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ANIMAL MUTILATIONS AND UFOs

At 10:30 on the evening of April 19, 1897, according to a story published four days later in the *Yates Center Farmers Advocate*, a Kansas newspaper, the first instance of interplanetary cattle-rustling took place before the startled eyes of one of the area's most respected citizens. His son and hired hand also witnessed the event. In the words of rancher Alexander Hamilton:

[W]e were awakened by a noise among the cattle. . . . [U]pon going to the door I saw to my utter amazement that an airship was slowly descending upon my cow lot, about forty rods [600 feet] from the house. Calling my tenant, Gid Heslip, and my son Wall, we seized some axes and ran to the corral. Meanwhile the ship had been gently descending until it was not more than thirty feet above the ground and we came within fifty yards of it. It consisted of a great cigar-shaped portion, possibly three hundred feet long, with a carriage underneath. The carriage was made of glass or some other transparent material. It was brightly lighted within and everything was plainly visible—it was occupied by some of the strangest beings I ever saw. There were two men, a woman, and three child-

ren. They were jabbering together but we could not understand a syllable they said.

When the beings saw the witnesses, they turned a bright searchlight on them, and their craft started to ascend. Then it stopped about 30 feet above the witnesses, who noticed a calf caught in the fence. "Going to her," Hamilton testified, "we found a cable . . . fastened in a slip knot around her neck, one end passing up to the vessel and tangled in the wire." Unable to cut the cable, the three could only free the animal and watch it and the ship sail off. The next day a rancher some miles away found the butchered remains of the calf in a field where there was no "track of any kind on the soft ground."

The *Farmers Advocate* appended an endorsement of Hamilton's honesty and good character from some of the county's leading citizens. The story was rediscovered and republished in UFO books in the 1960s (Vallee, 1965; Edwards, 1966) and cited as an impressive early CE3. Some years later, however, an investigation determined that the story was a practical joke inspired by reports of mysterious "airships"—UFOs in modern terminology—then in circulation (see *The Emergence of a Phenomenon*, pp. 17-39). The tale was concocted by Hamilton with the connivance of members of a local liars' club—the same men whose statement claimed they had "never heard his word questioned" (Clark, 1977). Subsequently, while conducting research on historical UFO sightings, Thomas E. Bullard found a letter from Hamilton in a Missouri newspaper, the *Atchison County Mail* (May 7, 1897), in which he cheerfully acknowledged the truthfulness of his story (Bullard, 1982).

But in 1897 Hamilton's yarn, though not his confession, attracted enormous publicity and was reprinted in newspapers across the United States. It is one of the most successful UFO hoaxes of all time. It is also the first story to allege a connection between strange flying objects and mysterious cattle deaths. There would be many more to come.

In 1985 *Fate*, a popular monthly magazine on anomalies and the paranormal, printed an account dictated by an elderly woman, Pearl Chenowith, who had died the year before. Her granddaughter Shannon Graham, who submitted the story, expressed confidence in its accuracy. Mrs. Chenowith claimed that in Au-

gust 1896, when she was nine years old and living on a Howell County, Missouri, farm, she and her family saw a "large saucerlike shape" with blinding lights. It hovered over their property for an extended period of time one evening. The next morning the family made a sickening discovery:

[I]n a large patch of burned grass were three of our steers lying dead on the ground. . . . [T]hey had been completely drained of blood. The only marks on them were some dried blood on their throats from two puncture holes in the jugular vein; these looked as if they had been made by a two-tined fork.

She added, "Later that week, when the newspapers came from St. Louis . . . [t]here were several stories of just such incidents all over Missouri that night" (Chenowith, 1985). In fact, the St. Louis newspapers of August and September 1896 contain no such accounts. Unless Mrs. Chenowith had the date wrong, it is possible that her memory played a trick on her and fused the Hamilton yarn with modern reports (see below) of alleged UFO links with cattle mutilations.

A dead horse in Colorado. In 1966 and 1967 the Ohio River valley played host to a variety of weird phenomena, including UFOs and strange creatures. These reports figure prominently in *The Mothman Prophecies* (1975) by John A. Keel, who spent time in the area, interviewed witnesses, and had his own UFO sightings. In his book Keel says he examined the bodies of mysteriously slain dogs, cows, and horses. They died, he states, from "surgical-like incisions in their throats. . . . Often the carcasses seem drained of blood." At the time little was made of these incidents.

An incident from southern Colorado, however, became something of a ufological cause célèbre. After the Hamilton story, it would be the most famous UFO-linked animal death prior to the emergence of the "mutilation" phenomenon in the mid-1970s, and it would set the stage for—depending on one's point of view—the onset of either a particularly chilling manifestation of extraterrestrial visitation or a new variety of human craziness.

The incident took place in the San Luis Valley on the Harry King ranch 20 miles northeast of Alamosa, Colorado, and just south of the Great Sand Dunes

National Monument. During the day a three-year-old Appaloosa saddle horse named Lady, the property of King's sister Nellie Lewis, would roam the dry, desolate area near Mount Blanca, but every morning and evening she could be counted on to show up for water in the corral where her mother Snippy was kept. When she did not appear the evening of September 7, 1967, King worried that something had happened to her. The next morning there was still no sign of her. So King mounted his own horse and went looking for her. Soon afterwards he found her carcass at the foot of the mountain.

Though he saw no tracks around the body, the animal appeared to have been skinned from the neck to the shoulders, which were nothing but bleached bones. The cut around the neck looked too smooth to have been accomplished with a hunting knife. No blood was in evidence, in either the body or surrounding ground.

The following day King returned to the site with Nellie and her husband Berle. The soil beneath the carcass was damp, and a medicinal odor hung in the air. As the three expanded their search, they noticed a chico bush 100 yards to the north. To their eyes it looked as if something had flattened it to within 10 inches of the surface. Not far from this bush was a piece of horse flesh encased in skin. When Mrs. Lewis punctured it, a sticky green paste poured out and caused a burning sensation on her hand. The burning ceased only after she had washed the hand.

Over a 5000-square-yard area the three discovered 15 circular "exhaust" marks punched into the ground. In a nearby meadow they came upon other evidence of flattened brush as well as six other indentations. Each of these was two inches across, four inches deep, in a circular configuration.

On another visit to the site, on September 16, Mrs. Lewis encountered an object she took to be a tool covered with horse hair. It burned her hand exactly as the green substance had.

Nellie Lewis called Alamosa County Sheriff Ben Phillips and tried to interest him in an investigation, but Phillips assured her the animal had been killed by lightning. But on the twenty-third Duane Martin, a ranger with the U.S. Forest Service, went over the

area with a Geiger counter, claiming to have detected an unusual amount of radiation two city blocks away from the carcass. The “exhaust marks” also yielded a high radioactivity count, he said. (Martin, however, confessed to lack of experience with a Geiger counter and later amended the count to “slight.” Subsequent surveys by more experienced users, who detected nothing out of the ordinary, suggested Martin had recorded only normal background radiation [Bennett, 1967; Wadsworth, 1967].) Earlier, during the summer, Martin had observed fast-moving, odd-looking “jets” flying at low altitudes over the area where Lady’s carcass would be found. The night Lady disappeared, in fact, 87-year-old Agnes King, Harry and Nellie’s mother, thought she saw a “large object” pass over the ranch house, but her poor eyesight kept her from getting a good look at it.

Reports of anomalous lights in the San Luis Valley had attracted some press attention in Colorado that summer, and they so intrigued a young Denver hematologist, John H. Altshuler, that one weekend in mid-September he packed up his family and headed down to see for himself. Leaving his wife and children in an Alamosa motel, he drove to the Great Sand Dunes park, which officially closed at 10 P.M., planning to stay the night and watch for UFOs. Between 2 and 3 A.M., he wrote years later, “I saw three very bright, white lights moving together slowly below the Sangre De Cristo mountain tops. I knew there were no roads up on those rugged mountains, so the lights could not be cars. They were definitely not the illusion of stars moving. Those lights were below the tops of the mountain range and moved at a slow, steady pace. At one point, I thought they were coming toward me because the lights got bigger. Then suddenly, they shot upward and disappeared” (Howe, 1989).

In the morning park police found Dr. Altshuler and demanded to know who he was and what he was doing there. Fearing his medical career would be ruined if his UFO interest became known, Altshuler pleaded with the officers to keep his name a secret. Their manner changed from threatening to interested when they learned of his medical specialty. At this point they told him about the mysterious horse death of about 10 days earlier, and soon one of the officers was escorting Altshuler to the King ranch. Nellie Lewis led him to the remains. Altshuler took tissue

samples and later examined them under a microscope. “At the cell level,” he would recall, “there was discoloration and destruction consistent with changes caused by burning. . . . Most amazing was the lack of blood. . . . Then inside the horse’s chest, I remember the lack of organs. Whoever did the cutting took the horse’s heart, lungs, and thyroid. The mediasternum was completely empty—and dry. How do you get the heart out without blood?” (*ibid*).

Altshuler managed to stay out of the ensuing furor, even though the presence of an unidentified “Denver pathologist and blood specialist” was noted in some press accounts. Probably the story would have died a natural death, like or unlike Lady, had it not been for Mrs. Lewis’s determination to have the “facts” uncovered, and as a UFO enthusiast she was already certain that a flying saucer had killed the horse. A local UFO buff and part-time law-enforcement officer, Don Richmond, was already spreading the word to ufologists, and in early October a Texas radio station broadcast an account of Lady’s allegedly UFO-related killing. This gave the *Pueblo Chieftain*, the major local newspaper, the encouragement it needed to tell the story. In its October 7 issue it devoted a few paragraphs to Lady’s death, padding the story with brief accounts of current UFO sightings and rumors, including a local artist’s recollection that not long before she had sold a painting to a “peculiar man” who announced that he was “not of your world.”

In the days to come, publicity rapidly escalated. Early on Lady got confused with Snippy, her mother, and in many accounts Snippy also switched gender. Pleased that the story was getting the attention she felt it deserved, Mrs. Lewis did not bother to correct the error—now so widespread that it probably would have been futile to make the attempt, in any event. As a consequence the Lady affair has gone down in UFO history as the “Snippy case.” Press coverage of the episode, little of it drawing on anything like real investigative journalism, was rife with mistakes, rumors, and absurd speculations (Merker, 1968).

On October 8 the *Denver Post* highlighted the possibility of UFO involvement, and in short order investigators from the **University of Colorado UFO Project** (informally known as the Condon Committee, after director Edward U. Condon) and the National Inves-

tigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) descended on the scene. In common with veterinary experts who examined the carcass, they concluded that Lady had died a conventional death (Gillmor, 1969; "Colorado Horse Death," 1967). The University of Colorado team included Robert O. Adams, chief of surgery at Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. On October 19 another team member, James E. Wadsworth, reported to Maj. Hector Quintanilla of the Air Force's **Project Blue Book**:

1. Snippy [sic] apparently died of natural causes. Specifically, Dr. Adams found an infection in "Snippy's" [sic] right flank which would have been sufficient to kill "Snippy" [sic] within a matter of hours.
2. The neck of the horse had apparently been cut (possibly as a mercy killing if the horse was suffering, or for some other reason). Birds—i.e. magpies—can rapidly strip skin and flesh from a dead animal once access through the hide is available.
3. Evidence in the area had deteriorated [sic] greatly due to rain, sightseers tramping around, etc., and by the time the C.U. investigators arrived little could be accurately deduced. The alleged "exhaust marks" which formed a rough circle near the horse's body, were probably a fungus growth sometimes found on alkali deposits and known as black alkali. The indentations in the ground appeared to be weathered hoofprints.
4. Other reportedly strange aspects of the condition were described by Dr. Adams when he said: "It is normal for all nervous tissue to be gone from the brain and spinal cord after the length of time this horse had been dead. It is also normal for all visceral organs to be destroyed and absent since these are some of the first tissues to degenerate". . . .

In summary, the most important conclusion the investigators reached was that no UFO sightings in the area could be linked to "Snippy's" [sic] death, and such connections as were alleged

were of a purely speculative nature [Wadsworth, 1967].

Another investigation, conducted by six scientists from the University of Nevada's Desert Research Institute, examined soil and tissue samples and found nothing out of the ordinary. An alleged tool or container recovered from the site proved to be "of plant origin" ("Spacemen," 1968). The scientists suggested that lightning had killed the animal. But on January 25, 1968, Alamosa veterinarian Wallace Leary, who was in the process of reconstructing Lady's skeleton, found two bullet holes, apparently from a .22 caliber weapon, in the hind quarters. One bullet had fractured a right thighbone and a foot bone. He thought that the wounds and the infection noted by other examiners were "very probably related" (Saunders and Harkins, 1968).

If not every aspect of the circumstances surrounding Lady's death is known with certainty, it is clear that the death was not nearly so extraordinary as some apparently wanted to believe. Though no evidence of UFO involvement would emerge then or later, NICAP's skepticism angered some ufologists. The rival Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), of which the imaginative Don Richmond was the area representative, declared, "The whole episode smacks of the strange, the bizarre, the unknown" (Lorenzen and Lorenzen, 1968). APRO complained about the "highly erroneous" nature of much that had been reported about the incident, but its own coverage was littered with mistakes, starting with the horse's identity and gender and the principals' correct names (*ibid.*; Lorenzen, 1968) and going on to include the apocryphal "radiation considerably above background count" and other dubious claims ("The Snippy Case," 1967).

For several years afterwards the San Luis Valley would attract pilgrims seeking their own UFO sightings or encounters with paranormal forces. One of them was an East Texas State University student named Tom Adams, who would become a leading figure in the controversy over "animal mutilations" that would erupt in 1973 and whose echoes still resound two decades later.

Phantom surgeons. In 1967, while investigating UFO sightings in the Ohio River valley, writer John A. Keel

spoke with a woman who lived on a farm outside Gallipolis, Ohio. She told him that the previous November she had witnessed a UFO landing and briefly conversed with its occupants, two men with pointed faces and tanned complexions. They spoke like a "phonograph record playing at the wrong speed." That was not her only strange experience, she added. Three or four years earlier, she said, "rustlers" had butchered cattle in her pasture. "I'd see them out in the field and go after them with a shotgun," she said. "But they always got away. They're tall men, and they wear white overalls . . . which is kind of stupid because they really stand out in the dark. And they can certainly run and jump. I've seen them leap over high fences from a standing start." Oddly, "they didn't seem to want the choice cuts. They just took the brains, eyeballs, udders, and organs that . . . we'd normally throw away." Keel subsequently spoke with the woman's teen-aged son, who confirmed her account (Keel, 1975b).

Early in the afternoon of November 5, 1973, members of a Canby, Minnesota, farm family found a cow lying dead in a pasture. They thought there was something unsettlingly out of the ordinary about it. Its udder seemed to have been neatly cut off. The ears, tongue, and tail had also been severed. Hair clippings from the end of the tail lay in a neat pile near the carcass. There was no blood to be seen either on the ground or in the animal's hide near the wounds. Yellow Medicine County Deputy Sheriff Dennis Kamstra, who investigated, found "no clues—no tracks, no vehicles, no footprints."

Around the same time, in neighboring Lincoln County, rumors spread that a "cult of devil-worshippers" had killed and mutilated several cattle. The sheriff's office looked into the "mutilations" and, in consultation with a local veterinarian, concluded that the animals had died of natural causes. After the blood had coagulated, small wild animals ("varmints") had nibbled off the softest parts of the anatomy. The sheriff's office received two or three reports of helicopters circling cattle (Clark, 1974).

That fall, though unknown to farmers and law-enforcement personnel in southwestern Minnesota, Kansas was quietly undergoing an epidemic of what appeared to be strange cattle deaths. The incidents

first received wide publicity in a feature story in the December 22 issue of the *Kansas City Times*, which took note of an "eerie pattern." It went on, "Of the many breeds feeding on the Kansas grasslands, almost all the deaths have been [of] black cows, mostly Angus. They have died within a few miles of U.S. 81 in a dozen counties in north-central Kansas. Even more bizarre, many bore knife marks on the carcasses, including the apparent butchering of the sex organs from both bulls and heifers. . . . Two other points confounding investigators have been the absence of blood and footprints."

That month a dozen sheriffs from the afflicted Kansas counties met to discuss the problem. Nothing definite came out of the meeting beyond a consensus that cultists were at work. Yet autopsies performed on several allegedly mutilated bodies suggested otherwise. According to the Kansas State University Veterinarian Laboratory, the animals had died of bloat and coyotes had eaten the teats, anuses, and other soft parts. Many farmers, ranchers, and police officers rejected this pronouncement. A typical response came from Ottawa County Deputy Sheriff Gary Dir: "I've spent 25 years of my life on a farm around cattle. These cases don't match up with what coyotes would do" (*ibid.*). To proponents of the theory that the deaths were out of the ordinary, "classic" mutilations were defined as those in which body parts—usually sex organs, ears, tongues, or anuses—were removed with surgical precision. There would also be an absence of blood, signs of struggle, or clues to the cause of death (Hall, 1980; Owen, 1980).

For some months the Kansas law-enforcement people had been receiving reports of unidentified helicopters, suspected at first to be operated by rustlers and now to be linked to the mutilations. "Mystery helicopters" would be a recurring feature of the mutilation scare over the next two decades (Adams, 1980; Adams and Massey, 1979; Donovan and Wolverton, 1976; Howe, 1993).

In its September 30, 1974, issue *Newsweek* exposed the cattle-mutilation phenomenon to a broad national audience. Noting that "more than 100 cattle have been found dead and gruesomely mutilated in Ne-



A typical "cattle mutilation" took place on a farm near Piermont, New Hampshire, on September 27, 1978. Such incidents, which some theorists link to UFO activity, remain highly controversial, with most authorities contending that the animals died of natural causes.

braska, Kansas and Iowa," it listed various suspected culprits: witchcraft cultists, UFOs, helicopter-borne rustlers, marijuana smugglers, and predators ("The Midnight," 1974). Only the last was treated with undiluted skepticism. By now a kind of panic was sweeping through America's heartland, and in the months and years to come the scare would spread from the Midwest to the West to the South. As late as the summer of 1994, "cattle mutilations" were said to be taking place in northern New Mexico, amid speculations about the by-now-familiar suspects (Benke, 1994).

In 1975, acting on information supplied him by a writer who had been investigating mutilation reports, Donald E. Flickinger, an agent of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division of the U.S. Treasury Department, launched an investigation of an alleged national Satanist network said to be behind the mutilations. Flickinger determined that the story was

without foundation. Its creator, a federal prisoner, had hatched a scheme by which he would be transferred to a county jail, purportedly for his personal safety, from which it would be easier to escape. He and an associate did in fact briefly flee a county jail in Minnesota but were recaptured hours later (Ellis, 1991; Vallee, 1979).

In May 1979 retired FBI agent Kenneth Rommel conducted another major official investigation. Financed by grants from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the Santa Fe District Attorney's office, the inquiry focused on New Mexico cases, though it paid some attention for comparison purposes to incidents in other states. After a year Rommel released a long report which devastatingly debunked popular theories about the deaths. The animals had died of natural causes, he contended, and the allegedly mysterious aspects of the "phenomenon" could be explained conventionally.

"The parts of the carcass that are allegedly removed in 'classic' mutilations," he wrote, "are the same ones customarily consumed by predators and scavengers." He cited the testimony of noted ornithologist Kenneth Sager: "The larger the animal, the more difficult it is for the scavenger to gain access to the food supply below the tough surface. [Thus they attack the] softer points of entry, namely the eyes, anal openings, and the soft underbelly areas, especially the udders of female bovines." L. D. Kittner of the University of Missouri's College of Veterinary Medicine told Rommel, "Surprising as it may seem to the uninitiated, many of the scavengers can make [as] clean [a] cut as might be done by a surgeon with a knife. . . . It is the rule rather than the exception for these animals to do a neat job and not leave either blood or mess at the site of the carcass." Only incompetent investigation, rumor-mongering, hysteria, and outright invention, in Rommel's estimation, had turned ordinary cattle deaths into a national mystery (Rommel, 1980).

The UFO connection. Those who believed mutilations were really taking place (and not just to cattle but to horses, rabbits, dogs, cats, and even buffalo) subscribed to at least one of three explanations: cultists, government agents, or UFOs. Each interpretation generated its own literature and its own "evidence." In what follows we consider the evolution of the mutilators-as-ufonauts theory.

From the onset mutilations intrigued ufologists. For one thing, they knew of the 1897 Kansas calf-napping, generally accepted as authentic until it was exposed as a hoax in 1977. Second and probably more important, the Snippy case had prepared them—some more than others—for the idea that UFOs could do terrible things to animals (Adams, 1970; Bord, 1972). The most influential figures in what became known as "mutology" all knew Berle and Nellie Lewis, having come to Alamosa to look into the celebrated horse death. John Altshuler, the first, would be the last to emerge into public view, starting in the late 1980s, but he would do much to provide the heretofore-missing scientific evidence for anomalous, arguably alien-generated mutilations. But a decade earlier, through their extensive network in media and law enforcement, Alamosa pilgrims Tom Adams, Linda Moulton Howe, and Howard Burgess did much to spread the notion that the incidents were so strange

that no purely terrestrial explanation for them seemed possible. All were ufologists.

Early on Adams started collecting information on "mutes" (his shorthand term for them), and in January 1978 he released the first issue of the bimonthly *Stigmata*, the newsletter of Project Stigma, "an attempt to coordinate and assist in information-gathering activities on the part of the pertinent and responsible investigative agencies and individuals." In the next issue he defined the limits of intellectual tolerance: "[T]he pages of *Stigmata* will not be enthusiastically open to debate on the question of whether there actually *are* any 'classic', unnatural animal mutilations occurring. Our primary thrust will be toward determining who (or what), how and why" ("Agreed," 1978). The lead editorial in the same issue defended the UFO/mute link as a defensible provisional hypothesis. "Why must there be a 'burden of proof?'" Adams asked ("Is There a 'Link'," 1978). "If we cannot at a given moment say that we must have conclusive proof that UFOs (or the occupants thereof) are responsible for mutilating animals, does some kind of automatic quantum leap in logic justify the assumption that UFOs are *not* involved in the mutilation of animals?"

So far, however, the "automatic quantum leap in logic" had been in the opposite direction. The first vocal proponent of a UFO/mute link, an eccentric Minnesotan named Terrance Mitchell (who elsewhere claimed to have visited Sasquatch creatures in their homes ["More on Mutilations," 1975; Randle, 1989]), mistook snow-covered silage near one mutilated cow for marks made by a "hovering UFO" (Ellis, *op. cit.*; George, 1974). But before another investigator exposed this blunder, Mitchell had gone on national television to expound on his fantastic interpretation. In the April 1976 issue of the newsstand magazine *UFO Report*, Texas ufologist Tommy Roy Blann treated the UFO/mute link as effectively proven. He wrote:

The most startling fact was that the evidence being uncovered by these [rural law-enforcement] agencies indicated that the culprits were utilizing methods that could not be explained, and the evidence clearly indicated that the culprits were dropping out of the sky rather than

using conventional vehicular transportation. But perhaps the most startling revelation of all was that UFOs were being observed by dozens of witnesses in these mutilation areas!

In common, then and since, with others who believed or suspected a link between alien beings and mutilated animals, Blann assumed that if UFOs were reported anywhere near an area claiming anomalous cattle deaths, there must be a connection. (At the same time proponents of other, more earthbound mute theories were doing much the same with helicopter sightings.) From the start Adams's reporting employed, or at least implied, similar logic. For example, after detailing an April 21, 1978, mute in Natrona County, Wyoming, Adams noted, "During weeks preceding the mutilation, UFO sightings were numerous north and south of Casper" ("A Weekend," 1978). During a spate of mutes in Goochland County, Virginia, in the spring of 1978, a man observed a "white light which descended below a low knoll. . . . This occurred 'during the time' that the mutilations were being discovered, although it is not known whether any mutilations occurred on that specific night" ("A Closer Look," 1978a).

Perhaps something could be said for this sort of guilty-by-association approach if UFOs were being reported *only* in those areas where mutes were occurring. Such, however, was far from the case. Moreover, because the mutologists typically failed to do more than simply note the ostensible UFO sightings, one could not be certain these were sightings of genuinely anomalous phenomena. Mutologists displayed little interest in pursuing one obvious line of inquiry: Did the popular belief in a UFO/mute link encourage nervous farmers and ranchers to confuse ordinary stimuli—astronomical bodies, aircraft—with extraordinary ones?

NICAP doubted that UFOs had anything to do with mutilations of cattle, drawing lessons from the "Snippy" case ("Animal Mutilations," 1975). On the other hand, in its first statement on the mutilation wave, the *A.P.R.O. Bulletin* remarked, "These cases are reminiscent of the now famous 'Snippy' horse incident," meaning that in the opposite sense. To APRO the new incidents were as mysterious as the earlier one. Conceding that "there is no hard evidence that

UFOs have been involved" in the current cases ("Mysterious," 1975), APRO would for a time champion the Satanic-cult explanation ("More on Mutilations," *op. cit.*), but by 1979 director Coral E. Lorenzen had been persuaded of a UFO link (Lorenzen, 1979). Of the other two leading American UFO groups, the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) embraced mutes as ufological phenomena almost immediately, and Adams and Linda Howe, producer of the popular 1980 documentary *Strange Harvest* (a pro-UFO treatment of the mute mystery), became its principal consultants and spokespersons on the subject. The Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) evolved from initial indifference to outright hostility; eventually CUFOS challenged the idea that mutes existed as an anomalous phenomenon of any kind.

Aside from the frequently employed argument that UFO sightings and mutes often overlapped, proponents of the link claimed other, seemingly more direct evidence. Not always judiciously chosen, the "evidence" sometimes consisted of what folklorists call "foaftales"—friend-of-a-friend tales. *Stigmata* ran a fantastic story which it reported it had learned from a "friend and associate of Project Stigma." He had learned it from a New Mexico shop owner who got it from a customer, a "Mrs. L."

According to Mrs. L., in the mid-1970s she and her husband lived in Arkansas. One day while picking apples off a tree some distance from her home, Mrs. L. fell off a ladder and badly cut her leg. As she lay in a semi-conscious state, two figures, apparently a mother and child, approached and applied an apparatus to her leg. The bleeding and pain stopped. Mrs. L. noticed, to her understandable surprise, that these individuals were more humanoid than human. When she offered them food, they declined but gave her a metal plaque with drawings on it. As she related this part of the story, she showed the plaque to the shop owner, who observed markings that looked like "pyramids" and "six-pointed stars" as well as an unidentifiable metal.

Six weeks after the initial incident, Mrs. L. went looking for a lost dog. Her search led her through some nearby woods and into a clearing, where she observed a strange scene: two "Air Force" helicopters, two white-suited men carving up a dead horse,

two men in "Air Force" uniforms, and the two humanoids who had healed her. Suddenly gripped with fear, she turned and fled. A helicopter pursued her and fired a blue beam which burned her right breast and some of her clothing. The helicopter then flew off, and Mrs. L. managed to get away.

While in the hospital, she told anyone who would listen what had happened to her. Soon "strange people" showed up and grilled her. They acted like FBI agents but never produced credentials. She was transferred to a mental hospital but released after she proved sane. Nonetheless the local sheriff continued to hold her responsible for the horse mutilation in the clearing.

When she returned home, the strange people continued to bother her with demands for answers to the same questions over and over again. Soon she and her husband moved to New Mexico to get away from the harassment. But now, she told the shop-owner, the strange people had found her and were after her again. Not long afterwards Mr. and Mrs. L. left New Mexico for parts unknown ("Ordeal in Arkansas," 1978).

What gives this story its particular interest is its fusion of two versions of mute mythology. Here *both* official operatives and ETs are the mutilators (even the helicopter, with its UFOlike blue beam, becomes one with the flying saucer). In the 1980s the belief that the U.S. government and the aliens have formed an unholy alliance to commit mutes and other horrors together would spark an entire movement and a considerable literature.

Another kind of argument advanced for a UFO/mute connection purported to offer direct physical proof. Howard Burgess, usually represented in mutologist writing as a "retired scientist" but in fact an instrument designer once employed at Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque, had a longtime interest in UFOs and other anomalous phenomena. In June 1976 his suspicion that the mutes represented something unearthly led him to Dulce, New Mexico, and to an association with State Police Officer Gabe Valdez, who was making sensational claims about UFOs and cattle deaths in his jurisdiction in north-central New Mexico ("Valdez," 1982). Valdez claimed that the carcasses were sometimes surrounded by

either mysterious circular tracks or tripod marks—an allegation independent sources disputed and for which Valdez would be criticized in Rommel's report (Kagan and Summers, 1984; Rommel, *op. cit.*).

In Burgess's view the mutilators, whom he believed to be UFO occupants, must have been using an ultraviolet beam to make preselected victims visible from the air. He enlisted the assistance of Valdez and rancher Manuel Gomez, who believed he had lost a young bull to mutilators in April 1978. On the night of July 5, 1978, the three men ran 120 of Gomez's herd one at a time through a squeeze chute, and as they passed through the ultraviolet light, five of them were seen to carry bright fluorescent marks on their backs—where they could be seen from the air.

Four days earlier, at just after midnight on July 1, members of three Taos, New Mexico, families spotted an enigmatic orange light. "I could hear a kind of crackling noise," Mrs. Elias Vargas told the *Albuquerque Journal* (Thompson, 1978), and she stepped to the window to see a "roundish" form "about as big as two cars, maybe bigger. By then it wasn't orange any more, it was a sort of gray color." After two minutes it shot off in a northerly direction and vanished in two seconds. It had been hovering at a low altitude between the Vargas house and an immediate neighbor's and above a pickup truck. Not long afterwards flakes of some unidentified substance were found nearby, and there was some speculation that they might be pieces of a UFO.

Burgess went to Taos to retrieve the material and gave some of the chips to Robert Schoenfeld, head of Albuquerque's Clinical Laboratories. In December the *Journal* reported that the Taos "UFO" chips and samples of affected hides from Gomez's cattle had "similar properties," implying a connection. Schoenfeld subsequently denied having said any such thing. Furthermore, the chips turned out to be nothing more interesting than white enamel paint, according to the FBI laboratory, though Burgess would continue to insist they were pieces of a UFO. Finally, none of the cattle with the alleged fluorescent marks fell victim to mutilation (Kagan and Summers, *op. cit.*).

Of all mutologists Linda Howe would prove the most outspoken and effective advocate of the ET interpretation. From her base in Denver, she created the

hugely influential documentary *Strange Harvest*. Nine years after its first airing in 1980, it was literally creating mutilation cases. On March 17, 1989, a woman hiking along a trail around Mount Taylor, New Mexico, came upon a dead cow. A ufologist who interviewed her not long afterwards wrote, "She told me . . . that, if not for Linda Howe's video movie 'Strange Harvest' [which] she had viewed the year before, she would not have noticed anything special about the corpse" (Gille, 1989).

Howe's movie draws mostly on speculation in its effort to draw UFOs and mutants together. But one story explicitly links them: the testimony of a Texas woman named Judy Doraty. Along with members of her family, Doraty had seen a UFO along a road near Houston one night in May 1973, then undergone a period of missing time. Afterwards she was plagued with anxieties, fears, and headaches. Five years later she underwent hypnosis with a physician. The experience led her to believe she had hidden memories of an uncomfortably close encounter.

Through University of Wyoming psychologist/ufologist R. Leo Sprinkle, to whom Doraty had written, Howe learned of her experience and persuaded her to undergo further hypnosis with Dr. Sprinkle. As the cameras rolled, Doraty told of seeing a squirming calf being drawn into the UFO. Apparently in an out-of-body state, Doraty looked through the window of the hovering craft and watched, sickened, as two gray-skinned, large-eyed, big-headed "little men" cut up the animal in the fashion of a classic mute. The beings spoke "like someone talking through their nose" in speeded-up, sing-songy voices. They said that pollution was poisoning the human race and intimated that what they were doing to the calf was related to this concern. "I kept asking about the animal," Doraty said, "and they found it insulting, I guess, by the way they responded. That to sacrifice an animal was nothing compared to what it would bring, you know, the knowledge they could gain from it" (Howe, 1989).

As evidence this leaves something to be desired. The testimony was elicited under hypnosis, and it is impossible to prove it did not result from confabulation, the process by which hypnotized individuals fantasize without always realizing they are doing so. Moreover, Doraty entered into the situation fully aware that

Howe was at work on a documentary about cattle mutilations; thus she may have been in a suggestible state and—even if unconsciously—told Howe a story she wanted to hear. Of course this is speculation, but without other evidence—or a number of other, comparable cases—we would be unwise to read the testimony as a description of a literal event.

One other abduction story, again recounted under hypnosis, brought a calf mutilation into the narrative. The abductee, 28-year-old Myrna Hansen, consciously recalled seeing UFOs on the evening of May 5, 1980. She was traveling on a country road near Cimarron, New Mexico, when the sighting and a four-hour period of missing time occurred. Soon afterwards investigator Paul Bennewitz interviewed Hansen, then contacted Dr. Sprinkle. Under hypnosis she recounted a series of unpleasant experiences on board the UFOs, occupied by several different kinds of human and humanoid entities. Early in the course of the abduction she saw a calf mutilated while it was still alive (a claim, interestingly, also made by Doraty). Later she was flown to an underground area, apparently near Las Cruces, New Mexico, where she escaped her captors for a short time and observed a tank filled with animal and human body parts (*ibid.*; Howe, 1991).

Bennewitz, the original investigator, was already entertaining lurid notions about extraterrestrials and mutilations of both animals and human beings, and it is not clear to what extent, if any, he may have planted ideas into Hansen's possibly pliant unconscious. Certainly no other abduction account indicates or even hints that aliens are cutting up human bodies and depositing the bloody remains in vats. (For whatever it may be worth, Bennewitz sat in on the hypnosis session with Sprinkle.) Bennewitz's theories, to which we shall return presently, would play a large role in the creation of the Dark Side mythology that would dominate fringe ufology from the late 1980s on.

Aside from these two abduction reports, Howe uncovered a couple of consciously recalled CE3s which at least implicitly tied UFO occupants to cattle mutilations. On a morning in April 1980, as he looked for a cow ready to calve, a veteran Waco, Texas, rancher allegedly came upon two four-foot-tall, almond-eyed greenish humanoids with "heads

... shaped like eggs with the pointy end down. . . . Between them they was carryin' a calf. . . . I was afraid of them seein' me. I've read all about them abductions and I didn't want them takin' me away in some flyin' saucer! I took off down the hill pretty fast." Two days later, when he recovered sufficiently from the shock to confide the story to his wife and son, the three returned to the site and found, in Howe's words, "the calf's hide pulled back over the skull and folded inside out on the ground. . . . About a foot from the empty hide was a complete calf backbone without ribs." This may be an unusual cattle death. It may even be related to the beings the rancher supposedly observed—though his familiarity with UFO literature, conceivably including the Hamilton hoax with its own butchered calf, gives any cautious observer reason for pause.

Howe interviewed a Springfield, Missouri, farm couple, Ron and Paula Watson, who told her about a bizarre experience they underwent on a sunny morning in July 1983. A shiny, flickering object appeared in a pasture, but it was too far away for them to determine what it was. So they secured binoculars. Through them, Ron Watson recalled, "There was a green cone-shaped craft back there. . . . [T]here was a door on it, and a platform went out onto the side." Standing next to the object was a bipedal "lizard-type creature." According to Paula Watson, "It had big green eyes, and it looked like leaves on it or like it was camouflaged. . . . [I]t looked at me with those big eyes." Badly frightened, she handed the binoculars over to her husband.

Curiously, Paula could not see the green craft, and even Ron had a hard time finding it when he looked for it a second time through the glasses. The implication, apparently, is that the object's green color was intended to disguise it in the green landscape, though the Watsons themselves did not advance this explanation.

They then noticed two small, white-skinned humanoid figures in silver suits. They were bent over a black cow which, though alive, was not moving. Paula recalled that "they just were runnin' their fingers over it like that and runnin' 'em down it and lookin' at their fingers." The reptilian creature stood in the background next to what Ron perceived as a craft and

Paula as a hill. According to her, "Then next they had their hands over [the cow], and it just floated right up the ramp . . . and disappeared right into the hill" (Howe, 1991).

Local ufologist and Howe associate John S. Carpenter says of comparable reports in southwestern Missouri:

Neither UFO sightings nor animal mutilations are a regular, ongoing occurrence. But . . . when such events have been reported, they have been reported simultaneously and independently, along with other reports of odd "silver-suited children." One rancher and his son observed a glowing, four-foot "child" in "tin foil" on their property after several horses were mutilated. . . . Using hypnosis, I worked with a local woman who has never read any UFO materials. She recalled observing a calf's being levitated by a beam of light into a hovering UFO [Carpenter, 1992].

Nothing is said here about whether the animals allegedly levitated into UFOs ever returned as mutilated cattle.

In a paper discussing possible psychological explanations for abduction experiences, Susan Marie Powers quotes one of her subjects, a woman who says extraterrestrials kidnapped her on several occasions. Once she went on a cattle-killing expedition with them:

We would fly low, lasso a cow, and take her off. Then they would take a big needle into her neck vein. I watched [as] blood went into a tube and then into a big tank. The cow's eyes would glaze over. Then I knew she was dead. We would fly back and drop her in the pasture with other cows. The little people do not eat meat. They take the blood home with them [Powers, 1994].

Is she talking about cattle mutilations? All that connects this anecdote with mutes is the blood-draining. She does not mention the taking of eyes, ears, anuses, or sex organs. The idea that advanced extraterrestrials would have to resort to a lasso, like Hamilton's Old Western alien cattle-rustlers, is amusing and surely places the story in the realm of fantasy.

In a story set in Puerto Rico sometime in the early 1980s, cattle mutilations plagued a rancher in the northern part of the island. He and two friends armed themselves with rifles and maintained an all-night vigil, hoping to catch the culprits. To their astonishment four small humanoid creatures appeared, entered a stable, and removed a small heifer calf via levitation. The rancher and his companions then opened up with a volley of gunfire. The heifer fell to the ground, as did one of the humanoids. As the latter lay shrieking, the other three tried to help it, but further gunfire drove them away, and they disappeared into the night. When the wounded being tried to get to its feet, a bullet through the neck knocked it down. The gunmen approached the wounded entity and delivered a crushing blow to its head. Since then, according to a Puerto Rican ufologist, the rancher has kept the body in various freezers. In early 1995 a Spanish-language UFO magazine published four pictures out of a sequence of 22 taken of the corpse, showing it from a variety of perspectives. The rancher refused to surrender the remains allegedly out of fear that the authorities would seek to cover up the evidence (Corrales, 1995; Martin, 1995). In the absence of real evidence and in view of wildly conflicting testimony about the provenance of the photographs, there is no reason not to suspect a hoax.

Mute phenomena in the classic sense are rare outside the North American continent. Nonetheless a case from Frodsham, Cheshire, England, alleges an interest by UFO occupants in cattle. It came to light after a local newspaper reporter, who heard the story second-hand, confronted the witnesses. Initially unwilling to talk, they eventually agreed to provide an account on the promise that their names be kept confidential. They insisted on anonymity for a good reason: they were engaged in illegal activity—game-poaching—when the encounter took place.

On the evening of January 25, 1978, the four young men, aged 17 to 19, were watching for pheasants in the lush vegetation alongside the River Weaver when they saw a silver, spherical object, about 15 feet in diameter, approaching them, moving about 20 feet above the water's surface. A faint humming sound emanated from it, accompanied by a noise like rushing wind. It had a row of rectangular windows along its mid-section, and on the bottom there was a kind

of skirt or rim. The glow from the windows hurt the men's eyes, preventing them from seeing inside or even looking for very long.

All the while they were not thinking of the object as a UFO but as a "satellite." Then it landed in some nearby bushes, and a figure with a humanlike contour wearing a silvery, one-piece suit stepped out of it. A helmet covered its head, and on top of it a device resembling a miner's lamp illuminated the surroundings. The light seemed to be of the same variety as that illuminating the object's interior.

The figure looked around until its gaze fell on cattle in a field. The animals were standing absolutely still, presumably from either fright or paralysis. The occupant returned briefly to the craft and brought a companion out with him. Between them they carried a large silvery cage or frame, which they proceeded to position around one of the cows. The animal remained motionless as they moved, to quote one account, "parts of the cage (struts and bars), as if performing an intricate measurement of the animal's size and shape!" (Randles and Whetnall, 1980).

At this juncture the witnesses decided to run away, lest they be noted and subjected to whatever fate lay in store for the cow. Oddly, one of them experienced a tugging or pulling at his testicles, which remained sore for some time afterwards. For the next two days he suffered from a rash on his legs of a sort that, had it been summer, he would have associated with sunburn.

So far as is known, no farmer complained of a mysterious death in his cattle herd. Presumably the UFO beings' interest in the animal was harmless, so any connection with the mute phenomenon is speculative.

Animal killings, UFOs, and other unidentified flying objects. Mutologists' range of interest has encompassed all seemingly unexplained animal deaths. Though many bore no resemblance to classic mutes, mutologists have called them "mutilations" anyway and incorporated them into the body of mute evidence and lore. UFOs and even weirder manifestations figure in some of the stories. Four examples:

Otoco, Bolivia, early 1968: A Bolivian newspaper reported that in the early evening a woman discovered a strange net over the corral where she kept her

sheep. Inside the corral a humanlike figure, about four feet tall and clad in what looked like a bulky spacesuit, was killing sheep with a hooked tubular instrument and dumping their entrails into a bag. In a frantic effort to stop him, she pelted him with stones. The figure walked over to a boxlike instrument and turned a wheel at the top. The netting was then absorbed into the box. By now the woman had collected a club and was marching menacingly toward the intruder, who threw his weapon at her. Each time it would return to his hands in boomerang fashion. Each throw resulted in small cuts on the woman's arms. The humanoid gathered up both box and bag and rose into the air, "making a most extraordinary noise" and disappearing from sight. Local authorities, led by Police Col. Rogelio Ayala, launched an investigation. They counted 34 dead sheep, each missing a portion of its digestive organs (Galindez, 1970).

Puerto Rico, 1975: From February through July, animals—mostly domestic birds, ducks, and goats but also including some rabbits, geese, cattle, sheep, pigs, and pets—were found dead with what one veterinarian characterized as "strange wounds." Police agencies could not explain the deaths, which typically occurred in the early morning hours and were accomplished, appearances indicated, with a sharp instrument which punched through flesh and bone, usually in the neck region. In some cases the necks were broken. Though most owners of the animals heard nothing out of the ordinary, some claimed to have been awakened by loud screeching sounds, flapping noises, or hums. Around this time some residents of the island said they had seen large, unidentified birds. Many UFO sightings were also being made. "It is not possible to establish categorically a link between the mystery deaths of animals and the UFO sightings," Puerto Rican ufologist Sebastian Robiou Lamarche remarked. "However, it must be emphasized that both of these phenomena were occurring simultaneously" (Robiou Lamarche, 1977).

Carlos Avery Game Preserve, Minnesota, 1975-1977: The Dahls and Dubois (pseudonyms), two farm families living in a state-protected wilderness area, experienced frightening phenomena. In the fall of 1975, the carcass of a buck deer, left to hang from the thick limb of a pine tree near the Dubois house prior

to being butchered, was found on the ground a few hours later. Someone or something had neatly severed the branch. The animal's head was missing, having been ripped from the neck. The intruder left no tracks. The following June the Dubois found a pig killed inside a pen. Its head was gone, and every bone in its body was crushed. There was no blood or evidence of a struggle, and no tracks led to or from the pen. A month later another pig suffered the same fate. Dubois and Dahl began conducting night patrols. During one they witnessed a reddish light which seemed to approach them from far away before it assumed a cylindrical shape and shot away. During another Dahl saw the same or a similar object, this time almost directly overhead. The following night the two men heard piercing shrieks, "half-human and half-animal," and observed the shadow of a large upright figure as it moved toward them. At that moment a watchdog bolted for the house, and the figure fled before the two could see exactly what it was. In November Dahl heard the shriek again as he hunted for the unknown intruder in a swamp. In April 1977, not long after the Dubois' Shetland mare gave birth to a colt, something killed the mother, breaking its neck and ripping out some of its insides. It also left a sharply defined "triangular incision" in its belly. The family found the colt alive some distance away, but it died a few hours later (Ayers, 1977).

Palmarejo, Puerto Rico, March 31, 1991: For two nights in a row a couple heard their two Dobermans, a male and a female, howling as if frightened, apparently upset by a peculiar sound like a phonograph record being played at the wrong speed (see the Gallipolis, Ohio, story earlier in this entry). It seemed to move around the house, but its source could not be seen from inside the house. Suddenly one of the dogs shrieked, and everything became silent. When the husband ran out of the house to investigate, he encountered two strange beings in his patio. They were, he told ufologists (one of them his neighbor Edgardo Lozada), "some three to four feet tall, of gray color, big heads, big black eyes, and almost imperceptible nose, and with a mouth like a little cut." On seeing him, the beings fled. The man went to look for his dogs and soon found the female unharmed. The male, however, had suffered a horri-

ble fate. It was "empty, with nothing inside. It was as if all had been sucked out through the eyes. It had empty eye sockets, and all the internal organs had disappeared. It had only the bones inside the skin. It was hollow." He tossed the remains into a ravine where months later investigators looked for but could not find them (Martin, 1993).

A turn toward skepticism. Early in the 1980s Gordon Creighton of Britain's *Flying Saucer Review* declared, "The truth . . . is that *we do know* what is responsible for all these animal mutilations. . . . *We do know* that UFOs are involved" (Creighton, 1981). By that time many of his colleagues agreed, not so much because any particular case firmly established the link but because no less extraordinary an explanation seemed sufficient. The largest American UFO organization, MUFON, published mute material in its monthly *MUFON UFO Journal* and regularly featured promote speakers, including director Walter H. Andrus, Jr., at its symposia.

Some ufologists had grown skeptical, however. Either they thought mutes were occurring but were unrelated to UFOs (Hall, *op. cit.*), or they deemed the whole "phenomenon" a delusion. The first major skeptical blast in the UFO literature was sounded by a man who had gone from consulting psychics about the mutilators' identity (Jordan, 1982) to judging the "study of cattle mutilations . . . worth not even a yawn" (Jordan, 1983). Speaking to the 1983 MUFON conference in Pasadena, California, New Jersey ufologist Peter A. Jordan charged that mute proponents refused to acknowledge a crucial fact: "Formal autopsy reports from universities and clinics which had been submitted tissue from purportedly mutilated animals in the states of Colorado, Texas, Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, Kansas, and New Mexico *unambiguously* point to animals such as coyotes and badgers as the culprits—the stretching of animal tissue produced by post-mortem gas production and autolysis [cell breakdown] often giving the jagged edges of a bite wound the 'appearance of knife cuts'."

Mutology suffered a particularly severe blow in 1984, with the publication of a 500-page book titled *Mute Evidence*. Authors Daniel Kagan and Ian Summers, New York journalists, had traveled extensively through Western states, interviewed numerous persons—from

mutologists to ranchers to county sheriffs to veterinary pathologists—and considered just about every item of alleged mute evidence. Powerfully (and at times savagely) argued, the book contends that mutes were a made-up mystery. Those responsible were "UFO subculture" members such as Adams, Burgess, and Howe and their journalistic allies. "None of the mutology buffs had access to any experts in veterinary medicine, livestock or any other fields that bore on the cattle mutilation question," they charged, "and it was obvious that there was not one seriously qualified investigator in their underground. . . . They had nothing going for them, yet they controlled the opinions of literally hundreds, perhaps millions of people, regarding cattle mutilations. Not one of their testimonies would be acceptable as expert or even informed in a court of law" (Kagan and Summers, *op. cit.*).

Kagan and Summers wrote that only veterinary pathologists are truly qualified to determine the causes of an animal's death. But by the time the real experts got involved in the matter, "cattle mutilations" had taken on a life of their own, and those caught up in the "mystery" refused even to consider the possibility that the truth behind the uproar might be prosaic. Those who disagreed with them, as the veterinary pathologists almost invariably did, could only be doing so out of incompetence or sinister motives.

Yet, according to Kagan and Summers, there *were* real mutilations. They took care, however, to separate these from what they called the "mutilation phenomenon." The real mutilations were of two kinds: copycat incidents in which pranksters carved up the bodies of already dead cattle and ritualistic killings by cult members. The latter incidents occurred, for the most part, in Idaho, though some may also have taken place in Colorado, Iowa, and western Canada. But these cults were local groups; they were not part of a large, well-organized national network, as claimed by Flickinger's informants and others.

Mutology itself, in Kagan and Summers's estimation, was a worthless pursuit, an exercise in self-delusion, a "closed system, self-referential, solipsistic, which allow[s] no fresh information to enter unless it [is] properly polarized to support the prevailing attitude of mystery."

Skeptics within ufology were quick to seize upon *Mute Evidence*. Jerome Clark, whose August 1974 *Fate* article "Strange Case of the Cattle Killings" had been the first piece on the subject to appear in a national magazine, praised the book as "one of the finest . . . ever written on a Fortean subject . . . an object lesson in the dangers of being caught up in one's own beliefs" (Clark, 1984). In *International UFO Reporter (IUR)*, the Center for UFO Studies magazine, Mark Chesney praised Kagan and Summers's "first-rate investigative reporting" and remarked that from now on the research of mutologist-ufologists should be viewed with suspicion (Chesney, 1984).

While Kagan and Summers had put together a clear and specific case which demanded a clear and specific refutation, nothing of the sort would be attempted then or later—a fact that seemed only to strengthen their argument. Two years before *Mute Evidence* saw print, *Stigmata* attacked the authors of the book-to-be as "2 urban lads . . . whose first order of business was to sojourn out west to determine which end of the bovine was intake and which is outlet" ("Tome," 1982). If *Stigmata's* put-down at least had its tongue in cheek, the same could not be said for John Keel's. Keel, who had read an early version of the manuscript, resorted to crude *ad hominem* attack: "Kagan . . . is wrestling with his own insecurities and obsessions. He has no real credentials, no journalistic or literary credits or experience. His manuscript was an awesomely undisciplined brew of repetitious, egoistic, unqualified speculations" ("Letters," 1982).

The quality of the rhetoric did not much improve after the book saw print. Reviewing it in *Flying Saucer Review*, Keel attacked the messenger again, lashing out at the authors for such character defects as being a "science-fiction buff" (Summers) and a former "rock-singer and poet" (Kagan). Keel now claimed that a "wave of mutilations 2,500 years ago . . . led Zoroaster into his pioneering studies of demons and angels" (Keel, 1984). He characterized a 1905 British episode as a "wave of mysterious mutilations" when all available evidence suggests the depredations of wild animals; the principal victims, sheep, "were devoured, all but the fleece and bones" (Fort, 1941)—not mutilated. By now, however, the term "mutilations" had come to mean whatever anyone who spoke it or wrote it wanted it to mean.

Like other mutologists Howe—whose *Strange Harvest* underwent nearly 30 pages' worth of scathing analysis in *Mute Evidence*—ignored Kagan and Summers's substantive criticisms. To her the book was merely "diatribe and character assassination" unworthy of further comment (Randles and Hough, 1988). Adams retreated into a posture he had taken earlier following the release of the Rommel report: A "point-by-point refutation" would be too time-consuming and expensive. Moreover, the "truly classic and unexplained mutilations will stand on their own despite the debunkers. . . . [who] will deserve to be forgotten—and we'll do our part" ("The Three R's," 1980).

But Kagan and Summers were not destined to be forgotten. Many ufologist-readers agreed with the sentiments expressed by Mark Chesney in response to *IUR* readers who objected to his favorable review of *Mute Evidence*: "I really fail to see how anyone could read the book carefully (and completely) yet still think that the mutilations are mysterious. . . . What seems to me most damning of all is that so far the 'mutologists' have refused—or been unable—to refute in open debate the points their critics have raised" (Worley, et al., 1985). Even Richard Hall, notwithstanding a few reservations about the book, acknowledged that "'mute' proponents have failed to make a convincing case for a real mystery, much less a UFO link. The ball is in their court" (Hall, 1985). Praising Kagan and Summers's "definitive work," one-time mutologist Chas S. Clifton wrote, "The logical error repeatedly committed by Howe and other mutologist-ufologists was basic: If the explanation given was not the one they wanted to hear, then *their* explanation had to be right. A few cultists and a lot of coyotes and crows never interested them as much as hypothetical spacemen" (Clifton, 1988).

Within mainstream ufology MUFON continued to champion mutes as enigmatic and UFO-related, and in 1992 it elected Howe to its board of directors (Howe, 1993). At the grass roots mutes retained their allure, but among many conservative ufologists mutes simply ceased being an issue; when they were mentioned at all, commentators tended to associate them with such discredited claims as ancient astronauts and the Bermuda triangle (Clark, 1992a). In 1990 ufologist Jacques Vallee, who still took mutes seriously, complained that the "UFO research community,

except for a few courageous investigators, prefers to sweep [the mute question] under the rug and keep it there." Even so, he admitted that he "cannot yet prove" that muties "have a direct relationship to the UFO phenomenon" (Vallee, 1990).

Tales from the Dark Side. Alternative Three was originally supposed to air on Britain's Anglia TV Network on the telling date of April 1, 1977, but the fact that the broadcast was postponed until June 20 may or may not have influenced public perceptions of its truthfulness. Written by David Ambrose and directed by Christopher Miles, it took the form of a documentary in which members of the "Science Report team" meticulously uncovered a horrifying international conspiracy: The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union had established bases on the moon and Mars. The Cold War was a hoax, and the world's elite were plotting to leave the earth to escape imminent ecological catastrophe. They were also kidnapping animals and people, "de-sexing" them before flying them to another world, where the human victims would serve as slaves. If something went wrong in the de-sexing process, the bodies were dumped back on earth.

The next day telephone lines to Anglia and to British newspapers were flooded with calls from angry, alarmed, or frightened viewers who were certain that what they had seen was true. An Anglia spokesman said, "It was never our intention to create another *War of the Worlds* scare." Ambrose was struck by the "gullibility of people. Those upset by this program are the type who never read the small print on contracts they sign" (Rickard, 1992).

In 1978 a paperback of the same name appeared, and soon rumors were spreading that it had been banned in the United States and elsewhere. When one enterprising soul "checked out all the facts" and could confirm none of them, he concluded that the story must be true; otherwise why would they have been so well concealed? (*ibid.*).

A year later, in New Mexico, Albuquerque businessman/UFO enthusiast Paul Bennewitz (already mentioned in connection with the Judy Doraty abduction case above) became convinced that he had stumbled upon an immense secret: the U.S. government's interaction with extraterrestrials. He filmed what he

thought were UFOs (identified by others as conventional aircraft) operating around the Manzano Nuclear Weapons Storage Facility and the Coyote Canyon test area, located near Kirtland Air Force Base. He also believed he had found a way to monitor low-frequency signals through which the military and extraterrestrials communicated. Moreover, he was convinced, he had been able to break the code.

Bennewitz's activities brought him into contact with Kirtland's Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), and on October 26, 1980, he met with AFOSI Special Agent Sgt. Richard Doty and Jerry Miller, Chief Scientific Advisor for Kirtland's Air Force Test and Evaluation Center. According to an October 28 AFOSI memorandum signed by Maj. Thomas A. Cseh, Commander of the Base Investigative Detachment:

After analyzing the data collected by Dr. BENNEWITZ, Mr MILLER related the evidence clearly shows that some type of unidentified aerial objects were caught on film; however, no conclusions could be made whether these objects pose a threat to Manzano/Coyote Canyon areas. Mr MILLER felt the electronical [sic] recording tapes were inconclusive and could have been gathered from several conventional sources. No sightings, other than these, have been reported in the area.

A follow-up meeting on November 10 with a small group of Kirtland officers and scientists led to a decision to pursue the investigation no further. Nonetheless, according to ufologist William L. Moore, who knew the principals, AFOSI began to monitor Bennewitz's activities; the electronic signals, though not related to UFOs, were real enough and were part of a highly classified experiment. AFOSI not only tapped Bennewitz's phone but broke into his house. Beyond that, Moore claims, AFOSI fed the increasingly paranoia-driven ufologist disinformation which encouraged his lurid and terrifying fantasies. By mid-1982, Moore wrote, Bennewitz believed, among other improbable notions, the following:

There were two groups of aliens, one malevolent, one friendly. The malevolent ones, which Paul referred to as the "grays," were really in

control, and they were the ones responsible for the cattle mutilations, for human abductions and the implanting of sinister control devices in humans, for having first made and then broken a secret treaty with the U.S. government, for maintaining a secret underground base under Archuleta Peak near Dulce in northwestern New Mexico, and for having supplied the U.S. government with alien space hardware and weapons which ultimately proved defective or which were caused to crash, thus leaving human civilization virtually defenseless against invasion. . . .

I was personally aware of the intelligence community's concerted efforts to systematically confuse, discourage and discredit Paul by providing him with a large body of disinformation on the subject of UFOs, the malevolent aliens who allegedly pilot them, the technology they employ and the underground bases they supposedly possess and occupy. The entire story of a secret treaty between the U.S. government and the aliens, of battles between aliens and American armed forces, and of aliens allegedly having implanted hundreds of thousands, even millions, of human beings for the purpose of taking over the world and using us as cattle or slaves, came about as a result of this process [Moore, 1989a].

Bennewitz eventually suffered a nervous collapse and retired from active ufology, though not before his stories and ideas started to influence impressionable UFO buffs, among them Linda Howe and Tom Adams.

Howe and Adams also had begun to interact with William S. English. English reported that in 1977 he had been working at a Royal Air Force Base in England, where he served as a civilian intelligence analyst for the U.S. Air Force. One day he was shown a 625-page document titled *Grudge/Blue Book Report 13*. To his amazement it reported on what the Air Force had learned about UFOs between 1947 and 1951. It had learned, it seemed, quite a lot, most of it from retrievals of crashed extraterrestrial spacecraft, autopsies on alien bodies, and interactions with live humanoids. A photographic section contained pictures not only of spaceships and space people but also of mutilated human bodies.

English's own experience with malevolent unearthly forces also appeared in the report as an appended document. In May 1970, after radioing a frantic message that it was under UFO attack, a B-52 bomber went down in the Laotian jungle. An Army Special Forces unit, of which English was a member, searched for remains and eventually found a "fully intact" aircraft with sealed hatches. "We found the crew still in their harnesses, horribly mutilated," English recalled years later. "And there was very little blood, when there should have been pools of it on the deck of the aircraft" (Brookesmith, 1994).

By the mid-1980s a Dark Side mythology had emerged. It saw its initial appearance in George C. Andrews's *Extra-Terrestrials Among Us* (1986). Like the Dark Siders to come, Andrews held the U.S. government responsible for every imaginable—and even unimaginable—evil in the world. Among other crimes it has built secret concentration camps in which one day it will imprison UFO witnesses. Already the CIA, a Nazi front organization in collusion with malevolent extraterrestrials, has killed ufologists who got too close to the truth. The CIA and the bad ETs are together mutilating cattle, possibly to secure glands "to instill elderly politicians with youthful vim and vigor." Andrews makes it abundantly clear he is *not* joking.

Next to Andrews's relatively slim book, however, William S. Steinman and Wendelle C. Stevens's *UFO Crash at Aztec* (1986)—at 625 pages the same length as English's alleged *Grudge/Blue Book Report 13*—is an encyclopedia of flying-saucer paranoia. Like Andrews, Steinman and Stevens cited English's fantastic tale as evidence that human as well as animal mutes are taking place. They also contended that the "Invisible Government"—a sinister cabal composed of the country's true rulers—is killing witnesses, investigators, and even politicians and officials (among them Truman-era Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and President John F. Kennedy) to ensure that horrifying saucer secrets are kept and the Invisible Government's interests protected.

Soon John Lear, an airline pilot, the estranged son of aviation pioneer William P. Lear, and friend of Bennewitz, was spreading a yet more elaborate version of the growing legend. A malevolent secret

government had entered into an agreement with evil extraterrestrials whereby it would receive alien technology if the aliens were allowed to abduct a specified number of citizens. The agreement collapsed in the 1970s when it was found that the ETs were abducting unauthorized people, into whom it was placing implants so as to control their behavior. The ETs were also mutilating animals and human beings, using their organs to create android beings in underground laboratories in New Mexico and Nevada. The aliens also used animal and human tissue to rejuvenate themselves, since they are members of a dying race. Lear's ideas took their inspiration from Bennewitz, popular UFO literature, and right-wing conspiracy theories (Cannon, 1990).

Milton William Cooper soon came along to pick up where Lear left off. According to Cooper, a former Navy petty officer, who claimed as sources classified documents (including *Grudge 13*) he had seen while in service, the secret government runs drugs, launders money, and encourages massive street crime so that Americans will be receptive to gun-control legislation. It has also introduced AIDS and other deadly diseases as means of population control. Drawing directly from *Alternative Three*, he said the secret government plans to round up Americans soon and place them in concentration camps before shipping them off to the slave colonies on the moon and Mars. The secret government, which runs not just America but the world, has interacted with a variety of extraterrestrial races since at least 1953, and it has known of ET-generated human and animal mutes for almost as long (Cooper, 1989). Howe, who considered Cooper credible, featured him prominently in her 1989 book *Alien Harvest*.

As Cooper's tales grew in the telling, so did his audiences, which flocked to hear him and to purchase books, videos, and tapes whose content no longer made even token bows to documentation—Cooper produced none whatever—or to common sense (Moore, 1989c). Among other preposterous claims Cooper maintained that the secret government possesses not just space but time travel; through direct investigation it has learned that nuclear war will erupt in 1999 and Christ will return in 2011. No less crazily, Cooper incorporated the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a notorious anti-Semitic forgery, into

the conspiratorial mix but denied anti-Semitic intent (Cooper, 1991; Clark, 1992b).

Another Dark Side figure, John Grace (who wrote under the pseudonym of "Val Germann"), directed the far-right-wing Nevada Aerial Research Group. Grace held that the secret-government conspirators now control UFO, occult, and religious groups, peace organizations, all major media, banks, the television networks, police and intelligence agencies, the American Medical Association, all significant Western political parties, Communism, the World Health Organization, all aerospace corporations, all institutions of higher learning, the Rotarians, the Better Business Bureau, the Club of Rome, fraternities, political science and economic organizations, and *Playboy* and the *National Enquirer*. "This is only a partial list," Grace warned ("Trap Groups," 1989). Elsewhere, addressing the mute question, Grace stated, "The Cattle Mutilations are in fact *proof* for the existence of an 'alien/human deal.' That is why the whole subject has been resisted so long and so hard by 'Ufology.' Many 'Ufologists' are actually on the inside and thus part of the problem" (Germann, n.d.).

That was also Cooper's view of his critics. He would suddenly "remember" seeing their names in the secret documents; even his one-time ally Lear became an agent of the conspiracy (Ecker, 1990a). The critics, however, were uncowed. William Moore, for one, exposed the sources Cooper had drawn on as his yarns evolved and multiplied (Moore, 1990), and an investigation conducted by Don Ecker of *UFO* magazine found that "much of Cooper's material is entirely fabricated, lifted from others' work, or . . . selected and twisted to support his own story" (Ecker, 1990b). British journalist Peter Brookesmith devastatingly debunked English's yarns (Brookesmith, *op. cit.*).

If Cooper and English looked like conscious purveyors of untruth, no one seriously questioned Lear's sincerity, only his good sense. Yet sincere or otherwise, the Dark Siders had tapped into one strain of post-Vietnam, post-Watergate popular paranoia. Americans emerged from the 1960s and 1970s in a state of profound disillusionment. Whereas in the 1950s a Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy could speak of a government riddled with subversives, he and his

audience assumed implicitly that America's was a basically decent society; what they feared was subversion by outsiders, in this case Soviet agents. But after Vietnam and Watergate many Americans came to see their society and their institutions as fundamentally flawed, cynical, manipulative, even (to some) evil incarnate. Many Americans could now imagine their government to be capable of *anything*, from complicity in the assassination of a president to the betrayal of the whole human race to malevolent extraterrestrial intelligences.

There is, of course, virtually no chance that any of these things are true, and there seems as little chance that any of these beliefs will go away soon. Paranoia, after all, is a sign of societal as much as personal illness. And it is the ultimate unfalsifiable hypothesis: it explains *everything*. Including, it appears, dead cows.

The elusive proof. In September 1980 Iona Hoepfner, a science teacher in a small Colorado town, looked through a microscope at a hide sample taken from a calf allegedly mutilated just days before. The sample included the section of the belly believed to have been removed by the presumed mutilator. Mrs. Hoepfner later told Howe, "It was not a cut, not a laser burn. No cell was destroyed. [The incision] was separated between cells, cell for cell. No cell was disrupted in the mutilator's cut. There is nothing that I know of that could do such a thing. . . . I don't think mankind has the ability to do what was done."

Before she was able to make this observation, however, Hoepfner had already experienced something odd and unnerving: the theft, over a two-night period, of samples from the high school laboratory where she had kept them. She was forced to return to the mute site a second time to collect the sample to which she refers in the previous paragraph ("Covert Capers," 1981). Later Hoepfner personally handed over to Howe a box containing samples which were to be independently analyzed at the Schoenfeld Clinic Laboratory in Albuquerque. The next morning she shipped the box to the laboratory. It got there, but when Robert Schoenfeld was ready to conduct the analysis, it had disappeared. It was never found (Howe, 1989).

Whatever one makes of these curious events, the simple truth is that no one else has reported observing a similar effect in a mute sample.

In 1989 John H. Altshuler, whose role in the "Snippy" case was described earlier, became an active participant in the mute controversy, allying himself with Howe and lending his services in microscopic examinations of tissue from mutilated rabbits, deer, horses, and cattle (Howe, 1992). Though a pathologist, Dr. Altshuler, a physician and former assistant clinical professor of medicine and pathology at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, is not a *veterinary* pathologist. Nonetheless his professional credentials are impressive. From his analysis of mute samples he has become convinced that mutes are extraordinarily anomalous events:

It is difficult to avoid the inescapable conclusion that the changes in animal tissues in these unexplained deaths had dissection with an instrument causing high heat. By what instrumentation and means this is accomplished remains a mystery[;] for what purpose is even more enigmatic. The fact that these animals are found in remote areas, away from human or animal tracks, off roads and away from highways, found within hours of having been seen alive at a time of unusual observed aerial phenomena all suggest that extraterrestrial factors must be considered as a plausible explanation of the ever increasing numbers of unexplained animal mutilations [Altshuler, 1991].

An autopsy on a two-year-old Hereford steer believed to have been mutilated was conducted at Oregon State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. According to its report:

Sections of skin from a steer are examined. All sections display moderately severe post-mortem autolysis. The notched edge does exhibit a band of coagulation necrosis consistent with a heat induced incision, such as with an electrosurgical unit. Numerous bacteria are present on the skin, except in the area of coagulation necrosis. This is consistent with a specimen collected via electrosurgical excision [Howe, 1991; Rae, 1991].

Interesting as these findings are, they stand alone. No other pathologist who has examined mute samples has reported anything comparable. In one instance, Alabama state veterinarian Lee Alley examined mute samples which Altshuler had said showed signs of heat damage. Alley saw "no evidence of high heat . . . just normal post-mortem changes" (Ecker, 1993).

A rash of mutes in northeastern Alabama between October 1992 and April 1993 attracted national publicity. It featured all the by-now-familiar elements: dead cows, UFO and helicopter sightings inferentially linked to the mutes, and conflicting interpretations. A major player in the story was Ted Oliphant, a San Francisco documentary filmmaker (*UFOs—A Need to Know* [1991]) turned small-town Alabama cop, who vigorously promoted the UFO angle ("The Alabama Cattle Mutilations," 1993; Ecker, *op. cit.*). The ubiquitous Linda Howe showed up to interview local people for a Fox television UFO special (Howe, 1993). A mute scare in Colorado and New Mexico in 1994 revived the standard arguments (Van Eyck, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c; Foster, 1994).

Why? Except for Dark Siders, mutologically inclined ufologists have had relatively little to say about the reasons alien beings would mutilate animals.

A UFO buff with a strong Christian orientation, Fredrick W. Smith held that the earth is "under a curse" but that UFOs represent "heaven's citizens" who are "trying to help us. On the other hand something stands in the way of any free communication." Therefore they "present people with plenty of evidence, for example all these mutilated carcasses. But it must always be of a kind that people can either accept or reject. . . . [W]e can be sure there will NEVER be what is called solid evidence." Ultimately the occurrence of mutes and other manifestations of God's presence on earth must be accepted on faith if human beings are to achieve salvation (Smith, 1976).

On the other hand, John Keel, whose own UFO theories tend toward the demonological, takes note of the traditional belief that "demons and gods need physical matter from this world to aid their own materializations. And once they have materialized in a physical form, they must replenish themselves frequently to retain that form," thus "the deaths and

disappearances of animals and people during these mysterious invasions" (Keel, 1975a).

For all her prominence as a proponent of alien-generated mutes, Linda Howe has had little to say about the presumed motives of the mutilators. She does, however, ask these rhetorical questions: "Is earth life used as a crop, harvested for unknown alien needs? Does the harvest link directly to an alien survival problem?" Intrigued by psychic messages channeled through a Missouri woman who claims to have been abducted repeatedly by insectlike creatures, Howe cites this terse alien explanation for mutes:

Increase in tissue sample collection of bovine species. Similarities in genetic makeup of human tissue. Samples extracted for varied uses. Pollutants registered in areas selected for study. Absorption of harmful substances revealed in tissue of mucous membranes. DNA uses also to be increased in collected data. The cellular tissue and organs extracted by concentrated beam of photon energy. Fluids extracted and circulatory system infused with hydrostatic substitute [Howe, 1991].

Jacques Vallee, ufologist, conspiracy theorist, and Linda Howe associate, proposed a hardly less esoteric hypothesis. Writing in *Messengers of Deception* (1979), he speculated that animal mutilations are one manifestation of a covert effort to "achieve social changes on this planet." Here the changes, to ends about which Vallee was vague, are engineered through terror: "expectation of something dreadful that will come from the sky, something no one on Earth understands, something swift and pitiless that will reshape human life." The actual mutilators, possibly members of "some sort of secret organization," are fabricating phenomena which they know people will relate to UFOs. But subsequently Vallee's views changed. Animal mutilations are not mentioned in *Revelations* (1991), the sequel to *Messengers*. In *Confrontations* (1990) he hinted that he has now come to suspect a direct link between the UFO phenomenon—which he regards as occult rather than extra-terrestrial in nature—and mutes (*see also Paranormal and Occult Theories About UFOs*).

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ASHTAR

On July 18, 1952, George Van Tassel, just then embarking on a career that would make him one of the most influential flying-saucer contactees of all (see *The Emergence of a Phenomenon*, pp. 390-92), chan-

neled a psychic message from "Portla, 712th projection, 16th wave, realms of Schare." Portla was calling to alert Van Tassel to an important event: "Approaching your solar system is a ventla [spaceship] with our chief aboard, commandant of the station Schare in charge of the first four sectors. . . . We are waiting here at 72,000 miles above you to welcome our chief, who will be entering this solar system for the first time."

Shortly thereafter the chief spoke directly, introducing himself as "Ashtar, commandant quadra sector, patrol section Schare, all projections, all waves." The message that followed warned that the hydrogen bomb, then being developed, threatened the earth's continued existence; if "your materialists" did not immediately cease their H-bomb work, Ashtar threatened, "we shall eliminate all projects connected with such." Other communications came in the ensuing weeks and months and were chronicled in Van Tassel's *I Rode a Flying Saucer!* (1952).

Though Van Tassel reported messages from a variety of oddly named space people (including the suspiciously monickered Clatu, reminiscent of the peaceful alien Klaatu in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, a popular science-fiction film of the year before), it would be Ashtar who would be remembered. Communications from the Ashtar Command would become a channeling staple, and in the 1980s a contactee who called herself Tuella (Thelma B. Terrell) prepared a book-length tribute, an anthology of Ashtar's writings as channeled through Tuella and others around the world.

Contactee lore, heavily influenced by nineteenth-century occultism (Melton, 1988; Stupple, 1994), holds that Ashtar is an "etheric" being who lives on a higher vibratory level than human beings but who is able to move down the vibratory spectrum so that he can be glimpsed on selected occasions. This hardly makes him unique; he shares this ability with the 20,000,000 other space beings who are preparing selected earth people for the changes to come. What makes Ashtar distinct is that he is, in the words of his sponsor Lord Michael, "Supreme Director in charge of all of the Spiritual program" for earth. He beams his messages from a starship somewhere in the earth's general vicinity. He says this of his mission:

concluded that locomotive headlights were responsible. But participants in a 1916 expedition swore that they had seen the lights just below the summit and, moreover, floating to the southeast in a horizontal direction and in and out of the ravines.

Continuing sightings and debates about their meaning brought another Geological Survey scientist, George Rogers Mansfield, to the area in March and April 1922. He devoted seven evenings to personal observations and supplemented these with a survey of the mountains and with interviews of local residents. He attributed 44 percent of the lights to automobiles, 33 percent to trains, 10 percent to stationary lights, and 10 percent to brush fires. Besides leaving 3 percent unaccounted for, Mansfield was acknowledging what by now seemed obvious: no single explanation covered all the phenomena. He did speculate that the 1916 witnesses had seen nothing more than fireflies, even though he conceded that a government entomologist whom he had consulted held that identification to be "improbable" for various reasons.

In the years since then, witnesses have reported phenomena that they state resemble "toy balloons," "misty spheres," "flood lights," and "sky rockets." In a few instances, when witnesses believe they have been closest to the manifestations, they claim to have heard a sizzling noise. A 1977 experiment beamed a 500,000-candlepower arc from a town twenty-two miles away to a location west of the mountain where observers lay in wait. The blue-white beam looked like an "orange-red orb apparently hovering several degrees above Brown Mountain's crest." The investigators concluded that refractions of distant lights were largely responsible for the sightings.

Other theorists, such as Britain's Paul Devereux, hold that the lights are evidence of the presence of little-understood, so-far-unrecognized geophysical phenomena he calls "earthlights," but this explanation seems needlessly complex. Local folklore has it that people were seeing the light long before the age of trains and cars; the evidence for this, however, is exceedingly slight. Still, if this claim is ever validated, it would demonstrate that the Brown Mountain lights have not yet surrendered all their secrets.

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Cattle Mutilations

In the fall of 1973, farmers in Minnesota and Kansas reported that their cattle were dying under mysterious circumstances. To all appearances persons or

forces unknown had killed the animals, though apparently without knife or bullet, and with surgical precision had removed various parts – usually eyes, ears, lips, sex organs, rectum, tail, or combinations thereof. Farmers also frequently claimed that the animals' blood had been drained. Strangest of all, the enigmatic killers accomplished all this without leaving footprints or other evidence of their presence.

Law-enforcement officers were mystified. According to Deputy Gary Dir of Ottawa County, Kansas, "The large majority of these mutilations occurred near occupied houses. In no instances were the animals found less than a quarter-mile from the roadside and none . . . more than a quarter-mile from an all-weather, well-traveled road." One carcass in Cloud County was found in a mud hole. Even so, there were no footprints.

In December a dozen Kansas sheriffs met to discuss the problem. Though they had little to go on, most agreed that "cultists" were probably responsible. In southwestern Minnesota, however, authorities were expressing skepticism. Lincoln County Sheriff Albert Thompson, who investigated several deaths, was certain that the animals had died of ordinary cattle diseases and that the so-called cuts were left by small animals ("varmints") that had chewed on the soft parts of the carcasses. Nonetheless, many rural people remained convinced that a group of Satanists rumored to exist in the area had killed the animals in bizarre sacrificial rites.

When Kansas authorities brought the carcasses to the Kansas State University Veterinary Laboratory, pathologists determined that the cause of death was blackleg, a bacterial disease often fatal to cattle. State Brand Commissioner Doyle Heft dismissed fears that something out of the ordinary was going on.

The "cattle mutilation" phenomenon had begun.

Satanists, secret services, and saucers

Most of the essential elements were in place by early 1974: seemingly mysterious cattle deaths, a widespread conviction that these were the acts of cultists, and prosaic findings from autopsies conducted by the veterinary pathologists.

The incidents, real or imagined, soon spread to other states in the Midwest and West and even into Canada's western provinces. By the late 1970s, newspapers claimed that as many as 10,000 unexplained cattle deaths had taken place even as clues to the perpetrators' identity remained elusive. Paranoia and speculation were running rampant. Four schools of thought emerged. The first blamed cultists for the depredations; a second suspected a conspiracy involving intelligence agents who were conducting secret chemical/biological-warfare experiments; a third pointed to UFOs and extraterrestrials; and the fourth laid the cause to hysteria about what were in fact ordinary deaths.

Police agencies in Alberta, Idaho, Montana, and Iowa found a few cases in which circumstantial evidence tied Satanist groups to cattle mutilations. Laboratory analysis confirmed that a small number of animals had been killed after being drugged. In Idaho a police informant infiltrated a group that claimed to have



mutilated cattle, though he himself did not personally witness such an act. Some reliable sightings of black-hooded figures, presumably cultists in ritual garb, were recorded, though any connection between these and animals' deaths could only be speculative. Officers, farmers, and ranchers occasionally stumbled upon what they believed to be evidence of ritual activity, such as stone altars and the bodies of small animals.

In 1975 Donald Flickinger, a Minneapolis-based agent of the U.S. Treasury Department's Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms division, was assigned to investigate reports of a nationwide Satanist network involved in animal and human mutilation. He found no supporting evidence, and his principal informant, convicted bank robber Albert Kenneth Bankston, proved untrustworthy. It turned out that Bankston had drawn on prison rumors and his own freewheeling imagination to get himself transferred from the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas, to a small-town Minnesota jail where he supposedly would be safe to testify. Subse-

New Mexico State Police Officer Gabe Valdez, who coordinated an interstate investigation of livestock mutilations in the 1970s, examines a mutilated cow carcass.

(Photo by Peter Jordan, courtesy Fortean Picture Library.)

quently Bankston persuaded authorities to bring up a friend from Leavenworth, Dan Dugan. The two later broke out of jail – their intention all along – though the police recaptured them in short order.

Speculations concerning secret intelligence operations came out of Vietnam- and Watergate-era fears that the U.S. government could be counted on to be up to no good – which was not the logical conclusion from an abundance of evidence. In fact, the only arguably suggestive physical evidence consisted of a curious, if ultimately inconclusive, discovery made in Lincoln County, Colorado, in 1975. A rancher found a blue satchel – assumed to be government issue – near his mailbox. Inside the satchel he discovered plastic artificial insemination gloves, a bloody scalpel, a cow's ear, and part of a tongue. The Colorado Bureau of Investigation unsuccessfully checked for fingerprints, and area law-enforcement officers were unable to connect the animal parts with any cattle-mutilation reports known to them.

Persistent reports of “mystery helicopters” also fueled speculations. Summarizing reports to 1979, “mutologists” Tom Adams and Gary Massey remarked that such aircraft “are almost entirely without identifying markings, or markings may appear to have been painted over or covered with something. The craft are frequently reported flying at abnormal, unsafe or illegal altitudes. The mystery choppers may shy away if witnesses or law officers try to approach. On the other hand, there are several accounts of aggressive behavior on the part of the helicopter occupants, with witnesses chased, ‘buzzed,’ hovered-over or even fired upon.” No direct link between these reports and mutilations has ever been established, however.

In 1979 and 1980 a New Jersey investigator, Peter A. Jordan, gave photographs of mutilated New Mexico cattle to four East Coast psychics, who independently produced readings that seemed to describe an intelligence operation. None of their information checked out in any meaningful way.

Evil ETs

To a number of mutologists, farmers, ranchers, and rural police officers, the apparently extraordinary features associated with the cattle deaths – notably the absence of footprints and the supposedly surgically precise cuttings on the carcasses – indicated that the mutilators must be of unearthly origin. *Strange Harvest*, a 1980 documentary produced and written by Denver filmmaker Linda Moulton Howe, attracted considerable attention and was widely influential in shaping popular beliefs about UFO-generated cattle mutilations.

Belief in cattle-killing extraterrestrials spread quickly, even in the absence of compelling evidence. Few UFO reports suggested a direct connection with cattle deaths. One that did was recounted under hypnosis; a woman told University of Wyoming psychologist and ufologist R. Leo Sprinkle that she had seen a cow drawn up into a UFO “in a pale, yellow beam of light.” She and her daughter also were taken into the object and saw aliens dismembering the animal.

Subsequently Sprinkle hypnotized a second woman who told a somewhat similar story. This woman reportedly was abducted with her son, and during the

experience the two encountered aliens with "burning eyes, like the devil." Even more terrifying, the woman saw a vat containing blood and human body parts. This story bears a striking resemblance to one told in *Jay's Journal* (1979), a novelization of a young man's initiation into a Satanic cult that mutilates cattle.

From these small (and hardly conclusive) elements there grew a complex mythology that, by the early 1990s, had become a minor social movement based on the idea that evil UFO beings have entered into an agreement with America's "secret government" whereby the aliens are permitted to mutilate cattle and abduct human beings in exchange for extraterrestrial technology. Some versions of the tale have it that the government looks away as aliens mutilate people as well as animals. These yarns, for which no supporting evidence exists, have been spread through books, lectures, and videos by Milton William Cooper, William English, and others. All claim to have learned of these terrible secrets from unnamed intelligence informants and government documents. Critics have raised questions about the sincerity and motives of Cooper and English.

Conventional causes

In 1979 the First Judicial District of New Mexico received a \$40,000 grant from the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to investigate mutilations in that state. A former FBI agent, Kenneth Rommel, took charge. In April 1980, at the conclusion of his investigation, Rommel announced that he had found no evidence of cattle mutilations. He had worked on twenty-four cases in New Mexico and established extensive contacts in other states with law-enforcement officers whose own inquiries had led them to be skeptical. Rommel concluded that "all of the mutilations investigated by me were caused by and totally consistent with what one would expect to find from normal predation, scavenger activity, and decomposition of a dead animal."

Rommel blamed incompetent investigations, speculation, exaggeration, and ignorance for manufacturing a mystery that did not exist. His conclusions echoed those reached earlier by authorities in other states, though Rommel's received the most attention because he put them into a comprehensive official report. Academic social scientists who had investigated the mutilation panic's spread characterized the episode as a case of mass hysteria, fueled by exotic theories and unfounded statements that were quoted uncritically in press accounts.

In 1984 two New York writers, Daniel Kagan and Ian Summers, who had traveled the western United States and Canada researching the phenomenon and the individuals involved with it, wrote a thick book, *Mute Evidence*, that will probably remain the definitive account. In examining the origins and evolution of the legend, Kagan and Summers pointed to a small group of "mutology buffs," most of them also UFO enthusiasts, whom they held accountable. None of them, they charged, "had access to any experts in veterinary medicine, livestock, or any other fields that bore on the cattle mutilation question, and it was obvious there was not one seriously qualified investigator in their underground. They were all amateurs, all poorly trained to deal with the subject, and all seemingly uniquely igno-



Cattle mutilation
at Morrill Farm,
Piermont, New
Hampshire,
photographed in
1978.

*(Photo by Loren Coleman,
courtesy Fortean Picture
Library.)*

rant of research procedures and methods of constructing proven cases. . . . They had nothing going for them, yet they controlled the opinions of literally hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people, regarding cattle mutilations. Not one of their testimonies would be acceptable as expert or even informed in a court of law.”

By the early 1980s press accounts were asserting that as many as 10,000 mutilations had taken place. Kagan and Summers, who checked official cattle mortality rates, learned that cattle had died in normal numbers all through the most intense years of the mutilation scare. The 10,000 figure turned out to be the invention of a mutologist who conceded it had come essentially out of thin air. In 1991, reporting on a “mutilated” heifer calf that a veterinarian determined had died of blackleg and been chewed on by buzzards, an Arkansas newspaper quoted two “UFO investigators” who said 700,000 mutilations had occurred, and that the alien beings who performed them used “lasers” to do the cutting.

The truth exposed?

Alleged mutilations of cattle have continued well into the 1990s, most prominently in Colorado and New Mexico. The most interesting stories, however, come out of Alabama, where some police officers believe they had uncovered the truth behind the mystery.

In 1990 Ted Oliphant, a California-based documentary filmmaker with an interest in UFOs, moved to Fyffe, Alabama, to investigate a long history of sightings in the area. He ended up spending three years there, the latter part of it as a police officer. A spate of seemingly mysterious cattle deaths erupted in August 1992, and Oliphant participated in some forty investigations. Witnesses also reported black, unmarked helicopters in the area.

In a 1988 article published in *The Anomalist*, Oliphant makes some fairly incredible claims. He says that law-enforcement officers have traced the helicopters to military installations such as those at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, though spokespersons there have denied the fact. He writes:

In recent mutilation cases . . . pharmaceuticals have been found in bovine blood, including barbiturates, anticoagulants, synthetic amphetamines, aluminum-titanium-oxygen-silicon flakes, and antimony, a brittle, lustrous, white metallic element occurring in nature and used chiefly in alloys and medical compounds. . . . Among those law enforcement agents who have thoroughly investigated these bovine excision sites, there is a consensus that some kind of medical testing is going on. The additional presence of helicopters on the scene, before and after cattle are found missing specific organs, leads both victimized farmers and investigating officers to conclude that there is a connection.

Oliphant speculates that the purpose of the operation is to test dying animals for evidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, better known as "mad cow disease." He has no direct evidence to support this hypothesis, and he acknowledges that even if true it cannot explain all allegedly unexplained cattle deaths.

To all appearances the cattle-mutilation legend is one of the most durable myths of our time.

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Crop Circles

Crop circles are so called because they originally appeared as circular, swirled-flat cut-outs in various crops of growing grain, including wheat, rye, and barley. Over the years they have seemingly "evolved" in both number and complexity, and the term now refers to a variety of patterns, from simple single circles to quintuplets (a central circle ringed by four smaller satellites) to dumbbell shapes and complex arrays of all of the above (involving straight lines, bars, runged ladders, and so on). The latter are also referred to as "pictograms" because of their at least superficial resemblance to primitive rock paintings.