

AFTER SNIPPY - WHAT NEXT?

Janet Bord

When a lengthy report on events in the San Luis Valley was received from researcher Stan Ferguson Mrs. Bord offered to make further enquiries on our behalf, and to summarise the more interesting of the accounts.

SNIPPY, the most famous horse in ufology, died in mysterious circumstances in September 1967, five years ago. The details are too well known to require re-telling here, but for those who wish to remind themselves of this strange case, two articles, by Coral Lorenzen and Donald Merker, appeared in the May 1968 issue of *Fate* magazine. Apart from giving the full details of the events following Snippy's death, these articles are also interesting because they present opposing viewpoints on the theory that UFOs were somehow involved in the affair. Mrs. Lorenzen's article is captioned "Proponents of UFO murder theory claim Snippy fought valiantly when attacked by something from the sky"; Mr. Merker's caption reads, "Opponents insist nothing was in the sky but stars and blame mass media for enigma they trumped up."

Whatever may be the truth of the matter, and we'll probably never know, there's no smoke without fire, or, to twist the old saying in this case, there's no fire without smoke. UFOs were immediately blamed for Snippy's death because, according to local reports, there had been strange aerial activity in the area previously. Other cases are known where UFO occupants have shown interest in terrestrial livestock, so why not in Snippy's case too? If what has been reported of the death is accurate, there are certainly mysterious features which do not appear to be easily explained.

However, since Snippy's death there have been many more reports of peculiar happenings in the locality, some more fortuitous than *ufoid*. Are these strange events genuinely mysterious, or are they the "no fire without smoke" referred to above? That is, did Snippy's death and the subsequent ballyhoo about UFOs cause a widespread state of mind over-receptive to the slightest happening which might be interpreted as mysterious? I am not in a position to judge what is true or false in this case, but I will now quote several representative cases reported from the San Luis Valley area of Colorado, USA, where it all happened, so that the reader can decide for himself.

The quotations all come from a report compiled by Stan Ferguson, Tom Adams, Kye Kastrop and Gary Massey, who formed a research group into aerial and related phenomena at East Texas State University in 1970 and investigated the events in the San Luis Valley. The following events are not in any chronological order. The Mrs. Lewis frequently referred to was Snippy's owner, and she firmly believes that her horse was a UFO victim.

I

"Mrs. Lewis related to us the reports of a duck-billed platypus in and around Crater Lake, above Como Lake. Mrs. Lewis's father saw it on occasion. Others have reported it and Leonard Calkins of Fort Collins, Colorado, Mrs. Lewis's cousin, saw a platypus approximately 4 years ago and attempted repeatedly to capture a specimen, to no avail. Mr. Calkins and the Lewises submitted a report on the animal to the National Geographic Society, only to have the report rejected as invalid since there were 'no such things in existence' in that area."

II

"The Lewises mentioned that they, along with Harry King (Mrs. Lewis's brother, on whose ranch Snippy died—J.B.), had noticed that, on mornings after a fresh snowfall in the mountains, fresh rocks and debris could be seen strewn over the snow as though the product of some excavation. This has been noticed in the canyon immediately south of the area where the Lewis cabin is located.

"They reported that, at one time fairly recently and since the death of Snippy, they had been out driving in their truck when they observed a light which originated from what appeared to be a 'Quonset hut'-shaped object* near the base of Mt. Blanca. The object gave the impression of resting just above the ground. They began to observe the phenomenon closely and stopped their truck some distance away. They then noticed that 'something' began moving towards the truck. Mrs. Lewis described it as a dark, ambiguous shape; an estimation of its size would be '20ft. tall and 5ft. wide.' The Lewises could discern no definite shape. This occurred at 12.15 a.m., and at this point Mrs. Lewis became hysterical and highly agitated. She induced Mr. Lewis to drive away, towards Alamosa.

"The sighting had been made no more than 20 miles from Alamosa. After driving approximately 8 miles Mr. Lewis stopped, turned the truck round, and they observed a light originating from the location of the object. They resumed the drive back to Alamosa, arriving at home at 3.30 a.m. (After Mr. Lewis stopped the truck and turned round, they remained there for no more than 5-10 minutes.) During the drive back to Alamosa, Mr. Lewis had to stop several times, as Mrs.

* A Quonset hut is the US equivalent of the Nissen hut.

Lewis seemed very ill and was subject to periodic vomiting. The Lewises have no explanation for the time discrepancy."

III

"Sixteen people had been at the Lewis cabin (located approximately 8,500ft. up in the Sangre de Cristo range of mountains, 4 road miles from Harry King's ranch—J.B.) one night, including Dr. Leo Sprinkle, Mr. and Mrs. Don Richmond, and Mr. and Mrs. Berle Lewis, and others. Eight persons left in two cars to make field observations, and eight stayed in the Lewis cabin. The field party contacted the cabin party at the outset and then was unable to obtain a response from the cabin for a two-hour period. They returned to the cabin only to have someone in the cabin party comment that they had been in contact with the radio of the field party only a matter of five or so minutes before. A check of watches disclosed that the cabin party was unable to account for their experiences during the two-hour period.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lewis at one time had an extended stay in northern Colorado and were returning home to Alamosa, although they were both extremely tired. They left Walsenburg and began the approach up the eastern slope of the La Veta Pass. Suddenly, and much to their amazement, they found themselves driving down the western slope of the pass. They could not recall having actually driven over the pass. They reached Alamosa, checked their watches, and noted that, to have made the trip from Walsenburg to Alamosa in the time indicated, they would have had to have travelled at a speed of well over 100 miles per hour.

"In their cabin one night, they observed a tremendous number of tiny pinpoints of light in a meadow which lies below the cabin at the very base of the Sangre de Cristo slope and adjacent to the Sand Dunes Road. Several other persons were in the cabin and observed the phenomenon. An investigation of the meadow the next morning produced nothing out of the ordinary.

"Mrs. Lewis related that Larry Childs, a UFO researcher and an airline employee, had visited Harry King to view the blinded, deformed calf. At that time, however, Mr. King had destroyed the calf. Childs was able to obtain one of the calf's deformed hooves, and proceeded with it to his home in northern Colorado. On the way, Childs was involved in a one-car automobile accident. It was reported that the steering column on Child's car had the appearance of being sawed or cut.

"Mrs. Lewis felt that the area around Uraka Canyon and Uraka Cemetery had had possibly the highest concentration of UFO sightings and anomalous activity.

"She told us of two young Alamosa residents who were parked at the cemetery one night and observed a 'creature' of some sort.

"The Lewises have found very large and unidentified tracks in the area in which their cabin is located. The tracks were reportedly spaced at a distance of nine feet apart."

IV

"In the vicinity of the Lewis cabin one morning at approximately 10.00 a.m., Mr. Lewis and a friend of his heard an unusual and unidentified scream or cry in the

mountains above them. Mr. Lewis is familiar with the cry of a cat or cougar, but this apparently would not account for the sound.

"The Lewises said that on several occasions at the cabin, unidentified sounds similar to 'motors' have been heard. Also, a rumbling sound seemed to come from the ground and the chandelier hanging from the cabin ceiling has been observed swinging and swaying back and forth.

"Mrs. Lewis feels that UFOs may very well be hostile and that they may 'come out in force' someday."

V

"On one occasion, Mr. Wilson (a member of APRO; he and his wife have seen anomalous lights from the Lewis cabin—J.B.) was returning from the Great Sand Dunes with a lady who is a good friend of theirs. They were travelling south on the Sand Dunes Road when, after passing the Zapata Ranch area, the lady noticed something in the valley to the right of them, and commented that she didn't think that there was a "motel" in that part of the valley (that portion of the valley is uninhabited). Mr. Wilson glanced to the right and did indeed see what he described as 'walls' or a structure which appeared to be about two stories tall. They stopped their vehicle and backed up to the point from which they had seen the 'structure,' but it was no longer to be seen.

"Mrs. Wilson reported that she does not ordinarily sleep well; but after she has observed an anomaly, she tends to sleep extremely well.

"The Wilsons do not necessarily subscribe to the idea that UFOs may be hostile. Mrs. Wilson feels that they are most definitely harmless.

"They have spent many nights parked in the valley to observe anomalies. On several occasions they have experienced buzzing sounds or high-pitched whines although nothing was sighted visually. Once, the whine was so intense that it induced pain and Mrs. Wilson was partially paralysed so that she could not speak."

VI

"Mr. Robinson (who owns a small house trailer near the Lewis cabin—J.B.) spoke to us quite readily. He denied ever seeing any unusual lights in the area or experiencing any of the other unusual phenomena that others have reported. He feels, though, that people in the area have been seeing 'something,' although he reserved judgment on whatever the 'something' might be. He spoke of mysterious tracks which have been found in the area of Uraka Cemetery. He mentioned that compass deviations were quite common in the area, and that he had seen this occur."

VII

"On one occasion, Mr. Richmond (an APRO investigator, who was the first person to begin a thorough examination of the Snippy incident—J.B.) was in the Lewis cabin observing the San Luis Valley from the picture window. He heard a sound as though something had struck the roof of the cabin. He grabbed a flashlight and approached the door leading to the outside. He stopped at the door and he feels that here he may have received some type of 'contact.' He felt that something

had told him that a 'surveying disc' had accidentally struck the cabin roof and rapidly moved off. He also sensed that he was being told not to go outside to investigate. Mr. Richmond hesitated for 45 minutes before going outside, only to find nothing.

"On another occasion, Mr. Richmond saw a large white light from the cabin window and called it to the attention of Dr. Leo Sprinkle and others present. When the others left the cabin to observe it, the light had begun to fade rapidly from view. Mr. Richmond feels that this was his best sighting, personally.

"Mr. Richmond and Duane Martin (of the US Forest Service) were parked in the San Luis Valley one night and observing the mountains facing them. They were standing in the road when the headlights of one of their cars suddenly came on."

VIII

"Mr. Richmond believed that his telephone had been tapped 'a couple of times' and that Mrs. Berle Lewis's phone was constantly tapped.

"Mr. Richmond feels that Harry King's blinded, deformed calf may have been exposed to radiation. The calf was photographed by Mr. Richmond before Harry King destroyed it. On the day that Richmond was at the King Ranch to view the calf, a large jet interceptor with what appeared to be conventional military insignias flew over and repeatedly 'buzzed' the ranch area."

IX

"Once, while observing anomalies, Mr. Richmond experienced a time lapse or blackout of sorts which lasted for about half an hour."

X

"Mr. Richmond said that, on the night when something struck the roof of the Lewis cabin, he felt that 'something' had told him to leave the cabin area, not to return until it would be indicated that it was safe to return. The Richmonds left the cabin and did not return for three months. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Berle Lewis also felt that they should refrain from staying at the cabin. They also remained away for the same three-month period. One night, the Richmonds and the Lewises both decided, independently, that it was safe to visit the cabin, which they did.

"The Richmonds have investigated the report of Kenneth Flack, a college student who resides in Pueblo. One night Mr. Flack was driving alone on a highway at the northern end of the San Luis Valley. He was about to pass two other vehicles: a Ford with a Texas licence plate and a camper containing a family from Pueblo. As Flack was about to pass, the lights on all three vehicles went out and the motors stopped. Flack pulled over to the side of the highway and noticed a light in a field off to his right. The light seemed to be approximately 350 yards away. Flack left his car, crossed a fence which stood about 50 yards from the highway, and proceeded towards the light. Flack then noted that the light originated from a 'football-shaped object.' The object appeared to be suspended a short distance above a base of some sort which exhibited

three tripod-like legs upon which it rested. As Flack approached the object, he noted that the 'football' seemed to 'swivel' such that one end pointed towards him. At this time Flack observed a ray or light which originated from the object. The light reached him and, as he began to throw up his hands in front of him, he blacked out. His next sensation was of extreme coldness, and he realised that someone was carrying him.

"The passengers had observed Flack from the highway as he approached the object. They saw the object turn towards him and, although they did not see a light or ray originating from the object, they noted that Flack was suddenly enveloped by an aura of light and he appeared to become paralysed. The legs of the object's base then appeared to fold under the base and the object rose into the air and took off at high speed towards the north-east. The passengers in the other two vehicles noted that the aura surrounding Flack remained for five minutes after the object had vanished from sight. The aura then disappeared and they approached Flack, who at that time was regaining consciousness, noting when they touched him that he seemed very cold. The persons in one of the vehicles then took Flack to his college dormitory."

XI

"Once, while visiting at a friend's home in Pueblo, Mr. Richmond noticed, as he left the house, a jeep parked across the street which suddenly left the area at a considerable rate of speed as Richmond stepped out the door of the house. While Richmond had been in the house, his friends thought that whoever was driving the jeep had brought Richmond and was waiting for him. They were about to suggest that Richmond ask his 'friend' to come in. As Richmond left the house and proceeded to his car, the jeep drove away and Mr. Richmond caught a glimpse of the driver. He noted nothing particularly unusual about him, except that he seemed to be rather small. A circle was inscribed on the door of the jeep. Within the circle was a lightning bolt and something also that Mr. Richmond thought was reminiscent of a bird. A car with a lightning bolt on the door was involved in the Dale Spaur case."

XII

"Terry Vitullo, who resides in Pueblo, Colorado, is an APRO member who works closely with Don Richmond. Mr. Vitullo has a great interest in photography, and he has captured many anomalies on film . . . A photograph of a man appeared in the prints of one of these rolls of film, after processing. Mr. Vitullo does not know this man (attired in business suit and tie, photographed from the chest up, blank expression, male Caucasian, background appears to be a wall of some sort) nor does he recall taking his picture. The other prints from that roll of film are of the sky taken from Mr. Vitullo's window."

XIII

"The night of March 26-27 was the coldest night we experienced at the Lewis cabin. We had noticed earlier that a great deal of snow seemed to be falling on the higher peaks. The four of us slept in the living room

of the cabin, where the fireplace was located. As we were preparing for bed, we noticed that the room seemed abnormally warm. It soon became extremely hot and we were so uncomfortable that we were unable to sleep. The fire was moderately blazing, but no more so than it had been any other night, when the room would still be slightly chilled in places, even as the fire blazed, and we usually slept in some kind of clothing. This night, however, we discarded our clothing but were still unable to attain any degree of comfort, and we perspired freely. The heat eventually subsided and we were able to sleep."

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Taken at their face value, these incidents seem to present overwhelming evidence for the existence of "something" in the area, but human psychology is a revealing study, and people have been known to read far more into an event than is valid. Consider how many times an extra-bright planet in our night sky has been

positively identified as a UFO. And I myself was once present on a well-known Wiltshire hill when someone who shall be nameless claimed as a UFO a moving light which was quite obviously a satellite. Wishful thinking plus a touch of local hysteria is all that is necessary to turn straightforward events into mysteries, and we must all beware of falling victim to this.

However, I am quite convinced that strange things *are* happening, often unnoticed or unrecognised, all over the world, and the events in the San Luis Valley may be just another expression of this global phenomenon. The only problem is, how do we distinguish between objective and subjective happenings? Even subjective happenings may be controlled by an outside agency, and so perhaps it isn't necessary to try to categorise events into "true" or "false," "real" or "unreal." Perhaps I'm being too sensitive about the whole subject of interpreting "anomalous events," or perhaps this confusion and uncertainty is all engineered by THEM. Who knows? I certainly don't.

MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

Buddhism, Christianity and UFOs

Dear Sir,—Ted Holiday (*Was "God" at Aberfan?* FSR July/August 1972) believes that the Buddhist world view offers a more reasonable habitat than Christianity for UFO and related phenomena. In fact, whether it is support for the "big bang" theory you want, or a realistic approach to the mysterious prevalence of evil, and evil entities in all kinds of guises, the Bible is emphatically your book. Certainly it is cryptic at times; certainly the imagery can be baffling. But it deals with things which must remain (except for glorious essentials) beyond our comprehension so long as we are trapped in time and space. I find it a good deal more convincing than the nebulous obfuscations of Buddhism.

Yours truly,
Peter Jackson,
5 Walsingham Road,
New Addington, Surrey.
September 22, 1972.

Piri-Reis map:

Dr. Paul Davies replies

Dear Sir,—Several people have written to me in connection with my recent article on the Piri-Reis map, pointing out the absence of any reference to a book called *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* by C. H. Hapgood, in which a discussion of the map occupies a prominent position.

Whilst preparing the article I tried unsuccessfully to obtain a copy of the book (which was not published in the U.K.). I was, however, familiar with

Hapgood's earlier work *Earth's Shifting Crust* which contains a footnote about the map. In this footnote, the speculation described in my article is already attributed to Mallery *et al.* I therefore did not regard Hapgood as an original source on the matter, and decided to omit the reference.

Since that time a copy of *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* has been very kindly lent to me by Dr. Ronald Westrum. As I had assumed, the book does not contain any further speculation, but concentrates instead on Mr. Hapgood's efforts to obtain a projection for the map which would justify Mallery's claim that a portion of Antarctica is included. I do not regard these efforts as successful, but in view of the apparent interest in this author I am preparing a sequel to my article in which these matters are discussed in detail.

Yours etc.,
Paul C. W. Davies.

[*Dr. Davies has now taken up a new post with the University of London—*
EDITOR.]

Devil's Footprints

Dear Sir,—On the question of The Devil's Footprints, a fellow reader of the *Review*, Mr. Michael Poyle, asks whether any measurements were taken at the time to ascertain if the distance between the prints varied where they traversed a sloping roof.

The only reference in this connection appears to have been in an eye-witness account sent in soon after the visitation to the *Illustrated London*

News by a reader signing himself "South Devon," part of which reads as follows:

"... this regular track (the footprints) passing in some instances over the roofs of houses, and hayricks, and very high walls (one 14 feet) without displacing the snow on either side or altering the distance between the feet..." (my italics).

Further to the numerous theories put forward for the cause of The Devil's Footprints, another eye-witness, writing this time to the *London Times*, describes the prints as appearing to have been caused by a drill or mechanical contrivance and I submit that the solution to this age-old mystery can be found by studying reports of Flying Wheels such as that appearing on Page 15 of the July/August 1972 issue of FSR.

A wheel, with spokes protruding slightly beyond its rim, would make a series of regular prints in the snow as it bowled across the countryside, although the description "wheel" can, for the moment, only be our own rationalisation for something whose actual construction and purpose is quite beyond our present comprehension.

Yours truly,
S. E. Priest,
22 Sutherland Road,
Southall, Middlesex.
September 24, 1972.

Saucer-induced learning?

Dear Sir,—In the article *Recent Reports From Argentina And Peru* (FSR Vol. 18 No. 4) Jane Thomas