

George Vandeman (1916-2000) was the first prominent television evangelist for the Seventh Day Adventist church, one of the first tele-evangelists of any denomination, and was the author of the series, "It Is Written." Vandeman received his Masters of Arts degree from the University of Michigan. In regard to Noah's Ark research, George Vandeman founded the Archaeological Research Foundation (ARF), of which he was Chairman and President for a number of years and one of the primary movers behind making the 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1967, and 1968 Mount Ararat ARF expeditions a reality. "The Story Behind the Story" was the beginning of a manuscript that George Vandeman planned to publish about his experiences in Noah's Ark research. When the SEARCH Foundation found wood on Mount Ararat in 1969, Seventh Day Adventist officials advised the highly visible Vandeman to pull back from his research, as they realized the authenticity of the wood was a controversial topic.

Chapter 11

1960-1968 George Vandeman

Malcolm Randall said, "It was on the 1960 Archaeological Research Foundation expedition that Dr. Lawrence Hewitt and Wilbur Bishop were scouting the top of the mountain by plane, looking for any tell-tale shapes in the ice lake, that they happened to make a pass down the northwest slope and over the Cehennem Dere Circ. They noticed a strange boat shaped object protruding from the end of a glacial finger, high in a crag, but neither believe that this was where the Ark might be."

George E. Vandeman – Riddle of Ararat

The click of a camera started it all. When Captain Serket Kurtis, late in 1958, flew at 17,000 feet over one of the barest terrains in eastern Turkey, little did he know the stir that would be caused by a simple, routine photograph. For when it received its first careful scrutiny a year later, the world found itself once more face to face with an age-old riddle – the riddle of Ararat.

What is the strange fascination that draws man to that rugged, ice-capped peak? What is it that has steeped that whole area in tradition that has clung like a cloak through the ages? Why do those who know Ararat best speak of it as the forbidden mountain? Is it only flimsy fiction imprinted on the elusive pages of forgetful centuries? Has memory played tricks? Is it only fantasy – or is there something on that mountain that would rock the world if ever it were found? That is the riddle of Ararat.

I had no time for riddle. But this one refused to go away until I found myself high on the jet-powered wings of technology, bound on one of the strangest missions I had ever undertaken. My destination: Ankara. My purpose: to find out exactly what Captain Kurtis had photographed on that lonely mountain slope twenty miles south of Greater Ararat.

I knew the traditions. I knew the rumors that had proved false. I knew the smiles and lifted eyebrows when Dr. Arthur Brandenberger, photogrammetry expert of Ohio State University, had studied the photograph and announced his conviction that what he saw was a petrified boat four hundred and fifty feet long. And what would a boat of that size be doing high in the Ararat range? I proposed to find out.

This was no idle adventure. This would be no expedition of sportsmen climbing a mountain for diversion and hoping for some sensational find. This was serious business. Archaeologists across the land were interested in this probe into eastern Turkey. Great institutions in both Europe and America, among them the British Museum, were eagerly watching the outcome of my mission. I would be joined in a few days by Dr. Brandenberger, and by Dr. Siegfried Horn, archaeologist of Andrews University. Captain Ilhan Durupinar, Turkish cartographic expert who discovered the strange object in the photograph in the process of making NATO maps, would also join us. Other experts would be standing by in Europe ready to come if needed.

And there was Haji Yearam. I could not forget Haji's story, strangest and most convincing of all. And how could I doubt its veracity when I heard it from the lips of his friend and mine? Yet simple geography told me that if Haji's story was true my present mission must fail. The same giant boat could not be resting high on Ararat and at the same time twenty miles south of the mountain. That was part of the riddle.

Hal Thomsen was my traveling companion. Sometimes we talked. Mostly we thought. Other faces came up before me – faces of friends who had made this trip possible. Don and Mildred Loveridge in particular. I hoped Don would join me

in a few days. His imagination had been stirred with mine as we read a newspaper story clipped from the Staats Zeitung and Herald, Woodside, New Jersey, of November 15, 1959. I had it now in my briefcase, as translated from the German:

“STEREO-AIRPHOTOS AT MOUNT ARARAT SHOW PETRIFIED
BOAT IN A FIELD OF LAVA, POSSIBLY NOAH'S ARK OF THE BIBLE

“COLUMBUS, Ohio, 14 Nov (AP) – if Noah's Ark is really at Mount Ararat in Turkey, then there is a discovery from a young Turk who is living in Columbus, Ohio. Serket Kurtis has filtered stereographic air photos in Turkey, from which maps can be produced, and he has made a curious discovery.

“Even if it is not Noah's Ark, Kurtis' discovery will be something quite extraordinary.

“The 'discovery' has not yet been verified. However, Kurtis assumes that the curious form of the discovered object could be the Ark of Noah, which is described in the Bible and in the Koran.

Discovered with Stereoplanograph

“The airphotos were taken a year ago on behalf of the Geodetic Institute of Turkey. But the curious object was just recently discovered in one of the photos. The 'ark' was not recognizable with the unaided eye. It was discovered when in Ankara Captain Ilhan Durupinar used a stereoplanograph in order to prepare maps. With this instrument this object was discovered, which could not have been created by nature itself but by human hands. Kurtis reports that Captain Durupinar has worked on thousands of square miles in this method for the preparation of maps, but has never seen a similar object in stereographic air photos. Captain Durupinar is convinced, because of his topographic experience, that this discovery must be an object created by human hand. The size corresponds with the description of the Ark in the Bible and in the Koran. The object has the form of a boat, is 450 feet long, and 160 feet wide.

Expedition next spring

“Kurtis said that at this time of year it is not possible to send out an expedition for the verification of the discovery, because the whole area around Mount Ararat is covered by snow. So one must wait until spring comes and the snow is melted.

“The place on which, according to the airphoto, the discovery was made about twenty miles south of Mount Ararat, close to the Iranian border. This area is volcanic, mountainous, and uninhabited. It was never before cartographically registered.

“Kurtis said that the object, which could be the ark, is sunk in a field of lava. Through heat the Ark might be preserved like Herculaneum and Pompeii. If it is really Noah's Ark, then it must be 7000 (4500) years old.

“Dr. Arthur Brandenberger of the Geodetic Institute of Ohio State University said after he had seen the stereophotos he also is convinced that this discovery can not be a 'product of nature' but possibly a 'petrified boat'. He added that if it were really Noah's Ark it would be a sensational discovery.

“In the last years several expeditions searched in vain for Noah's Ark near Mount Ararat. However, every time the mountain peak was scoured but not the fields of lava fifty miles south of the mountain. Nobody thought to search from the air.”

Here was something different. Here was not a fanciful rumor. Here was not a wishful following of any of the existing traditions. Rather, here was an accidental discovery that had come about in the serious business of map making. It might not be a fruitful search. But could any unbiased mind ignore the possibilities? We did not intend to!

Contact had been made at once, on December 29, with Dr. Brandenberger. A day was spent with him personally, also making contact with his student, Captain Kurtis. Dr. Brandenberger stated that after careful study of the photograph he was certain the object was man-made and that it was a petrified boat. He expressed himself in these words: “Mr. Vandeman, I have been skeptical about the existence of such a boat. But if this object proves to be what I am now certain it is, I will have to change my opinions. And if it is pursued and found to be the Ark of Noah, it will be the greatest archaeological discovery of all time.”

Developments from that time had been rapid, which plans passing through several stages, culminating in a trip to Turkey, accompanied by Don Loveridge, on January 17. Preliminary contacts made through friends in New York had proved fruitful, and the Turkish government, despite its initial reluctance, had promised full cooperation.

[Official Letter of permission from the Turkish Government]

Contacts made on our return trip with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and with the British Museum in London had revealed, on the part of both institutions, enthusiastic interest and desire to cooperate in any investigation that might be made.

This is how the matter now stood. We had obtained prints from the original negative in Ankara. We had found that the boat-like object was located not fifty miles south of Mount Ararat, as incorrectly reported in the German article but in the saddle between Ararat and Tenderick, about twenty miles south. It was near the village of Dogubayzit and only a few miles from the main road to Teheran. There would be no guesswork about the location. The map-making instruments are accurate to one to two feet at a two-and-a-half mile height. As soon as the snow melted it could be easily located. And since it was at an altitude of only about 8000 feet, though surrounded by higher peaks, it should be possible to carry out our exploratory probe by helicopter.

The purpose of our probe would be simply to identify the nature of the object – to discover whether it might or might not be a boat, made of wood, petrified or otherwise. The answers to these questions would determine whether or not any full-scale expedition by any group would be warranted.

The Turkish government, despite the U-2 incident and internal disquiet over student uprisings, still promised cooperation. On May 5 I had cabled Mr. Mayatepek that we would arrive on May 19. And on the evening of May 13 a reply to this cable had been relayed to us through the Turkish Embassy in Washington, stating that the project had been cleared with all ministries involved. They welcomed us to Turkey for the completion of our mission, and would plan to personally meet our plane.

This, then, was the challenge. This was the unfinished story. Could it be that in the providence of God we were about to take part in a dramatic vindication of the Book by which all men are to be judged? That knowledge we did not have. We did have a convincing thread of evidence, Turkish permission, and melting snows. And we had asked God to give us the heart of a child.

POSSIBILITY

I took from my briefcase a book that had been my constant companion these last few months – a book entitled *Patriarchs and Prophets*, written by Ellen White. It contains the most vivid account of the Flood I have ever read. It makes it live. I could never match its language. Many scientists and businessmen who had never read the Bible were now reading Genesis, and were reading this book.

I did not need to find the Ark in order to believe. Those whose faith is sanely and deeply rooted in Scripture will believe – whether or not the famed ship is ever found. But there are those who, like Thomas, need to handle the evidence. Could it be that God is about to give them the chance?

STRANGE MOUNTAIN

We were speeding through the night toward a strange, forbidden mountain. Ararat. Mountain of the Flood. When it comes to traditions of the Flood itself, they are so widespread as to be almost overwhelming. Dr. Richard Andree, for instance, a German scholar, compiled a collection of eighty-eight different Flood traditions. B.C. Nelson in 1949, reported on forty-one Flood stories.

Mr. Edgerton Sykes, former Secretary of the British Embassy in Warsaw and a keen amateur archaeologist, has gathered together more than six hundred documents, tradition and otherwise, in Noah's favor. Mr. Sykes family believes that the Ark is somewhere on Ararat between the 11,000 foot line and the summit, perhaps a little above the belt of shells deposited by the receding waters. He hoped, in fact, in an expedition he planned to use radar and submarine television, which had been tried out following the atomic experiments at Bikini. But Turkey refused him permission to visit Ararat.

A strange characteristic of the lower slopes of Ararat is the complete absence of wind, though a keen wind blows at the higher altitudes.

UNIDENTIFIED OBJECT

Some things larger than the Ark have been discovered more than once. Take our own Crater Lake, for instance. Located as it is, high in the Cascade Range and surrounded by tall evergreens, men could easily pass less than a quarter of a mile from its rim without ever suspecting its presence. Evidently Indians knew of it, though they seldom visited it. A young prospector discovered it in 1853. In 1862 it was "discovered" again. A third "discovery" was made in 1865. Could it be that if the Ark of Noah is now located it will not be its first discovery, but rather a positive and scientific verification that will vindicate for all time the Genesis story?

Los Angeles, Calif.
November 10, 1945

"Mr. A.J. Smith...
"Kind friend,

"I was indeed surprised that after all these years someone had traced the Noah's Ark story back to me. The above named story has been printed and reprinted so many times all around the world and each time given a different credit that I was lost in the shuffle long ago.

"Yes, I am the originator of the story which I wrote up to the best of my ability from second hand facts. Despite of positive proofs lacking I believe the story to be true because of so many other reports which all fit together to form the same picture.

"I published it, for the first time, in the *New Eden* magazine of which I am the editor...I wrote the article in story form with the purpose of making it more interesting to read."

"Very truly yours,
"Floyd M. Gurley"

While most of the story may be fictitious, as evidenced by this admission, yet some part of it probably originated in facts. But this story circulated around the world and many people like Bob Appel, son of Nicholas Appel who was in WW

II, saw the same article about the Russian flyer. One has to seriously wonder, in the absence of any Stars & Stripes or other WW II articles, how many of the Stars & Stripes eyewitnesses actually saw a version of the Gurley article...

THE CALL OF THE EAST

What a trip it had been. A constant round of customs and permissions and unforeseen difficulties. We had purchased new camera equipment in Germany, and we never knew till we got back to the States and saw the results whether it was working properly or not. What a headache that had been to Byron Logan and Les Post, our photographers. Especially when that new camera, fortunately in its case, once fell off a donkey, and on another occasions was thrown out of a train window by an over-zealous porter.

But everywhere doors had been opened. Everyone was kind. I remembered the friendship of Dr. Selim Hassan, dean of Egyptian archaeologists, who opened the doors of the Cairo Museum to us. And the British Museum had been equally cordial. Precious items were removed from their cases so that we might photograph them.

It had been a killing schedule. Often we were up at one or two or three o'clock in the morning to be on our way. Traveling by night and shooting by day. Perhaps it had been good training for what we were about to experience.

I could not forget the friendliness of the East. I remembered how we had wanted pictures of Jacob's well. Like many of these old landmarks, it was now enclosed in a shrine. We must have lights. And there was no electricity. But the authorities in the village of Nablous had strung out electric cord for over a mile to give us current.

I WAS THERE

These had been my thoughts. But now I was there. Our plane, Turkish Airways Flight 651, put down at Ankara at 8:45 pm. It was Sunday, May 22, 1960.

We had spent two profitable days in London. There we had received valuable counsel from Dr. R.D. Barnett of the British Museum. He was deeply interested in our project and desired to cooperate in every possible way. But strained relations still existed, unfortunately, between Ankara and London, making it impossible for British archaeologists to participate actively. We would not soon forget the graciousness of Dr. Barnett.

Then, at nine o'clock Sunday morning, all formalities over, we had settled down in a fine new Pan-American 707 and hurtled through the skies at approximately six hundred miles an hour, bound for ancient Turkey.

It was difficult to adjust to so drastic a change, from the new world to the old, in so short a time. There had been a brief stopover in Frankfurt, long enough to feel the throbbing pulse of a reviving industrial giant. One does not leave West Germany with anything but commendation for their comeback since the tragedy of World War II and the days of dictatorship.

Then on to Vienna and Istanbul. In Istanbul, as we left our place, we had noted long lines of visitors and waving flags. We felt we must have happened upon a celebration of some kind. Nor were we disappointed. For Prime Minister Nebru, strong man of Southern Asia, was making a state visit. Hal and I joined in the party.

Then we had boarded our Turkish Airlines plane, and in a little while had dropped down into dark, quiet, deserted Ankara. A businessman had informed us en route that only the night before a shaky government had ordered an eight o'clock curfew to curb the rioting students. The Army, too, was revolting, at least mildly, restless and concerned. We understood that the matter was entirely a domestic one, having no connection with international tensions.

Now we were there. We settled for the night in the Hotel Grand Balin, room 506, which was to become the nerve center of the delicate arrangements that must begin tomorrow. Mirahsin, a young lady who was chief clerk at the hotel, became our key translator and a real help. Already we were feeling Turkish courtesy.

We dropped to our knees that first night, thankful for a safe trip and asking for wisdom and guidance. Little did we know what the week held in store. We closed our prayers with, "Lord, give us the heart of the child."

Monday was the day that richly repaid our first visit in January. All suspicions were gone. We were now known, and we were friends.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Picture it if you can – the majestic, almost fantastic beauty of giant Ararat as the dawn came streaming through the crude windows of our hotel in Doğubayazit.

Ararat: so dry and bare and woodless, yet so magnificent. So serene and so sublime, illuminated by the early sun. No other mountain gives the illusion of rising so near the sky. Its white summit, like a cloud suspended in the blue, seems almost detached from the earth. No man can escape the enchantment of his first view of Ararat. It etches itself forever in memory.

It was so striking it was difficult to curb the urge to photograph. Yet cameras are suspect in some areas of Turkey. And we understood the battle for freedom. Americans would cooperate.

The Major called for us at 5:30 and we set out by our bus for the army camp where we would pick up the horses. I shall never forget that ride. The Major sat in front, the rest of us straight in our seats, as if at military attention. Our eyes turned repeatedly to Ararat unable to escape its fascination. In the distance were the villages that had been destroyed by the earthquake of 1883 and since rebuilt.

As we rode along the Major recounted the story of his own ascent of Ararat. And then momentarily he was interrupted by a military tramp-tramp at our side as we passed the nineteen horses that soon we would be riding. It was a two-hour walk for them. But Turkish courtesy had arranged for us the comfort of the bus. We waved to the soldier boys. And the Major resumed his story.

We reached the army camp at 6:15. By 7:15 the horses had arrived and we were ready to be on our way.

But first a lesson in the art of riding. The Major insisted on almost military procession. He gave me a beautiful steed and laughingly indicated that the horses understood English, for they all had "US" stamped on them!

Then at the Major's command we were off, the Major in the lead, behind him the seven members of the expedition, followed up by fifteen cavaliers of the Turkish Army. It would take a strenuous pull of uphill travel to reach our destination.

Dr. Horn's horse seemingly did not understand English as well as the others. Or perhaps he shared his rider's interest in archaeology. At least there were a number of side expeditions.

Anticipation mounted as we gained altitude. We kept trying to fit the aerial photograph into the surroundings. In a few moments our suspense would be ended.

Our horses lifted us up on a grassy plateau, and the Major pulled his reins. We lined up our horses beside him at the edge of the precipice. The Major looked at his map. This was it. There, spread out before us, not more than two hundred yards away, lay the object of our search, the outline of a ship.

But it was not a lava flow. And it was evidently not a ship – at least not on the surface. Rather, there on a gentle mountain slope was a giant landslide, the earthen walls of which had been packed into the form of a giant boat.

We must investigate. And since the horses needed rest, we would walk down to the site.

What could have caused this strange formation? Was it only a freak of nature? Or was something buried underneath that caused the earth to take this strange shape?

We walked down into the center of the "ship" and looked about. Why this smooth, symmetrical, grassy area in the midst of crevasses and landslide debris?

Captain Durupinar studied his photographs and his maps. Dr. Brandenberger measured off the length. It was four hundred and fifty feet. Everything checked. But it was not a lava flow. And it was not man-made. Yet the outline of a ship was clearly visible. There were the steep, twenty-foot sides, then a depression, rising again to a grass-covered mound in the center.

Apparently the whole side of the mountain had dropped twenty to forty feet, leaving this boat-shaped area intact. What made it so? That day started many men thinking. It was an enigma not easily resolved.

Dr. Horn selected a likely spot and the Major gave the order to dig. We had no permit for anything but surface excavation. But the soldiers began digging a trench down into the wall.

There was perhaps fourteen inches of surface soil. Then the hard clay. There were a few snail shells in the topsoil. Then pieces of lava mixed with the clay. The pile of earth heaped up as they dug down, down for eight feet. We watched intently. There were no archaeological remains. Nothing manmade. At least not at that depth.

We tried the other wall. And a third spot. The results were the same.

Most of us joined Dr. Horn in the conviction that the physical phenomenon was not of significance in solving Ararat's enigma. But Captain Durupinar persisted. He had a permit to explore for minerals. He could order the use of dynamite.

Dr. Horn wrung his hands at that. No archaeologist uses dynamite. But others in the group outvoted him. And the Major was eager to demonstrate the skill of his men.

They returned the next day with nine sticks of dynamite. That took us down another eight feet. But still we found no trace of archaeological remains.

Evidently this was a freak of nature. And if it was, the site was of no further interest to us. We had ruled out one possibility ready to tackle another. Our eyes now turned to greater Ararat looming beside us, its riddle still unsolved.

Disappointed? Yes. Like the rocketry expert who plans a dozen launchings but is just human enough to hope that the first might be successful. The scientific mind rarely solves his problem in a single attempt. The space man does not give up because one rocket misfires. From each apparent defeat he builds toward eventual success.

No claim had been made as to what we would find. Our specific purpose was to determine whether the object revealed in the photograph was or was not a boat. It was not. But our mission was accomplished. And since the formation shown in the photograph was apparently only a freak of nature, we felt that a full-scale expedition to carry on extensive excavation at the site would not be justified.

We turned back our horses. Mission accomplished. It was one more step in solving the riddle of Ararat.

And the solemn, snowy cone, persistently intriguing, stubbornly silent, was even now smiling down upon us as if amused by the questions of men. But we would keep on asking!

UNFINISHED STORY

The story has not ended yet. Its final chapter is still to be written. It may or may not be in the providence of God that we shall help to write it.

But the persistent search will continue. For if one named Noah actually did ride out that nightmare of a storm in a boat God told him to build, then men might someday yet come upon its wreckage.

We do not know that God has preserved the ship that survived that abrupt catastrophe. We only know that He could have. And the possibility intrigues us.

If the boat was held intact for this doubting generation, responsible minds reason that it could have been accomplished in one of several ways. It could have been preserved by carbonization, by ancient burning. It could have been petrified. It could have been, like the mammoths, frozen in eternal ice. The latter suggestion seems most reasonable.

Four things point uncannily to the possibility that the great ship still exists, frozen on a glacier high on Ararat. One is the Haji Yeamam story, eloquent in its consistency. The second is the ring of authenticity surrounding the accounts of the finding of the Ark by Turkish soldiers following the earthquake of 1883, these accounts widely reported in the world's great newspapers. The third is the persistent thread of evidence running through the sightings of the last century and more. The fourth, and perhaps most conclusive, is the near find of Navarra at the same general altitude and location as Haji Yeamam described. ????(Not the Parrot Glacier)

We have followed up one lead, the aerial photo. And this probe into Turkey has yielded valuable information. We know the area and have contact with the country and peoples of the Ararat region. We are now ready for a plateau of investigation involving exhaustive research in every area that might lead to the solving of the riddle.

My good friend Dr. Lawrence Hewitt, together with a group of dedicated scientists, scholars, and vigorous-minded businessmen whose vision encompasses a contribution to all humanity, has built solidly on the fruit of this first expedition. These men have decided that the time has come to establish a strong foundation for archaeological research, commissioned to probe every part of the riddle, a group with whom the Turkish government will work, protecting the interests of all people everywhere. For if the Ark of Noah is ever found, it belongs not to one man or one nation. It belongs to the world.

This group is already deep in research. And information is coming to light which may make the Haji Yeamam story, with the confession of the dying scientist, a link of evidence that dare not be disregarded. In fact, the evidence already in hand places before this generation the moral responsibility of probing the complete mystery.

Our minds turn now to a glacier high on the slopes of Ararat. Seldom does this giant glacier melt. But a dry river bed, bending its circuitous way down the rocky side of the mountain, is mute evidence that at times it has drained its mighty waters when in the providence of God it has yielded to the extreme heat of an occasional hot summer.

We shall have to wait until the glacier melts. We know that it melted in 1857. We know that it melted in 1883. We know that it did not melt in 1952, for Navarra found only dark, well-defined outlines beneath the ice, though he was able later to dig out a piece of wood.

That glacier holds a mighty potential. For the solving of the riddle would reach across both national and ideological barriers. It would reach boldly across conflicting curtains of separation that men have built, curtains that statesmen find it impossible to pierce, and turn the minds of men to the Creator.

September 14, 1967 – Dear Board Members and Friends of the Foundation,

I write this report at my desk in Washington soon after returning from Turkey and after counsel with the available officers here. The board members have received copies of cables sent from Turkey, except one which evidently was lost. I wanted to let you know what was happening at weekly intervals. The results of this overseas investigation were not conclusive. We did learn much. Hardwicke Knight proved genuine and directed us to the area where he saw the timbers. We checked out the Reshit story, the Russian general, and contacted Navarra. You will be interested in what actually happened.

The situation in Ankara is well in hand. An excellent relationship exists between government leaders and us. Dr. Zinnur Rollas again proved his worth. This man is growing in influence daily in Turkish government circles. He is highly respected, uses his influence wisely, and has not been hesitant to openly assist our project.

The United States military personnel changes constantly. There are new faces in old familiar chairs, but these new people are as cooperative and interested as the old, if not more so. Colonel E. T. Hovetter, twenty-five years with the Pentagon and now in charge of our contract, is vitally interested and extended to us complete assistance. Detachment 98 at Erzurum is now headed by a man who is genuinely interested in our project, and he too pledges complete support.

Every man in our small group did splendidly. Their loyalty to the project is unquestioned, and each man did his utmost to bring lasting credit to the Foundation. Bud Crawford was our key man on the mountain. His familiarity with the local situation and his past experience in climbing made his contribution most valuable. Dr. Vanden Hoven proved an excellent all-round expedition member. He proved a good doctor for the health of the members, French translator and a good climber. In fact, he quickly learned the art of climbing and assisted Bud in some of the most dangerous areas of the search.

Hardwicke Knight was the main reason for this summer's quiet probe. There was to be no geological work, no glaciological work, no work on any of the other background sciences. The decision was simply that we take Mr. Knight to the mountain and learn from him the area where he sighted wood in 1936. Hardwicke Knight is an archeologist with some ability. He is at present working under a grant from the National Science Foundation through the University of Hawaii, studying Polynesian history. Mr. Knight is now fifty-six years of age and not entirely rugged in health. Dr. Vanden Hoven watched over him carefully.

Kuranda—Mona Mona
 Aboriginal Welfare Centre of the Seventh Day Adventist Church

...I thought you would be interested in a story we heard while living on Pitcairn Island. The Otago University of Dunedin in South New Zealand felt a burdon (sp.) for Pitcairn and frequently sent some teachers to the island to do research work. The men and women were not Bible lovers and their visits were of doubtful benefit. There was one man, however, whom we asked to tell us a story in a Young People's meeting and we sat spellbound as he told us of some of his experiences as a British Spy in Russia. During the war he was in Russia as a photographer and he traveled from place to place visiting the country. Knowing that he was being watched he fled to the area of Mt. Ararat. The weather had been very dry and the snows had melted and he followed a track out from a village and to his amazement he came to an area where there were massive timbers exposed and he felt that these could have been the remains of a large ship. As a surveyor he plotted the position and took many pictures. With these interesting pictures he made his way to the Black sea (cap.) and tried to get through to Turkey. In passing Russian Guards his films were all taken and he was dreadfully sad to lose them. He returned safely to New Zealand. I asked him why he had not told the story to the world and he simply said, "It is not safe for me to do so yet." His name and address is, F. Hardwiche (sp?) Knight, Photographic Dept. Duneden (sp.) Hospital, Great King Street, DUNEDIN, C.1. New Zealand. If you could possibly see him or have him fly to Auckland to meet you I am sure you would value his help...

Yours very sincerely,

W.G. Ferris, Pastor

Letter, F. Hardwick Knight

Dear Mr. Vandeman

My original journal has been much edited, but I do not think it would have helped me to give you a much less vague idea. I cannot remember making any entries during the actual journey across the high ground between the Persian frontier and getting down to the Black Sea. I had deliberately crossed the border south of Sadarak where the rivers permitted, in order to escape from embarrassing followers, and intended to continue southwards on the Azerbaijan side, not realizing then that that would be impossible. I was riding, and the track I followed led me further and further from the river towards the foothills. It was not far from Gigo Qishlaq (?) that I fell foul with the armed guards I told you of, and after detention was taken to the Turkish frontier at a high pass. Descent southwards now meant the risk of re-entering an inhospitable Persia, and at all events I was deterred by the darkness (as I remember it) of a probably uncrossable (sp.) river course. My progress was along the contour, proceeding from pass to pass, and must have been generally in a north-western direction, for to the west was a deep ravine that became more impossible as I continued, and in avoiding this dangerous-looking country I tended to keep high on the slopes, intending to continue until a pass or ridge gave me a view to the north across the plain to Echmiatzin, where I had been befriended. The ravine threatened every now and then, between the ridges, to turn up towards the mountain, and this possibly made me climb to a higher contour than I realized. My health apparently benefited. There always seemed to be another ridge ahead, and eventually when I got to the Hama Da pass the way ahead was stopped by a ravine and the plain to the north looked very remote in the haze. I gave p all idea of a route through Ahora to Aralek, and tried to reach Orkov. I do not know to this day where I got to. It is most likely I did after all get down onto the plain again at a place called Beri, but this part of my journey is irrelevant.

My discovery, which I must admit I did not fully realize the significance of at the time, occurred during one of the rather desperate progressions to reach the final pass that would give me a view to the north, but where or when during that mentally and physically distressed actual scenes but no continuity. You know the country, and will appreciate the feelings of one alone, without the language, and uncertain if he might not be moving into an impassable country. I believe that had I ventured more to the west I would have hit a track, but then I would have made no discovery.

Regarding the timbers, I can only say that they looked amorphous, imbedded, but definitely as if part of a structure, and hewn, or at least angular. Subsequent archaeological experience with wood that has been preserved by various conditions make me certain what I encountered was wood and not lignite or anything else. I did not think as far back at the time as Noah, but rather of the possibility of military maneuvers of abandoned military machinery or works, and the find was to some extent reassuring to me that I was on route for the pass and not in a cul-de-sac.

I made enquiries regarding military operations on Ararat years later in the Brit. Mus. Library, and it was only then that I came to consider the more likely hypothesis of a religious refuge of peoples coming from the Lake Van or the Tigris Valley to the immediate south. Whoever they were, they must have returned again to the south, for it is through the peoples from that area, is it not, that the majority of the flood and Noah accounts appear to have spread.

I have always been engaged in archaeological work in Britain, in Spain, in Russia, and recently very intensively in the Eastern-Polynesian-New-Zealand-culture area. I am past president of the Otago Anthropological Society; on Pitcairn I work for the Nat. Sciences Foundation of America, and produced the trigonometrical (sp.) survey of the Island, the site

plans, and supervised the photography. I am a professional photographer, as you know, and started as an air photographer. I am at present seeking a publisher for a textbook I have written on 'Archaeological Recording' covering the surveying, photography, and graphic techniques involved. On the less practical side, I think my greatest interest in the archaeological field has been what I might call the vindication of tradition, and that very much includes the Bible. You may not be with me in this, and I assure you I am nonetheless a strict scientist, but if you ever produce evidence to quieten (sp.) the school of Biblical scoffers, I for one shall be very happy that day. You must please, at all events, keep me informed of your activities in future. Meantime, I trust I can in some way cooperate.

What I have always hoped to see done at the Ararat site, was that first sections should be opened up to see if any trace of a stratigraphy could be found, indicating occupation there, and then sacrificial and other fires. The possible fauna of past periods also I wanted to study, and to recover the past ecology generally. I do not know how much in this direction you have already done; I have no doubt you are very far advanced, and I trust I may sometime be permitted to catch up with your work.

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) F. Hardwick Knight

We learned that it was possible to engage large tractors drawing heavy bedded trailers, which can carry equipment and men to the base camp quickly. A tractor can do the work of twenty eşeks, for one-fourth the cost and in a fraction of the time the slow animals consume. Walkie-talkies were tested and found to work to a distance of fifteen miles, which is great since communication can be a life or death issue.

After pitching our second camp near the top of the Ahora Gorge, three men searched certain promising areas while Hardwicke Knight rested from the climbing strain. On the second day, he seemed able and anxious to travel, so he led the way up a difficult climb, including sheer cliffs, to the place he felt to be the spot. Once on top, he indicated that all of his travels came immediately to mind, and he remembered the exact place where he had stood at the edge of the Gorge when he was turned back because of the precipice but outlined the area in the old mountain of Ararat where he had seen the giant timbers. There are clear demarcations between the old mountains, the original material of Ararat, and the giant volcanic cone. In fact, Bud and his climbing companions the first day located a stratum of sea life high in the demarcation area.

Hardwicke, feeling that he had completed his task in positively locating the area, decided that his work was finished. We all attempted to persuade him otherwise but bronchial trouble had already set in. So when we arrived back at base camp, he prepared to leave on the morrow. We did know the area, however, which we believe is also the Navarra area. The group then decided to return to the base camp in Ahora, intending to proceed up another leg of the mountain to the right of the Gorge, placing our camp in close proximity to the actual Knight area and thus eliminating the need for the exhausting climb up sheer cliffs each time a search was made. We felt it was practically impossible to take enough equipment up the sheer cliff to establish even a high camp from that location, for had we attempted it our high camp would have been nearly three thousand feet above our second camp in the Gorge even though the actual distance would have been less than half a mile. This took several days over the weekend.

In the meantime, I went down the mountain and in six hours Providence guided me to the Reshit group. We found a guide and associate of Mr. Reshit and learned the full details of all that happened. They, too, saw wood, but not the full Ark as the story was told in the newspaper at Istanbul. It was well-tooled, mortised timber, however, protruding from the snow and ice. This was seen on two occasions as they brought others back to examine it. But no one is still living who can take us to the actual spot. This aged man's testimony, however, fully identifies the section of the mountain as being the same as that which we were already searching. We will give further details on the Reshit situation at our next board meeting. At the least, it was evidence to support what we were doing.

During the night I traveled back up to base camp by tractor. We decided that while the transfer to the right side of the Ahora was taking place by our men, I should quickly travel to Paris to appeal to Navarra, on the basis of little or no remuneration, to come in to help identify the exact spot. I knew our men might find it. But if they did not, it would be too late to call for Navarra's help. So I set out for Paris. I met and talked with Navarra, and discovered that he had suffered near bankruptcy during the summer. It was this that had led him previously to ask us for \$20,000. He faced nearly \$50,000 in unpaid bills, and he was simply hoping to recoup some of it by sharing what he felt was valuable to us. In the meantime, the government had helped him out of the problem and loaned him sufficient funds to finish a demolition job near Bearritz, France, 100 miles east of Bordeaux. The job must be done by August 31 in order to qualify for these funds and he was to begin another one on September 1. I was convinced of his sincerity. He and his family opened their hearts to me and he solemnly promised that next year, money or no money, he would lead us to the spot, and he would give us what time was necessary to make positive identification.

I spent a number of hours while in France tracing the Russian general who commanded the Mount Ararat area up to the Russian revolution in 1917. But this is another piece of historical evidence that I will share with the board at our next meeting. We will have to rewrite some of our history in this particular. It was a very valuable visit. But now back to the mountain. The men had faithfully covered every portion of the Knight area, which was the only portion of the mountain not previously searched by our men. Our small group believes that there is no spot on the mountain more likely to hold the

giant ship, or its remains, than this area. There are several huge valleys surrounded by smaller peaks, all originally part of the old Ararat range before the spouting of volcanic action erected the two huge cones to the south. So thorough was the search on these two different occasions by the two groups that it seemed useless to continue without further identification of the actual spot beneath the ice.

We are of the considered opinion that our find will be of a confused array of timber beneath the ice, to be followed by a man-sized job of excavation or ice-melting such as only General Electric or some other giant corporation can do with their huge sun-focusing mirrors. We believe that this identification can be inexpensive in comparison with the costs of the past. The entire cost of the operation this year, including the visits to Navarra and the Russian general, was less than \$9,500. No salary was paid to anyone, except a little sustenance for Bud Crawford's family. We had a previous agreement that Navarra should be contacted on a no-remuneration basis if necessary.

Now a word about the Cinerama group's proposal. Eryl Cummings, hired as a field representative for three months to raise funds, made a valuable contact with Mr. Howard Minsky, vice-president of Cinerama. Various members of the board traveled to California and met with Mr. Minsky and worked out an agreement. The Cinerama people would begin immediately to gather funds in the amount of one million dollars to be in hand by January 1. These funds would support a full-scale expedition in 1968, film it in 65 mm, and finally divide the profits of the film production release with the Foundation. The film would be a travel-exploration-type film to be given to the world market in twenty-three different languages. Many questions still need to be answered about this along with unauthorized people, not officers of the Foundation visiting Mr. Minsky. Therefore, the officers authorized Ralph Crawford and myself to investigate. Ralph, myself and our legal counsel from Latham & Watkins met with Mr. Minsky who gave us his evaluation of all that had taken place. He is a very fine gentleman. Mr. Minsky told us that the money-raising venture had been discarded. He indicated that at the urging of Eryl Cummings and other friends who had been visiting Mr. Minsky occasionally, including Dr. McReynolds (a total of fifty hours in all), he had agreed to an expedition this year. It was planned, we learned, to send a camera crew with the investigating party at a cost of \$50,000, which money was to be raised not by Cinerama but by these men who were urging the immediate expedition. And what these men evidently did not understand was that the \$50,000 they were to raise did not involve a Cinerama picture. It would simply be a 35 mm film of fifteen minutes in length that could be used for fund-raising and not for the world market. We developed a new plan in case a find were made this year. Mr. Minsky submitted a new budget including the 65 mm camera since the board had their heart set on it. Therefore we set out to raise one of two sets of monies—\$100,000 for the total involvement in case a finder should be made, or \$12,000 to \$15,000 simply for an inexpensive probe. We believe it is providential that we were able to raise only \$12,000 this year. Also, the Foundation has paid Eryl Cummings a total of \$5,551.30 in salary and expense, plus telephone bills paid directly by the Foundation in the amount of more than \$1,000 for his three months of fund-raising responsibility. There have been some questions regarding this.

Cordially Yours,

George E. Vandeman, Chairman

G. Eric Jones, President

Humanity is restless and perplexed, fearful of the future. Men are willing to probe even unpopular theories for the sake of finding truth. The times demand it. And in a divided, distracted world what could give such pause as reverting minds to the day when God took a hand in the affairs of men?

God did take a hand. And He will do it again. In spite of our proud achievements, the cosmic events of our day have produced a groping humility in the minds of thinking men and women. They have been intrigued with the possibility that one day soon the Creator will again intervene with one of His great acts.

That is what the Book describes. It seems almost prophetic that today's writers seem forced to go back to a Volume finished over eighteen hundred years ago to find the phrases they feel compelled to use to describe this hour. Is it any wonder that tapping insistently at the minds of men is the suggestion that the Bible is right after all? And what could burn that suggestion more deeply into the thinking of a surprised world than the solving of Ararat's riddle?

The Ark may no longer exist except in the dust of the centuries. It may never be found. But tugging at our imaginations and at our reason is the possibility that it silently awaits discovery. If it was there in 1857, if it was there in 1883, if it was there even as late as 1952, may it not be there today? May Ararat yet yield its secret and permit its stubborn enigma to be explained?

This, then, is the challenge. This is the unfinished story. Whether or not we are about to turn the page to its final chapter we cannot say. It may be that in the providence of God the world is about to see a dramatic vindication of the Book by which all men are to be judged. That we do not know. We do have a convincing thread of evidence, Turkish friendship, and a faith that covets vindication not for itself, but for others.

And may God give us the heart of a child!

