

#54

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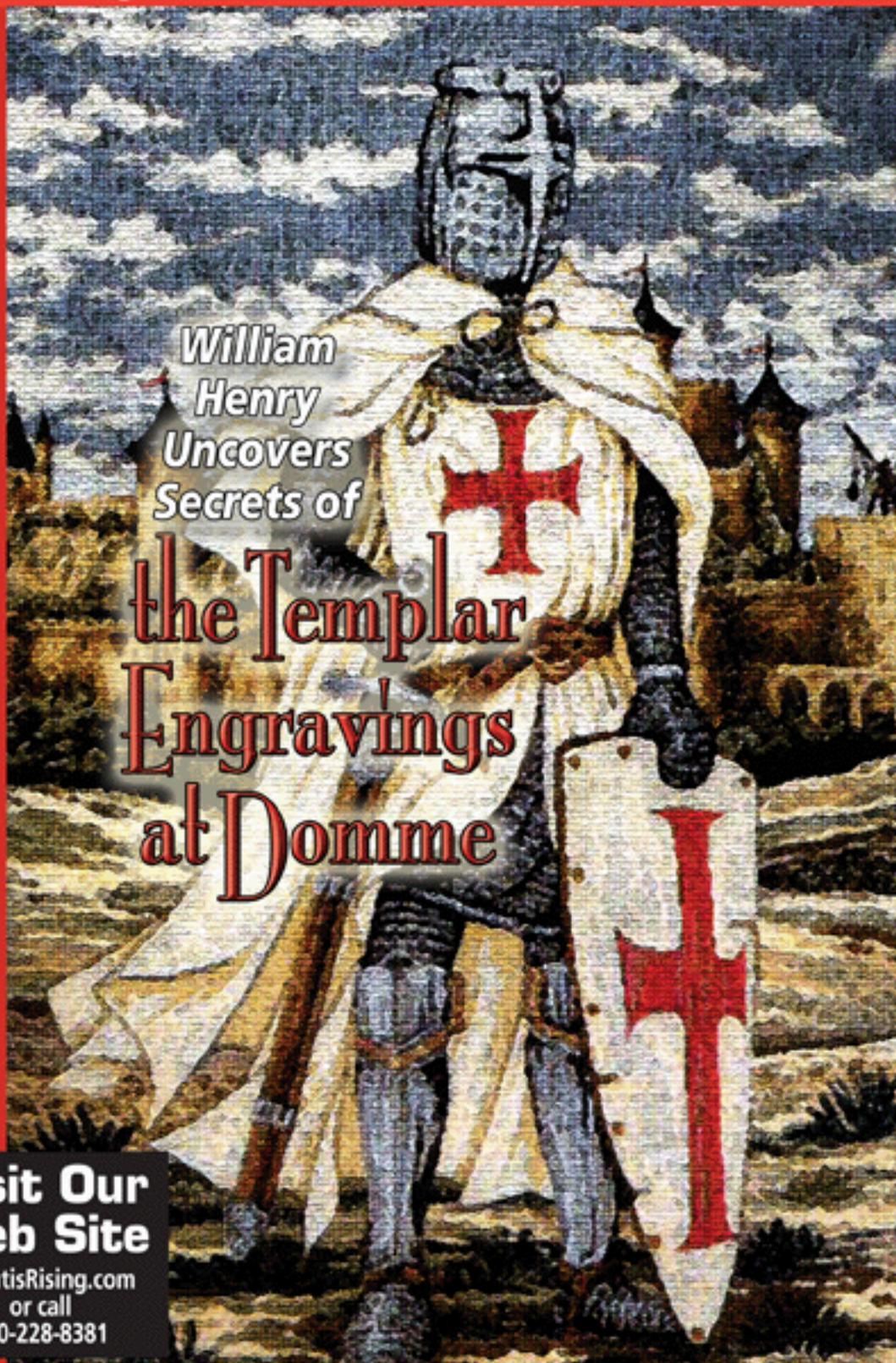
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EARLY RAYS



Do highly complex natural forms like this butterfly show evidence of intelligent design? The debate over that question is getting quite nasty.

EDITOR PERSECUTED FOR INTELLIGENT DESIGN STUDY

When Richard Sternberg, editor of the scientific journal *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, decided last year to publish a paper making the case for "Intelligent Design" he had no idea what he was in for. Despite scrupulous attention to correct peer review procedures, Sternberg, who holds two Ph.D.'s in Biology was accused of being a shoddy scientist and a Bible thumper and of taking money under the table from fundamentalists. "I was basically run out of here," he recalls. Now the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, an independent agency whose job it is to protect federal officials from reprisals, has found that senior scientists with the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History did indeed retaliate against Sternberg for running the article.



Richard Sternberg

According to the *Washington Post*, the Special Counsel investigators examined e-mail traffic from the scientists and noted that "retaliation came in many forms . . . misinformation was disseminated through the Smithsonian Institution and to outside sources. The allegations against you were later determined to be false." James McVay, the principal legal adviser in the Office of Special Counsel, wrote to Sternberg, "The rumor mill became so infected that one of your colleagues had to circulate [your résumé] simply to dispel the rumor that you were not a scientist."

Now, thanks to significant coverage from mainstream papers like the *Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, the scandal has gained considerable notoriety. For more detail on the original incident see "The Intelligent Design Controversy" (A.R. #53).

The Sternberg controversy publicly ex-

poses a common tactic of the so-called mainstream science establishment (epitomized by organizations like PsiCop)—the use of ad hominem attacks which have nothing to do with the merits of the arguments presented. Frequently heard is the accusation that Intelligent design advocates are closet creationists masquerading as scientists. The argument made is that intelligent design theory is not science but theology. Whether science or not, though, the controversy is certainly not without irony. A point long made by critics of the Darwinian/materialist establishment, but seldom publicized, is that many arguments offered by so-called mainstream science are essentially metaphysical and theological in nature (i.e., assuming that the true nature of the universe is materialistic and random), yet, those questionable assumptions have been presented in schools and colleges as if they were settled, scientifically verified, truth, despite an absence of suitable evidence. To the detractors, such invocations of scientific authority for unproven assertions appear to be nothing less than an unlawful usurpation of power by charlatans. Not surprisingly, they have gone to war. The present squeals of outrage by self-righteously indignant scientists at the growing challenge to their authority seems to many to be more hypocrisy than legitimate complaint.

Just as the celebrated Scopes "Monkey trial" in 1925 had the effect of revealing the weaknesses in dogmatic fundamentalist beliefs about the origins of the human species on earth, the trials of Richard Sternberg now appear capable of doing something similar to the credibility of the entrenched Darwinian/materialist establishment. ■

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REPORT FROM THE FRONT

Tracking the News of the Coming Energy Revolution

Can the Castor Bean Avert Fuel Wars?

BY JEANE MANNING

It's time to get grounded, so to speak. We can't yet purchase the far-out energy technologies, but some down-to-earth souls are introducing transition technologies that both ecologists and economists can welcome. That means both the business community and environmental activists can be happy, as is the case with the achievements of the Institute of Ecolonomics (IoE).

Film star Dennis Weaver founded the IoE in 1993. By the time this is in print, you may have heard news of an action sparked by the new chairman of the IoE's board of directors, Peter LaVaute. At New Energy Movement board meetings I met the man I now call "pragmatic Peter." He's Mr. Down-to-Earth in my mind, yet he's added a politically crucial agenda item for a Farmers' Union executives' fly-in to Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2005. At this time it looks like a 400-person fly-in, with LaVaute as a consultant in the thick of simultaneous-lobbying action that week. Ten days later he'll be in Brazil studying its successful biofuel program that could be copied back home in the American Midwest, big-time. It's all based on castor beans...

Energy-related developments are evolving fast in LaVaute's life, but years of quieter efforts with his company EcoSense Solutions laid the groundwork. (Dennis Weaver and family are now co-owners of EcoSense Solutions, LLC.) The pace accelerated repeatedly this year—for instance when LaVaute and Weaver were handed the keys to Crane, Missouri, a town which they envision becoming the first Ecolonomic city.

Let's back up to find out why the lowly castor bean started hanging out with film stars. And why that particular bean could undermine the argument for oil wars. We'll look at what Weaver and LaVaute are up to.

Briefly, both men have roots in the Midwest, and care. They see people streaming away from rural communities, yet farm family life and rural communities traditionally provided a stable foundation for society. So the IoE and EcoSense Solutions came up with a plan—Re-Ruralization. It starts with assessing resources—what's locally available that a community can turn into job-creating businesses while preserving a healthy envi-

ronment. As with the Weavers' own home built out of abandoned tires and cans, a region can take troublesome waste materials and turn them into resources. Each community gets a "positive action plan" for producing electricity, liquid fuel, housing and food locally, and producing value-added products to sell outside the area. Crane, Missouri, in an economically depressed rural area, is a good place to start.

They're also working with the Northwest region of Oklahoma. How did they get their

likes the thought of growing crops that take carbon dioxide out of the air and transform it into oxygen before being burned for fuel, but he found the alcohol fuels to be saturated with politics. Corn growers successfully lobby for incentives to make alcohol (ethanol) plants, but other powerful lobbies make sure we can't use more than a small per cent alcohol in our gasoline.

Researching biofuels, LaVaute learned why our soybean growers created the soy biodiesel industry—they had surplus oil, from crushing beans for soybean oil meal for livestock. Even supplying the fast food industry didn't create enough demand for the oil. Could it be sold as fuel? Due partly to singer Willie Nelson and his biodiesel campaign, truck-stops would really like to pump biodiesel for truckers. Truck stop chains, however, won't promote a fuel unless assured of a constant supply. Meanwhile, soybeans are only about 18 per cent oil. And in a National Renewable Energy Laboratory survey, soybean crushers were asked if they would continue to crush soybeans if there weren't a market for the meal. They replied that it was unlikely. This reduces soy

biodiesel to being a byproduct dependent on the demand for soybean oil meal. Although LaVaute appreciates soy bean growers for pioneering a supply infrastructure for diesel-fuel-from-agricultural-sources, he realized the scenario isn't the best "ecolonomics" model.

So he researched which crop is best to be grown specifically for fuel, not as an afterthought. "I've come up with a number of them," he told me, "but the one that just blows you out of the water is castor bean... some varieties being grown in Brazil are 42- to 48 per cent oil. There are reports of beans in the 60 per cent range."

He learned that Brazil has new social programs set up in its semi-arid northeast: The government builds houses in a huge circle. Each house has a strip of maybe 25 acres shooting off from it. Destitute farmers and their families can own a house and its land if in ten years they've stayed with it and grown at least fifteen acres of castor beans per farm. The government trains farmers and buys their crop. Brazil recently mandated that at least two per cent of its diesel



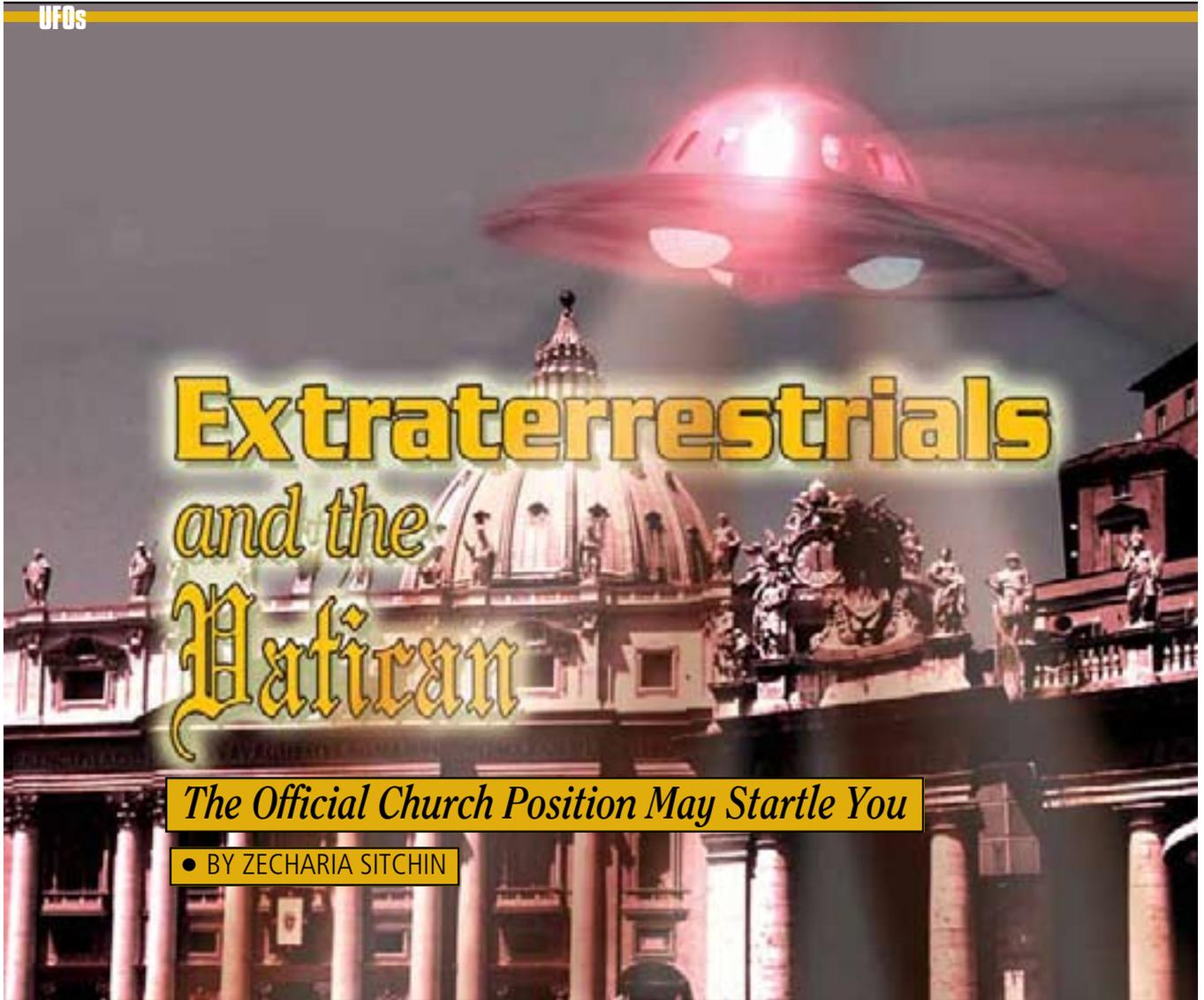
Peter LaVaute

Re-Ruralization program into such a large area? LaVaute points to Tom Lucas of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Resource Conservation and Development branch as an "organizational powerhouse;" he's implementing it. LaVaute sees Lucas as a natural Ecolonomist, and he's now on the IoE board of trustees. I include this because readers might be doing grassroots organizing themselves—perhaps an energy cooperative. Don't underestimate your neighbor who works for the government.

In Crane, the plan includes a large building to house an "ecolonomic incubator"—a commercialization center. The incubator checks out innovations that might solve environmental problems while creating new businesses. If inventions test out, they'll be helped toward the marketplace. LaVaute's group has a head start on the incubator, using a large rented workshop space.

Which brings us to the beans, or almost there. He and his EcoSense engineer, Russell Gherke, decided hydrogen is neither an efficient nor sustainable route to energy independence at this time. LaVaute researched alternatives including biofuels. He

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Extraterrestrials and the Vatican

The Official Church Position May Startle You

• BY ZECHARIA SITCHIN

The death of Pope John Paul II has occasioned widespread discussions about his own stand and the Vatican's position regarding a variety of subjects, from purely theological to social issues. Completely lacking has been any reference to an issue of concern to many, and especially to those interested in the subjects of UFOs, Life on other planets, and Extraterrestrials in general, and in Zecharia Sitchin's writings in particular.

As it happened, in April 2000, Sitchin engaged in a public discussion of those very issues with a leading theologian of the Vatican, Monsignor Corrado Balducci, during an international conference held in Bellaria (Bimini) in Italy. The dialogue was reported at the time on the Zecharia Sitchin web site (<http://www.sitchin.com/>). Here is the full text of that report.

Dialogue in Bellaria

SITCHIN AND VATICAN THEOLOGIAN DISCUSS UFOs, EXTRATERRESTRIALS, ANGELS, CREATION OF MAN

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In what must be a historic first, a high official of the Vatican and a Hebrew scholar discussed the issue of extraterrestrials and the creation of man, and though different from each other in upbringing, background, religion and methodology, nevertheless arrived at common conclusions:

- Yes, extraterrestrials can and do exist on other planets
- Yes, they can be more advanced than us
- Yes, materially, man could have been fashioned from a pre-existing sentient being.

The Participants

The high Vatican official was Monsignor Corrado Balducci, a Catholic theologian with impressive credentials: A member of the Curia of the Roman Catholic Church, a Prelate of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Propagation of the Faith, leading exorcist of the Archdiocese of Rome, a member of the Vatican's Beatification Committee, an expert on de-

monology and the author of several books. Appointed in the Vatican to deal with the issue of UFOs and extraterrestrials, he has made in recent years pronouncements indicating a tolerance of the subjects but he has never before met and had a dialogue with a Hebrew scholar, and gone beyond prescribed formulations to include the touchy issue of the creation of man.

The Hebrew scholar was me—Zecharia Sitchin: A researcher of ancient civilizations, a biblical archaeologist, a descendant of Abraham...

The monsignor and I had almost met for such a dialogue the previous December, but it did not come about. This time we were scheduled to meet in Bellaria, Italy, at a conference whose theme was "The Mystery of Human Existence." I arrived there with my wife and a score of fans from the U.S.A., on March 31, scheduled to address the audience of over a thousand the next day. The monsignor was nowhere in sight but he was

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Understanding the Roswell Moment

Whatever It Was that Happened in 1947, Some Believe, We Have Not Been the Same Since

• BY DAVID S. LEWIS

• BY LEN KASTEN

For some in the UFO community the purported crash of an extraterrestrial spacecraft outside of Roswell, New Mexico on July 4, 1947 has now taken on the dimensions of a historical watershed event comparable to other significant dates in world history, such as the invention of the printing press, the discovery of America by Columbus, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada. More than any other event involving UFOs, this one has achieved near mythic proportions, and has succeeded in becoming the marker of the beginning of the space age. Why this should be so is not entirely clear. After all, it is now believed that the Nazis were dealing with E.T.s in the early 1930s, and the Philadelphia Experiment, which is said to have involved E.T. assistance, took place in 1943. But certain events, in hindsight, just take on an aura of extraordinary importance and significance, for inexplicable reasons, and this is one of them. Before Roswell, the world continued to reflect on the horrors and glories of World War II. It was still a time of dance bands, the promise of the stock market and total cosmological innocence. Distant stars were just the subjects of romantic songs. After Roswell, it seems the planet entered a distinctly new and different era, and the stars were seen as the home of strange new visitors to Earth. Everything changed. We were no longer alone in the universe.

Viewed from this perspective, one can marvel at their timing and geographical

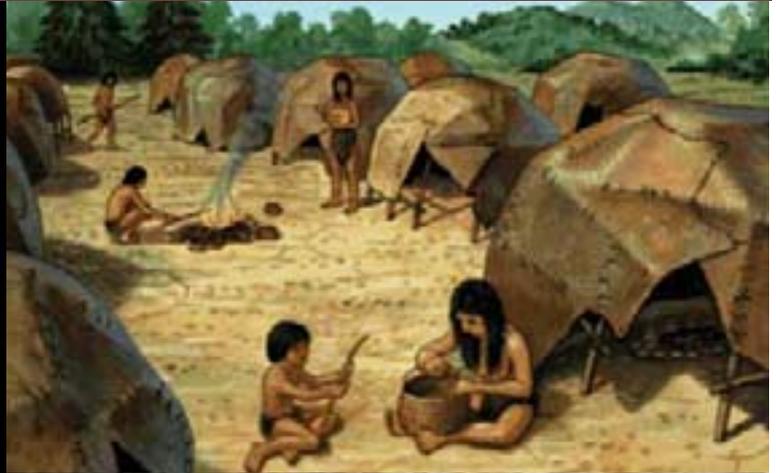
placement of such auspicious events because they seem to occur when needed, and at a place where succeeding events can most easily follow. It is as if a long freight train is steaming down the tracks, expecting the switch to be in place when it arrives at a crossing point. If that switch is not in place, the train will wreck and its valuable freight will be scattered to the winds because it is not slowing down. But through some miraculous agency, the switch is thrown just in time and the train passes safely through, now able to unload its precious cargo to anxiously waiting hands. In 1450, the Renaissance was the freight train carrying the burgeoning intellectual and artistic products of an explosive cultural revolution in Europe, but hand-printed literature was the exclusive province of the church and the royal courts because it was too expensive and time-consuming for anyone else. If Johann Gutenberg hadn't invented the printing press at that moment in time in central Europe, and thereby thrown that critical switch, the Renaissance, inspired by widespread access to classical art and literature, could never have happened, and we might still be in the dark ages.

The Real War of the Worlds

The timing and geographic placement of the Roswell crash, it is argued by some, was extremely fortuitous, and set in motion a

chain of discoveries that allowed us to realize that we had been virtually catapulted into the middle of extraterrestrial warfare. According to Col. Philip J. Corso in his breakthrough book, *The Day After Roswell*, this shocking realization caused a panic in the American military establishment when it was understood that we were actually pawns in a struggle between super-technological adversaries, against whom we were practically defenseless. Out of this panic, it is said, emerged a Faustian agreement with hostile aliens as we began to play the game of exopolitics, while embarking on a crash program to develop the technology and weaponry we needed to protect the planet. All of this has been conducted under a thick blanket of secrecy allegedly to avoid alarming the public, and creating financial anarchy. And the secrecy itself, it was said, became a bargaining chip with the E.T.s. Our agreement to the cover-up allowed them to carry out their most nefarious operations away from the prying eyes of the press. In return for our collusion in keeping it all under wraps, they granted concessions which we probably could not get otherwise, as we raced feverishly to catch up with technologies that were thousands of years in advance of our own. Unfortunately, we paid a heavy price for this agreement, the story goes, since we lost the advantage of opening up the science problems to the best minds on the planet, and instead relied only on scien-

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(Clockwise from upper left) The Skull of Kennewick Man (Washington state), 9,000 B.P.E. Native Peoples of Monte Verde, Chile, 12,800 years ago. Stratigraphic evidence at Pedro Furada, Brazil of human settlement at least 11,200 years ago. The Bering Strait where a passage across the ice is said to have brought the first humans 12,000 years ago.

Who Were the Earliest Americans?

The Skulls of People Dead for a Very Long Time Are Telling Tales

● BY GEORGE ERIKSON

In *Atlantis In America: Navigators of the Ancient World* Ivar Zapp and I proposed that when the identities of the first Americans were finally known that they would likely turn out to be South Pacific Islanders. The idea that open-sea navigators would be the first Americans was the result of our belief that the great stone spheres of Costa Rica were sculpted by the earliest peoples in the Americas and that they resembled structures used as sighting stones throughout the Pacific. *The Te Atibu ni Borau* ("The Stones for Voyaging") of the Gilbert Islands were both similar in construction and were laid out in configurations very like the spheres of Costa Rica.

Ivar and I were equally sure that dates preceding Clovis (the orthodox dating scenario for the arrival of humans in the Amer-

icas) or any possible land migration were already being discovered or were on the very near horizon. We documented Anna Roosevelt's finds of sophisticated rock art at Monte Alegre in Brazil carbon14 dated to a minimum of 11,200 YBP, and Tom Dillehay's find that Monte Verde in southern Chile at 12,800 BP predated any Clovis site. Dillehay was vilified by conventional archaeologists. When James Dixon, Curator and Professor of Archaeology at the University of Alaska, rose to Dillehay's defense, he was fired. It was not until the Smithsonian sent three distinguished archaeologists to Monte Verde to review Dillehay's work that he was exonerated. Dr. Brian Fagan, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, wrote in an *Archaeology Magazine* review that Dillehay's work was "exhaustive, exemplary... and unassailable." Since Fagan had authored *The Great*

Journey, the story of the settling of America through Beringia migration, I thought his assessment showed unusual fair-mindedness. As I'd known him for many years, I sent Fagan a note expressing this. He called back to say that he still believed in "Clovis first" and Beringia migration and that anyone who proposed an earlier people in the Americas was guilty of "pseudoscience." He went on to say that I had become a "new-ager" and that my ideas were "very wrong and on very dangerous ground."

However, it is Dr Fagan and his indignant fellow archaeologists who have been proven wrong. It now appears that the earliest settlers of America may have come from the Pacific, Australia, southern Asia, or even Europe.

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VIKING RUNES: MORE ANCIENT THAN IMAGINED

*Taking a New Look at these
Enigmatic Messages from
a Forgotten Past*

• BY FRANK JOSEPH

The well-known “runes” used by medieval Scandinavians made up a syllabary known as *Futhark* from its first seven letters. It is composed of phonetic symbols belonging to an all-purpose alphabet, with commemorative, recording, identifying, as well as magical purposes. Runes have been found from Iceland and Greenland to the Isle of Man, Athens, and the Black Sea. Some were carved into the floor of Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia Cathedral. About a dozen others, far more controversial, appear in North America. Foremost among these is the Kensington Runestone, a long inscription which recounts the early 14th century voyage of Christian Vikings to Minnesota, and Oklahoma’s Heavener Runestone, emblazoned with a single name: Gnomedal, possibly “Valley of the Gnomes,” perhaps a deprecatory reference to local tribal Indians a thousand years ago. Scholars have identified about five hundred runes in Denmark, compared to an estimated seven hundred fifty in Norway. Sweden has the largest collection, with ap-

proximately three thousand examples. More than a thousand runes may be found in the province of Uppland alone. Virtually all of these inscriptions date from the late 8th to the mid-13th centuries, mostly commemorating the deeds and deaths of royalty.

To be sure, *Futhark* suffered modifications under the influences of events in northwestern Italy during the early centuries B.C. As the Etruscans were pushed out of dominance by Rome, some fled north into Germany, coming into contact with the Goths. The names by which the runes are known today—*fehu* (originally *faihu*), *thurisaz* (*thauris*), *wunjo* (*winja*), etc.—are all Gothic words. They competently date *Futhark* to Rome’s early imperial period, probably less than 2,000 years ago. Over the following centuries, it remained fundamentally unchanged, but underwent local inflections with the reconfiguration of various runes. At the beginning of the Viking Age, circa A.D. 800, the Norse were in possession of what is now known as the Elder *Futhark*, certainly the most consistently authentic

version available today. Subsequent developments, with the growing influence of Christianity, placed greater emphasis on recording historical events and personages at the expense of divination. These later sets included the Anglo-Saxon and Northumbrian runes the “Younger” *Futhark*. The Gothic and Medieval versions represented a final evolution before the rune practices were outlawed under pain of death.

They were revived during the late 19th Century by the single most influential runologist, Austria’s Guido von List. Rejecting all the known runic systems, he believed they were distortions of an earlier, authentic, more magical method, part of an actual written language, the first ever used in Old Europe. During his efforts to distance the runes from their mundane function as recorders of vainglorious kings, he created an original arrangement based on eighteen spells found in the *Havamal*. “The Words of the High One,” a reference to All-Father Odin, the god of wisdom, was a collection of



This Swedish runestone was found in a church graveyard in 1881, where it had been part of the foundation of the old Dominican cloister since the 13th century. (Photo: Jack Ammerman, Hartford Seminary Library)

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The Templar Engravings at Domme

• BY WILLIAM HENRY

After a long night enjoying amazing French wine and a bizarre argument over whether Pamela Anderson or Dolly Parton best exemplified the Divine Feminine in our time, our gang of classic American templar and wine enthusiasts left Chartres cathedral way too early that morning.

Before we rolled our bus' GPS pinged a satellite. We locked on like a guided missile to Domme, a 'lost' village in the Dordogne valley no one on the bus had ever heard of but me. Even the satellite appeared to work to locate it. "You wanna go where?" It seemed to say.

I was inspired to visit Domme by Ean and Deike Begg. In their book *In Search of the Holy Grail and the Precious Blood*, they describe the bizarre graffiti found in the chateau at Domme, where Knights Templar were imprisoned during the surprise attack by the Catholic church in 1307. Here is found a depiction of Jesus' execution that is slightly twisted from the official Church version. On Jesus' left is a pregnant woman holding a wand or a rod.

Unfortunately, the Begg's book didn't include a photograph of this graffiti. I had been dying to see it for years.

I've written about the perplexing images of a shorthaired, beardless Jesus using a magic rod or wand to perform miracles in several of my books, including *Cloak of the Illuminati*. For example, in the 5th century portrayal shown here Jesus is turning water into wine with a magic wand at the wedding at Cana. A woman, possibly Mary Magdalene, stands beside him. It was Hebrew custom in Jesus' time that the groom provided the wine at wedding feasts. Many believe this was Jesus' wedding to Mary Magdalene. Early Christian art suggests he produced the wine by magical means.

If this woman at Domme is Mary Magdalene, as I presumed, the wand likely belonged to Jesus. It would suggest that Mary Magdalene brought his technology to France with her after her husband's demise.

On a hot day in July 2005 I had an opportunity to hunt for it.

Overheating

Rolling through the hilly French countryside I daydreamed about Pamela Anderson, excuse me, Jesus' wand while looking at fields burned an early shade of brown from the hot summer sun. I hoped I wasn't wasting the time of the eighteen revelers who accompanied me to France. The stop at Domme that morning was a surprise to the group. So too was the fact that our bus suddenly overheated forcing us to pull off the road to give it a rest. What do you do when there's nothing to do in France? Whine? No! Find wine!

Back on the road, a few anxious hours later we exited the auto route at Domme. My



*What Can the Mysterious Graffiti in an
Obscure French Village Reveal About
This Once Powerful Secret Order?*

wilting excitement blossomed. A few fellow travelers commented how I lit up every time we caught the light of certain sites. I thought of my cat, Boo, who loves to chase the red beam of my laser pointer dancing across a wall. I think he knows he'll never catch that light, but its fun flying after it, and good exercise, too.

Creeping along the narrow road toward Domme our big white bus was an unwanted obstacle to the train of tiny cars behind us. Most were packed to the gills with vacationing Europeans fleeing to the Dordogne valley's famed rivers and hiking trails. The valley is a favorite holiday spot whose post-card-perfect scenery is dotted by romantic medieval chateaus and Harry Potter-esque stone villages.

Suddenly, we entered a forest. The sun disappeared behind the trees. The road turned into a long black serpent making frequent switchbacks. Our land yacht lurched and lunged, surfing the turns that took us from left to right and back again in less than 30 seconds. Side-to-side. Speeding up. Slowing down.

Passengers sloshing in the rear of the bus began to complain of nausea and motion sickness. Of course, it was my fault.

When I pointed the laser pointer at Domme on the map on the wall and said, "We're going," I had no idea that it would take so much effort or time to get there. This was turning into a guilt trip.

Just then the bus swung into a parking area. Our seasick crew spilled out on dry land with shaky legs.

"Oh look," I said, pointing to the last three-quarter mile of steep slope atop which sits Domme, "remember how good the long walk leading to the Great Pyramid felt? It won't be that bad." They looked at me like I had two heads.

Fortunately, a local entrepreneur was waiting with his miniature railway train. Paying two euros each for the ride we climbed aboard the tiny train and chugged up the mountain like happy dwarfs with our knees in our chests.

Domme

The conductor deposited us in the town square, a surprisingly lovely and colorful tourist trap with an astounding panoramic view of the heavenly Dordogne valley.

My fellow travelers scattered into the shops in search of refreshment. I bolted for the tiny Templar museum sandwiched in between two handsome gift shops to inquire about the Templar graffiti.

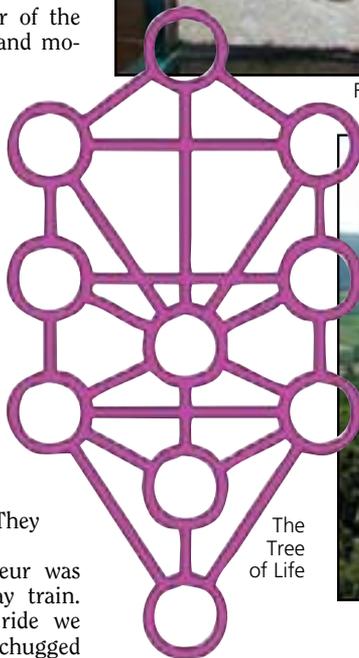
Inside I was sorely disappointed. The Templar prison was closed!

What?!

Seeing my smile melt into disappoint-



Replica of the Templar graffiti engraved on stone at Domme, France on display in the Templar Museum at Domme. © William Henry.



The Tree of Life



The Dordogne valley viewed from Domme

ment the sophisticated young French woman behind the counter flipped a look to the wall behind me. There sat a stone replica of the Templar graffiti. "That's as close as you'll get, Simon Templar," her look seemed to say as I smiled back at her in appreciation.

I fired off a few shots with my digital camera. Then I settled in for a long gaze.

It was nothing like I had imagined. The drawing was crude. But what should we expect from prisoners drawing on rock?

Sure enough, there was a crudely drawn figure of a person (is it a he or she?) holding a rod that looked like a downward pointing arrow (or the Spear of Longinus?) to me.

Beside the figure is a spread eagle Jesus

on a cross.

This surprised me in its similarity to early fifth century Christian depictions that show a muscular, almost superhuman, Jesus spread out against the cross so different from the giant crosses with a small (or often no) Jesus Christians display in America today.

Why, I wondered, would Templars carve crucifixes on the wall of their prison at all? Denial of the crucifixion, or a Savior who hangs on a wooden cross, was the requirement of initiation into their order. To get in they spit on the cross. The reason for this remains a closely guarded secret.

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● BY CYNTHIA LOGAN

India Supera is pointing to a small area overlooking a sparkling lake on the nearly 100 acres that comprise the Feathered Pipe Ranch in the Rocky Mountains just outside Helena, Montana. It's her garden, and she's telling guests they should "feel free to weed it." She raises a hand expressively towards the expanse surrounding them. Her fingernails display rich, dark dirt—she's a woman of the land she loves and believes to be as sacred as any spot on earth. As director of the Feathered Pipe Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to furthering humanitarian efforts and preserving endangered cultures and traditions, she and her staff plan and run the programs she hopes will help participants develop resources of body, mind and spirit. Her own resources are generous and well developed—you're tempted to think of her as Mother Supera, Mother India.

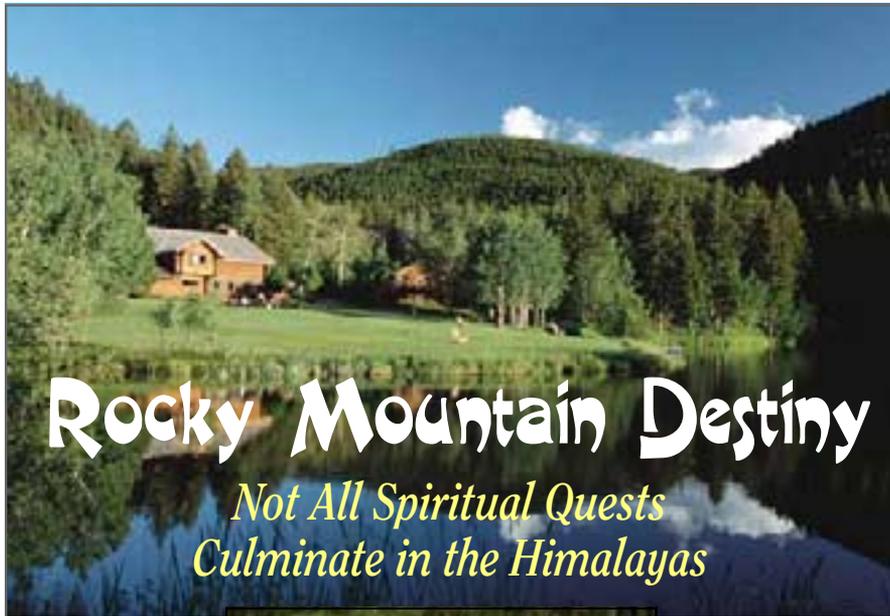
An A-student who had always been at the top of her class in Downey, California, Supera dropped out of high school in the '60s ("we moved to Orange and my new Latin teacher didn't know Latin") and began an adventure to rival those of Indiana Jones. It culminated in her being given the land she now lives on year-round, with just enough money to keep it up for about a year. Thirty years later, after having seen and led tours to nearly every sacred site on the planet, Supera feels it's just as awe-inspiring as any place she's visited. "You can trace history in Montana," she says. "The earth still has a large voice here; this [ranch] land is older than the mountains that surround it—granite outcroppings, essentially crystal conductors, help create a vortex of energy almost like a 'reverse pyramid.'" (She says granite has been discovered to be "something like 90% air" at the subatomic level, and thinks the Pyramid builders may have tapped into that lightness to move those rocks!) With 180,000 acres of national reserve hugging it, Supera considers this land "kind and gentle," the yin counterpart to the nearby Blacktail Ranch in Wolf Creek, Montana. "You won't encounter anything poisonous or dangerous here," she states. "You will find abundant wildlife, healing plants and beautiful flowers. You can hike any-

where in the vicinity, get lost and find your way to a road within two hours."

As the yang component of this tai chi, the Blacktail boasts more rugged terrain, and does hold out the possibility of an encounter with bears and other animals. A jewel at the base of the Continental Divide, Blacktail's 8,000 acres are surrounded by

have been the most sacred of sites. "I love the Feathered Pipe," exclaims Supera, "but the Blacktail takes my breath away—I felt like I was betraying a lover when I first set foot here and felt the way I did." Rich with archaeological sites, it holds an extensive cave system dating back to the Ice Age, as well as tipi rings, and Medicine and Sun Wheels. An on-site museum houses artifacts from the cave—the deepest in the world, and largest in the Americas. Evidence suggests it cradled people as far back as 18,000 years B.C.E. Sitting inside around a natural stone altar with a group offering chants and prayers by candlelight, time stands still, ancient offerings still reverberate against the womb-like walls, echoing down through the ages. You feel a deep connection to those who warmed and worshiped here so long ago, as well as to the earth herself.

Owner Tag Rittel discovered the Blacktail cave when he was a teenager. Exploring the property with four younger boys, carrying a knife in his mouth ala Errol Flynn and wielding a weak flashlight, he came across the entrance. Uncovering enough to send the smallest boy through ("it was a belly buster, you had to go in at a 45 degree angle"), he says the boy returned quickly, eyes wide, sure he'd seen a bear's eyes glinting back at him. "I braved the next one up and sent him in," recalls Rittel. "He came back just as quickly, saying there was definitely a bear in there. It was just like being Tom Sawyer!" He sent the third boy in, then the fourth. Each returned with the same wide-eyed fear. He finally dug out enough to lower himself inside, saw the same "eyes" and had to force himself not to run. The eyes turned out to be light filtering through an opening and playing over green leaves. Through the years, explorations have yielded 28 different ice-age animal remains, including a musk ox and a Kodiak bear (the first to be found on the mainland), each dated as being 15,000-20,000 years old. Overseen by Montana State archaeologists, 15 five-gallon buckets of bones, including those of humans, were unearthed in the 1960s. During the next decade, a new chamber was discovered within the five-mile labyrinth. Psychic an-



(above) Feathered Pipe ranch (below) Ranch manager Howard Levin and India Supera (all pictures by Deborah Anderson)

the Helena National Forest, the largest roadless area in the lower 48 states. Pine and fir trees roll into broad fields of natural grasses and wildflowers. Not far away, the Bob Marshall Wilderness is home to an ancient Indian camp considered by many to