



John Candy in a scene from "Splash."

with him," the comedian said. "Someth football coach and me being his compl

So much for another million-dollar

The rotund Candy is the brightest st mermaid movie from Touchstone, wh Disney Studios adopted in an effort to their new comedy films movies are dil mature, than the comedy films that ca

Candy, a veteran of improvisationa City and the Second City TV program, carries one-liner quickness wherever

He has a few serious moments in "S younger brother (Tom Hanks) about

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Candy bursts into the product business her own, waving an armload of

" he keeps yelling, then reveals that ne has published his letter to the editor. rmaid has been revealed and a mass of hronging around Candy and Hanks, Candy 'one is representing Penthouse. When n andy declines to speak to the "ordinary"

and-white checked shirt, with a solid navy jacket, as he talked over breakfast one and the tie was slightly askew. He has

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will never know except through her dad's stories. He explained that he did not expect her to live up to her aunt. You're your own person, he assured the infant. I just think you ought to know about the person who carried this name before.

And the infant smiled.

Now, every pediatrician in the country will tell you that infants don't really smile. What looks like a smile has to do with stomach gas, the doctors will say.

But don't you believe it.

The Bouncing Lights: Ghost Riders In West Texas Sky

By Derral Mulholland

BY DAY, U.S. Highway 90 between Alpine and neighboring Marfa is indistinguishable from the rest of West Texas. It is 26 miles of emptiness, peppered with mesquite and cholla. At night there are cars along this same route, but they are parked, their occupants staring off into Mitchell Flat to the south. These people are looking for the Marfa lights.

There, in the distance, a disk of light moves across the field. Suddenly it bounces, then seems to hover for a moment, or it zigzags around. Maybe it divides into two disks, each of which cavorts around. Sometimes there are several at a time. Others report being chased by them. The descriptions differ, but no one disputes that the lights are real. They can be seen almost any night.

No one knows what is different about the few miles around the Nopal, Antelope Springs and Escondido ranches, but the lights aren't

seen anywhere else. There is no want of theories about what they are. Most, however, are non-scientific. While few people believe in Indian ghosts anymore, lots of folks are credulous enough to associate the lights with supernatural forces or extraterrestrial visitors.

According to one tale, World War II aviators from the Marfa air base — right in the haunted area — went out at night and bombed the lights with sacks of flour to mark the spots for investigation. It is a common story but a false one. No trace of the markers was ever found. Fritz Kahl, who then was an instructor at the base, says flatly, "It never happened. Sure we chased them, but no one ever dropped flour sacks."

At least four possibilities do not require belief in the supernatural. Phosphorescent minerals, for example, absorb ultraviolet light. Even after a radiation source is gone, these minerals will glow for a time as energy is released from within. Geologists who have examined the Marfa area, however, declare

Every theory yet proposed seems to have flaws.

that there are no phosphor deposits in the vicinity.

In some localities, methane (commonly known as swamp gas) escapes from the ground and produces eerie lights, probably from spontaneous combustion. The confirmed cases tend to be swampy areas where the methane is produced by rotting vegetation. There hasn't been a swamp in West Texas for several million years. And there is no known gas near Marfa.

Kahl and Curt Laughlin, the superintendent of nearby McDonald Observatory, have considered another source — the electrical phenomenon called St.

Elmo's fire. But what is there about one isolated patch of rangeland that would generate high-voltage static electricity to the exclusion of the similar pasture for miles around?

A more attractive hypothesis has to do with the peculiar paths light can take. Astronomer Eric Silverberg speculates that the Marfa lights may be simply automobile headlights carried over great distances and along writhing paths by atmospheric tunneling, also known as the Novaya Zemlya effect. Large and abrupt temperature variations above the Earth cause sharp changes in the density of the air, bending light in funny ways.

The headlight theory, however, encounters two problems. South of U.S. 90 and east of Marfa is empty country for a long, long way. In addition, the first recorded report of the lights was made by Robert Ellison in 1883. But, Silverberg is quick to point out, starlight may also be subject to

atmospheric tunneling. Stars appear a likelier source for the phenomenon at Marfa, but no one has proved it.

Out on the range, the lights continue to bounce, divide and disappear. Every theory yet proposed seems to have flaws. Perhaps a definitive test would be to analyze the color spectrum of the lights, which would determine what chemical elements are involved. To make such measurements, however, would require a large portable telescope and a suitable spectrograph. No one has yet volunteered.

The residents accept the lights as a fact of life. Laughlin's response is perhaps typical of local feeling. "I hope we never find out what the Marfa lights are. Some things in our lives need to remain mysteries."

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