

MOTHMAN MONSTER

Is it a bizarre behemoth from the bowels of the earth? Or is it some winged night marish visitor from outer space? One thing is sure, it has terrorized hundreds of people in Ohio and West Virginia—and its nocturnal visits are becoming more frequent and frightening!

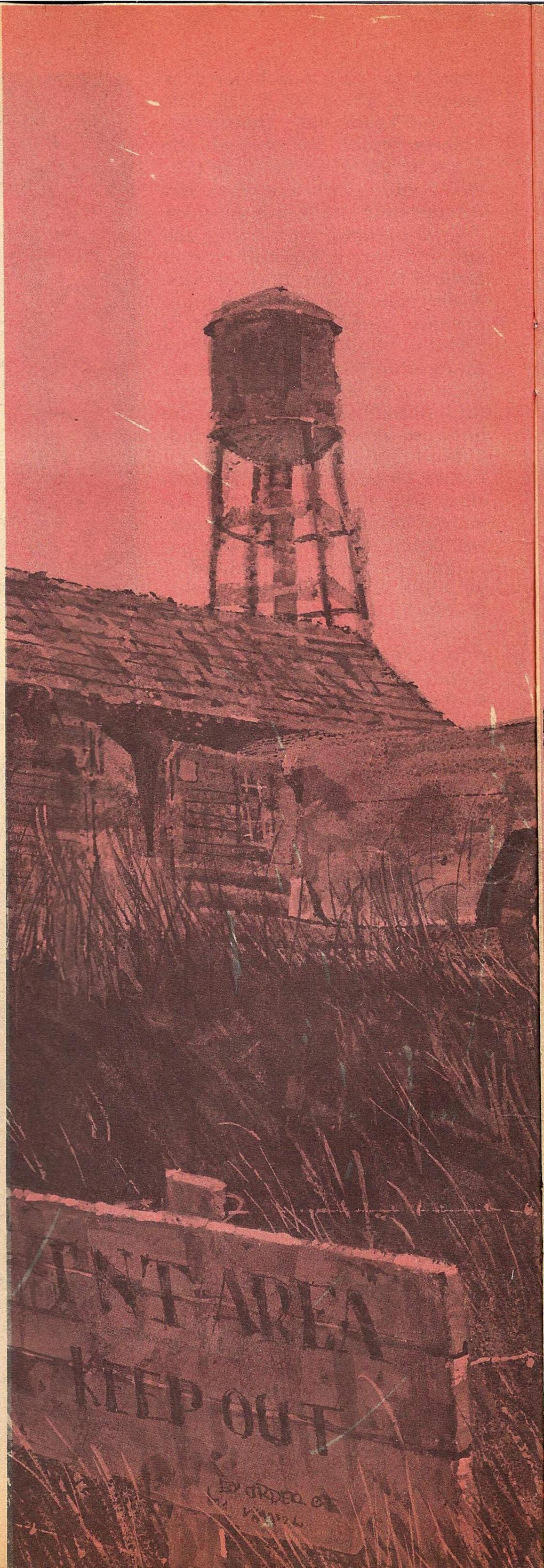
By John A. Keel

What is battleship gray, five to seven feet tall, has a pair of red eyes two inches in diameter which blaze like two laser beams, wings which extend to 10 feet when spread, and loves to chase automobiles? Give up? If it's any consolation, nobody else seems to know what it is either, but over 100 people in Ohio and West Virginia swear that they have seen such a creature since November 1966. Included among the witnesses are schoolteachers, businessmen, pilots, and members of the National Guard. They call it "The Bird," but newspapers from coast to coast have dubbed it "Mothman."

Folks who scoffed at the accounts of the early witnesses later turned into instant believers when the creature popped up in front of their own cars. To compound the mystery, the Ohio Valley lair of this bizarre bewinged behemoth broke out in a massive rash of "flying saucer" sightings soon after Mothman made his first unwelcome appearance. Two seemingly reliable witnesses even claim to have seen a rendezvous between an unidentified flying object (UFO) and "The Bird."

I have visited Mothman country five times since December 1966, and have interviewed many of the witnesses in depth. While I have seen quite a few of the strange lights which bob at treetop level almost nightly throughout the area, Mothman has chosen to elude me. But he, or it, has reportedly turned up twice in my immediate vicinity. And those weird lights seem to have followed me from one end of West Virginia to the other.

West Virginia is long established as a haven for assorted monsters. In September 1952, a very good year for UFO stories, six glowing objects hurtled across the secluded hills of Braxton County, W. Va., and one of them reportedly smashed into a hilltop at a little hamlet called Flatwoods. A group of residents headed by Mrs. Kathleen May and Eugene Lemon grabbed flashlights and climbed the



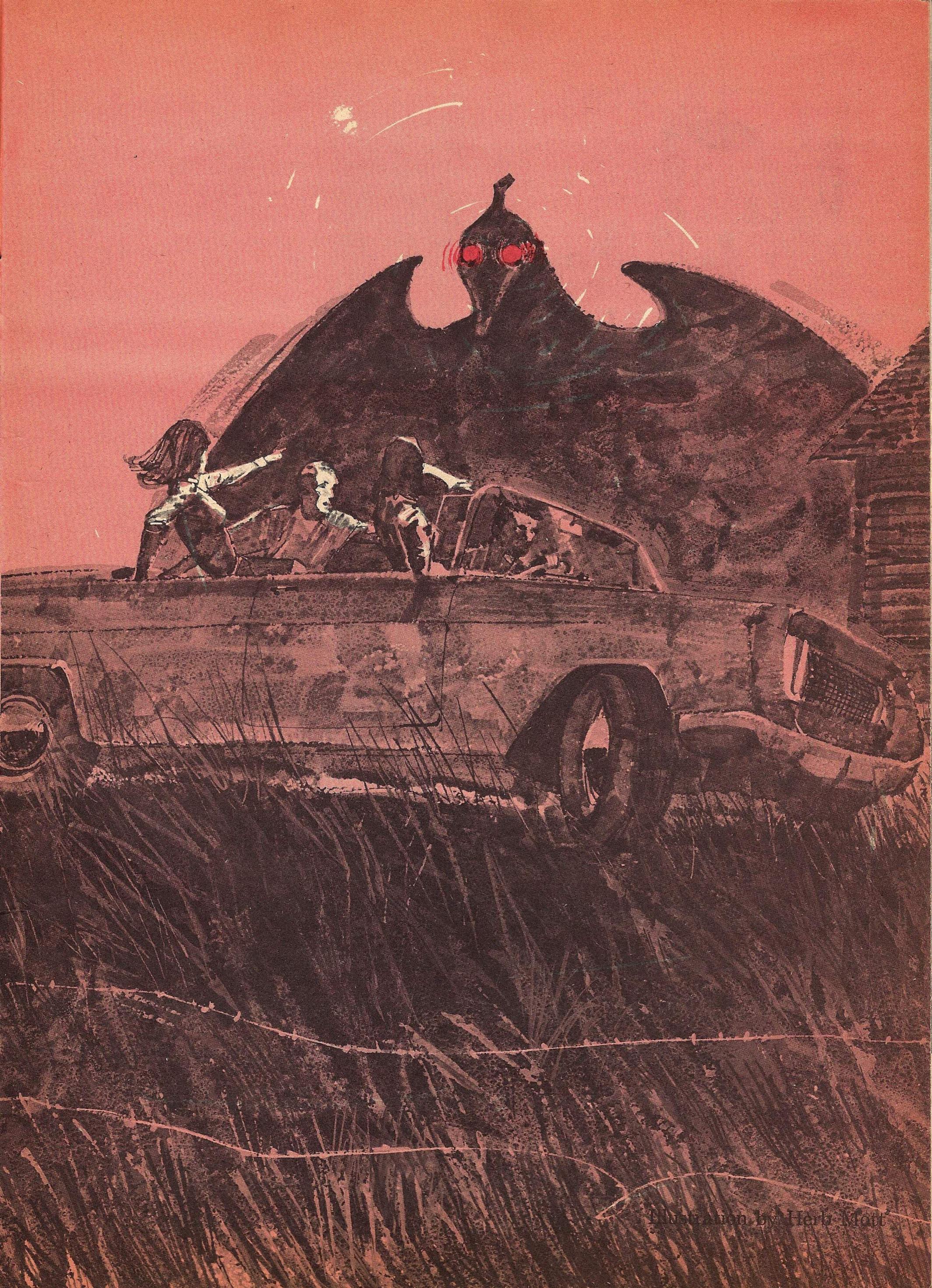
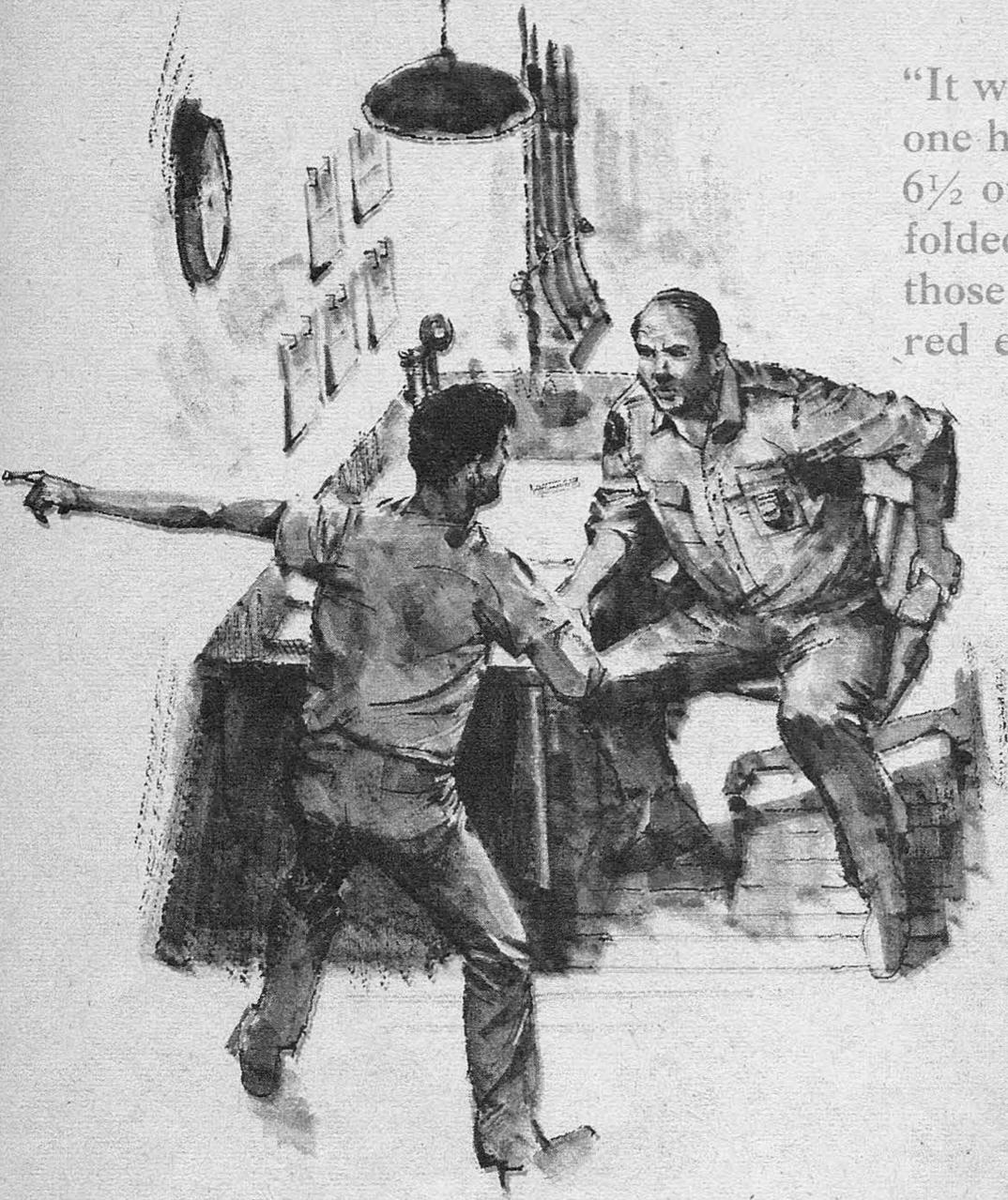


Illustration by Herb Mott

"It was shaped like a man, but bigger," one hysterical witness said. "Maybe 6½ or 7 feet tall. And it had big wings folded against its back. But it was those eyes that got us. It had two big red eyes—like automobile reflectors."



hill to investigate. On the summit they came face to face with a strange spectre. It was an enormous gray-green figure, according to their story, with no arms or legs visible, but it did have a head or helmet shaped like the ace of spades. Two intense, pale blue beams of light represented its eyes, and it was surrounded by a very unpleasant odor. Lemon passed out on the spot and the others decided not to linger. They grabbed up their fallen comrade and hurried back down the hill. All were violently ill, apparently from the unknown but toxic gas, for several hours. A dog which accompanied the group ran around the apparition then staggered down the hill, vomited *and died on the spot*. This became a "classic" in the annals of Ufology and is known as "The Flatwoods Monster Case."

The next West Virginian monster was allegedly a giant creature in the shape of a man, covered with black hair. It leaped in front of a bakery truck driven by Charles Stover, 25, on the edge of the Braxton County line in December of 1960. Others also reported seeing the same "Thing" and an armed posse searched the area in vain. It left behind giant human-like footprints which led nowhere. Another witness, one Hannibal Harper, said it was over six feet tall, covered with glossy black hair, and walked with a slow, awkward shuffle.

Hairy monsters have become rather routine in recent years, with sightings being reported annually

in California, Michigan, Washington and, most recently, even in Florida and New York State. But giant birds are another matter altogether.

"A winged human being" was reported by witnesses to the *New York Sun* back in September of 1877. They claimed it was cavorting in the skies over Brooklyn, N. Y. Nebraska was reportedly visited next, in 1922, when two different witnesses in different locales described essentially the same thing. One, a hunter named William C. Lamb, said he observed the landing of a strange circular flying craft and hid behind a tree as a giant eight-foot-tall creature with wings disembarked and flew off. (There were thousands of UFO sightings throughout the world in 1922, although the newspapers of the period usually referred to them as "mystery aircraft" and "ghost ships.")

At 2:30 a.m. on a hot morning in June 1953, Mrs. Hilda Walker, 23, Howard Phillips, 33, and Judy Meyers, 14, were sitting on their porch on E. 3rd St. in Houston, Tex., when, as Mrs. Walker told it, "I saw a huge shadow across the lawn. I thought at first it was the magnified reflection of a big moth caught in the nearby street light. Then the shadow seemed to bound upward into a pecan tree. We all looked up."

According to the *Houston Chronicle*, they saw a six to seven-foot-tall man in gray, fitted with wings like a bat. He was surrounded by a dim gray light. Judy Meyers screamed and the light died out.

AFFIDAVIT

To whom it may concern:

I, Mrs. Mary Hyre of 219-Sixth Street, Point Pleasant, W. Va., a reporter for the Athens (Ohio) Messenger, hereby swear that I was present at the following event and personally witnessed it as described.

On the evening of April 6, 1967, I accompanied Mr. John A. Keel of New York City to an isolated hilltop on Five Mile Creek Road south of Gallipolis Ferry, W. Va. Shortly after 11 p.m. I observed a pale red object of undetermined size moving in a controlled manner slightly above tree-top level over a hill about 500 yards south of our position. There are no houses or roads on that hill. The object appeared to move cautiously and slowly through the sky to the far end of the sloping field, the light flickering on and off in an irregular pattern.

As the object drew closer, Mr. Keel got out of the car and flashed a powerful flashlight directly at it three times. The object immediately returned the signal by flashing a brilliant white light three times. Then it rose upwards and the pale red light went completely out.

State of West Virginia)
County of Mason) To-wit:

Signed:

Mary Hyre

Mary Hyre

This day personally appeared before me in my office, county and state, Mary Hyre, known to me personally, and acknowledged the above statement to be true and that she personally signed her signature in my presence.

Given under my hand this 21 day of June, 1967.

My commission expires June 12 1977

Howard Schull Notary Public

"Immediately afterwards," Mrs. Walker said, "we heard a loud 'swoosh' over the housetops across the street. It was like a white flash of a torpedo-shaped object."

Ten years passed before the unearthly "Bird" was reported again. Late on the evening of Nov. 21, 1963, four teenagers were walking home from a dance when they saw what they described as an oval of bright light descend from the sky and land in a thicket close to their path. "It seemed like we were being watched," John Flaxton, 17, told authorities later. "I felt cold all over. Then suddenly we saw a huge, dark figure coming out of the bushes toward us. It shambled."

The four youngsters didn't wait another second. They fled. Under close interrogation they all told the same story. And they all agreed that the creature had wings like a bat . . . and no visible head.



"This snow owl is not Mothman," say eye witnesses of the real monster.

Giant footprints were found in the area later. They were an inch deep, two feet long and nine inches across.

That incident occurred near Sandling Park, Hythe, Kent, in England.

It's a long ways from Kent, England, to Scott, Miss., a little town of 300 just north of Greenville. But at 2 p.m. on Sept. 1, 1966, Mrs. James Ikart of Scott phoned the Delta Democrat Times in Greenville and reported "a man with wings" was circling over the town. Photographers and reporters rushed to the scene but the odd aerial object was gone. There were, however, a number of people who admitted having seen it.

"It got down pretty low and then would go up," Mrs. Ikart said. "I had never seen anything like it."

A local meteorologist, John Hursh, suggested that it was just "somebody's research balloon that's gotten away."

A few weeks later that "research balloon" turned up hundreds of miles northeast of Scott, and about 200 miles west of monster-ridden Braxton County in West Virginia. Five gravediggers near Clendenin, W. Va., were among the first to glimpse "The Bird." Kenneth Duncan of Blue Creek, W. Va., claimed that he and the others were baffled when something that "looked like a brown human being" performed an aerial reconnaissance of the grave site in broad daylight on Saturday, Nov. 12, 1966. "It was gliding through the trees and was in sight for about a minute," Duncan stated.

The real saga of Mothman did not begin until three days later, however. Around midnight on November 15, 1966, two young married couples, Mr. and Mrs. Roger Scarberry and Mr. and Mrs. Steve Mallette, were driving through an abandoned W.W. II ammunition dump known as the "TNT Area," seven miles outside of Point Pleasant, W. Va., when they unwittingly entered the Twilight Zone. As they passed an old deserted power plant they saw a weird figure standing beside the road staring at them.

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

"But it was those eyes that got us," Mrs. Scarberry declared with a shudder. "It had two big red eyes, like automobile taillight reflectors."

"For a minute we could only stare at it," Roger said. "Then it just turned and sort of shuffled toward the open door of the old power plant. We didn't wait around."

Roger, a strapping but soft-spoken and introspective 19-year-old, stepped (Continued on page 66)

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on the gas pedal of his souped-up jalopy and headed out of the TNT Area for Route 62 which leads into Point Pleasant. As they shot down the highway ("We were doing better than 100 miles per hour," Roger said), his wife cried out, "It's following us!"

All four swore that "The Bird" was low overhead, its wings spread out to about 10 feet. It seemed to keep up with the car effortlessly even though its wings weren't flapping.

"I could hear it making a sound," Mrs. Mallette, an attractive 18-year-old brunette, declared. "It squeaked, like a big mouse."

"It followed us right to the city limits," Roger said. "Funny thing, we noticed a dead dog by the side of the road there, but when we came back a few minutes later, the dog was gone."

They drove directly to the office of the Mason County sheriff and excitedly poured out their story to Deputy Millard Halstead.

"I've known them all their lives," Halstead told me later. "They've never been in any trouble. I took them seriously. They saw *something*. They were really scared."

Deputy Halstead returned to the TNT Area with the excited quartet. As he parked outside the abandoned power plant the police radio in his car suddenly emitted a strange sound . . . like a speeded up phonograph record. He shut the radio off. "The Bird," however, was nowhere to be found.

The next day a press conference was held in the County Courthouse and the four young people repeated their story. One of the reporters there, Mrs. Mary Hyre, Point Pleasant correspondent for the Athens, Ohio *Messenger* and local stringer for the A.P., later told me, "I've heard them repeat their story a hundred times now to reporters from all over and none of them have ever changed it or added a word."

News of the Scarberry-Mallette sighting was flashed around the world. It even appeared in the Pacific edition of the *Stars & Stripes*. TV camera crews from Huntington and Charleston invaded Point Pleasant and that night the normally deserted TNT Area resembled Times Square on New Year's Eve. Thousands of people from Ohio and West Virginia descended in hopes of getting a glimpse of the new sensation, even though Steve Mallette had announced, "I've seen it once. I hope I never see it again."

The TNT Area was to become the "home grounds" of the Bird in the months ahead and it couldn't have

picked a better base. The area consists of several hundred acres of woods and open fields filled with large concrete domes known as "igloos." During W.W. II these igloos were used to store the high explosives manufactured in nearby plants. A network of tunnels laced throughout the area but most of these are now sealed off and are filled with water. Immediately adjoining the area is the McClintic Wildlife Station, a 2,500-acre animal preserve and bird sanctuary. Both sectors are filled with artificial ponds and dense woodlands. Steep, heavily forested and almost inaccessible hills rise in the background. The entire area is thrown open to hunters and fishermen every year and nearly every male in the county knows every inch of the place. Its winding, poorly kept dirt roads are also popular "lover's lanes."

Only a few homes are scattered throughout the sector. One of these is the residence of the Ralph Thomas family. Their little house stands on a slight rise surrounded by woods and "igloos." It was here that the next act of the Mothman drama was enacted. At 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 1966, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Wamsley and Mrs. Marcella Bennett and her daughter, Tina, two, drove out to visit with the Thomases.

"On the way to the house we were watching a funny big red light in the sky," Mrs. Bennett told me sometime later. "It seemed to be moving around over the TNT Area. It wasn't an airplane, but we couldn't figure out what it was."

Like everyone else, they had heard of the "monster" sighting of the night before and Raymond Wamsley decided he would play a prank on the Thomases by tapping surreptitiously on their window. However, he never had the chance to play the joke.

They parked in front of the Thomas home and Mrs. Bennett climbed out of the car, gathering up her sleepy two-year-old in her arms. Suddenly a figure stirred behind the parked car.

"It seemed as if it had been laying down," Mrs. Bennett said. "It rose up slowly from the ground. A big gray thing. Bigger than a man, with terrible glowing red eyes."

Mrs. Bennett was so horrified she dropped Tina to the ground, stumbled and fell herself. She remained on the ground for a long moment, transfixed.

"It was as if the thing had her in some kind of trance," Raymond Wamsley said. "She couldn't move."

Panic engulfed the group. The Wams-

leys ran for the house as Mrs. Bennett pulled herself together, grabbed up her bruised child, and followed. They locked themselves in. Ralph and Virginia Thomas were not home, but three of their children, Rickie, Connie, and Vickie, were. Hysteria swept over them as the strange creature shuffled onto the porch and peered into the windows. Raymond Wamsley grabbed the phone and called the police. But by the time help arrived, the thing had disappeared once more.

Mrs. Bennett, a slender blonde in her mid-20's, would not recover fully from this horrifying experience for many weeks. And months passed before she was able to discuss what she had seen with anyone, even her own family. Her trauma was so real that she had to start seeing a doctor on a weekly basis.

Now Mothman started to cut crazy capers all over West Virginia. Sightings were reported in Mason, Lincoln, Logan, Kanawha and Nicholas Counties. Most of the population remained skeptical but the near-hysteria of the rapidly multiplying witnesses was very real. Police in the city of Charleston, W. Va., received an excited phone call from one Richard

West at 10:15 p.m., Monday, Nov. 21st. Patrolman D. L. Tucker handled the call. West insisted that a "Batman" was sitting on a roof next to his home. "It looks just like a man. It's about six feet tall and has a wingspread of six or eight feet. It has great big red eyes."

"Did it fly?" Tucker asked.

"Straight up, just like a helicopter," West replied.

In St. Albans, W. Va., just outside of Charleston, Mrs. Ruth Foster claimed that Mothman appeared on her front lawn on the evening of November 26th.

"It was standing on the lawn beside the porch," she told reporters. "It was tall with big red eyes that popped out of its face. My husband is six-feet-one and the bird looked about the same height or a little shorter, maybe.

"It had a funny little face. I didn't see any beak. All I saw were those big red poppy eyes. I screamed and ran back into the house. My brother-in-law went out to look, but it was gone."

Sheila Cain, 13, and her younger sister were walking home from the store in St. Albans on the following evening when they saw an enormous "something" standing next to a local junk yard.

"It was gray and white with big red eyes," Sheila said, "and it must have been seven feet tall—taller than a man. I screamed and we ran home."

The creature is supposed to have taken wing and flown low over the running girls.

By this time the "Bird's" peculiar characteristics were becoming apparent. Whatever it was, most witnesses described it as man-sized or bigger, yet all agreed that it had a wingspan of only 8-10 feet. Such a wingspread would have been inadequate for such a large creature. If you were to attach wings to a normal-sized man so he could glide, you would have to make the wings at least 35 feet long. Like the bumblebee, Mothman's flight seemed scientifically impossible. In addition, most large birds require a running start and a lot of wing flapping before they can become airborne. But all of the Mothman witnesses swore that he, or it, took off straight up and flew without flapping the wings at all. Only a few birds in the hawk and eagle families can exceed 40 to 50 miles per hour in level flight, yet Mothman repeatedly demonstrated an ability to pursue speeding autos

effortlessly and swiftly.

On November 17th, Steve Farrell, 17, claimed that "a giant gray bird" chased his automobile on Route 7, near Cheshire, Ohio, just across the river from the TNT Area. And a Clarksburg, W. Va., shoe salesman, Thomas Ury, 25, reported a hair-raising encounter on Route 62, a mile or so north of the TNT Area. He was driving past the Homer Smith farm at 7:15 a.m. on Nov. 25th, Ury testified, when he sighted a large gray man-like figure standing in a field near the road. "Suddenly it spread a pair of wings," Ury stated, "and took off straight up like a helicopter."

"It veered over my convertible and began going in circles three telephone poles high," the frightened young man later told Sheriff George Johnson. "It kept flying right over my car even though I was doing about 75."

"I never saw anything like it," he confided to reporter Mary Hyre. "I was so scared I just couldn't go to work that day. This thing had a wingspan every bit of 10 feet. It could be a bird, but I certainly never saw one like it."

Miss Connie Carpenter, a shy, studious girl of 18 from New Haven, W. Va., allegedly had an identical encounter at 10:30 a.m., Sunday, Nov. 27th. She was driving home from church, she told me, when she saw what she thought at first was a large man in gray, standing on the deserted links of the Mason County Golf Course outside of Mason, W. Va., on Route 33. Those 10-foot wings suddenly unfolded, the thing took off straight up and *headed for her car.*

"Those eyes! They were a fiery red and once they were fixed on me I couldn't take my own eyes off them," she declared. "It's a wonder I didn't have a wreck."

She said the creature flew directly at her windshield, then veered off and disappeared. Connie stepped on the gas and raced home in hysteria. She was so upset that she was unable to go to school for several days after her experience and she required medical attention.

She was also one of the few to claim a close look at the Mothman's face. "It was horrible . . . like something out of a science-fiction movie."

The next morning her eyes were reddened and swollen shut and itched fiercely. This condition persisted for over two weeks. In fact, her eyes were still red and watery when I first interviewed her. I had seen this odd ailment several times before, but only on UFO witnesses who claimed to have gotten a close look at the luminous objects. Connie Carpenter was the only Mothman witness to come down with "eye burn."

(I myself suffered from this phenomenon when, at 1:30 a.m. on April 3, 1967, an eerie circle of green and red light swooped down to within 60 feet of my car on a hilltop outside of Gallipolis Ferry, W. Va. My eyes were swollen and itchy for about five days afterwards. The next day I returned to the site with Sheriff George Johnson and Deputy Millard Halstead and we scoured the area with a Geiger counter with negative results. One odd thing did happen, however. As Sheriff Johnson's car neared the spot his police radio suddenly sprang to life with strange sounds, like a speeded up phonograph record. The startling thing was that his police radio had to be turned on and off with a key; the radio was not only turned off at the time, *but the key wasn't even in it!*)

The first wave of Mothman sightings in the TNT Area created a crisis for Sheriff Johnson and his small force. Thousands of people, many of them armed with rifles and revolvers, poured into the area nightly hoping to see the monster and maybe get a shot at it. Swarms of teenagers clambered around the stripped down old power plant with its many high, dangerous catwalks and crumbling staircases. The gate leading to the plant was closed and the place was ruled off-limits. For a time, Johnson and his men banned firearms in the area, fearing that the men might start shooting each other.

Somehow, Mothman always seemed to turn up where he was not wanted. Clandestine lovers, necking in parked cars on the isolated, unlit back roads of the TNT Area reported that the giant gray thing with glowing red eyes lumbered up to their autos. In November 1967, I cruised around the area for the last time and noted that there was not a single car parked anywhere. The local lovers seem to have abandoned the place altogether.

Shortly after the first Mothman stories hit the local papers, a wide variety of explanations were expressed by assorted experts. Dr. Robert Smith of the West Virginia University biology department declared that everyone was obviously seeing a rare Sandhill crane. A bird whose long neck and long legs give it a height of six feet, and it has red patches around the eyes. Yet no hunter in the area has reported seeing such a crane, and members of the zoology department of Ohio University pointed out that the crane inhabits the plains of Canada and had never been seen in the W. Va.-Ohio region.

For a time I carried a photo of a Sandhill crane in my briefcase and showed it to Mothman witnesses. "That's

not the thing we saw," Roger Scarberry scoffed. "This thing could never chase us like it did."

"I just wish Dr. Smith could see the thing," Mary Mallette added.

All those who reported having seen Mothman sneered at the crane theory, but the skeptics quickly accepted it and dismissed the mystery. Three groups of witnesses contributed to the confusion by declaring that they were absolutely convinced that the "Bird" was really some kind of giant ornithological oddity and not "a monster from outer space" as some were beginning to imply.

Capt. Paul Yoder and Benjamin Enochs, both volunteer firemen from Point Pleasant, revealed that they had seen a very large bird in the TNT Area on Nov. 18, 1966. "It was definitely a bird," they stated flatly, "with big red eyes. But it was huge. We'd never seen anything like it."

Seventy miles north of Point Pleasant, as the "Bird" flies, four people outside of Lowell, Ohio, spent a fascinating Saturday afternoon watching a group of gigantic birds flutter about the trees near Cat's Creek. They saw no red eyes, witness Marvin Shock offered, but they did see four very strange winged creatures and kept them in view for two hours on Nov. 26, 1966. Shock, who was accompanied by his two children, Marlene, 14, and Phillip, 11, first noticed the birds in some tree branches.

"They looked about as big as a man would look moving around in the trees," Shock said later. "When we started walking toward them for a closer look—we were about 100 yards from them—they took off and flew up the ridge."

The trio followed the birds by car and saw them settle on the edge of the woods about 200 yards from the home of Ewing Tilton. Tilton joined them. Both men agreed that the birds stood from four to five feet tall and had a wingspread of at least 10 feet.

"They had dark brown backs with some light flecks," Tilton observed. "Their breasts were gray and they had five or six inch bills, straight, not curved like those of hawks or vultures."

Shock thought there was "a reddish cast" to their heads. The birds kept their distance and finally fluttered off into limbo.

At the Gallipolis, Ohio, airport, just across the river from Point Pleasant, five local pilots got an unexpected look at the bird at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4, 1966. When they first saw it, they mistook it for an airplane.

"Look at that crazy character coming in in a downwind in that plane," Eddie Adkins commented.

Everett Wedge of Point Pleasant,

Henry Upton of Leon, W. Va., and Leo Edwards, Ernie Thompson and Adkins, all of Gallipolis, stared at the winged form gliding low over the river. It was about 300 feet up, they all agreed, and it was traveling about 70 miles an hour effortlessly, without flapping its wide wings.

As it sailed past the airport the men noted that it seemed to have an unusually long neck and was turning its head from side to side as if it were taking in the scenery.

"It was like something prehistoric," one of them remarked later. "I don't think it was any crane."

Wedge grabbed his camera, jumped into his plane and took off after it. But it had disappeared somewhere down river. This was the only sighting in which a neck was observed at all.

A month later another witness thought she was seeing an airplane, too, when she first noticed a large winged thing majestically swooping along route 62 at 5 p.m. on Jan. 11, 1967. Mrs. Mabel McDaniel, the mother of Mrs. Linda Scarberry, one of the original Mothman witnesses, was near Tiny's Drive-in Restaurant on the outskirts of Point Pleasant when she first saw the "Bird."

"I thought it was an airplane, then I realized it was flying much too low," she told me later. "It was brown and had a wingspread of at least 10 feet." Then she added an interesting detail. "I thought I could see two legs . . . like a man's legs . . . hanging down from it. It circled over Tiny's and then flew off." She did not see any head or neck. The wings were not moving and there was no sound.

Now over 100 people in the Ohio River Valley swear that they have seen this mysterious flying creature. Point Pleasant is part of the highly industrialized Ohio Valley and is on the edge of the Bible Belt. Its 6,000 inhabitants support 22 churches. There are no bars. Most of the witnesses I talked to were very devout, well-educated, and owned late model cars and color TV sets. They all seemed remarkably honest and sincere, and many requested anonymity. They said they came forward with their stories only because they "wanted to help" and they wanted to assure me that "all those other people saw what they said they saw."

Beginning in the fall of 1966, the TV sets and telephones in the region began to go wild as strange globs of crystalline white light appeared in the night skies. Many of these lights moved at treetop level. There were also many daylight sightings of strange circular metal objects, particularly in the TNT Area. By the end of 1967, over 1,000

UFO sightings by responsible witnesses had been recorded throughout the valley. As with the Mothman sightings, I often had to "dig out" the witnesses, for many feared publicity and the attending ridicule. For each UFO report that appeared in the *Athens Messenger* and the *Point Pleasant Register* hundreds went unpublished.

"I'm just getting too many reports," Mrs. Hyre explained. "We can't print them all."

Cars passing along the Camp Conley Road, south of the TNT Area, stalled inexplicably. TV sets and radios, some brand new, burned out suddenly without cause. In March-April 1967, the UFO sightings hit an incredible peak with the objects appearing nightly at low level over the TNT Area as if they were following a regular flight schedule. Thousands of people invaded the section again to view this new wonder. No one was disappointed. Sheriff Johnson and most of his men were among the witnesses but soberly refused to comment on the phenomenon.

As the UFO activity seemed to increase, the Mothman reports dwindled off. An Ohio man claimed that a "huge winged something" pursued his car up Route 33 on a rainy night in March 1967, and two women swore they saw a Mothman fly to meet a UFO on May 19, 1967.

"We were driving past the TNT Area on route 62 around 10:30 p.m.," one of the ladies told me, "when we saw two bright red lights on a shadowy form high in a tree just off the road. Suddenly this big red light appeared and approached the tree and the form rose up toward it and disappeared. Then the big light took off to the north."

That same night 20 persons reported seeing a brilliantly lighted object land briefly in a field next to the Ohio River junior high school in Point Pleasant. (Sightings and landings around schools have become common in the past year and have been reported in Miami, Fla.; Boston, Mass; Lima, Peru; Melbourne, Australia, and many other places.)

In November 1967, four hunters told Mrs. Hyre that they had encountered the Mothman in the Chief Cornstalk Park south of Point Pleasant. They said they were so startled, and so frightened, when the huge gray thing with red eyes loomed up in front of them that it never occurred to them to try to use the rifles they were carrying.

Shortly after noon, on Nov. 2, 1967, Mrs. Ralph Thomas says she heard a sound "like a squeaky fan belt" outside her home in the TNT Area. She stepped onto her porch and saw what she described as "a tall gray figure, bigger than a man" moving swiftly among the near-

by "igloos." It didn't appear to be walking, she said, rather it was sliding or gliding along the ground. She was positive it was not a man or a bear. Since it was the hunting season, no man in his right mind would wear gray there, she noted, but would wear a red hunting jacket.

The UFO-Monster situation in West Virginia and Ohio is obviously a most complicated one. It may be only a coincidence that the region was "invaded" simultaneously by giant, unidentified birds and unidentified flying objects. No photograph of the "Bird" was ever taken. No single theory seems to fit all of the reported sightings. If a huge winged creature is hiding in the TNT Area, thousands of eager hunters have failed to flush it out. Perhaps, like the "Flatwoods Monster" of 13 years earlier, it will eventually become part of West Virginia folklore and become lost in legend.

"I laughed at those people who said they'd seen Mothman," John Love of Point Pleasant remarked to me soberly. Then on the morning of Nov. 19, 1966, he and four others came face-to-face with the thing in the TNT Area. "I'm not laughing any more. We all got the shock of our lives. I never want to see that 'Bird' again!"

But the winged thing with glowing eyes will probably reappear in the months and years ahead. What it is, where it comes from, where it goes and why it crops up periodically to chase cars and frighten lovers may always remain a mystery. Perhaps several different things were on the loose in W. Va. in 1966-1967. Perhaps the great brown birds were not even distant kin of the gray giants with the luminous eyes. Or perhaps they all slipped through that mysterious door that seals our world off from a world of dragons and elves and things that go bump in the night; a world spun of myth and fantasy and legends going back as far as man's memory can take him. From time to time that door seems to swing open and monsters and ghouls stalk across the landscape, bring laughter and derision to those unfortunates who glimpse them, and then as the posses sally forth they slip back across the dark borderline and the door swings shut behind them.

The sincere testimony of scores of badly frightened people seems to shift the burden of proof onto the shoulders of the baffled scientists who would rather ignore the things they cannot carry into the laboratories for study beneath their microscopes. The phenomenon is not that such creatures live; it is that we have been able to overlook them for so long.

★ THE END