

Ancient Astronauts Modern Mysteries

John A. Keel

VANISHING PHOTOGRAPH

The great Thunderbird was a legend among the Indians of the Southwest long before the arrival of Europeans, and modern researchers are again investigating this mysterious and possibly very real giant bird. According to tradition, the Thunderbird is a fearsome prehistoric monster with a wingspan of 30 to 40 feet. It supposedly preyed upon small children and elderly people too feeble to escape it. However, some Indian legends seem to describe flying saucers rather than winged behemoths, and the "thunder" in the Thunderbird legends may have been noises now associated with the UFO phenomenon.

Several years ago an old photograph of a Thunderbird was widely published. Maybe you saw it. It showed a gigantic bird nailed to the side of a barn. It was so big it nearly covered the entire structure. A group of proud men stood in front of it. They were all hardy frontier types, and the photo was probably taken out West at the turn of the century. A couple of the men in the picture were wearing worn top hats, and the caption identified them whimsically as visiting "college professors."

The strange thing about this picture is that no one has been able to relocate it, or any copies. Yet, ironically, many—including this author—remember seeing it! Shortly before his untimely death, Ivan T. Sanderson, the great animal authority, launched a massive search for the photo. Members of his Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained scoured back issues of everything from *The*

National Geographic to *The National Enquirer*. Researchers plunged into the dusty files of western newspapers such as the *Tombstone Epitaph*. Everyone drew a blank.

We know the photo once existed and that it was once published in a national publication. It could be very important to modern researchers . . . if we could only find it. Perhaps some SAGA reader can recall when and where this picture was published. If you have any concrete information about this mysterious photo we would appreciate hearing from you.

BACK TO TUNGUSKA

On June 30, 1908, something roared out of the skies over Siberia and exploded with a deafening crash and a brilliant flash of light, leveling hundreds of square miles of forest and killing several hundred people. Although it became known as the Tunguska meteorite, recent Soviet expeditions to the area failed to find any of the usual meteoric traces. Instead, the incident produced illnesses and effects remarkably similar to those of a nuclear explosion. The mystery has inspired a great many theories. Some Soviet scientists have stated that a nuclear-powered spaceship was responsible for the holocaust. (There was a worldwide epidemic of UFO sightings in 1909.) More recently, some astronomers have speculated that the great "meteorite" was actually a "black hole," a tiny mass of highly concentrated cosmic matter like a condensed star.

Whatever it was, it glowed for days, lighting up the skies thousands of miles away. London suffered an incredible heat wave the following week, with temperatures reaching as high as 125 degrees, according to *The New York Times* of July 5, 1908. At night the skies of northern Europe were brilliantly lighted at midnight, as if dawn were breaking.

A diligent researcher named Ronald Dobins has located references to other odd events during that same period. Siberia was a virtually unknown land in those days but, by a strange coincidence, newspapers all over the world were focused on Siberia in 1908. The great overland automobile race of 1908 carried the courageous racing drivers straight through Siberia, passing not far from Tunguska. Rough maps of the area appeared on front pages everywhere that June. The "meteorite" seems to have tried to "cash in" on the publicity.

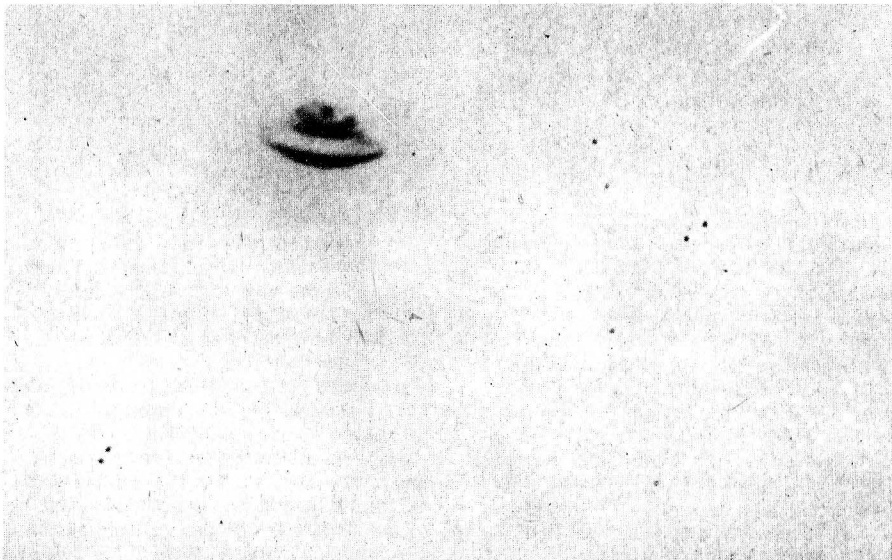
1908 SEA SERPENTS

Paranormal events seem to happen in cycles, and all kinds of crazy things happen at once when these cycles peak. While some people see UFOs and atmospheric phenomena, others view sea serpents and tall, hairy monsters. Outbreaks of ghost and poltergeist cases also seem to coincide with such events.

On June 24, 1908, the entire crew of the steamship *Livingstone* reported seeing a 200-foot sea serpent in the Gulf of Mexico. Their story appeared on page one of *The New York Times* of July 1, 1908. The ship belonged to the Texas-Mexican line and was making a routine trip between Galveston, Tex., and Frontera, Mexico. About 50 miles from Frontera, the monster appeared off the port bow. "The ship got within 60 feet of the creature," according to the *Times*, "and for 15 minutes stood by while all on board viewed the serpent through the glasses. It was apparently sleeping, and was not less than 200 feet long, of about the diameter of a flour barrel in the center of the body, but was not as round. The head was about 6 feet long by 3 feet at the widest part. The color was dark brown, and near its tail were rings or circles that appeared larger in circumference than the body at that point. As it swam away the tail was erected, and a rattling noise as loud as that made by a Gatling gun in action startled the watchers on the *Livingstone*."

As soon as the ship docked in Frontera, the captain, his crew and 15 passengers signed a sworn affidavit before Charles W. Rickland, the United States Consular agent, on what they had seen.

(Continued on page 54)



ANCIENT ASTROS

(Continued from page 23)

LIGHTNING STRIKES

One of the most neglected branches of meteorology is the study of lightning. We have many reports of people being killed by lightning bolts from a *clear, cloudless sky*. There are over 800 lightning deaths around the world each year. Strangely, deaths by lightning seem to increase during UFO waves, and both people and animals have been found dead in areas where flying saucers have been observed. In some cases, lightning bolts seem to have been *directed* in some way. For example, a few years ago a Florida researcher was sitting at his desk typing an important UFO report he planned to

send to this author. Suddenly he felt an overwhelming compulsion to leave the building. As soon as he went out the door, a lightning bolt crashed into the old windmill where his study was located and completely demolished it! His report, and the notes and documentation he was using, were destroyed.

The selectivity of lightning bolts is unnerving, to say the least. And during those strange weeks in June-July 1908 there was at least one incident of this type. A Baptist preacher, the Rev. T. H. Feagin, conducted an outdoor revival meeting at China, Tex., on the night of July 3, 1908. After his sermon, he stepped among his congregation and was chatting and shaking hands when a bolt of lightning singled him out and struck him dead on the spot!

We have other reports of lightning bolts

entering churches and killing ministers on the pulpit. Some of them date back hundreds of years. Small wonder that people have always associated lightning with the wrath of God.

There are also innumerable cases in which people have been slammed by a bolt and remained completely unharmed although their clothes were blown off and the coins in their pockets were welded together. Even the old saying that certain great men were "struck by lightning" has a basis.

During that puzzling Fortean year of 1908, a young man in Kansas was zapped by a blast of lightning. It stunned him but, miraculously, he was unhurt. He went on to become one of the most important men of this century. His name was Dwight David Eisenhower. Could it be that aliens from other planets are "tapping" certain individuals for leadership on Earth?

★ THE END