News and Comment

After 60 Years, the Most Famous of All the 'Nessie' Photos Is Revealed as a Hoax

Since the first reported sighting of a "huge fish" back in 1868, a debate, fueled by eyewitness accounts and fuzzy photographs, has continued over whether a giant monster roams the murky waters of Loch Ness, Scotland. Believers in the monster legend have often cited the 1934 "surgeon's photograph" as the best evidence for the animal's existence. Over the years, the image had withstood rigorous scientific examination. Explanations ranging from tree trunks to wishful thinking have been offered, but no one has been able to settle the matter conclusively.

Now two Loch Ness researchers have established that the famous shadowy silhouette was merely a plastic wood model attached to a toy



The 1934 "surgeon's photograph" of the "Loch Ness monster."



Sunday Telegraph, London

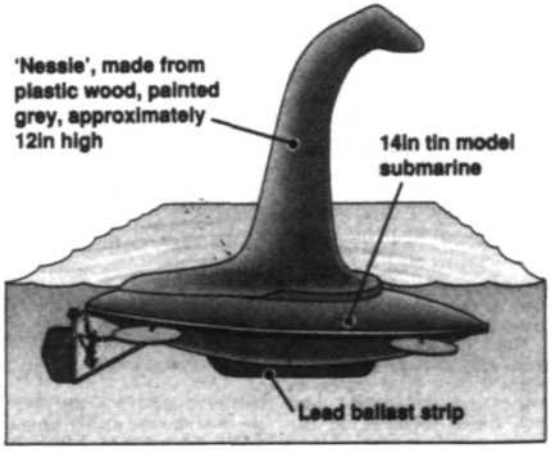
From left: a 1992 photo of Wetherell's stepson Christian Spurling; Duke Wetherell and Colonel Robert Wilson, photographed in 1934.

submarine. Their revelations were first reported in a lengthy front-page article in the March 13 *Sunday Telegraph* (London) and subsequently disseminated by international news services.

The research began after David Martin and Alistair Boyd, both with the Loch Ness and Morar Project, stumbled across a 1975 gossip column that indicated that a Loch Ness monster photograph had been faked. Although the column did not mention Colonel Robert Wilson (the surgeon to whom the 1934 photograph was attributed) or specifically which photograph was being referred to, it did name as co-conspirators Maurice Chambers and Ian Wetherell, the latter the son of a flamboyant actor and film producer from the twenties and thirties, Marmaduke Arundel Wetherell.

Martin and Boyd first attempted to locate Ian Wetherell but discovered he had died some years before. They then contacted Marmaduke Wetherell's stepson Christian Spurling. Although 90 and in poor health, he was able to answer a series of questions.

Back in the thirties, Marmaduke Wetherell, often called "Duke," was hired by the *Daily Mail* to look into the stories that were circulating about a mysterious beast in the loch. On December 20, 1933, after only two days at the Loch, he discovered two large, four-toed footprints on the south shore. Somewhat prematurely, the *Mail* proclaimed, "Loch Ness Monster Is a Fact, Not a Legend," and for two weeks the world waited as



An artist's impression of Christian Spurling's model, from the *Sunday Telegraph*, London.

plaster casts of the prints were analyzed at the Natural History Museum. On January 4, the museum revealed that the two prints were identical and from the foot of a young hippopotamus, most likely being used as an umbrella stand.

Disgruntled and irritated, Duke Wetherell decided he'd get conclusive proof of the illusive beast, announcing to his son Ian: "All right. We'll give them their monster." His son purchased the raw materials—a toy submarine stabilized with soldered lead—while his stepson Christian Spurling sculpted the 12-inch head and neck of plastic wood. After taking eight days to complete the "monster," sea trials were conducted and sometime in February or March 1934 Ian took the photographs at Loch Ness. Duke Wetherell shared the story with his close friend Maurice Chambers, hoping he might know someone convincing enough to lend credibility to the photos. Chambers produced a respected doctor, Colonel Robert Wilson, who agreed to go along with the scheme. Wilson took the plates to a chemist shop, developed the famous photograph, and put into motion what some have called one of the greatest hoaxes of the twentieth century. The photo has appeared in virtually all accounts of the Loch Ness monster ever since.

Despite these amazing revelations, the hunt for Nessie will continue. Adrian Shine, the Loch Ness Project Chief, says he accepts the report of the hoax, but he maintained, "Eyewitness accounts still suggest that there is something powerful in the loch." Surprisingly, even the sleuths who uncovered the scheme agreed with Shine and do not believe that the monster itself is a fraud.

So what happened to Duke Wetherell's monster? Apparently, during one of his attempts with his son to set up a photograph, they heard a groundskeeper approaching and had no choice but to sink the model. (So it seems there really is a "monster" in the Loch Ness after all.)

—*Tom Genoni, Jr.*

Time *Challenges John Mack's UFO Abduction Efforts*

The widely read "Outlook" section in the Sunday, April 17, *Washington Post* carried a front-page feature article by Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack with the headline: "ALIEN RECKONING: Many Americans Claim They've Been Abducted by Extraterrestrials. A Once-Skeptical Harvard Psychiatrist Believes Them." If any of the *Post*'s top editorial officials believe there is even one chance in a million that UFO abductions are really occurring, one should expect that they would have assigned a team of investigative reporters to look into Mack's claims—*before publishing his article.* The *Post* could have assigned the story to its Robert Woodward, who played a key role in breaking the Watergate cover-up.

Time magazine *did* assign an investigative reporter—James Willwerth—to look into Mack's claims. Less than a week after publication of the *Post* article, *Time*'s April 25 issue provided its readers with a two-page critical analysis of Mack's modus operandi, titled: "The Man from Outer Space."

The *Time* article revealed that one of the "abductees" Mack had worked with—Donna Bassett—was really a researcher who had infiltrated his

"support group." According to *Time*, after reading books and articles on UFO abductions Bassett was able to "recall under hypnosis" for Mack her childhood experiences with an ET friend "named Jane, who healed her hands after a neighbor stuck them in boiling fudge to punish her for snooping."

At one of the sessions, which took place in a bedroom of Mack's house, Bassett told Mack she "recalled" being taken aboard a flying saucer during the Cuban missile crisis, where she saw President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, who was crying. She told Mack that, to comfort Khrushchev, she sat on his lap, put her arms around his neck, and reassured him that the crisis would be resolved. "Hearing her tale, Mack became so excited that he leaned on the bed too heavily, and it collapsed," according to *Time*.

When *Time*'s Willwerth revealed to Mack that Bassett had concocted her abduction tales, "Mack declined to discuss her case, though he hinted that he had doubts about her reliability."

The *Time* article concludes: "Mack's view of the UFO phenomenon reflects a larger philosophical stance that rejects 'rational' scientific explanations and embraces a hazier New Age reality. 'I don't know why there's such a zeal to find a conventional physical explanation,' he says. 'I don't know why people have such trouble simply accepting the fact that something unusual is going on here. . . . We've lost all that ability to know a world beyond the physical. . . . I am a bridge between those two worlds.' "

With Mack's widespread appearances on major TV and radio talk-shows to promote his new book, *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*, Mack is displacing his former mentor, Budd Hopkins, as the chief guru of the UFO-abduction cult. Because Mack is a psychiatrist who


THE MAN FROM OUTER SPACE

Time's investigation casts doubts on John Mack's methods.

formerly headed Harvard's department of psychiatry, his claims carry more weight than those of Hopkins, who is a professional artist, or Hopkins's principal deputy, David Jacobs, a history professor at Temple University.

Although Mack credits Hopkins with having introduced him to the UFO-abduction field, and each publicly refers to the other as "my good friend," their relations have deteriorated recently because of their basically different philosophical views on UFO abductions. Hopkins and Jacobs, understandably, view UFO-abductions as evil, traumatic events—comparable to rape.

Mack concedes that abduction victims suffer what he calls "ontological shock" as "the reality of their encounters sinks in." However, as Mack explained in his *Post* article, the net result "is the discovery of a new and altered sense of their place in the cosmic design, one that is more modest, respectful and harmonious in relation to Earth and its living systems. A heightened sense of the sacredness of the natural world is experienced along with deep sadness about the apparent hopelessness of

Earth's environmental crisis." In other words, in the long run Mack seemingly believes that UFO abductions are beneficial to the "experiencers," as he calls them.

—*Philip J. Klass*

APA Statement Addresses the Debate Over 'Assisted' Memory

In response to the ever-growing controversy surrounding the false-memory syndrome (FMS), the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has issued a "Statement on Memories of Sexual Abuse." Although the statement does not include the "body of scientific evidence" on which its position is based, the five-page document does attempt to summarize the available information on the subject for psychiatrists and others working with sexual-abuse issues.

"It is not known how to distinguish, with complete accuracy, memories based on true events from those derived from other sources," the statement says.

Regarding the possibility of adolescent abuse resulting in repressed memories and neurosis, the APA affirms its belief that child sexual abuse is a "risk factor for many classes of psychiatric disorders" and that the coping mechanisms "can result in a lack of conscious awareness of the abuse. . . . Conscious thoughts and feelings stemming from the abuse may emerge at a later date."

While the APA admits that the emergence of memories can aid in assessing abuse claims, it states: "There is no completely accurate way of determining the validity of reports [of sexual abuse] in the absence of corroborating information." Given the current level of scientific knowledge on the subject, the mechanisms of memory are simply far too complicated for the recalling of a personal experience to be confidently relied on for complete accuracy when it has been influenced by expectations, emotions, sensations, stress, and post-event questioning. "The retrieval and recounting of a memory can modify the form of the memory, which may influence the content and the conviction about the veracity of the memory in the future," the statement says.

One crucial element of the FMS debate is centered on the role of the therapist. Many skeptics have claimed that because of the nature of the memory-recalling process, it is easy for a therapist to "lead" a patient, either by accident or design, to "remember" abuse that may or may not have occurred. The APA statement reflects the same concerns: "Memories can be significantly influenced by questioning . . . and it has also been shown that repeated questioning may lead individuals to report 'memories' of events that never occurred." The dangerous consequences that can result from the misuse of this type of therapy were illustrated by a recent $10-million sexual-abuse lawsuit against a Chicago cardinal. The plaintiff ultimately withdrew the suit, citing an eventual lack of confidence in the memories that were initially "recovered" during sessions with a therapist of questionable credentials.

According to the APA, "Psychiatrists should maintain an empathic, nonjudgmental, neutral stance towards reported memories of sexual abuse. . . . A strong prior belief by the psychiatrist that sexual abuse, or other factors, are or are not the cause

of the patient's problems is likely to interfere with appropriate assessment and treatment." The APA warns that therapists without proper training in many areas of care may cause further psychiatric problems for a patient.

In its closing paragraph, the APA statement asserts that "these issues should not influence psychiatrists to abandon their commitment to basic principles of ethical practice." It makes two other points: "Psychiatrists should refrain from making public statements about the veracity . . . of individual reports of sexual abuse" and "Psychiatrists should vigilantly assess the impact of their conduct on the boundaries of the patient/doctor relationship." The APA concludes by declaring that it will continue to monitor developments related to these issues.

The False Memory Syndrome Foundation (an organization skeptical of therapy-assisted memories) commented favorably on the APA statement, although not without some reservations. It applauded the APA position that therapists should remain neutral when evaluating sexual-abuse claims (which the FMS Foundation sees as in direct contrast to the role taken by many recovered-memory therapists) as well as the APA's advice against a psychiatrist's making public statements relating to a patient's case. However, the FMS Foundation requested that the APA make available the specific scientific evidence that it uses to support the existence of and treatment for repressed memories.

—*Tom Genoni, Jr.*

The full text of the statement, approved by the APA Board of Trustees on December 12, 1993, is available from the APA, 1400 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, telephone 202-682-2000.

New Shroud Developments, Intriguing to Bizarre

A number of new theories, experiments, and tests relating to the Shroud of Turin have come to light—ranging from the intriguing to the bizarre.

Among the latter is a notion that, before it was the burial shroud of Jesus, the 14-foot length of linen was the tablecloth used at the Last Supper. This idea was advanced by the new wife of pro-authenticity scientist John Jackson (who now heads something called the Shroud of Turin Research Center, in Colorado Springs). She does not appear to be kidding.

Another fanciful idea, proffered by several independent researchers and elaborated in a book being written by two of them, takes skepticism about the shroud into the realm of conspiracy theories. According to the theorists' scenario, the shroud was not merely damaged in the chapel fire of 1532 but actually destroyed; its owners shrewdly substituted a fake produced by none other than Leonardo da Vinci. Proof? Nonexistent. Innuendo and speculation? Offered in abundance.

Much, much more credible is the intriguing work of University of Tennessee forensic researchers Randall Bresee and Emily Craig. According to their article "Image Formation and the Shroud of Turin" in the *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology* (34: 59-67, January-February 1994), reported nationwide by the Associated Press on February 9, 1994, Bresee and Craig's experiments enable them to produce images with macroscopic and microscopic properties comparable to those of the shroud.

Their technique—used by medical

illustrators but not common to mainstream artists—is called carbon-dust imaging. Soft brushes are used to apply pigment to a flat surface that is then covered with a cloth and rubbed with a suitable tool (such as a wooden spoon), thus transferring the image to the cloth. To reproduce the shroud's touted photonegative (actually quasi-negative) properties, Craig explains that "you don't use light and shadow or highlights but build the image with the darkest part being the closest to the viewer (like the tip of the nose on a face) and then . . . lighter and lighter as you work back through the planes of the face."

Craig and Bresee report that their images appear only on the uppermost fibers and exhibit other characteristics typical of the shroud, including "an abundance of accurate three-dimensional information." According to Bresee, his study of the shroud has "turned out to be a real interesting problem with religion mixed up with science. Beliefs have gotten in the way of an awful lot of people," he said.

He might well have been describing the late scientist Max Frei's reputed pollen evidence—characterized elsewhere in this issue as "a study in deception."

—*Joe Nickell*

Joe Nickell, CSICOP Fellow, is author of several investigative books, including Inquest on the Shroud of Turin.

Alternative Science Update: Coast Guard Sails into the New Age

The Strategic Planning Staff of the U.S. Coast Guard figured they could do a better job of planning if they knew where the world is headed, so they hired the Arlington Institute to tell them. The result was "The Road to 2012," 348 pages of clairvoyance. It is very informative.

One learns, for example, that we will be able to tap the zero point energy in the vacuum. The technology for this is, the report says, "revolutionary," but, alas, it is protected by international patents. "Cold fusion," the report says, may simply be a manifestation of zero point energy.

It gets even more exciting: "Dozens of studies have shown that the prayers and meditations of widely separated individuals correlate with significant improvement of the health and well-being of others." (Presumably it also works if they are close together.) "The well-known phenomenon of dowsing may be a spontaneous twitch of muscle as one is moving over a geological gradient due to variations in extremely low intensity geophysical fields." And: "Herpes has been linked to loneliness." Everyone else recommends being alone as a sure-fire preventive. "Remote perception, or the ability to ascertain information nonlocally, has been demonstrated. . . . Mind interacting with matter transcends the limitations of ordinary space-time."

To perceive what this report cost, we were able to transcend the space-time limitations of the U.S. Coast Guard bureaucracy using nonlocal means (the telephone). The cost to the taxpayers was $100,000.

—*Robert L. Park*

Robert L. Park is director of the Washington office of the American Physical Society. This is from the APS's "What's New" weekly electronic newsletter and is published with permission.