the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH). During UFO waves they appear in a thousand places around the world simultaneously on a single date.



John Keel c. 1975.

Would a society on some other planet send thousands of craft to this world to hover around garbage dumps, stone quarries, golf courses, and cemeteries (all favorite UFO haunts) for one night, or one week, and then fly home across millions of miles in space? These things have been around for thousands of years and they have been seen in the same places century after century. They are part of the environment, like clouds and pollution.

Mothman, like phantom kangaroos and the redoubtable Bigfoot, belongs to that class of beasts known to the ancient Greeks as Chimeras. The Greeks noted that such animals usually had fiery red eyes, were often surrounded by the smell of "fire and brimstone" (hydrogen sulfide) and often

disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as they had come. In countless UFO cases we also find all of these characteristics. The UFO is surrounded by a terrible smell, like the smell of rotten eggs (hydrogen sulfide again), sometimes making the witnesses ill. Creatures emerge from the UFO and leave footprints leading to the middle of a muddy field, where they vanish suddenly. Or they leave no footprints at all. Chimeras take many forms. A few years back there were reliable reports of dinosaurs

stomping around Italy, France, Africa, and even Texas. Some of them left perfect dinosaur tracks behind. Mothman left tracks that looked like giant dog prints. Such prints have been found in many places where other types of monsters have been seen. Even gigantic snakes—and we have plenty of reports of those—have left giant dog prints in their wake.

Cosmic Jokers

When you investigate a UFO flap area very carefully the whole phenomenon begins to seem like a robust practical joke perpetrated by some cosmic jokers. There is no beginning and no end. What happened in West Virginia in 1966 was repeated in Texas in 1976 when a giant bird,

identified as a prehistoric pterodactyl by some witnesses, put in a brief appearance.

We know now that many of the things that happen in UFO country are clever diversions. While armed citizenry go chasing after UFOs in one direction, animals in a field in the opposite direction are suddenly mutilated. Mothman kept a whole town sitting in an old ammunition dump for several weeks while animal mutilations and human abductions took place only a few miles away.

In earlier times, the manifestations were blamed on black-magic practitioners, witches, alchemists, the Fairy Commonwealth, the Rosicrucians, the Gypsies. Now we know that whoever is behind it all has the ability to use advanced techniques of hypnosis and brainwashing. Dr. Leon Davidson, one of the men who gave us the atomic bomb (thank you, doctor), studied the UFO situation for years and finally decided it was all a cold-war gambit of the CIA. When UFO mania struck Tashkent in the Soviet Union back in the 1960s, the Russian news agency, Tass, issued a release accusing the Western imperialists of being behind the whole thing. Ivan Sanderson stuck his tongue in his cheek and wrote a book explaining that UFOs were coming from cities at the bottom of our oceans. Ray Palmer, the man who started it all when he was editor of *Amazing Stories* back in the 1940s, believed that the earth was hollow and that UFOs were coming to us from holes in the North and South Poles. The situation is infinitely more com-

plex than any of these interesting but simplistic explanations. If UFOs are real, and if they are extraterrestrial, then all of the patterns indicate they are totally hostile. If this is the case, then the proper government procedure would be to set up a false PR front to deal with the random reports and lull the public while a secret agency made a real effort to cope with the problem. If they are not real but are only part of the wild, wild world of psychic phenomena and chimeras, then there is nothing that can be done and no amount of investigating can be expected to be fruitful. So it is a no-win dilemma for the civilian saucer sleuth with a straitjacket as the reward.

I wish I could report that the Mothman episode had a happy ending and that the people of Point Pleasant returned to normal, industrious lives. Unfortunately, 13 months to the day after the creature's first appearance a terrible disaster struck the little town. The bridge that joined Point Pleasant with Ohio collapsed laden with rush-hour traffic and 46 people died. Several of them had seen Mothman and/or UFOs. The critter appeared a couple of times following the bridge disaster, then vanished forever. ■

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