

S H C



"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

—(Exodus 3:1-2)

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Phantom Fires in Folklore and History

by Dale G. Jarvis

For thousands of years, ghostly flames have danced through the religious literature, folklore, and legends of the world. They continue to be seen today, in many different forms and configurations, and are one of the

spirit world's most dramatic forms of manifestation. Yet in spite of their history and geographical distribution, phantom fires remain a rarely studied field of paranormal research.

There is something instinctively other-

worldly about flames which burn but do not consume; which give off light but do not emit heat. They have become a well known motif of fictional and factual ghost stories and are often mentioned as part of larger, more complex hauntings.

Fire in the House

One early 20th-century account was reported by author John D. Seymour in 1911. The haunting took place in a small seaside community on the south coast of Ireland. A large family house in the hamlet was known to be haunted by a variety of spirits. Two sisters occupied one of the upstairs rooms. On numerous occasions, the girls awoke to find the floorboards of the room engulfed in flames. Seymour writes:

"The two elder sisters slept together, and used to see flames shooting up all over the floor, though there was no smell or heat; this used to be seen two or three nights at a time, chiefly in the one room. The first time the girls saw this, one of them got up and went to her father in alarm, naturally thinking the room underneath must be on fire."

According to contemporary accounts, this fire would be witnessed two or three nights in a row and then would disappear for some time before suddenly blazing forth once more. While it was occasionally witnessed in other parts of the house, it occurred chiefly in the room where the two girls slept. The strange flames proved to be too much for the family, and they left the premises well before the term of their

lease had expired.

While this type of interior phantom fire is rare, the Irish example is not unique. A similar spirit fire was reported in Canada, in the city of St. John's on the island of Newfoundland. Located close to the heart of the town is Willicott's Lane, one of the oldest lanes in the community. The area was known historically as Tanrahan's Town, a maze of tightly packed, poorly constructed houses, garbage-filled ditches, and open sewers. The neighborhood produced a particularly dreadful stench, often offending the delicate nostrils of those attending Sunday service at the nearby Anglican cathedral.

Named after a local slum landlord, the district saw some 1,500 souls crammed into about 200 houses, all of which burned to the ground in the Tanrahan's Town fire of 1855. The neighborhood was rebuilt from the ashes only to be destroyed completely 37 years later in another great fire in 1892. This much larger holocaust destroyed Tanrahan's Town along with most of the city.

After the fire, a timber-frame, Second Empire-style building was constructed backing onto the lane. For most of the middle part of the 20th century, the house was occupied by an old woman who lived alone and who eventually died within its walls. The house stood empty for a while before it passed on to new owners, who began to notice a very strange phenomenon.

Different people reported seeing a fire burning in the fireplace, but upon closer examination, the fire disappeared. A hand



placed within the grate felt no heat; the stones were cold to the touch. In the 1980s, as a tenant lay in his bed in a different room on the same floor, his door swung open. Looking from his bed out into the hall, the man saw the flickering of firelight reflected on the walls. Knowing himself alone in the house, he left his bed to investigate but found nothing.

He closed the door and returned to bed. The door swung open again, revealing the same strange light. He got up to check and again found nothing, the light disappearing as he left his room. A third time he returned to bed, and just as he was drifting off to sleep, the door swung wide again and the firelight flickered on the opposite wall. At this point, perhaps braver than the average soul, the eyewitness turned over and went back to sleep.

Fires Around the World

Other examples of ghostly fires can be found the world over. Scotland in particular seems to have a great tradition of phantom fires. One example was recorded by John and Anne Spencer in their encyclopedia of ghosts and spirits. That fire was

spotted in the early part of the 20th century on the east coast of the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, near the town of Stornoway.

A local man, Kenneth MacDonald, had been out with four friends when a huge flame burst into being from the ground near them. All of them saw the strange fire and were so terrified that they ran to their homes. Locals declared that no good would come of the sighting and that someone would die on the spot of the strange conflagration. Sure enough, a young man from the area was lost and later found, dead from exposure, on the cursed site. Curiously, later sightings of the Stornoway lights were followed by untimely deaths in the same locations as the sightings.

While the Stornoway example was immediately recognized as a paranormal event by the inhabitants of the region, one recurring theme of phantom fires is that witnesses often mistake the flames for a real fire. In their research, the Spencers discovered another Scottish example where this type of misinterpretation was made.

In the 1960s, a woman by the name of Susanna Stone was driving a friend home, southwest of Tain in the Highlands of Scotland. As they drove along, they suddenly saw a nearby house on fire. Stone saw flames shooting out of the windows. The Spencers relate that:

“They drove towards the house to see if they could help and immediately lost sight of the blaze, assuming their view was obscured by bushes and fences. However,

as they rounded the bend, there was no sign of the blaze."

After she dropped off her friend, Stone checked with local fire officials, who claimed to have no knowledge of the blaze. Her investigation, however, did turn up another couple who had seen the burning house. Years later, the event still remained in the memory of the woman. She stated, "I saw no people or firemen, and I remembered I had never seen a house there before."

Readers of *FATE* have had eerily similar experiences. In the February 2003 issue, Mary Crawford told of an incident that had happened to Steve and Karen Crawford near Limrock, Alabama, several years before. Like Susanna Stone, the Crawfords had been driving along when they saw a house wreathed in flames. When they drew closer, the fire vanished, and the burning house was replaced with a house that was much less grand than the one which had been on fire.

The Burning Ghost

As if burning buildings were not in themselves dramatic enough, some ghostly fires come complete with tortured souls burning along with them! Researcher Richard Jones has written up one colorful local legend from the community of Pluckley in Kent, a village which Jones has described as England's most haunted.

Pluckley's burning ghost is that of an old gypsy woman who in life was known to sit against the stone walls of a bridge, smoking her clay pipe and drinking gin.



The combination of vices proved deadly to the poor woman. As Jones relates:

"One evening she fell asleep. The pipe dropped onto the rags she wore for clothing, and within moments she had erupted into a raging ball of flame. No one heard her agonized screams. She was found the next day, a charred pile of ashes, the battered old flask and the shattered clay pipe lying nearby."

Not content to burn once, the old woman returned many times in the years following her death. She appeared as a screaming, howling figure surrounded by flames. Apparently the unearthly inflammability of the gin and the rags is wearing off with time, as she has dwindled in more recent

States, it is best known as "foxfire," and examples abound from across the country. One typical American foxfire story is connected to an old graveyard located between Spokane and Walnut Shade, in Taney County, Missouri. This Missouri foxfire has been described as a bluish light about as high as a man's head.

Foxfire also makes a brief appearance to lend an air of dread to a scene in *Beowulf*, the oldest surviving piece of English literature. After Beowulf has killed the monster Grendel, the beast's mother emerges from her swampy lair to seek revenge. Hrothgar, the king of the land, describes to Beowulf the mysterious region that harbored the monsters:

"It is not far from here, in terms of miles that the Mere lies, overcast with dark, crag-rooted trees that hang in groves hoary with frost. An uncanny sight may be seen at night there—the fire in the water!" (from *Beowulf: A Verse Translation*, translated by Michael Alexander, Penguin Books)

It is possible that some versions of foxfire, such as the burning stump, and the fire in the water around Beowulf's dark, crag-rooted trees, have nothing to do with ghosts or the supernatural. It may be due to a genus of fungus known as *Armillaria*.

The different types of *Armillaria*, commonly called oak fungus or honey mushroom, cause many similar root diseases in trees. More interesting for our purposes, however, the fungus may glow at night with a cool, blue-green light. If you open a piece of wood with advanced decay caused by

Armillaria and view it in the dark, you stand a good chance of seeing the luminescence. While the light is not likely to cause blindness, some species are reportedly quite bright.

According to the *forestpathology.org* website entry on *Armillaria*, "it certainly is a wondrous thing to see in the night, bringing a strange mix of delight and spookiness. So it is easy to imagine strange and magical things behind it."

As has been demonstrated here, phantom fires fall into many different categories and have been reported in a wide range of situations. While luminescent fungus may be behind some reports, mold simply cannot account for them all. Some of the hauntings, in particular those accompanied by buildings which vanish once the apparition fades, may be anniversary type hauntings, hauntings that are linked to historical events and which recur on the date of that specific happening.

Other phantom fires, such as the burning gypsy of Pluckley, may be linked to a traumatic or emotional event, typical of many hauntings. Others simply defy description, or, like the vision of Moses, may be created by powers truly beyond our understanding. II

Dale Gilbert Jarvis is a folklorist, researcher, writer and ghost-tour operator living in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, and a past contributor to FATE. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology and a Master of Arts in Folklore. He can be reached at info@hauntedhike.com.



sightings to a faint pink glow hovering on the site of her demise.

Like the burning bush of old, not all examples of ghostly fires are linked to buildings or people. An example of this comes from the town of Milton, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland. Geoff Adams grew up in the community, and on a number of occasions worked at his uncle's gas station. His uncle was in his 80s in the late 1970s, when the event took place.

While working at the gas station, Adams was treated to some of the local folklore. One of the stories was about a stump that burned with a ghostly light.

One night the uncle had been making his way home from the nearby town of George's Brook. The journey took him up over a hill and past the church and cemetery. It then took him down the hill and back into the town near an old brickyard.

At the crest of the hill overlooking

the brickyard, the uncle slowed his footsteps as he became aware of a strange glow coming from the woods. Coming closer, he noticed a stump of wood engulfed in ghostly flames. The stump glowed in the darkness, surrounded by a surreal halo of white light.

The man had never seen anything so eerie in his life. Too scared to investigate further at that hour, he vowed to return the next day to examine the luminescent stump. The next day he found only a simple rotting stump with no signs of scorching or damage from the inferno of the night before.

Fairy Fire

Other examples of glowing wood have found their way into folklore and mythology. Aristotle wrote of the phenomenon, calling it "cold fire," but more recently it has been termed "fairy fire." In the United

True Mystic Experiences **SHC**



Douglas Empringham

Dreams of Vanishing Classmates

My family moved from northern New Jersey to Southern California in June 1941. By the time school started we were living in West Covina. The house was in a walnut orchard that had been subdivided into quarter-acre lots. We kept chickens, my brothers and I had pet ducks, and my mother had both a kitchen and a flower garden. Like the mild winters, it was a real treat.

Then came the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor, and something I'd forgotten until recently: dreams.

In them I was in the school playground during recess, when, alarmingly, some of the kids began to fade to nothingness. I had the dream again, and it still didn't distress me. Then, in the spring of 1942, it came true: Japanese-American children and their families were taken away and sent

to camps.

My brother Donald was nearly 12, old enough to understand adult rationale. My younger brother Richard, who'd just started school, was too young to understand. And a new friend I'd made at school, whose father was in the military, had been living in Honolulu when the attack came. So he had deeply personal reasons for hating the enemy and picking up on anti-Japanese slogans.

But I was eight, and having those dreams come true, having kids my own age vanish for a deed they'd had no part in, that frightened me profoundly. And other people's harsh, even threatening reaction to my "unpatriotic" questioning of their hate was the final stroke. All memory of those dreams vanished, just as the children in them had done.

What brought back the memory, lost and buried for so long, was having the current administration detain people on a mere suspicion, a chance possibility. But this time there are loud and organized protests, and I have faith that such an infamy will not happen again.—*Douglas Empringham, San Bruno, Calif.*

A Bowl of Blue Fire

About 20 years ago I had this dream, which, to this day, I still clearly remember.

I dreamed of a bowl of blue fire.

I believed the house was haunted, one of them, without even cracking a smile, told us that that might explain what happened to the previous purchaser. He said that a man had put down a \$1,500 deposit on the house in June and had even begun work on it. When it came time for the closing, the man never showed up. He also never called or tried to get his deposit back. Could he have been chased from the house by Alice's father, or even Alice herself?—*Samantha Herron, New Straitsville, Ohio*

Ghost By the Gate

My father, Robert Grover, was brought up in Nova Scotia, and passed away in 1994 at the age of 90. There was an event that really frightened him, and he often told us the story over the years.

One day, when he was 16, he had gone to town to do some errands for his mother. The nearest town was a few miles away, and he would often walk the wooded path to get there. As he headed back home, day was starting to turn to dusk.

He passed a farmhouse that had been vacant for years. This time, he noticed a girl of about 20 standing at the gate. She had long dark hair and wore a long white dress. Being the mischievous boy that he was, he thought he would try to frighten her. He silently walked closer and hid behind a tree, and threw a stone at the fence. The girl did not move. He threw another stone, and another. She still did not move.

He yelled to her, and she did not move. He started to walk closer, and could see her



Donna DiPietro

features, her long dark hair, and what she was wearing. But as he got within a few feet of her, he could see right through her.

He was so frightened, he turned and ran all the way home and didn't talk about it for a long time. No one knew who or what she was, or what she was doing there, but she made a life-long impression on my father.—*Donna DiPietro, Natick, Mass.* ♪

Share Your Proof

Have you witnessed or experienced a case of survival of bodily death?

Send your story to:

My Proof of Survival,

FATE Magazine, PO Box 460,
Lakeville MN 55044, or send it
via email to fate@fatemag.com

FATE pays \$50 for
each item published.

S H C

BF: Though I had at first determined to buy stuff for a new coat, I went away resolved to wear my old one a little longer.

FATE: When you make your unexpected, unbidden appearances in spiritual form, you seem to merely be a silent presence. You deliver no discourse. Maybe your presence is the message. You always wear your old coat, meaning you look like your aged face on today's \$100 bills. Any comment?

BF: Fear not death; for the sooner we die, the longer shall we be immortal.

FATE: As a printer's apprentice in Philadelphia, you engaged in disputation of religion and became known as both an infidel and atheist. You later chose to believe in a beneficent Deity, a source of infinite intelligence and wisdom. You also became a vegetarian until you saw a small fish in the belly of a larger cod. What did you think?

BF: If you can eat another, I don't see why

we oughtn't eat you...

FATE: Your body is buried in a simple grave in Philadelphia beside that of your common-law wife Deborah, whom you took "to wife" in 1730. After settling down, your unpublicized work as a Freemason began with your 1731 initiation. In 1749 you were appointed Provincial Grand Master of the Masonic order in Pennsylvania. While serving in France as newly independent America's sole plenipotentiary from 1778 to 1785, you assisted in the lodge initiation of a French writer who advocated enlightenment, Voltaire, over whose Masonic funeral you also officiated in 1778. During this time, your signature was reputedly recorded in a French Rosicrucian lodge's log. In 1999 your face materialized over features of the officer addressing a Rosicrucian convocation in upstate New York. Are you a legendary mystic

master? And what about your early epitaph? Will you share it, please?

BF: The body of
B. Frankin, Printer
Like the Cover of an Old Book
Its Contents torn out
And Stript of its Lettering and Gilding
Lies Here, Food for Worms,
But the Work shall not be Lost;
For it will (as he Believ'd) Appear once
More
In a New and More Elegant Edition
Revised and Corrected
By the Author

FATE: A new American President will be elected this year, although naysayers predict the country's decline. What do you think?

BF: There are Croakers in every Country always boding its ruin.

FATE: Any advice?

BF: God helps those that help themselves.

T

Blazing Yucca

Raymond M. Kelly

A yucca plant mysteriously burst into flames during the night at a home in the Northeast of England.

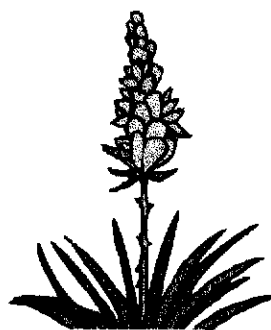
Carol Westgarth, 52, of Blyth, Northumberland, woke up to find that her third-floor flat was full of smoke. Believing that it had been caused by an electrical fault, she went to turn off the power and found her exotic plant blazing.

The conflagration burnt a hole in the plant pot and wrecked the flooring of the bedroom. However the four-foot-tall plant was scarcely damaged.

Carol, who has a grown-up son and daughter, admits to being absolutely terrified by the fire.

"I had been on holiday to Spain and my daughter had picked me and taken me home," she said. "I just went straight to bed because I was so tired after my trip, and the next thing I knew, my bedroom was full of smoke.

"I could see the cinders where the plant was, and I phoned the fire brigade straight away. They came and they said that it must have spontaneously combusted. It was quite scary really."



Tony Sewell, a sub-officer at Blyth Fore Station considers that the yucca must be the only possible cause of the fire.

"It does sound strange but there is no other explanation," he said later. There were no electrics, no heat source and no cigarettes involved."

A possible explanation could be the planting medium. It is very flammable and has been used as a fuel in the Celtic parts of the UK for generations. Peat fires do occur naturally in the sphagnum bog areas, and peat itself is the starting part of the formation of coal.

The plant had not been watered during Carol's absence. This would have caused the peat to dry out, and possibly begin to smoulder, similar to a peat fire starting naturally in the countryside. Eventually the plant would have caught fire, leading to great amounts of both heat and smoke.

Otherwise, the only answer is that Carol's yucca plant just burst into spontaneous combustion.

T



tiago, Chile, have kept its occupants on tenterhooks...not to mention firemen, who have been unable to find a logical explanation for this paranormal event.

According to the story told by the dwelling's owners, who were on the verge of being burned to death, clothing stored in furniture as well as blankets, curtains, and even the bathtub, which was full of water at the time, began to burn.

After Luis Torres and Carmen González returned from their customary weekend jaunt, they were startled to see smoke emerging from the bathroom, an event which marked the beginning of their nightmare.

After extinguishing a burning cloth and thinking it had all been the result of carelessness, they realized an hour later that more smoke was issuing from the bathroom, where the shower curtains were now aflame.

"The plastic shower curtains were burning. I threw water on them and my wife started to become hysterical," the apartment owner told the evening newspaper *La Segunda*.

After a few minutes, the couple noticed how the right side of their bed, the blanket, and the quilt had started to burn.

"As best we could, we took our things out of the apartment and poured water over them, but shortly after, the chest of drawers began spewing smoke," said Torres, who nervously added that he lost most of the clothing stored in that piece of furniture.

They smelled smoke again around midnight, but this time it poured out from his wife's closet. "The strangest thing was that the clothes hangers were on fire, while the clothes remained intact," said Torres. Firemen who reached the apartment before the flames were extinguished were able to witness a bathtub filled with water burning without any apparent reason.

Christian Chereau, a lieutenant with the Santiago Fire Department, with 27 years in the agency, stated that the events occurring in the Torres-González apartment were "absolutely inexplicable."

"There really isn't a logical explanation; therefore, I believe that the next course of action that the Fire Department will have

to take involves an exorcism," the firefighter remarked wryly. Chereau is an expert in chemical blazes. Some local television stations caught wind of the story and showed images of the phenomenon on their broadcasts.

Meanwhile, the apartment owners are waiting for a Catholic priest to rid them of this evil, although an evangelical pastor recently blessed their home and advised them to remain calm, since "the worst had already passed." (Thanks to EFE News Agency, Gloria Coluchi, and Scott Corrales)

"There really isn't a logical explanation; therefore, I believe that the next course of action that the Fire Department will have to take involves an exorcism."

Indian Rope Trick Debunked

The secret of the Indian rope trick, which has intrigued generations of scientists and magicians, has been uncovered by a Scottish academic after a five-year investigation.

Peter Lamont, a former president of the Magic Circle in Edinburgh and now a researcher at the city's university, revealed the truth at Edinburgh's International Science Festival.

He discovered that the trick has never been performed and was invented by an American newspaper as part of a circulation drive 111 years ago.

The *Chicago Tribune* caused a storm when it printed a report from India of a boy climbing an unsupported rope and disappearing at the top. The paper claimed he was followed by a man armed with a sword, who also disappeared before parts of the boy's body fell from the sky and landed in a basket at the base of the rope. The man reappeared and emptied out the basket, revealing the boy to be in perfect health.

Versions of the story spread worldwide,

but little notice was taken of a short note published by the *Chicago Tribune* four months after the original story that admitted the article was a publicity stunt.

It assumed readers would realize it was a hoax because the story was bylined "Fred S. Ellmore."

Lamont discovered the truth after a painstaking search that revealed the bizarre theories of others who claimed to have "solved" the trick. "It is a legend which the West constructed," said Lamont, 37, who is now planning to write a book on its history.

One Viceroy of India is said to have offered a £10,000 reward to the person who would reveal the secret so he could impress the visiting Prince of Wales. And one expert claimed the trick involved twin boys, one of whom would actually be murdered.

It is thought the hoax may have been inspired by the Indian street act of balancing a boy on a pole. "I suppose I have destroyed some people's beliefs," said Lamont, of Edinburgh University's Koestler Parapsychology Unit. (David Brown, *The Independent*)

Computer Control by Thought

A handicapped British experimenter has achieved limited success in operating a computer by brain waves alone.

Cathal O'Philbin of London, using a red plastic cap covered with electrodes and sheer will power, spent three hours and a half "thinking" three words onto a computer screen: "Arsenal football club," the name of his favorite soccer team.

O'Philbin, who has lost the use of his hands, formerly relied on an assistant and then on voice-recognition software to interact with his computer. The "thinking cap" is an off-the-shelf item from Electro-Cap International of Eaton, Ohio. The software that interprets the brain's signals and turns them into codes that the computer can understand runs under Windows 2000.

Technology Review, published by MIT, recently listed brain-machine interfaces as one of the top ten emerging technologies that "will soon have a profound impact on how we live and work." (*Wall Street Journal*, thanks to Carl Weschcke) II

SHC



Mary Crawford

House Fire That Wasn't There

In June 1992, Steve and Karen Crawford, a newly-married Alabama couple, were traveling west on Highway 35 (old Highway 72). As they drew near Limrock, they suddenly decided to take the Aspel road, which goes south and dead-ends at the new Highway 72 that leads into Huntsville.

Shortly after turning onto the Aspel road, Steve slammed on the brakes and exclaimed, "There's a big house all ablaze!"

Karen replied, "Yes, I see it too."

According to the young couple, the house they saw was a big two-story structure and appeared to have been a very nice building at an earlier time. Noting that no fire trucks were present, Steve turned into the dirt lane that led to the premises with the intention of offering whatever assistance he could.

As they approached, the upstairs windows appeared to be exploding, and flames were raging. However, as they came closer, the flames appeared to diminish, and the exploding glass stopped popping and cracking. Upon reaching the site, they found a man and his son, who were burning a patch of sage grass. The house that they saw then was nothing like the one they had seen from the road. This house wasn't nearly as nice.

Steve and Karen, badly shaken, hurriedly excused themselves by saying that they thought the fire was in the house and came by to offer help if needed. As they drew near the end of the lane that led back to the main road, they noticed another

car that slammed on its brakes, just as Steve had done a few minutes earlier. This car hurriedly approached the same house just as Steve and Karen drove away.

After Steve had told this story to me, I said, "Steve, I think I can throw some light on this mystery. As you know, I grew up at Limrock. I'm not positive as to the exact year that this incident took place, because I was pretty young at the time. It must have been to mid- to late 1940s."

The house that stood on the spot looked exactly as Steve had described it. I remember hearing it said that this was the old home place of some family we knew. However, I was not able to retrieve the names of the original owners. At the time in question, the house and farmland surrounding it were owned by the Patrick family and was rented out to sharecroppers. The name of the family living there was Davis. Times were hard and money was scarce. As was true of our own family and most other locals, the Davis family included several children.

One particular evening, the Davises determined that there was no kerosene in the house. That was a big problem, because electricity had not reached the Limrock area at the time. They did locate a container with a very small amount of gas in it. The gas was poured into a lamp and an attempt was made to light it. This resulted in a big explosion—just like the one Steve had described. Within a short time, the house and all the Davises' belongings had been reduced to ashes.

I asked Steve a couple of questions regarding this strange incident. Among other things, I asked him to describe the man and boy who were burning grass. They were described as short, stocky, and blond, a description that fit Mr. Davis and his son.

Steve concluded by saying that he had often wished that he had waited and talked to the people in the second car, to determine whether they had seen the

same thing that he and Karen had.

I reached back into my memory for more details of the actual devastation of this building. I remembered it was during summer vacation from school—at that time, school was out in May. It resumed during August. There was a break in order for children to help pick cotton. With this information, I suspect that the incident that Steve and Karen witnessed may have been on the anniversary of the actual catastrophe.—Mary Crawford, Dutton, Ala.

SHC

Canine Combustion.

We occasionally read stories about people who are saved from a house fire when their faithful dog alerts them to the danger. Matthew Gould of Kelso, Washington, was not quite so lucky, reports the Associated Press. Awakened in the night by smoke and flame, Gould called firefighters to put out the blaze. Investigation showed that the conflagration had been started by Gould's German shepherd mix, Sadie, who had gnawed into a box of matches. "Somehow, she chewed...just right and didn't slobber enough," said Fire Captain Mark Maker.

F. 2-98

I have had this and not-so-lazy dogs. Greatly passed over about 30 years ago; however, she visits now and then. She is fairly persistent in letting me know that she may

ago with a streetlight on a bridge. At first I thought it was just coincidence, but as it continued happening in odd places, I became negatively superstitious, thinking that it meant death. (My light of life about to go out?)

But then one day during my obsessive search for truth, I began reading *The Omega Project* by Dr. Kenneth Ring. I almost could not believe my eyes when the author began describing experiences of streetlights going out when certain types of people go near them. According to Dr. Ring's research, the lights going out is one of the lingering aftereffects experienced by people who have had near-death experiences or UFO encounters.

Dr. Ring calls this "Electrical Sensitivity Syndrome," and he theorizes "that there may be something about these encounters that may actually reprogram an experimenter's physiological and nervous system so as to make that individual inwardly and environmentally more sensitive."

This phenomenon really aroused Dr. Ring's curiosity, so he searched further and was truly surprised to discover that someone had done systematic research on per-

sons who have these experiences. Michael Shallis, an Oxford University lecturer and astrophysicist, studied over 200 cases personally, and even published a book about it in 1988 called *The Electric Connection*.

I had been wondering if you have had any UFO encounters which would help explain your Electrical Sensitivity Syndrome, but then you provided a clue in your July 2002 column, in which you asked "What's in my garage?"

You could be having Whitley Strieber-type, UFO-related visitations from unknown intelligences. The entity in your garage may have simply been using that location as a waiting room—waiting for you to go to bed and fall asleep so that contact could be made with you on another level, a level of reality parallel to this physical level.

Sometimes I think that these contact experiences mostly occur at deeper non-physical levels while the body is asleep because of certain emotional and psychological intensities that are often too difficult to bear at the normal level of physical, waking awareness. One of my favorite parts of Strieber's *Communion* occurs during his

first "visitor" contact when one of the unknown intelligences asks him: "What can we do to help you stop screaming?"

When your question appeared concerning your experiences of lights going out, I knew I just had to write. I waited to see how others would answer your question, but it seems that nobody sent you the information about Dr. Ring's research. I saw that as a signal. I wanted to send this letter at the end of August 2002, but I waited for the September issue to see if any more information appeared.

The September FATE never arrived. That had never happened before, and I wondered about the coincidence. Was there something especially significant about that issue? When I finally saw a small picture of the cover of the September issue (in the November letters section) I couldn't believe my eyes: the cover is a drawing of people in their bedroom experiencing the process of "acquiring" Electrical Sensitivity Syndrome.

There is so much that I would like to write about. I hope there is no limit to the number of times we can write to FATE.—
Larry W. Schmoekel, Marion, Tex.

Can You Help These Readers?

After 58 years of UFO research and investigations, I am seeking more information concerning possible UFO landings and UFO occupant encounters in North and South Carolina. To date I have received 90 landings and 77 reports of UFO occupants from 1842 to 2002. If any readers can add to this list, I would request them to respond.—George D. Fawcett, 602 Battleground Road, Lincoln, NC 28092

I am looking for books by E. E. Latimer (Solastro) as advertised in FATE for many years. Titles include *The Law of Cycles* and *The Book of Names and Numbers*. If you have these books, please let me know how much you want for them plus cost of air mail.—Mr. J. C. Dunn, 10 Harry St., Northampton, Great Britain, NN1 4JE

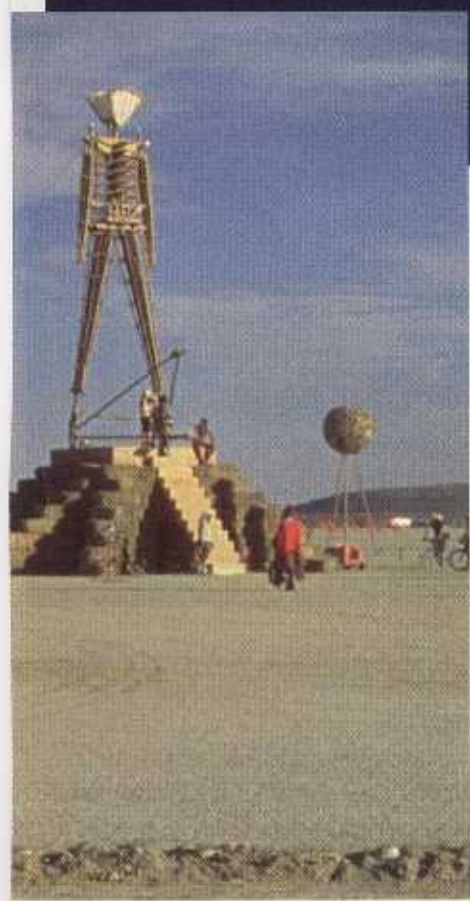
I am looking for information regarding ownership of the house on Route #1, next to the library in Frankfort, Maine. Any help you could provide would be gratefully appreciated.—lithevenus58@hotmail.com or blackhawk74720022002@yahoo.com

Can any readers tell me if there are any Holy Well publications currently being published?—Ernest E. Okarma, 2726 Spring Branch Cir., Toccoa, GA 30577-9322

I am looking for a book that is out of print: *UFO From Venus I Came* by Omneq Onac, alias Shello Schultz. Payment will be in US dollars for book and postage. Thanks!—Rosemarie K. Hilber Arnet, Heimstrasse 1B, 9014 St. Gallen, Switzerland

The Sphinx is the body of a lion with the head of a man. Are there any readers with understanding of how the Eagle and the Bull fit together with the Lion and the Man? Please write.—Richard Marshall, Box 49, Vermontville, MI 49096

Some years ago a lady from Wales ran a request for people who had seen animal ghosts to write her. I would like for her to contact me.—Everett Goudy, PO Box 62, Milford II, 60953; email: colt45@localline.com



Taking their names from the planets Mercury through Neptune, concentric streets orbit the inner circle as if the Man himself were the sun in this solar system. A number of settlements grow up beyond Neptune in the uncharted Planet X reaches of the desert. Behind the Man is a no man's land, broken up only by a few scattered works of art, a trash fence, and occasional land surfers.

The Meaning of Burning Man

For a purportedly anarchic event, Burning Man is remarkably well organized. A volunteer army of rangers and medical staff is on call day and night to deal with emergencies. *The Black Rock Gazette*, Events Billboards, and Radio Free Burning Man provide tolerably fast communications to a generation accus-

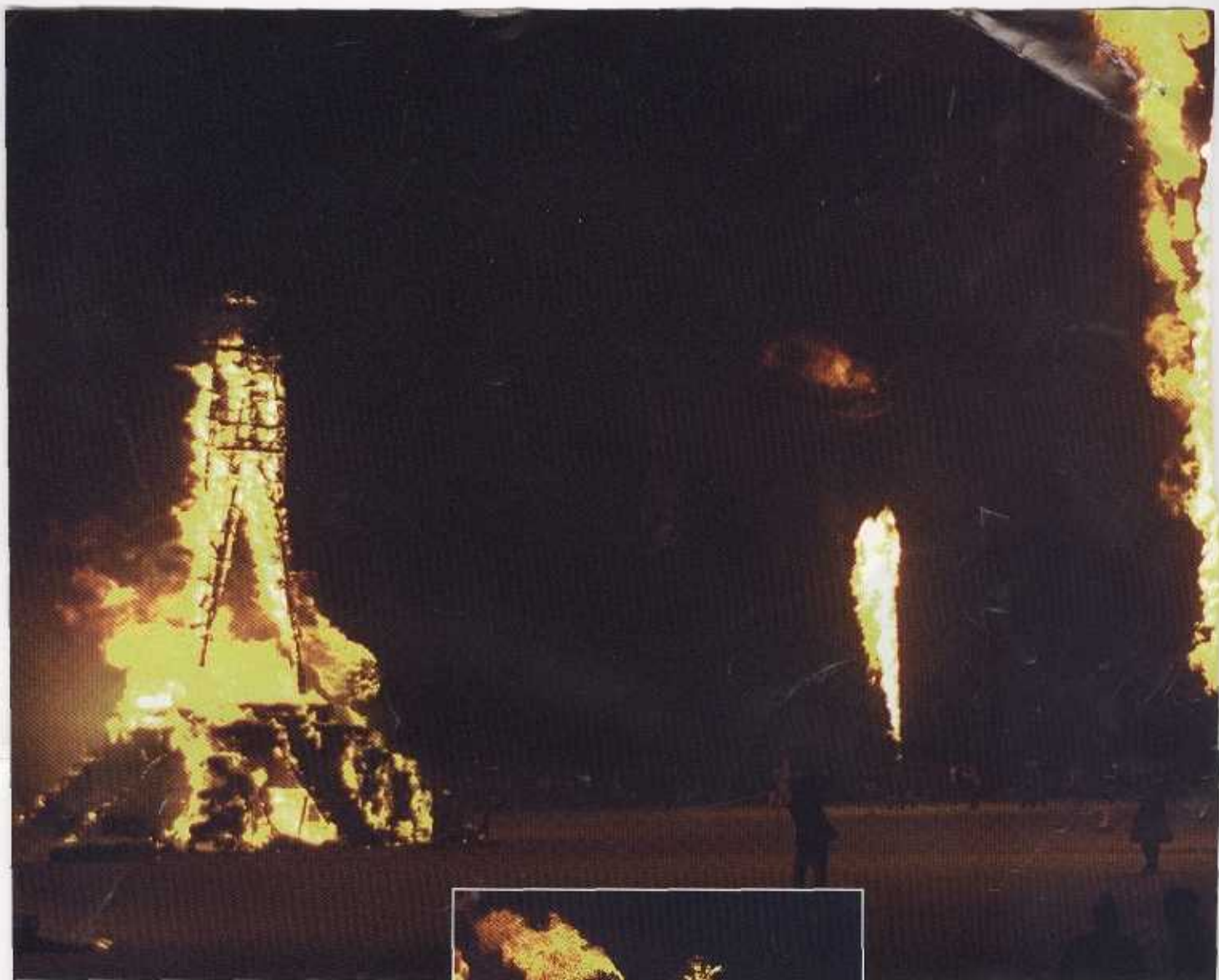
tomized to rapid-fire emails. Nonetheless, wires occasionally get crossed. This year masquerading rangers and a rogue issue of the *Gazette* spread false rumors of an upcoming snowstorm on Friday night.

To the uninitiated, the question arises: What makes Burning Man more than a sprawling costume party in the desert? Glimpses of an answer can be found around the Man himself.

Mounted on an altar of haybales, Burning Man looks out on the festivities. At night the red and yellow neon lights on his wooden skeleton are reminiscent of casino signs back in Reno. "Isn't he beautiful?" exclaims a "virgin" (a first-time attendant at the festival).

To explain the significance of Burning Man seems futile; one can only recount the events. More than any other

DE → ANIMATO



structure, the Man hosts rituals. On Wednesday afternoon the thespians of the Body Cartography Project, clad in orange Indian saris, extemporaneously chant and writhe around the feet of the man while a suppliant under a parasol kneels at the base of the steps. After a climactic series of clucks and yips, the troupe gasps as if in exhaustion and slowly recedes down the long road back to center camp. At other times devotees, stripped to the waist or entirely naked, meditate and pray before the sculpture while a flautist plays somber wandering melodies on the panpipe.

Around the Man there is a solemn, earnestly religious atmosphere. People stare up at the Man with the same hushed amazement with which one admires the dome of a cathedral. Hands touch his legs as if he might impart mystical power. *Burning Westward*, a journal



which gives the accounts of Utahns at the festival, contains an anonymous ecstatic poem:

*Opening myself to the universe to
enhance existence, to restore the
breath of life to a mangled
cadaver of apathy and guilt.
Upright I stand, facing the tall slender
man. He is a reflection of my
self, my inner being. I will burn as
he, to release myself of all the past, to
renew myself for all the future.*

Techno-Pagan Ritual

As Christians once journeyed to Canterbury, as Muslims brave the desert



en route to Mecca, so, it seems, pagan America makes its pilgrimage to Burning Man.

Saturday night, the night of "the burn," is the climax of the festival. After the warning flares are ignited, most of the city gathers around a perimeter of

blinking and circling lights. Lasers like bridges span from the north side of the city to the mountains miles to the south. The ghost of Elvis trudges through the crowd, crooning and dragging a karaoke machine in a red wheelbarrow. There are lights everywhere, on necklaces, on headlamps and flashlights, back in the camp, and all across the inner circle. The pyrotechnicians are having difficulties, so someone from the crowd offers his own lighter.

Then suddenly the Man is lit. Fireworks rip through his torso, shoot from his head and leave him burning. He totters for a while, reels and falls. The crowd rushes in and circles him again and again. "Fire is inherently spiritual," explains Sus Plum, a German girl who has been traveling America for the past few years.

Massive sculptures and structures rise around the Man. In accordance with the "Wheel of Time" theme, the area to the left facing the Man is known as the Present, to the right is the Future, and behind him, the vast Primordium. Michael Taluk's "Sharon's Rising," located in the Future, is the most impressive daytime spectacle. A triangular column draped with crimson streamers projects 40 feet into the air. Its base is popular for meditation.

At night Megavolt steals the show. A Tesla coil atop a moving van lashes out at a man in a grounded space suit while his accomplice zaps crowd-members with a low-volted gun and shouts, "Be baptized with a shock. You will all be damned if you are not baptized." Other popular works include towering robots that dance a ballet before collapsing and burning, numerous sundials, and a hockey rink with clay instead of ice.

An emphasis on the communal seems to make Burning Man more than merely one big party. "Community is the main thing," explains John Vars, a computer-programmer and four-year veteran. His community, the Motel 666, sports a free full bar and DJs who spin almost 20 hours a day.

In his 1998 speech, Larry Harvey,



Burning Man's founder, made an analogy between the event and the Internet, both of which build populist, non-hierarchical communities. He speculates that the digerati, or the computer-programming elite, are drawn to the event because the communities are more personal than on the Web. But the relationship must be symbiotic, for Burning Man depends on the Web in turn for planning and information dispersal.

Harvey hopes that the community at Burning Man will serve as an ideal and that the attendants will strive to bring Burning

Man home. He concludes, "The whole experiment we're running is an effort to recreate culture in the modern world."

The prominent communities that Burning Man propagates seem to be modeled on the participants' ideal urban hangouts. Ismi, a sort of opium den with a pool table and foosball, is the perfect place for the midafternoon daze. The now infamous Bianca's Smut Shack, a dance club and lounge, lives up to its reputation. Elvis Yoga offers three sessions a day, and the Bijou shows cult film classics at night. More often than