

WONDERS

Seeking the Truth in a Universe of Mysteries

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GIANT BONES



GIANT BONES	3
THE END OF SKY-LINES	14
MAGAZINES	16
BOOKS OF NOTE	17
AUTHORS	18

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WONDERS

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EDITORIAL

The Crest of Opportunity

We are living at a time of tremendous opportunities to advance knowledge by taking on some of the mankind's oldest and seemingly (judging by their neglect) most dreaded mysteries. These opportunities are waiting for the questing spirit of individuals to make the most of this point in the story of mankind. We are on the crest of a wave of change. We can take the advances of technology that lie ahead and use them to reach back and capture the world that is threatened with destruction in the wake of that change.

The world is not so old that all the great mysteries have been identified and resolved. The world is just old enough that many people convince themselves that they know so much that the only mysteries are deep in the oceans, deep in space, or deep in the structure of matter. It is our happy condition that they are wrong.

In addition, we have tools that were unknown to our equally puzzled ancestors. People one hundred years ago were aware, sometimes dimly and sometimes thoroughly, of the same mysteries that puzzle us today. They did their best to cope with the sources and technology of their age. The result may have been a book-length treatment that today we find to be useless. But they were doing the best they could in their circumstances. We have inherited the fruits of their progressive industry. We have more sources of accumulated knowledge and they are more accessible than ever before. We have at our fingertips -- or soon will have -- technology that would have looked like magic one hundred years ago. If we only play with these tools and do not apply them to the serious and enlightening problem solving then we will be wasting our inheritance.

If no one makes the effort now, we will realize years into the future that we had turned in fear from reality, that we had thrown the baby out with the bath water never to be seen again, and that we had let the power of ignorance command the lives of this generation.

GIANT BONES

by Mark A. Hall

From the enquiries I have received there is much interest in the reported finds of "giant bones." In 1992 I wrote two articles on True Giants which I proposed to be the living descendants of the fossil type known as Gigantopithecus.[1] These primates can exceed 15 feet in height and have been widely known throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. I do not assume, however, that all reports of large skeletal remains suggesting primates would have to be bones of the True Giants. At least two other types of man-like mysteries appear to exceed human beings in average height. They are also reported to have been seen in many provinces and states in North America as have the True Giants. Still other types indicated by similar evidence, though man-sized or somewhat smaller, might have bones with such mass as to be described in accounts as giant bones.

Far from anticipating their identity, we should be ready for surprises should modern finds of unusual bones be made and be given the desired examination. I have been asked which finds of "giant bones" are reliable. Reliability can only be determined when the bones are preserved and the facts of their find and description shared with everyone. The specter of the Piltdown hoax still hovers over the field of physical anthropology, as will be discussed later. Even professional scientists can be expected to be wary of giving an endorsement to finds beyond the current expectations in their field.

What follows here is a discussion of the importance of fossil finds and a look at the accounts already known that tell us people have been finding extraordinary bones.

The lack of fossil finds for non-human primates has been cited as a primary reason for doubting the validity of reports of the hairy beings. The most recent discussion is in the 1991 edition of a textbook on physical anthropology. It is worth looking at closely to find the arguments that are made by professional scientists who continue to simplify the subject matter. They sum up all data in North America as necessarily relating to a single type they call "Bigfoot."

Harry Nelson and Robert Jurmain are anthropologists and the authors of **Introduction to Physical Anthropology** 5th ed. (St. Paul: West, 1991). They are associated with Foothill College, Los Altos, California, and San Jose State University respectively. The main text of their work comments in passing on the issue of whether Neanderthals might survive:

...do they still exist in remote areas, as a Bigfoot or Yeti? (We may as well point out there is no worthwhile evidence for such survivors despite the sensational accounts that appear in the magazines at the supermarket checkstands.)[2]

The assertion of "no worthwhile evidence" is an opinion, of course, and one that admits there is evidence relating to Neanderthals surviving in Asia and to many other things behind "Bigfoot" in North America. The discussion of surviving Neanderthals, which will not

be elaborated here, is not a subject confined to magazines at supermarkets. It has arisen as described by Ivan Sanderson[3] and has been taken up by professional anthropologists such as John Pfeiffer[4] and Myra Schackley (in two of her books).[5]

Elsewhere in their book Nelson and Jurmain devote a page to "Is There a Bigfoot?".[6] It is one of a series of discussions of problematic issues in anthropology throughout their book. They start by generalizing the subject. They say reports from the Pacific Northwest to northern Michigan are consistent, an assertion that makes me question how well informed they are. Looking at the three sources they cite I find the sources are twenty to thirty years old. The sources include Sanderson's **Abominable Snowmen** (1960) and John Napier's **Bigfoot** (1972). The third source is a 1969 **Reader's Digest** condensation of a Sunday supplement article for the **Los Angeles Times**. [7]

Someone should tell these textbook writers that a lot has been published in the last 20 years. A few examples are: John Green's **Sasquatch File** (1973), **Sasquatch** by Don Hunter and Rene Dahinden (1973), **The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch** edited by Roderick Sprague and Grover Krantz (1977) [enlarged in 1979], **Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us** by John Green (1978), **Bigfoot** by Kenneth Wylie (1980), **The Bigfoot Casebook** by the Bords (1982). After the Sasquatch conference in 1978 two books appeared: **Manlike Monsters on Trial** edited by M. Halpin and M. Ames (1980) and **The Sasquatch and other Unknown Hominoids** edited by V. Markotic and G. Krantz (1984). There are others.

More recent articles than the 1969 one might have helped. Such articles include two written by myself that appeared in **The Minnesota Archaeologist** in the late 1970's. Nelson and Jurmain would have found other helpful articles reprinted in some of the books above.

Parenthetically, I can comment that some of the treatments of "Bigfoot" by anthropologists are not helpful. They seem to forget that within cultures a certain subject can have various uses. Within our own American culture, for example, some people want to interview "Bigfoot" observers and try to establish that some kinds of new species are being seen. Others in our culture use "Bigfoot" to sell such things as jeeps and pizza on television. Reading some of these anthropologists makes me think of someone looking at our culture and trying to define "Bigfoot" based solely upon the content of television commercials with a "Bigfoot" theme.

Nelson and Jurmain follow their generalization with a statement that "**anything** is possible" [the emphasis is theirs]. On the subject of the many reported sightings they recommend bears as the cause. They tell us that "the imagination can greatly influence our objectivity when primed with romantic tales of mythical beasts." This is an instance of begging the question. They have presupposed the conclusion in their argument.

The many footprints and the famous Roger Patterson film of 1967 could have been faked, say Nelson and Jurmain, so nothing else need be said about them.

The thrust of this treatment, however, is the lack of fossil finds. They note the lack of remains for any hominoid species in the New World except mankind. They expand upon this point by focusing on *Gigantopithecus* as -- in their view -- the primary candidate for their simplified Bigfoot. They ask why bones and teeth for this

fossil type have not been found here in North America. Later still they complain of the lack of evidence ("nary a trace") for a migration from Asia, and they reiterate the absence of a fossil remnant here while the species has existed for a half million years. This is the favorite refuge of professionals who feel pressured to say something about "Bigfoot." If another example is needed, Dr. Mary Young in a 1970 article wrote that "of major significance is the conspicuous absence of skeletal material." [8]

As mentioned at the outset, I identify Gigantopithecus with True Giants, a specific category of reports. If we define the classic Bigfoot as the creature in the Patterson film, which is not a True Giant, then the identity of Bigfoot in my view is Paranthropus (a.k.a. Australopithecus robustus). This identity for Bigfoot is not new, having been ably explained by Gordon Strassenburgh Jr. [9] and probably others have favored this view. My disagreement with Nelson and Jurmain over the primary candidate does not deny the validity of their questions. In fact, my views double the need for answers. Where are the fossils for Gigantopithecus and for Paranthropus? I am happy to respond to these questions.

But first let me note two very important things. The reports of hairy beings in North America are in harmony with what we are learning of the prehistory of the primates. The beings reported for centuries are not simply embodiments of anyone's myths; people are describing **survivals of the known past**. Also important is the fact that this particular past of primate evolution has been revealed to us only recently.

I find six reasons why the hominoid fossils for the various "wild men" of North America are not already resting on scientific shelves. First, we can point out that the fossils of the two primates mentioned above are rare even in Asia, which is the logical continent of origin for a migration to North America. And what remains exist in Asia are not much, being teeth and partial jawbones. Fossilization is a rare event for many hominoids.

Secondly, I must point to the different cultural context in Asia that contributed to the initial discovery of Gigantopithecus. The finding of giant teeth by Dr. R. von Koenigswald in a Chinese apothecary shop has been told so often I feel it does not need retelling here. The teeth were regarded as "dragon bones" and so something special. In Asia there was a cultural motivation that caused bones not only to be preserved but also to be put on sale. There is no parallel in North America. There is, as we will see later, some evidence to suggest that bones found here have been lost or discarded. Gigantopithecus was first recognized because of the cultural regard for fossil bones in that part of the world.

Once a fossil type is recognized, people begin to look for more of the same. This brings us to the next reason. North Americans are looking for the fossils of Homo sapiens, not other primates. Strassenburgh has already made this point:

...as every sophomore anthropology major knows, those digging for fossils less than a million years old are likely to be looking for **Homo**. The site they select will relate to the habitat of **Homo**, not **Paranthropus**. [10]



Fig. 1. Thor's battle with the Giants. From a painting by M.E. Winge. Giants appear in traditions found in Europe, Asia, and North America. One explanation for giants over 10 feet tall is the survival of Gigantopithecus, a fossil primate known from Asia by finds of teeth and jawbones. This hypothesis is explored in Hall, "True Giants" and Hall, "True Giants Around the World" (see Note 1).

Next, the populations of the other primates may not have ever been large in North America. The American Indians and the Eskimos describe knowledge of them. They appear in the post-contact records of the new Americans. But when any one of the fossil types first arrived from Asia will remain guesswork until we preserve in context some of their fossils. We simply don't know the population sizes today or in a past of anywhere from 12,000 to 500,000 years. Nelson and Jurmain complain about a migration "through thousands of miles of environments exceedingly inhospitable to such a forest-adapted form [as Gigantopithecus]." The globe-girdling environments have changed drastically over geological time. The inhospitable environments of today were simply not a barrier in the past.

Our fifth reason for scarce fossils in the New World is the very dynamic nature of the planet Earth. North America has been recently scoured by glaciers. Much prehistory has been ground away under the force of ice. This is undeniable even if one does not favor, as I do, the hypothesis of a shifting planetary crust.[11] On the basis of that hypothesis the best place to look for fossils of moderate age is Cuba and the Caribbean, areas that were temperate zones when a glacial ice cap rested upon Hudson Bay.

The final reason for the absence today of fossil specimens is that finds of "giant bones" appear to have slipped through our fingers. There are accounts of them. Those accounts will be discussed after this look at the textbook treatment of Bigfoot is completed. Accounts without the bones are not hard evidence, of course. But the absence of both the bones and any claims to finds would validate the charge that there is "nary a trace." Contrary to this charge, people have claimed to have found and then lost such "giant bones."

Having allowed that anything is possible, Nelson and Jurmain allow that large mammals may remain to be discovered in North America and that Bigfoot might be one. They follow that statement with the remark that "the suggestion that this creature is a hominoid is about the least likely imaginable." I find this to be an extreme opinion supported by poor arguments. The large body of sightings and tracks is oversimplified and than summarily dismissed. The reasons for scarce fossils, which are found primarily in the conduct of primatology and in history of geological change, are entirely missed.

The treatment ends with a particularly abysmal passage. The writers conclude that the "intelligent beasts" might as well be extraterrestrials and that the subject is beyond "the realm of science." This is an attempt to belittle the entire subject. My view is that Harry Nelson and Robert Jurmain only put themselves beyond the realm of science with such a poor study of a serious subject. The subject and the young minds that are likely to be exposed to this textbook deserve better.

We now turn to the records of giant bones. Two instances were cited in a previous article on True Giants. They were from Scotland and North America.[12] There are many others. I will confine myself here to examples from the New World. They can be grouped for convenience into three categories: 1. Bones recently found and lost; 2. Bones found early in this century and in the 19th century; 3. Bones found centuries ago.

The lost bone most familiar to Sasquatch followers is likely to be one cited by John Green in **On the Track of the Sasquatch**. [13] He learned from a woman in British Columbia how she and her husband had found some bones 20 years earlier. They were trapping near the Toba River at the time. It was a remote spot meaning they had to carry out all they had. Over her husband's objections, she brought out the jawbone from among the bones found. It was large enough to fit over her face. It was kept around the house and shown to people for the next ten years until the house burned down.

Stephen Franklin, in a mid-century summary of the B.C. Sasquatch, penned this paragraph:

The trail of the Sasquatch is littered with accounts of discoveries of giant bones. Some were reported shipped by a Lillooet coroner to the provincial archives -- and lost in transit; others were ordered tossed into the turbulent waters of the Fraser Canyon by a C.P.R. [Canadian Pacific Railway] section foreman; others are said to be lying in deep caves along Turtle Valley, east of Kamloops. None has reached competent hands. [14]

Another extraordinary skeleton was reported from Mexico by Dana and Ginger Lamb. in the 1940's they were traveling down the western coast of Mexico. Their overland route paralleled a trip they had previously made by water. On the Rio de Baluarte in the state of Sinaloa they were shown to an Indian mound that had recently been disturbed by a flood. Artifacts were partially exposed. One of their guides, Jack Barker, observed that the next flood would probably carry away the entire mound. They began to excavate and came upon a large olla, which they described as twice the size of any oil jar from Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. They hesitated to open the jar, but Barker advised them that his requests for museums to look at things he had found were routinely ignored. They made an opening by lifting out cracked pieces of the jar. Inside they could see two skeletons, one small and one that looked gigantic. The finger bones were twice the length of Dana Lamb's own. The size of the shin bones looked to be also twice as long. He thought the skeleton could be that of a person 8 feet tall. They replaced the pottery pieces. Later they wrote a letter to the museum in Mexico City telling of the site. [15] In all probability, as was predicted by Jack Barker, the mound was simply washed away by the river that same year.

You might think that the mystery of finds of giant bones would be helped if only one bone could get into the hands of a professional anthropologist. Surely, we would suppose in today's world, any genuinely new bone would be recognized, preserved, studied, and then celebrated as a revelation. Unfortunately, recent history argues against such expectations. You might better expect extreme professional caution, shuffling around of the specimen, neglect, subsequent denial of any knowledge of it, no recordkeeping (but official protests that if it were important there would be a record), and the eventual loss of the specimen. I write these things because they have already happened. You will find all of these responses detailed in the history of the Minaret Skull. I recommend that this

history be read in its entirety in Appendix A to the book **Bigfoot** by B. Ann Slate and Alan Berry.[16]

In brief, this skull was found in August 1965 by a medical doctor, Robert Denton, while backpacking in the Sierra mountains of California. The find appeared to him to be human but was unusual for its size, shape, and "markings." He passed it on to a pathologist in Ventura County. That gentleman passed it along to two archaeologists at UCLA, Herman Bleibtreul and Jack Prost. Journalist Alan Berry learned of it in 1973. With the help of the pathologist, Gerald Ridge, Berry tried to locate the skull and learn its fate.

Bleibtreul and Prost had both moved on to other jobs. Prost was contacted and flatly denied any knowledge of such a skull. Bleibtreul in 1973 had already denied any knowledge when queried by a colleague. Berry contacted him and read a letter Ridge had written to Bleibtreul. At that point he remembered the skull and said it was "certainly unusual." He was sure the skull was in the collections at UCLA. Berry had already sought the skull from museum officials. They had no record of it and pointed to Prost or Bleibtreul as having it. The skull had disappeared.

We can naturally expect professionals to be cautious about committing themselves to new discoveries. I have no argument with that. But the history of the Minaret Skull advises us to expect the worst from the specialists in anthropology. They may be too scared to do anything constructive.

The second category of alleged giant bones are the many claims for bones found earlier, especially in the nineteenth century. As one example, Borden Burleson of Cashion, Arizona, in 1974 told Robert Thomas of the **Arizona Republic** about such bones.[17] His family had lived in Mexico for three generations. According to his family's history his grandfather, Alexander Burleson, had dug up "human skulls" comparable in size to basketballs. This occurred in the western Sierra Madre region of Mexico in 1898. Borden Burleson had spent some time in the area trying to find his own evidence of giants. He was quoted as saying, "Both the Yaquis and the Tarahumara Indians have legends of a race of giant Indians that were said to be there when their forebears first came to the area."

Around 1951 the magazine **DOUBT** published a collection of old claims to bone finds from Minnesota.[18] Duluth resident Jack Clayton gathered them from newspapers and such sources as **The Aborigines of Minnesota**. I will not itemize them here. The original article can be consulted. (Numerous writers selling "true mysteries" have borrowed from Clayton's article in the past forty years, often without giving him credit.) I think similar collections could be made around the country.

In support of this view is a page in **The North Jersey Highlander** for Spring 1973.[19] The editor, W. Mead Stapler, reports there his finding three references to giant skeletons and teeth in New York.

There are three newspaper reports from the 1930's that have -- like Clayton's items -- been a mainstay of "true mystery" writers. This is because the stories appeared in the **New York Times**. They give brief accounts of giant finds in Sonora, Mexico (2 Dec 1930), in Nicaragua (14 Feb 1936), and in Florida (9 June 1936).

I do not assume that all claims are correct in their identity. The truth can only come from a close examination of each claim. Twenty years ago a publication that I helped to edit advocated at my suggestion that the original finds for such claims be sought out. We pointed out, as a good example, how a Canadian zoologist had pursued an old account of a fossil whale bones. They had been found in 1906 and much later were mentioned in a book of local history. Richard Harrington spent a year tracking them down and found them in a barn loft.[20] I continue to recommend that the value of old accounts is that they might lead to such a find if they were pursued.

Bones once thought to be giants may well turn out to be some other kind of animal. One can read in Willy Ley's *Exotic Zoology* accounts of European finds ("giants' bones") that turned out to be the bones of extinct elephants.[21] Francis Buckland tells how a "giant in an Irish bog" turned out to be the headless remains of an Irish elk.[22] But it would be as unjustified to assume that all the claims are mistaken identity as it would be to assume that they all are genuine giant primates.

The oldest accounts of giant bones appear to me to be the least useful. We need only note that they are not absent. In South America finds of giant bones are claimed as evidence of giants in Ecuador.[23] Elsewhere on the same continent, in what is now the southernmost region of Bolivia, giant bones were also said to be found. Edmond Temple writes at some length on the "Giants of Tarija." The province was "particularly celebrated for bones and even whole skeletons of prodigious size, which have been found from time to time in ravines, and in the sides of banks and precipices." [24]

Some people may find it contradictory that I have begun this discussion explaining the scarcity of certain fossils and then I have concluded by suggesting the frequency of claims to finding them. I see no contradiction. We do not know how often in other parts of the world such bones have been found but never catalogued. The failure to examine all finds may be a common occurrence. I am suggesting that we have squandered our opportunities in the New World to identify what may have been the remains of giants.

I have not written all I have to say on this subject. Particular subjects not named here will fill a chapter in a future book (*Mysteries of the Far North*).

Having reviewed some of the history of giant bones, let us not repeat the mistakes of the past. Primatologists look for and find *Gigantopithecus* only in Asia. In the New World only *Homo* is sought and that is what is found. When professionals themselves find fossils in their original place they have few problems. In the Americas giant bones found by anyone else are not going to be given a fair hearing. You can, if you like, call this the seventh reason why no non-human and recent primate fossils have been verified in the New World. Professional anthropologists are paralyzed by fear.

The fear was explained to me in 1968 by a teaching assistant, Robert Lynch. I was taking an introductory course in physical anthropology when we had a discussion about "Bigfoot" and the Roger Patterson film then in the news. He advised me that scientists were not going to look into "Bigfoot." He cited the Piltdown hoax which had embarrassed many British anthropologists. He told me Americans in

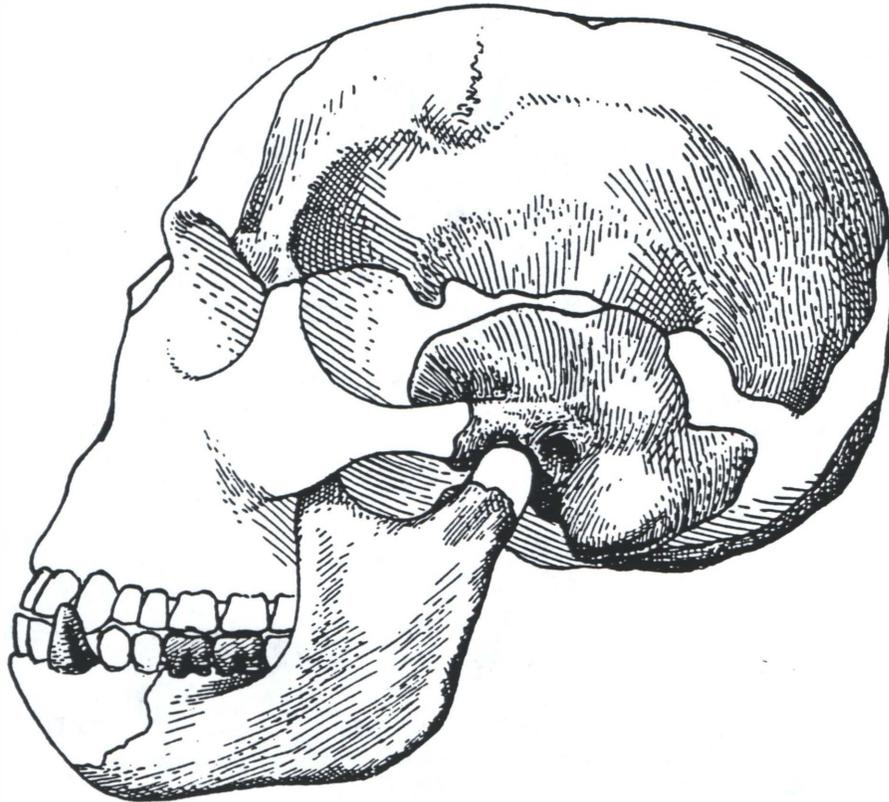


Fig. 2. A reconstruction of the "Piltdown Skull" by Professor John Hunter. Piltdown Man is now known to have been a hoax. Unveiled in 1912, it was included in textbooks and taught as an important find in human evolution through the 1940's. In 1953 it was exposed as a composite of a recent skull and the jaw of an orangutan. See Ronald Millar, *The Piltdown Men* (NY: St. Martin's, 1972), Frank Spencer, *Piltdown: A Scientific Forgery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990).

the field were fearful of getting drawn into another hoax of any kind. He also advised me that new ideas were simply unwelcome in the real world of science. While he was personally supportive of my curiosity, he gave me examples of people who were discouraged from pursuing new ideas. One example that I still remember was of dentistry student in that very university. He had proposed a new procedure for a particular dental problem. He was told that there was already a procedure in place and that he should forget his idea.

The paramount reason there are no fossils for "giants" of any stripe is that no one is looking for them. Should we ever stop collectively stumbling through the New World landscape, either ignoring or losing the unusual bones there, we should be ready for some surprises. The three species I have described in my writings -- Gigantopithecus, Paranthropus, and a relative of the Asian Yeti -- and still others yet to be detailed are all out there. Their bones will one day turn up, either fresh or fossilized. If the vast majority of physical anthropologists could only get over their career-long aversion to these topics, their most exciting and productive days would lie ahead of them.

NOTES

1. Mark A. Hall, "True Giants," WONDERS 1(2): 9, 11-23 (1992); "True Giants Around the World," WONDERS 1(3): 31-47 (1992).
2. Harry Nelson and Robert Jurmain, INTRODUCTION TO PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 5th ed (St. Paul: West, 1991), 519. In the 4th edition of this textbook there are two pages devoted to "The Frozen Neanderthal" (1988; pp.528-9). This feature was dropped from the 5th edition. The authors discuss a reported corpse of something large, man-like, and hairy which was publicized in 1969. This writer played a small part in that episode and so followed it closely. In contrast to the Nelson/Jurmain treatment, I would recommend another treatment as the more accurate among the many published summaries of it. That would be "The Enigmatic Iceman" (p.111) in MYSTERIOUS CREATURES by the editors of Time-Life Books (Alexandria, Virginia, 1988).
3. Ivan T. Sanderson, ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN: LEGEND COME TO LIFE (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1961), 318, 326, 357.
4. John Pfeiffer, THE EMERGENCE OF MAN (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 204; (in the 2nd edition, 1972, p. 228).
5. Myra Schackley, NEANDERTHAL MAN (England: Duckworth Press, 1980; Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1980); Myra Schackley, STILL LIVING?: YETI, SASQUATCH AND THE NEANDERTHAL ENIGMA (NY: Thames and Hudson, 1983).
6. Nelson and Jurmain, PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 5th ed, 346.
7. Sanderson, ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN; John Napier, BIGFOOT: THE YETI AND SASQUATCH IN MYTH AND REALITY (London: Cape, 1972; NY: Dutton, 1973); James B. Shuman, "Is There an American Abominable Snowman?"

READER'S DIGEST, January 1969, (condensed from WEST Magazine, 15 December 1968).

8. Mary M. Young, "Comments on 'Sasquatchery'," WESTERN CANADIAN JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY I(2): 84 (July 1970).

9. Gordon Strassenburgh Jr., "Perceptions and Images of the Wild Man" in THE SCIENTIST LOOKS AT THE SASQUATCH edited by R. Sprague and G. Krantz (Moscow, Idaho: University Press of Idaho, 1977) 124-25.

10. Ibid., 125.

11. Charles Hapgood, PATH OF THE POLE (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1970).

12. Hall, "True Giants Around the World," 34, 42.

13. John Green, ON THE TRACK OF THE SASQUATCH (Agassiz, B.C.: Cheam, 1969), 72.

14. Stephen Franklin, "On the Trail of the Sasquatch," Canada Wide Feature Service, reprinted in FATE Magazine, June 1960, pp. 54-63.

15. Dana and Ginger Lamb, QUEST FOR THE LOST CITY (1951; reprint Santa Barbara, California: Santa Barbara Press, 1984), 64-65.

16. B. Ann Slate and Alan Berry, BIGFOOT (NY: Bantam Books, 1976), 160-65.

17. Robert L. Thomas, "Canyon Explorer Seeks Hardy Companion," Arizona REPUBLIC, 23 November 1974, B1, B2.

18. Jack Clayton, "The Giants of Minnesota," DOUBT: THE FORTEAN SOCIETY MAGAZINE No. 35, pp. 120-22 (the issue has no date; approx. 1951).

19. W. Mead Stapler, "A Mystery in History," THE NORTH JERSEY HIGHLANDER, Spring 1973, p.2.

20. "Giant Skeletons," PURSUIT, July 1973, 69.

21. Willy Ley, EXOTIC ZOOLOGY (NY: Viking Press, 1959) 28-35.

22. Francis Buckland, CURIOSITIES OF NATURAL HISTORY, Fourth Series (London: Richard Bentley, 1891), 27-28.

23. Adolph Bandelier, "Traditions of Precolumbian Landings on the Western Coast of South America," AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST 7: 250-70 (1905). Reprinted in ANCIENT MAN compiled by William R. Corliss (Glen Arm, MD: Sourcebook Project, 1978), see pp. 760-61.

24. Edmond Temple, TRAVELS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF PERU Vol.2 (London, 1830), 320-22.

THE END OF SKY-LINES

by Mark A. Hall

In 1969 "sky-lines" were first noticed over Caldwell, New Jersey. These were strands of plastic that were stretched taut high above people's heads. The strands seemed to stretch from one horizon to the other. Sometimes they would go slack and drop into yards. When pulled upon the line would coil up in long lengths. Then the line would break, leaving two broken ends and no clue to its origin.

I have no firsthand accounts for what started this "sky-line" mystery, only the summaries of others. It is said there was more than one over Caldwell, several in 1970 and one in 1969. A small sample of the plastic strand was identified by the DuPont Company as a nylon or perhaps a copolymer.[1]

One line was observed in place for over a month. Then it gave way. A large amount was pulled in. Elsewhere a line was hauled in for one hour before it broke at the invisible "other end." People looked for kites or kite-fliers but none were seen.

As the 1970's went on, more instances of "sky-lines" surfaced. One person had seen such a line stretched over Greenwich Village in Manhattan. It eventually fell and coiled upon a fire escape. A year later another was seen close by.[2]

Something similar was seen in June of 1972 over Elberton, Georgia. It was lowest over a house. There it was grasped and many yards were hauled in. The **Atlanta Journal and Constitution** for 11 June reported:

There were two kinds of material in the line. That pulled from the west was a fluffy, shiny, white substance. That from the east was a tiny, hard-finished green material something like a fishing line. Both were hard to break.

No kites and no other sources for the lines were put forth. In eastern Pennsylvania in the early 1970's there was also a fuss about the omnipresent funny lights in the skies we call UFOs. At the time there was talk some UFOs were just experimental "electric helicopters" belonging to the military. There was further discussion about whether or not there were even such things as "electric helicopters"! All of this caused one wag, Adolph Heuer Jr. by name, to suggest to me that the "sky-lines" were extension cords for those electric choppers.

The subject of "sky-lines" came down to earth at last in 1978. The scene shifted to the neighborhood of Greensburg, Ohio, which is outside Akron. The **Beacon Journal** for 19 May reported that thousands of feet of fishing line had dropped into Green and Lawrence townships. John Wright found a line tangled in a bush in his yard. When he pulled on the line he discovered it seemed endless. He and a neighbor began hauling and filled eight fishing reels. As usual, the line then broke and seemed to float away.

Wright told his coworkers about this at a General Motors plant. Ken Croasmun was one who was not impressed by this tale. But when he returned home he discovered a line snagged in a tree in his own yard! He followed its length for about 2,000 feet but lost sight

of it. This was the fate of all the other "sky-line" trackers before him.[3]

The following day Tom Ryan of the Akron **Beacon Journal** presented the world with the explanation for the local mystery. In all likelihood a similar answer is behind the previous "sky-line" occurrences. Here is what Tom Ryan wrote:

The floating mystery fishing line mystery of Green and Lawrence townships appears to have been solved. The lines, which floated down in two locations six miles apart, apparently came from 18,000 feet of six-pound test line used by Richard Walker of Fairpark Avenue in Canal Fulton to launch a kite last Wednesday.

Walker, 32, said he spliced three 6,000-foot lines before his kite got away. "We tried to follow it with a telescope, but we lost sight of where it headed," he said. About 1,000 feet of the line was reeled in by John Wright on Michelle Drive in Lawrence Township, two miles from Walker's launching site. Another 2,000 or more feet is tied to a piece of farm equipment in the yard of Kenneth Croasmun on Massillon Road in Green Township.

"I like to fly kites," Walker said. "Last year I lost one using string and decided to try the stronger fishing line this time."

Solution of the mystery was a disappointment to Barberton balloonists Bob Zanella and Bev Sulzbach. They had volunteered to fly out of Croasmun's yard Monday and trace the floating line. "We kind of hoped we'd find a flying saucer on the other end." Zanella said.[4]

Obviously kite-fliers in New Jersey, Georgia, and New York have shared the desire to see how far their kites could go on fishing line. There is reason for these people to be shy about owning up, apart from the curious pollution of leaving fishing line strung over trees for thousands of feet. The Federal Aviation Administration limits the use of kites above 150 feet. The FAA must be informed if a kite is to be flown any higher. The reason is that kites can be a hazard to aircraft, especially to helicopters.

NOTES

1. "Sky-lines," PURSUIT (January 1971), p. 6.
2. "More Sky-lines" PURSUIT (July 1972), pp. 53-54.
3. Tom Ryan, "This 'fish' tale has no ending," Akron (Ohio) BEACON JOURNAL, 19 May 1978,
4. Tom Ryan, "The 'fish' was a kite gone wild," Akron (Ohio) BEACON JOURNAL, 20 May 1978.

MAGAZINES

Mysteries and unusual local color are found everywhere. America now has many regional magazines that can be a source of fortan articles. Each of these magazines has a state or a region as a focus.

For many years **Yankee Magazine**, **Vermont Life**, and **Arizona Highways** were the most noticeable among them. Now their ranks have been joined by many slick publications. They are too numerous to attempt to list them all. More seem to be coming along all the time.

Here are some samples of recent articles.

"Seeing Serpents" by Jessica Maxwell, about sea serpents in the Pacific Ocean pursued by Paul Leblond and E.L. Bousfield. **Pacific Northwest**, April 1993 (222 Dexter Ave. N., Seattle, Washington 98109.)

"Has the Cat Come Back? Updating the Catamount Legend" by Stephen Mease, cougars in Vermont, **Vermont Life**, Winter 1992 (6 Baldwin St., Montpelier, VT 05602).

"New Age Dowsing" by Chris Bohjalian, the American Society of Dowsers in Danville, Vermont, **Vermont Life**, Autumn 1992.

"The Mystery of the Menehune" by Jama Kim Rattigan. This is the best article I have ever read on the subject of the Hawaiian "Little People." It will not prevent me, however, from writing an article myself for a future issue of **Wonders**. There is more to be said on this subject. In **Aloha**, August 1992 (PO Box 3260, Honolulu, HI 96801).

"The Melungeon Mystery Solved" by N. Brent Kennedy. In search of his heritage, Brent Kennedy may indeed have found the sixteenth century source of the Melungeons. They are an ethnic community in the Appalachians. They have long been the subject of speculations about their origins. **Blue Ridge Country**, July-August 1992 (PO Box 21535, Roanoke, VA 24018). This article was preceded by "In Search of the Melungeons" by Joan Schroeder in the July-August 1991 issue. A letter-to-the-editor from Brent Kennedy adds more information in the September-October 1992 issue.

"The Spell of Enchanted Rock" by Laura Black, the granite dome in the Texas Hill Country is now a State Natural Area, **Texas Highways**, June 1992 (1101 East Anderson Lane, Austin, TX 78752).

* * *

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In other publications:

Updates on finds for fossil primates can be found in "A New African Ancestor" by John Van Couvering. *Natural History* 6/92, pp. 64, 66-7. On *Otavipithecus* found in Namibia. Page 67 has brief updates on other recent finds. In *Nature* for 4 June 1992, Vol. 357, pp. 404-7, you will find "New Middle Pleistocene Hominid Crania from Yunxian in China" by Li Tianyuan and Dennis Etler.

"Strange footprints" and stories of the mehti are featured from a 1992 trip to Nepal by Peter Matthiessen in *Conde Naste Traveler* for November 1992 (360 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017). The article is "Journey to the Edge of the World," pp. 148-59, 170-82.

BOOKS OF NOTE

Look for *The Book of Chinese Beliefs: A Journey into the Chinese Inner World* by Frena Bloomfield. Here is a book that is straightforward and comprehensible on the Chinese way of ordering some of the mysteries of life. The book is now in paperback from Ballantine, October 1989, \$3.95, 231 pp., originally published in 1983 from Arrow Books in Great Britain.

DeLorme Mapping of Freeport, Maine, continues to publish the best state atlases ever seen in the U.S.A. A 156-page book for Alaska came out late last year. The price for this one is \$19.95. Since then Wyoming and Utah have appeared. Each of those is \$14.95. The publishers project that Maryland/Delaware will appear in June 1993. Arizona is scheduled for November 1993. You can reach DeLorme Mapping at P.O. Box 298, Freeport, Maine 04032 or call 1-800-227-1656.

<p>Coming in Future Issues of WONDERS</p> <p>Why the World is Full of Wonders</p> <p>Mysteries in Southeast Asia</p> <p>Menehune, the Other Hawaiians</p> <p>The Indian Rope Trick</p>

AUTHORS

Edward Rowe Snow (1902-1982)

Edward Rowe Snow wrote 97 books. They were books about the sea and about New England. They were about all the things associated with the sea (ships, sailors, pirates, ghosts, monsters, and wonders) and about much of the history and mystery of New England. I have only about 20 of his books. Yet I find I have more of his books than the entire library system at the University of Minnesota. I fear he may not be greatly appreciated beyond the region and borders of New England. His books can be enjoyed by people everywhere. I urge you to seek them out for yourself.

A capsule biography and a listing of most his works can be found in **Contemporary Authors**, Vols.9-12 rev., pp. 849-50 (1974). I will list below a few of the titles and a mere sampling of the many topics treated in that book. His publisher was usually Dodd, Mead & Company of New York.

THE ROMANCE OF BOSTON BAY (1944)

STRANGE TALES FROM NOVA SCOTIA TO CAPE HATTERAS (1949)

TRUE TALES OF BURIED TREASURE (1952)

MYSTERIOUS TALES OF THE NEW ENGLAND COAST (1961) -- Dighton Rock, the disappearance of Nungesser and Coli, the Mary Celeste

ASTOUNDING TALES OF THE SEA (1965)

INCREDIBLE MYSTERIES AND LEGENDS OF THE SEA (1967) -- "Ghosts of Newport," "Frozen People," "Mermaids and Mermen."

FANTASTIC FOLKLORE AND FACT: NEW ENGLAND TALES OF LAND AND SEA (1968)

GREAT ATLANTIC ADVENTURES (1970)

GHOSTS, GALES AND GOLD (1972)

SUPERNATURAL MYSTERIES AND OTHER TALES (1974) -- "Phantom Ships," "Sea Monsters -- 1751 to 1848," "Sea Monsters -- 1886 to 1948."

THE ROMANCE OF CASCO BAY (1975)

MARINE MYSTERIES AND DRAMATIC DISASTERS OF NEW ENGLAND (1976)

BOSTON BAY MYSTERIES AND OTHER TALES (1977) -- Lizzie Borden.

Bruce Stanley Wright (1912-1975)

Bruce S. Wright was a rarity among naturalists. He was a professional scientist who was not afraid to pursue cryptozoological topics. He pursued one topic with special vigor, which is a necessity when one hopes to make a difference in one's own lifetime. His primary pursuit was the survival of the cougar in the northeastern states and eastern provinces of North America. When he began his study of the subject the eastern panther was considered extinct in that region. His first book on the subject, **The Ghost of North America**, was published in 1959 through a "vanity press," that is, by way of this paying for the publication himself. In 1972, however, the revised version, **The Eastern Panther**, was published by Clarke, Irwin, & Unwin in Toronto and New York. Wright also published articles on the subject through the years and became the focal point for unusual cat reports in that part of the world.

A recent widely-read article on cougars still managed to brush off the documentation of the animals in New Brunswick and Maine. This is just another indication to me that ignorance and professional jealousy die very hard indeed.

Wright also authored two articles on "Sasquatchery" (being "Sasquatchery -- To Date!" in the **Atlantic Advocate** for October 1969 and "The Gougou -- The Bigfoot of the East" in **George Haas' Bigfoot Bulletin** No. 25, 1971). He also investigated the possible survival of the West Indian monk seal. This interest probably put him onto the stories of the mysterious Lusca in the Bahamas. He wrote of it in "The Lusca of Andros" published in the **Atlantic Advocate** for June 1967.

A capsule biography of Wright can be found in **Contemporary Authors - Permanent Series Vol. 2 (1978)**, pp. 555-56. His books include:

HIGH TIDE AND AN EAST WIND -- THE STORY OF THE BLACK DUCK (1954)

THE GHOST OF NORTH AMERICA -- THE STORY OF THE EASTERN PANTHER (1959)

WILDLIFE SKETCHES NEAR AND FAR (1962)

THE MONARCH OF MULARCHY MOUNTAIN (1963)

BLACK DUCK SPRING (1966)

THE FROGMEN OF BURMA (1968)

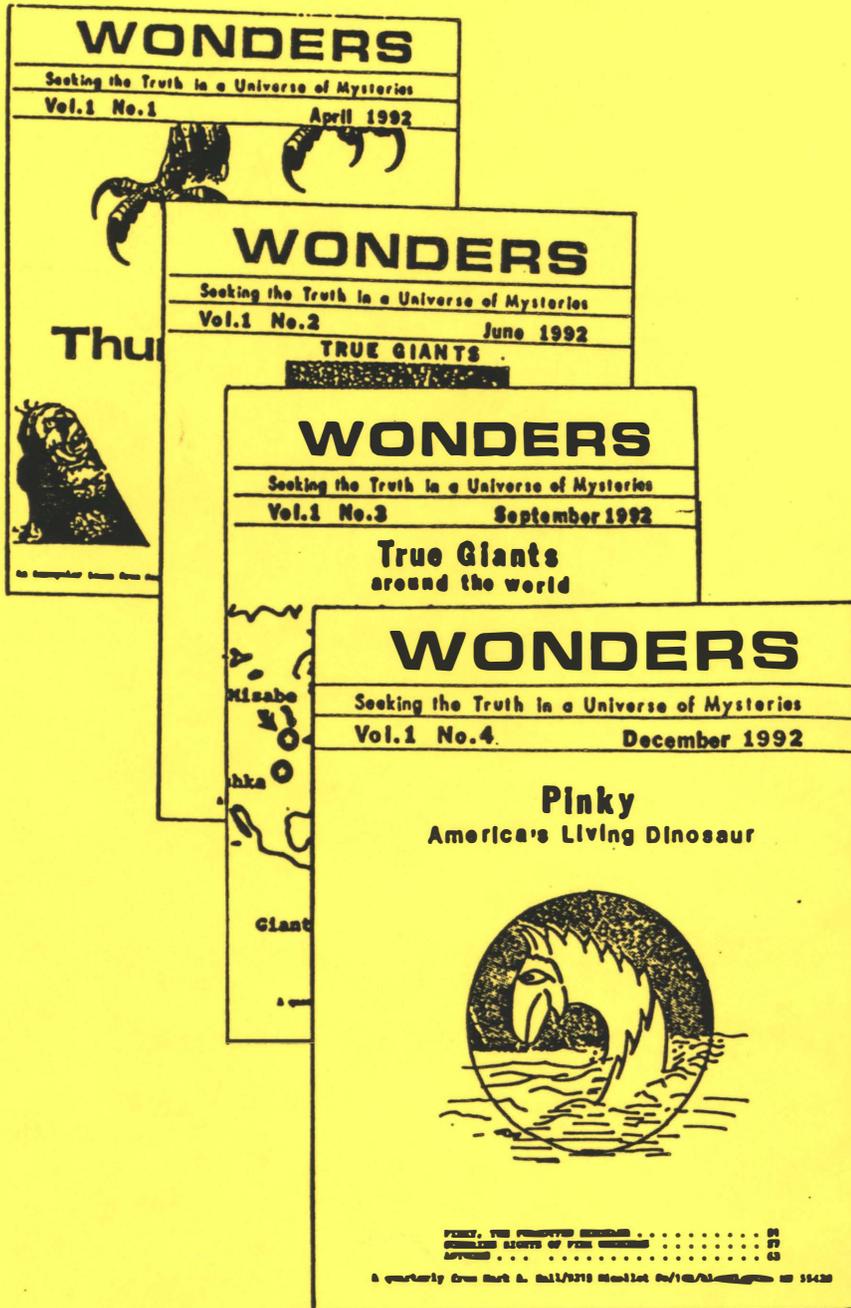
THE EASTERN PANTHER: A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL (1972)

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