

*John Morris (b. 1946) has been a leader in the search for Noah's Ark since the early 1970's. Though his responsibilities as President of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) keep him extremely busy, he remains very interested in the search for Noah's Ark. John Morris earned his B.S. in Civil Engineering from Virginia Tech in 1969. He received a M.S. in Geological Engineering from the University of Oklahoma in 1977. Morris gained his Ph.D. in Geological Engineering from University of Oklahoma in 1980. He is the president of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR – [www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org)) and the son of well-known creationist Henry Morris.*

#### Chapter 17

## 1971-1989 John Morris, Ph.D.

It has been a privilege and a blessing to have participated and been a leader in the search for Noah's Ark for over 25 years, during which time I participated in thirteen trips to Mt. Ararat. By God's grace I was able to write several books on the subject. When asked by my friend and Ark research colleague, B.J. Corbin, to excerpt segments from those books and articles detailing some of my Ararat expedition experiences for this collaborative effort called *The Explorers of Ararat*, I gladly agreed.<sup>1</sup>

1972

In the early 1970's, I became actively involved in the Noah's Ark search as field director of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) expeditions. In October of 1971, I went to Turkey to gain a working knowledge of the mountain, and in 1972, led a small group of mountain climbers representing ICR, consisting of John (J.B.) Bultema, Bill Ellison, Roger Losier, and John (Skip) Seiter. We ventured far into the Ahora Gorge, searching the vital western face from below. We then spent five days in the area above the Ahora Gorge, Cehennem Dere and on the Parrot Glacier, where we were able to take many excellent photographs of the upper reaches of Mt. Ararat.

It was felt that if the Ark remains on Mt. Ararat it must be in an area where the glacier is stationary, because a moving glacier moves with such tremendous force a wooden structure such as the Ark could not survive in its path. A glacier moves unevenly due to friction forces applied at areas of contact with the rock below, generating shear forces, which would grind to powder anything with which it came in contact. For the Ark to have been preserved since Noah's time, it would have to have been frozen almost constantly in a quiet and stable area protected from these destructive forces. The ICR team studied and photographed several such stationary ice packs.

The hardships faced by climbers of Mt. Ararat are well known, but let me tell you an incredible story that happened to our team on our first expedition.

#### Struck by Lightning

As we neared the top of the finger glacier, the winds, snow, and black clouds increasingly worsened. The force of the electricity around us made our hair stand on end and buzz. Even our ice axes gave out a high pitched ringing. At one point J.B. sat down beneath a large rock to rest and gain some relief from the blinding snow. I had seen lightning strike this rock several times and returned to warn him, but as all three of us stood or sat on this huge rock, lightning struck it again, sending unbelievable jolts of electricity through all of us.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts taken from *The Ark On Ararat*, by Tim LaHaye & John Morris; 1975.

J.B.'s back was frozen to the rock with his arms, legs, and head extended out into the air. He felt no pain at that time



Ahora Gorge, Cehennem Dere, and North Canyon, and upper Parrot Glacier near where lightning struck Dr. John Morris, J.B. Bultema and Roger Losier

Courtesy of Dr. John Morris

even though he sensed the current surging through his body. J.B. said it was though he was sitting on air with a rock backrest and the power kept him there until he could force one leg to the ground. From that vantage point, however, he could see Roger and I had been thrown off the rock. The force of the lightning seemed to suspend us in the air and then drop us far down the slope. Simultaneously, J.B. succeeded in forcing one of his legs to the ground, completing the electrical circuit. The electric current somersaulted him down the mountain following Roger and me.

I had been standing on the rock (now known as "Zap Rock") thanking God for protecting us once again, feeling that we would not be harmed. I no sooner finished praying when the bolt struck. My whole body went numb. I couldn't see or move, but I never lost consciousness. I fell over backwards, still wearing my heavy pack. Expecting an impact that never came, it seemed as though I was floating very slowly for several seconds, and was gently placed on the snow by unseen hands after which began sliding down the steep slope. I knew I must stop, but for an instant my eyes and arms would not function. When they did, I responded and grabbed a boulder in the snow, halting my slide.



Explorers on steep vertical slope of Ararat  
Courtesy of Dr. John Morris

For a few seconds I lay there, not moving, aware only of intense pain. I foolishly reasoned that since the pain was so great I must have received the full force of the bolt, and that the other two were unaffected. I tried to roll over and sit up, but to my horror found that both legs were paralyzed! There was no sensation of touch or life in them, just burning, searing pain!

I called to my friends for help, thinking they were unharmed, but the only answer was a call for help. Looking back uphill, I saw J.B. sitting in the snow, about 20 feet away, obviously also in great pain, with one leg twisted underneath him. He too was paralyzed and thought one leg was broken.

We remained there for several minutes, crying out to God for relief from the pain and deliverance from the horrible death that surely was to be ours. Suddenly I realized Roger was missing, and frantically began calling and looking for him. J.B. spotted him first, much farther down the mountain. His face was in the snow and one side of his head was covered with blood. We were unable to go to him, but prayed for him and called to him from above. Finally he stood up, looked around, and walked up the mountain toward us. His face was at least as white as the snow, and his eyes were filled with confusion and fear. When he was a short distance from me he stopped and began to bombard us with questions. "Where are we? What are we doing here? Why don't we go sit under that big rock and get out of this snow?" J.B. patiently tried to explain to him that we were on Mt. Ararat looking for Noah's Ark, and that we had just been struck by lightning under that big rock.

Roger was in shock and was experiencing total amnesia. He didn't know anything. He didn't know who he was or who we were. Furthermore, he didn't even like us. He wondered who these two nuts were sitting in the snow, freezing to death, when they could gain some shelter from the storm up among the rocks. J.B. finally convinced him to go get our ice axes, but that was the only thing he would do to help us.

So J.B. and I, unable to help ourselves, had to rely totally upon God. We reasoned that Roger would soon slip into deep shock and would need medical attention. J.B. thought his leg was broken and both of us were paralyzed, unable to move. We discussed a painful descent of the mountain, but ruled it out as impossible.

Our situation was, in short, critical. Unless we were able to get to some shelter, we would freeze to death in the storm within a few hours. And so, being unable to alter the situation, I prepared to die.

That's a weird feeling, rationally knowing that you are about to die. I never once doubted my salvation and did not fear death. In fact, I felt real peace, feeling that soon I would be in heaven. I had always envisioned meeting Jesus face to face as a rather exciting experience, but I now felt no excitement, just comfort. In fact, I wanted to get on with it—to die quickly, rather than slowly over a period of hours.

As I sat there contemplating horrible death, the Holy Spirit seemed to interject some of his thoughts into my mind. First, I was reminded of the hundreds of Christians who had suffered and died while following God's leading, and how they considered it a privilege to suffer for Him. Then I was reminded of the marvelous way in which our group had been led in the past months and particularly the past weeks in Turkey. I thought of the miraculous acquisition of our V.W. minibus, of the Christian friends who had helped us, of the granting of the impossible permits, of all the many dead-end streets down which we had wandered, only to find an open door at the end. I was reminded of the Christians back home who were praying for our safety and success, and of the job we had been called to do, and of its implications, importance, and urgency.

And then the conclusion. No, I wasn't going to die! God still had a purpose for us to accomplish. He wasn't going to let us die up in that frozen wasteland. Somehow, He was going to remedy the situation, heal and strengthen our bodies, and allow us to continue the search for the ark.

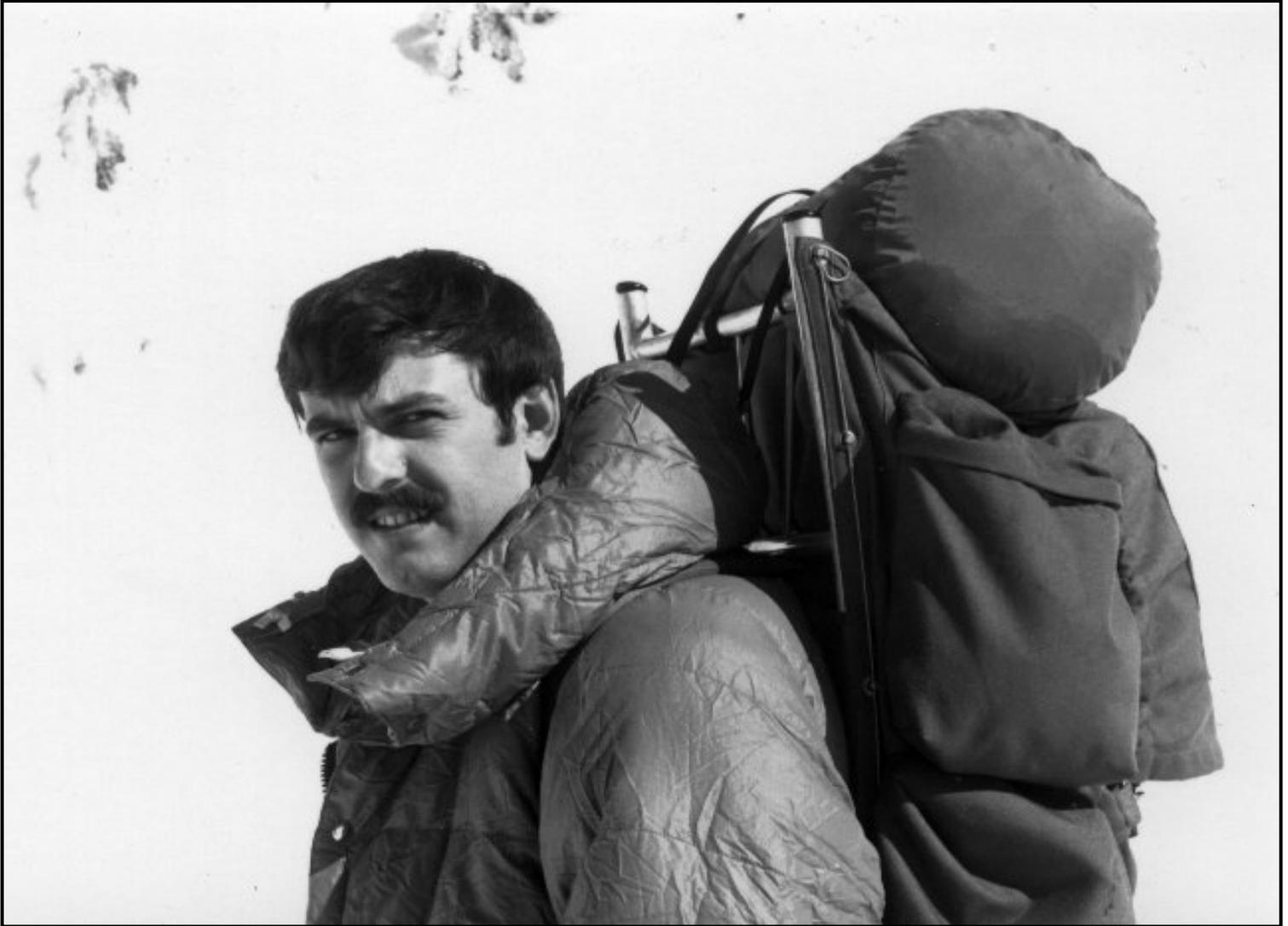
#### Miracle on Ararat

During those moments I was reminded of many passages of Scripture, including James 5:15, which states that "the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick," and I John 5:14, 15, stating that "this is the confidence which we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will He listens to us. And since we know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know that we have the request made of Him."

These thoughts were all whirling around in my head at dizzying speeds. I knew that I wasn't going to die. I knew that



Snow-capped peaks of Big and Little Ararat  
Courtesy of Dr. John Morris



Dr. John Morris with packing gear  
Courtesy of John Morris

God was going to heal us, and knew that this was according to his will. Since I knew these things, suddenly the realization came that I also had faith to believe that these things would come to pass. And if I had that faith, then I could pray the prayer of faith. And so, with my heart pounding wildly I prayed that prayer of faith, knowing that God heard me and that He would answer my request and heal my body.

Before the Holy Spirit had directed my thinking, I had prayed for relief from the pain and for healing. But it was a prayer of desperation, not of faith. This time I expected a miracle. I tried to move my legs—no response. Or did that toe move? Frantically I began massaging my legs and could gradually feel the firmness return. There was no sensation of touch in them, just a burning numbness. Before, when I had felt them, they resembled a balloon filled with water, shapeless and pliable. But now they were hard. I continued to massage, covering them with snow to ease the burning sensation. Their strength gradually returned, but still no feeling. Within thirty minutes my knees would bend! Within an hour, I could stand!

Using an ice axe as a cane, I hobbled over to J.B. and massaged his legs. He had been unable to reach his ankle and still thought it was broken. We determined that it was not broken, but both legs felt like jelly. Amazingly, he was quite calm and relaxed and felt that Roger needed attention more than he.

Roger was sitting on a nearby rock, obviously cold and shivering in shock. He didn't even have the sense to put on heavier clothing. So I retrieved his pack and re-dressed him—nylon pants, down parka, wind parka, and poncho. As I was tying his poncho up around his chin, a look of recognition crossed his face, and his memory began to return. When he asked why I was dressing him, I knew he was going to be all right. He did not fully recover for several hours, but in the meantime he was able to heat some water for a hot drink. But in doing so we lost nearly all of the coffee, cocoa, tea, and soup. All hot drink material slid down the hill, along with some valuable equipment.

J.B. had been massaging and flexing his legs during this time. His right leg had recuperated somewhat so that he could at least move it. Roger and I helped him over to a rock where he was able to put on warmer clothing and find shelter from the storm.

Finally, I began to dress myself, but my legs were very weak and shaky. I had walked up and down the slope gathering gear until totally exhausted. Then we huddled together under the rock to gain shelter from the storm, drank a hot drink to ward off hypothermia, and prayed to gain victory over the situation.

Earlier, I believed that it was in God's will for us to be healed and to survive the ordeal. Now we were partially healed and growing stronger each minute, but we still faced a cruel blizzard with few options open to us. Lightning was still flashing everywhere, snow was still coming down in buckets, and gale winds were blowing. We knew we were going to survive, but that it wouldn't be easy.

The only possible area of safety was on top of the ridge away from the big rocks. We needed to find a flat place to pitch our tent and gain shelter from the storm, so as soon as the lightning intensity lessened, Roger and I began searching for a way to the top. The wind was blowing the snow with such intensity we could not see more than ten feet ahead of us, but eventually we located a path between several huge rocks. It was nearly vertical and the footing was treacherous at best. Once we reached the top, however, we found the weather was even worse. We were right on the edge of the Abich I Glacier, and the wind velocity had doubled; in spite of it we found a flat place to camp and returned to J.B.

In our absence J.B. had been massaging and exercising his legs. His right leg had regained its strength, but there was no response from his left. He was still unable to move, so Roger and I climbed the slope again with our packs and made plans to anchor to a rock and assist J.B. in his ascent. I was nearly exhausted after this second climb. My legs were shaking like rubber, so I rested in the snow for several minutes. We descended once again to J.B., and much to our surprise found him standing up waiting for us. His legs still had no feeling, but their strength had returned enough to allow



(Back) Durnal, Losier, Bradley, Davies (Front) Morris, Ikenberry, Dewberry  
Courtesy of Dr. John Morris 1973

him to stand, so Roger carried his pack, and with little assistance from me, J.B. climbed that vertical slope on two numb weak legs!

Within minutes of the time we reached the top, the storm broke. I guess God figured that we had had enough. The snow and wind stopped, and the clouds disappeared as suddenly as they had formed. In complete comfort and peace we were able to pitch our tent and eat a hot supper. In fact, that evening before the sun went down, it was rather warm and pleasant.

Throughout the day, I had felt that this would be the day we would find the ark. This feeling was strengthened by the fact that Satan was so determined to stop us. It's not hard to imagine what I was doing and thinking as we pitched the tent and set up camp. As soon as time permitted, I wandered off to the edge of the Ahora Gorge, positive that the Ark was in full view. I didn't approach any dangerous cliffs, but with binoculars searched in all directions from a safe vantage point. Much to my disappointment, I did not see the ark; but the view of the Gorge from above was magnificent. The freshly fallen snow covered everything above 9,000 feet elevation including, I suspected, the ark. So we had to settle for a comfortable place to sleep, hot food, and our lives that night. We were satisfied and gave thanks to God. Very few people have ever camped that high on Ararat, and I'm sure no one else has ever had such a wonderful time of prayer and singing hymns as we had that evening.



Western side of the Ahora Gorge 1983  
Courtesy of Dr. John Morris

1973

Cooperating Turkish officials had assured the ICR team that permits for another expedition would again be issued in the summer of 1973, so plans were made to return. Preparations were made to take a larger, better-financed, better-equipped group to Mt. Ararat, capable not only of relocating the Ark itself, but also of thoroughly documenting it. Professional photographers, a medical doctor, and various Christian explorers and mountaineers were chosen for the job, in hopes of producing a 16-mm documentary film of the relocation of the ark, as well as other ancient sites in eastern Turkey. Team members included John Bradley, Jim Davies, Jim Dewberry, Luke Durnal, Jim Leeper, Roger Losier, Larry Ikenberry and myself.

Meanwhile, Turkey was undergoing a period of political unrest. Several months of bitter parliamentary fighting had divided the country's leadership until April 26, when President Koruturk and Prime Minister Talu gave an overwhelming vote of confidence to the new coalition government formed. Plans were made to gradually lift the martial law, which controlled the country.



Dr. John Morris searches by binoculars above Parrot Glacier crevasses 1973  
 Courtesy of Dr. John Morris

By the time our ICR advance team reached Turkey in July, only a few areas were still under martial law, and even those were quite peaceful. However, two potential problems loomed ahead. In October, almost every elected official in Turkey was up for re-election, and on October 29, Turkey planned to celebrate its 50th anniversary. All things considered, it was not a good year for a group of foreigners with sophisticated gear to explore one of Turkey's most sensitive zones. Mount Ararat overlooks both the Russian and Iranian borders.

Although a number of sympathetic officials in the Turkish government actively attempted to acquire permission for the ICR team, they were unable to do so. When the decision was finally reached forbidding the issuing of permits, these officials promised more effective support of the ICR efforts in the future. So the team left Turkey with not only a deep love and burden for its people and a sincere respect for its government, but also a sense of accomplishment, even elation over the prospects of future work.

However, the weeks the advance team was in Turkey were not spent entirely in the capital city of Ankara. Some members of the team twice journeyed to Ararat, again exploring and photographing ancient ruins, as well as thoroughly photographing the critical areas of the mountain with high-powered telescopic equipment. While these photographs did not reveal the ark, they would be strategically helpful in planning future endeavors.

On subsequent trips to Turkey and the base of the mountain, a pattern of not granting permits to research Mt. Ararat unfortunately became the norm for the next several years; however, we continued to establish and maintain contact with Turkish authorities. Efforts to search for the Ark were additionally hampered by several other groups climbing Mt. Ararat without the required permission. This only caused the Turkish government to mistrust the Ark research effort even more. There can never be justification for a Christian to directly disregard the law of the land.

Though I remained active in the search for Noah's Ark, I did not return to Mt. Ararat to lead another expedition until 1983. In fact, access to the mountain was extremely limited until former astronaut Col. Jim Irwin expressed an interest in exploring it. His visibility made him a celebrity in Turkey with officials granting him a rare permit in 1982. Asked to participate, I was unable to do more than help Col. Irwin assemble a capable climbing team. But once again expeditions were possible.

1983 Excerpts from November 1983 Impact article No. 125—*The Search for Noah's Ark*: 1983

We returned to the mountain on August 19, with a scaled-down crew of four Americans and one Turkish resident of America. The permits, which had been requested beginning in early July, were delayed until a very detailed screening was conducted and the Turkish government completed the evaluation process. Unfortunately, two members of the proposed team, Dr. Howard Carlson, a Sumerian archaeologist, and Dave Elliot, a professional cinematographer, were unable to accompany the group at such a late date. Three of the team were mountaineering experts, two of whom were



Ahmet Arslan, Brian Bartlet, and Dr. John Morris south of Parrot Glacier  
Courtesy of John Morris

also trained in mountain rescue and medicine. One of these mountaineers, Donald Barber of San Diego, re-activated a previous injury at the 9500-foot level and was unable to continue the climb. The other mountaineers, ex-medic Brian Bartlett of Samuels, Idaho, and Dr. Ahmet Arslan of Washington, D.C. area, an expert on Turkish folklore, native of Mt. Ararat, as well as professional climber, did make the climb. Ed Crawford joined them. We were accompanied on the mountain by Ahmet Shaheen, vice-president of the Turkish Alpine Federation, and two Kurdish residents of Mt. Ararat. A return date of September 7 was necessary because of prior commitments, the group having planned to begin the work earlier in the summer.

In contrast to nearly all past expeditions, ICR applied for and was granted full scientific research permits by the Turkish government. The group proposed to study archaeological remains in the Ararat area, make linguistic and cultural comparisons with remains at sites known to be of great antiquity and to test the ICR position that all civilizations had originally sprung from a common source, the survivors of the flood who lived on Mt. Ararat. Specific plans had originally included careful documentation and evaluation of known inscriptions, relief drawings, underground chambers, and structures previously discovered in the vicinity of Mt. Ararat, while also searching the area for other ancient relics, including the remains of the ark. All members of the ICR team were specialists—capable of accomplishing these goals.

Although the permits were finally granted and research visas issued by the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., finalization of the necessary paperwork kept the ICR group off the mountain for still another week and a half of precious



Ishak Pasa Palace 1973  
Courtesy of Dr. John Morris

time. While waiting they re-visited an unexcavated cave in the foothills of Mt. Ararat which had been dug into an upturned layer of sandy limestone near the ruins of Ishak Pasa. Many more aspects of this site were discovered, including a series of prepared ledges and a facade which had been smoothed off near the cave opening in preparation for additional inscriptions or openings. Unfortunately, much deterioration of the area had taken place since 1973 and an interior room (tomb area?) as well as an arched tunnel had collapsed. The excavation of this promising site remains of paramount importance in the understanding of the early civilizations which sprang up after the flood.

The other important archaeological site, which ICR had hoped to document, is known as Korhan, studied first in 1972. Unfortunately, it was declared a restricted zone and access was impossible. Objects discovered on past expeditions (such as the 1969 Lawrence B. Hewitt and Eryl Cummings trip) include a large semicircular altar, a cave with eight crosses on its entry, inscriptions in a pre-cuneiform script, washbasin or statue key, ancient graveyard, grinding wheel, twenty-five sacrificial pits, and many other objects of obvious antiquity. Much fruitful work could be done at this site.

Instead of beginning their climb on the northern side, which lies within the sensitive zone adjacent to the Armenian border, as they had hoped, the ICR team was forced to climb from the village of Örtülü on the south side and then to traverse around to the west and north. Implications of this ruling included losing four days of the limited remaining time in ascent and descent, inability to establish a base camp with proper documentary and climbing gear, and many miles of dangerous climbing on loose glacial scree.

Once at the Ahora Gorge, however, the team did check out what were thought to be the most promising sites, from vantage points above as well as below. No wood of any sort was discovered. Two new inscriptions were discovered on loose rocks in the bottom of the gorge made of a granite stone commonly found on the west face of the gorge. Another hand-carved cave, which is easily seen on the vertical west wall of the gorge, is reported to contain objects of religious significance by Kurdish villagers, none of whom have ventured there for superstitious reasons. Indeed, it would be nearly impossible to do so without technical rock climbing skills and equipment. Due to the reduced quantity and type of technical equipment brought on the long climb from the starting point on the south side of the mountain, the ICR team was disappointed in its efforts to enter the cave. Vertical climbing from below halted about 10 meters below the cave in rock too weak for pitons.

Those knowledgeable on the Ararat project know that late August is considered the optimum time to search. The weather becomes much more unpredictable and potentially violent in September and climbing may become quite dangerous. Reports of a record winter snowfall had dampened expectations for the summer's work, as did news reports of



John Morris, Brian Bartlet, Ed Crawford 1983  
 Courtesy of Dr. John Morris

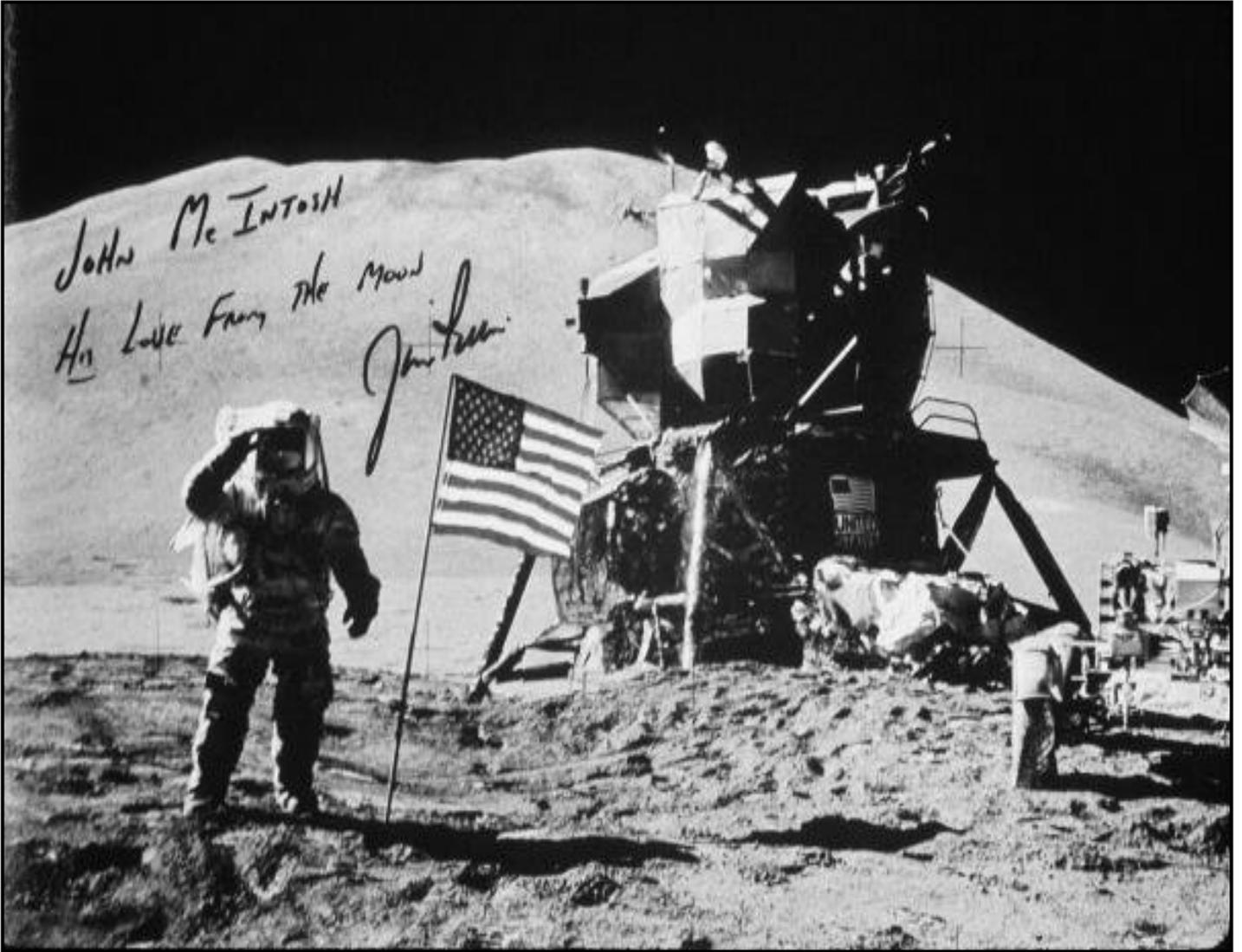
bad weather in mid-August. However, the ICR team found the mountain rather hospitable for a change, although cloud cover hampered photography and two midday snowstorms forced temporary bivouacs. Each day more snow melted and very little remained below 14,000 feet elevation, while glaciers had receded farther than in anyone's memory. The conditions seemed optimum for a discovery.

Other aspects of danger were also avoided. Relationships with the local Kurds on the mountain were enhanced by participation of the two Turkish guides and the assistance of the two well-respected Kurdish villagers. Thankfully, only a few minor skirmishes occurred with the usually vicious Kurdish wolfhounds. Furthermore, even though the team spent many hours and traveled many miles over loose "crumbly rock," only rare avalanches caused concern, with no injuries. We did encounter a bear in an ice cave on a hot afternoon in the Ahora Gorge, but thankfully he was not interested in us.

Despite the favorable conditions, no remains of the Ark were discovered. Those sites thought to be the most likely resting places for the Ark were thoroughly investigated and photographed. Other sites of less interest could have been checked out, but time was short. (As it was, I had to miss the first three weeks of teaching duties for the fall semester and could not stay longer.) The team returned to the States on September 8 and 10, satisfied that they had done everything possible under the circumstances. They and their financial and prayer supporters were predictably disappointed that the Ark was not discovered, but rested in the fact that God would allow the discovery in his time, and not before.

Turkey had recently changed its long-standing position against research and travel in the Ararat area. Whereas for the previous 10 years or so, i.e. 1973-1981, access had been quite limited, many groups from countries around the world were allowed to climb to the summit this year. (1983) Several expeditions were not restricted to the standard summit route and were allowed to look elsewhere in search of Noah's Ark.

One such expedition consisted of Pat Frost, Howard Davis, Dr. James Davies, and others who linked up with a Turkish group doing medical research on the mountain including Prof. Dr. Abdül Mecit DOĞRU, who was killed climbing the Communism Peak of Russia (7495 m). They achieved good coverage of the North Canyon area, and the area west of



Colonel Jim Irwin Walking on the Moon with Apollo 15 Lunar Lander 1971  
 Courtesy of John McIntosh

the Ahora Gorge. Another, headed up by Dr. Charles Willis, excavated a portion of an interesting ice pack east of the summit at 16,000 feet elevation with a modified chain saw adapted to ice. Still another group, John McIntosh and friends, spent some time searching the area east of the Gorge and toward the saddle between the two peaks. They then joined still another group headed by Col. James Irwin and including Eryl Cummings, Marvin Steffins, Ray Anderson, and climber Bob Stuplich. This latter expedition was even allowed to make plane trips around the mountain. The plane made four circuits at 11,000, 12,000, 13,000 and 14,000 feet elevation, with several hand-held cameras on board. Unfortunately, their photos showed no objects of interest. Neither did their ground search, which explored the east side of the Ahora Gorge and toward the saddle.

The obvious thought has now crossed each explorer's mind—perhaps the remains of the Ark are not really on the mountain at all. Yet the eyewitness evidence remains. Something must be up there. But where? Seemingly, every possible location has been checked. On the other hand, it may be that our methods are no longer productive. Since none of these difficult and expensive foreign expeditions has been fruitful, in part due to their inability to spend large amounts of time on the mountain, perhaps it is time to turn the search over to the actual inhabitants who have ready access to the mountain.

Just such a solution has been proposed and is being carefully considered. An ICR supporter has recently pledged a substantial sum of money to be offered through ICR as a reward to any Turkish discoverer of the Ark during 1983 or 1984. The money would be placed in a Turkish bank and would be released once an ICR observer has documented the discovery. Until the Ark is found, no money would be spent and no lives endangered. If approved, the offer will be extended to the proper Turkish groups within the next few months.

Those who might question such a plan should bear in mind that the combined 1983 expedition expenditures of the various groups totaled well over a quarter of a million dollars. A reward may well be a better use of limited finances, and seems now to offer a greater chance for success.

1984 Excerpts from Acts and Facts, Vol. 13 No. 10 October, 1984 by John Morris

On August 25, 1984, the news spread around the globe. Noah's Ark had been found! A group of American and Turkish explorers, including ICR's Dr. John Morris, had discovered the remains of a huge boat on the slopes of Mt. Ararat in eastern Turkey, so the papers claimed. But discriminating readers soon began to question the continuing news releases. Something seemed wrong.

Indeed things were wrong, so wrong in fact, that what promised to be the most productive Ararat expedition ever turned into a nightmare of worldwide proportions, at best, producing questionable results; at worst, the end of all searches.

Several expeditions were approved for research on Mt. Ararat that summer, the most prominent one being a combination of three subgroups: International Expeditions headed by Marvin Steffins; High Flight Foundation, with former astronaut Jim Irwin; and Institute for Creation Research, with Dr. John Morris. These three had received broad approval for search and research, including the use of a high-altitude, military helicopter beginning August 20.

The ICR group, consisting of mountaineer Don Barber, Halil Husrevoglu of Turkey and Dr. John Morris, arrived in Ankara on August 5, to accomplish the preliminary work for the entire team, including filing of a detailed flight plan for the helicopter and clarification of certain aspects of the permits. Numerous crippling problems had surfaced for all of the other expeditions by this time. Thus forewarned, Morris and the others were able to eliminate many problems before they occurred, but quite a few remained, which were faced as they arose. In all, about ten days were spent in government offices in six cities throughout Turkey.

Photo analysis by Ray Anderson of the United States had identified an ark-shaped formation half-buried by snow and rock at the 12,500-foot elevation on the western side of the mountain near the Parrot Glacier, which the ICR group desired to investigate before the enormous cost of the helicopter was incurred. As soon as final paperwork was done, they climbed to the site but the Ark was not visible. They were back down in four days to meet the Steffins party on August 19, consisting of Steffins, his wife and daughter, Turkish physicist Dr. Bulent Atalay, and helicopter expert "Watcha" McCollum.

Within a day it was made known to the team that the high-altitude helicopter promised was in need of repairs and would not be available. The substitute, which was offered, could only reach elevations of 10,000 feet, much too low for research purposes. It was refused, and the groups turned to secondary objectives and methods.

The Irwin subgroup arrived on August 20, consisting of Jim Irwin, John Christensen, Dick Bright and Ron Wyatt. Wyatt had, on several occasions, visited the Ararat region with particular interest in a strikingly ship-shaped formation in the foothills some 20 miles southeast of Mt. Ararat. The site had first come to light in aerial photos in 1959 and had been studied by expeditions in 1960 and 1973. Both groups had concluded that the object was merely an unusual geologic formation. Wyatt convinced Irwin to visit the site, and although Irwin was intrigued, he was not convinced the formation was Noah's Ark, and left the site to climb Mt. Ararat.

After consultation with Steffins, the ICR group traveled to Kars to obtain permission for both groups to study archaeological sites on the mountain's north face. But, while the ICR group was gone, Steffins and Wyatt returned to the formation, this time with a metal detector which identified several discrete, metallic anomalies on either side of a central rock outcrop. Fragments were collected which bore superficial resemblance to petrified wood. Needing to wrap up certain details with the government regarding the helicopter, Steffins then left the mountain area and returned to Ankara without having conferred with Irwin or Morris.

Once in Ankara, rumors were flying among members of the press that Steffins had found the ark. In order to squelch the rumors, Steffins called a press conference to explain that he had indeed found a boat-shaped, ark-sized object on the mountains of Ararat, which given more research and documentation might prove to be the Ark of Noah. But the press exaggerated and so twisted the story that it appeared Steffins was announcing a discovery. Furthermore, over the next week the incident became a national scandal. All expedition members were accused of being treasure hunters and smugglers, "proved" by the fact that Wyatt had announced from New York City that he had removed portions of the boat. Pictures of him with a sack of samples appeared in newspapers throughout Turkey. Wyatt had rushed to New York to announce the site while Morris, Doris Bowers and others were just beginning to critically examine the site. Productive work on the search was over at that point, with the Irwin, Morris and Steffins groups harassed, threatened and forced into hiding. Fortunately, everyone was eventually able to leave the country and return home.

On the day of Steffins' infamous press conference in Ankara, Morris and his group had been visiting the boat-shaped formation. Careful study indicated to them that the studies in 1960 and 1973 were correct, and that the formation was merely a geologic formation, although an unusual one. It is approximately 510' x 160' with walls 30' high in places. It was



The Durupinar Formation 1984  
Courtesy of John McIntosh

evidently formed as a brecciated mud flow descended a hillside and flowed around a prominent rock outcrop, producing a "boat-shaped" formation, as does river water when it flows around a rock. The mud consists of various rock types, from coarse sandstone to basalt, in a matrix of clay and fault breccia. Underlying the area is a layer of organic, rich, black limestone that looks somewhat like partially petrified wood. The formation is rather unusual but appears to be of natural causes. Its coincidental location in the foothills of Ararat, coupled with its boat shape and huge dimensions, is puzzling. The presence of magnetic anomalies demands that more careful research be done, and final judgments must wait.

Although the overall effect of the summer's work is uncertain, an unrelated group made one important discovery, that of the ruins of a major city near the village of Eli, which appears to be of great

antiquity. Located and photographed were many ancient inscriptions and structures, which may hold the key to understanding the origins of ancient civilizations.

1985

To test my proposition that Turkish nationals could search with less opposition, ICR sponsored an expedition by Mr. Halil Husrevoglu and three of his Turkish friends. Halil who lives in the states, had been with me on several previous expeditions, so he knew the area, the officials and the research.

Unfortunately, while Turks have better access, they have less protection. After an effective but unfruitful week studying crevasses in the Parrot Glacier, a well-known horseman by the name of Halis Chaven attacked Halil. Left for dead, the local tribesmen rescued Halil. When the incident was reported to the police, they were not interested.

1987 Excerpts from Impact No. 175—A Report On The ICR Ararat Exploration, 1987 by John Morris

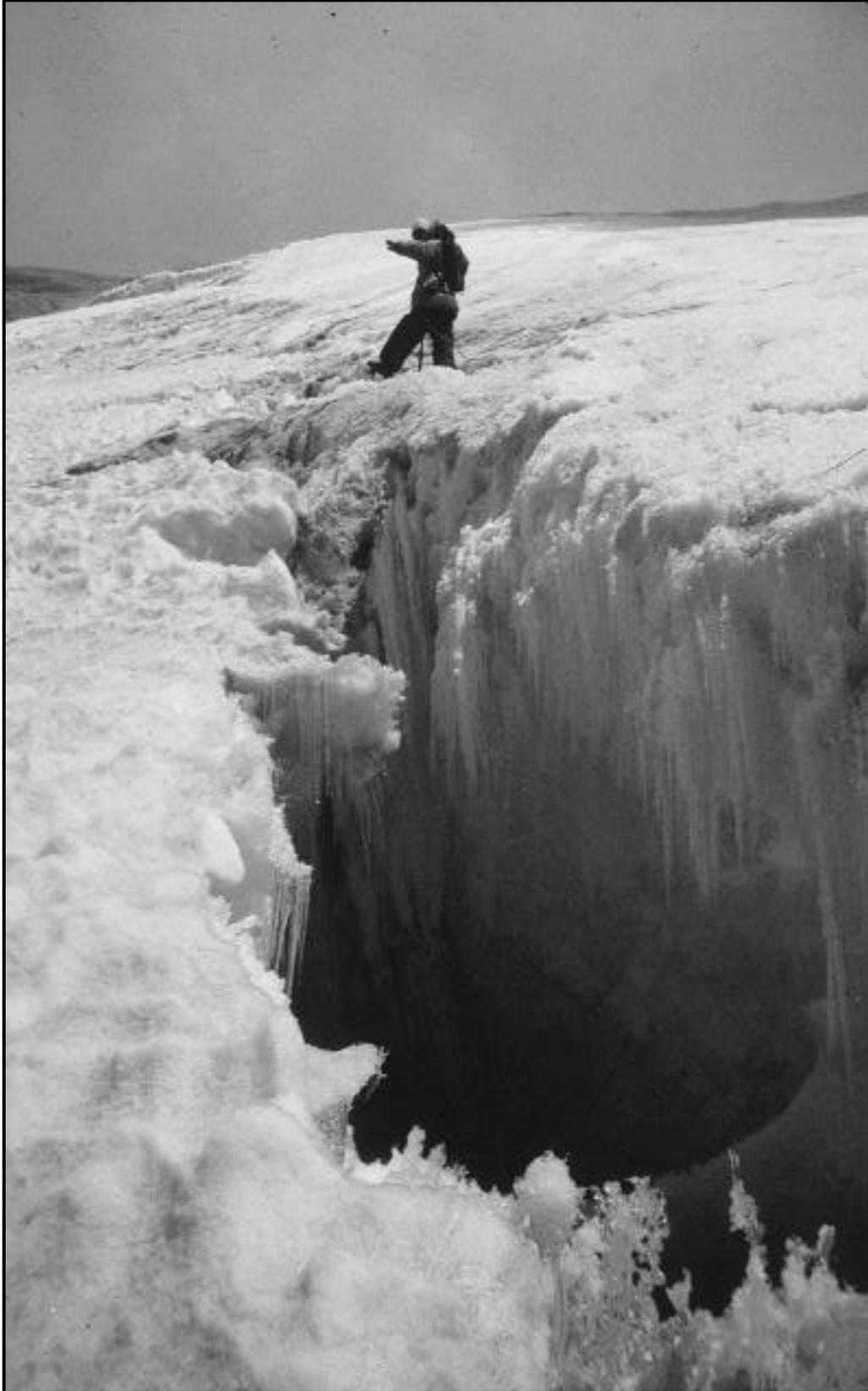
It has been obvious for some time that ground-based expeditions to Mt. Ararat in search of Noah's Ark have very little chance of succeeding. All who have seen pictures of the mountain and heard of the difficulties and dangers fully understand the necessity of using other methods.

In August of 1987, the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) participated in an international expedition composed of representatives of four organizations in cooperation with two Turkish companies. This consortium was granted permission by the very cooperative central government in Ankara: 1) to survey and photograph all areas of interest on the mountain from a fixed-wing airplane, 2) to investigate with a high-altitude helicopter any promising sites discovered from the aircraft or aerial photos, and, 3) to document any discovery by a ground-based climbing party. As a requirement of this permit, we were asked to do an equivalent study of the boat-shaped formation some 15 miles away from Ararat, which others have suspected might be the decayed remains of Noah's Ark. (I have studied this formation and am convinced it is merely an unusual geologic formation.)

Although all involved organizations participated in planning at all stages, primary responsibility for the acquisition and interpretation of aerial photographs rested with ICR and International Exploration, Inc. (Interex, Mr. Rod Keller, president), a Canadian-based aerial exploration company. A Cessna 206 aircraft was leased from a Turkish aircraft dealer in Ankara, capable of flying to 20,000 feet elevation and equipped with a high-resolution camera. The request to use a sensitive infrared video camera was withdrawn during permit negotiations.

High Flight Foundation of Colorado Springs (Jim Irwin, director and former Apollo 15 astronaut) accepted primary responsibility for the use of the helicopter—a Jet Ranger II with pre-engine, also leased from a Turkish company, as well as direction of potential ground exploration and documentation. Plans to use the helicopter to build a mountaineering shelter, at the request of the Turkish Mountaineering Federation, were canceled since the final permissions were not granted until mid-August—much too late for transportation of materials and construction. The structure had been required

by the Turks in the early permit negotiations in return for permission to explore. A "log cabin" design was chosen with pre-cut timbers to be flown up by helicopter and assembled on site.



Metin Karadag Crossing Life Threatening Crevasse 1984  
Courtesy of John McIntosh

Evangelische Omroep (EO), a branch of official government television in the Netherlands, (Jan van den Bosch, director) under separate permits to film in Turkey (including an interview with President Kenan Evren to discuss Turkish involvement in the European Common Market) was joined to the Ararat expedition to document all activities and discoveries. EO has had a long and fruitful involvement in creationist activities, including the original filming of the movies now known as the award-winning series, "Origins: How the World Came to Be."

As is always the case, difficulties and opposition surfaced at every turn. Our permit received approval on August 14, but getting the specific aspects nailed down and paperwork completed turned out to be a trying process. By August 25, however, we had explicit documents allowing all phases of our work, including the basing of both helicopter and airplane in Doğubayazıt, the town at the base of the mountain. Precise flight plans had been approved by the Turkish Civil Aviation Agency, and although cautious, our hopes were high.

Earlier in the spring, however, a directive had been issued from the Prime Minister (not normally involved in the permit process), mandating that no exploration of any sort would be allowed on Mt. Ararat, evidently in response to requests for exclusivity from certain American groups including Ron Wyatt who were interested in promoting the boat-shaped formation as the ark. Even though the evidence favoring this site is quite meager and speculative, there is a government effort to capitalize on the attention given it, including the building

of a "visitors' center" on the site and improvement of the road to it. I had been told of this directive, but assumed our permission constituted an exception to it.

Unfortunately, therefore, provincial and local officials with responsibility to implement our permits had two conflicting documents, and clarification and coordination turned out to be impossible. At 10:00 P.M. on the night before we were to begin flying, the local officials told us that the more restrictive of the two was to be honored, and the flights were canceled.

A second major problem dealt with the nearness of both Russian and Iranian borders. By agreement with these countries, Turkey maintains a 20 km buffer zone along these borders, within which activities such as our proposed exploration and photography are kept to a minimum. However, our permits specifically allowed us to land in Doğubayazıt (about 10 km from Iran), and specifically approved the areas of research on the mountain (slightly over 20 km from Russia, but only about 15 km from Iran). Again, local officials had two conflicting orders, and chose the more restrictive.

A third problem was the weather. The winter of 1987 had seen extensive snowfall in eastern Turkey, and since snow cover might obscure anything on the ground, this was thought to be detrimental to the search. Conversely, the summer had produced record heat waves. All Ararat veterans felt the snow melt-back was at least better than average. More importantly, the night on which our permits were canceled, a major snowstorm hit the mountain, leaving at least 18 inches of new snow, covering everything above 11,000 feet elevation. This had melted within a week, but by then our permits had been totally revoked.

After extensive negotiation, we were finally allowed to make one flight, of course restricted to air space outside the 20 km buffer zones. This meant we could photograph the west side of the mountain and see the promising north side only obliquely, from high altitude. Unfortunately, low-lying clouds covered the mountain below 13,000 feet, and the recent snowfall obscured much of what remained. Fortunately, these same clouds hid our plane from view as we ventured as close as possible to the Ahora Gorge and the Davis Canyon. The photographs taken, however, are of excellent quality, and do provide insight into a few areas of interest. They were taken in such a way as to provide stereoscopic coverage of the areas photographed, allowing three-dimensional viewing. The photos have now been carefully studied, and sadly no hints of the Ark have been seen, but all areas were shrouded in snow.

Even though we didn't do all we had hoped to do, in the final analysis, we were able to secure governmental permission for an aerial survey—an answer to a 16-year prayer of mine. We now know much more of the implementation process and of Turkish law bearing on this issue, and know ways to minimize the specific problems which stymied us. Now is hardly the time to quit! The mechanism is in place and relationships established which might yield a proper survey in the future.

Meanwhile, efforts are continuing to evaluate recent high-resolution satellite imagery of Mt. Ararat. Computer enhancement techniques, developed for the data from the French "SPOT" satellite, make it possible to "see" objects as little as three meters in diameter. ICR is committed to this study, and is involved in two such efforts.

The evidence continues to mount that God has protected the Ark over the years since the flood. In spite of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, the erosion by the glacier, and the effects of time, the data [through eyewitness accounts] strongly assert that the remains of the Ark lie somewhere on Mt. Ararat, buried by volcanic debris and ice, awaiting discovery at the proper time. God answers prayer, and we can be thankful for the progress made in the summer of 1987. In his time and to his glory, the obstacles will be overcome and the Ark will be found. Even with the disappointments and frustrations, I am convinced the discovery is near.

1988 Excerpts from Acts & Facts Vol. 17, No. 11, November, 1988

The summer of 1988 saw a number of investigators journey to Mount Ararat in search of the remains of Noah's Ark. Considered together these efforts compose the most complete study of Mount Ararat ever made in one year.

In July a joint Turkish-American effort studied the boat-shaped formation some 10 miles south of Greater Ararat, which some have maintained is the ark. Cores of the formation were taken down to some depth, but they yielded nothing of direct archaeological interest. Unfortunately, a group promoting this site soon plans to release a feature-length film claiming discovery of the Ark here.

Late in July a helicopter was used to search a hidden area known as the Davis Canyon. I was involved in the initial planning and ICR helped to a limited degree in the funding. Only moderate snow cover hampered the search, but no discovery was made. An effort to return at a better time to do a more complete survey was delayed until September 13. Even though late in the season, recent snow had melted, and good photographic coverage of many areas of high interest was obtained at that time. Again, there was no discovery.

Dr. Willis' group received Turkish permission to use a radar device to investigate beneath the ice cap on the eastern plateau summit region. No anomalous shapes were discovered under the ice in this area. There were a few other ground-based expeditions, also unsuccessful.

The many eyewitness accounts [included in an appendix], however, old and new, which have always been the main reason to search for the Ark on Mount Ararat, still remain unexplained, indicating something significant may indeed be up there, awaiting the right timing and conditions for discovery.

1989 Excerpts from Acts & Facts, December, 1989

As reported in Acts & Facts as well as in numerous news reports around the country, American explorers by the name of Chuck Aaron and Bob Garbe, claimed in late September 1989, to have discovered the remains of the Ark of Noah, high on the slopes of Mt. Ararat.

The object of interest can be seen as a dark spot in the southwest glacier. Turkish climbers call it "The Eye of the Bird," after the bird-shaped look of the finger glaciers. It has come to be known as the "Ark Cave" or "Ice Cave." I had participated in the planning and fund-raising for this helicopter-based search. I did not accompany the explorers on the September trip, but did return as part of a team of six in late October, in an attempt to verify and document the discovery. The ICR contingent consisted of Bob Van Kampen, geologist Grant Richards, my brother Henry Morris, III and myself. We joined Chuck Aaron and Bill Dodder, representing Jim Irwin.

Enjoying cooperation from the Turkish government, the group quickly acquired permits which allowed not only helicopter flights, but ground-based study and sampling. Unfortunately, complete implementation of the permits was delayed for several weeks. Finally, however, the team was able to study the object of interest from the helicopter once again, with even less snow cover than in September, but was prohibited from getting the much-needed samples.

From the air, the object looks long and rectangular, an estimated 70' x 100' x 300' protruding from the glacier. It seemed to consist of a basaltic ledge overlying an unconsolidated ash layer, which has partially eroded, revealing the interior. Since petrified wood can sometimes look superficially like basalt, samples are needed to settle the matter. Microscopic investigation of the samples would clearly show remnant cellular structure of the wood, or interlocking crystals of the rock.

The object appears visually much the same as eyewitnesses have frequently described their encounters with the ark, and as such, will remain of interest until samples can be obtained and studied. However, each of the team members was convinced at the time of viewing from the helicopter that the object was most likely of natural origin.



Ice Cave or "Eye of the Bird" rock formation 1989  
Courtesy of John Morris

## 1999 Conclusion

Several of the eyewitnesses have mentioned that the Ark is covered by rock or rock rubble, perhaps mixed with ice and snow, but not actually in the glacier. My current thinking is that the structure has likely been engulfed by volcanic ash, ejected in one of the mountains by many post-flood eruptions. Once buried in ash, the Ark could be preserved by petrification, injection with or replacement by silica, common in igneous rock. This could explain why several eyewitnesses have insisted that the Ark is "as hard as rock." Numerous layers of ash and volcanic flow rock are exposed in the Ahora Gorge and elsewhere, forming a "stair-stepped" terrain. Such topography is mentioned time and again by eyewitnesses, with the Ark resting on a ledge, protruding from the mountain and near a cliff.

While I remain interested in exploration of the glacier, I feel the bulk of the eyewitness evidence favors a lower site, in rugged, rocky terrain, but still accessible to non-technical climbers with knowledge of the proper route. Indeed, without these eyewitness reports, there is absolutely no reason to search at all.

Thus, I maintain a primary interest in the Ahora Gorge, and other similar features, from approximately 12,500 to 14,500 feet in elevation. I suspect only 50 feet or so might be protruding from an ash deposit, but even that would be covered by snow or rock debris on most years, forcing a continued revisitation of the many potential hiding places.

For nearly two decades, the search for the Ark was paramount in my thinking. Even at night I would dream of climbing the mountain several times a week. The Ark search gets into your blood. It's like having gum on your shoe. You can kick and kick, but can't get it off. I'll always be hooked. My study of the Turkish language, of Muslim writings, of Anatolian history, and of Turkish customs has been fascinating, and on my thirteen trips to the mountain, the many dear Turkish friends and experiences have been enriching.

I have memories, which will last for a lifetime. But in recent years my passion has turned to other projects, as responsibilities have grown at home and at ICR. I no longer seek to return to the mountain, although I maintain a deep interest in the search and contact with active search groups. But if the right opportunity arose...

