

*Richard "Dick" Bright (b. 1945) is the "bulldog" of Ark researchers with 27 expeditions and counting... His persistence in the search for the remains of Noah's Ark is nearly unmatched. (I say "nearly" where John McIntosh has tested him in the past). This persistence is a much-needed quality to overcome the many frustrations associated with searching for the remains of Noah's Ark.*

Chapter 25

## 1984-2006 Dick Bright, Ph.D.



Professional Airline Pilot Dick Bright  
Courtesy of Dick Bright

Dick Bright was a professional airline pilot. His education includes a Bachelor of Science degree from Bemidji State University in with major areas of study in geography, geology, and earth science. In some of the courses he took to obtain that degree, he was taught that the doctrine of uniformitarianism and the theories of evolution were, in essence, the basic background of the earth's and our human history. It was in an anthropology class that he began to have some trouble, which he will discuss later.

In recent years I have studied areas of Theology, which I find to be very important in my life, and have led to both a fully accredited Masters and a Ph.D. through external studies. I don't pretend to make any special claims, and I don't do this kind of work for a living. I consider myself still a student, and I love the subject matter. I'm an airline captain. That's what I do for a living.

My involvement in the search for Noah's Ark was in great part due to the impression upon me by Violet Cummings' book *Has Anybody Really Seen Noah's Ark?* There was also the meeting I had with Violet and her husband Eryl, who are now both deceased. As the "dean" of modern Ark research, many considered Eryl Cummings, a very knowledgeable investigator. Then came the meeting with one man who, I believe, had an incredible impact on my adult life.

From the pages of my book *The Ark, A Reality?*, I give you my impressions, as recorded at that time:

I wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Eryl Cummings. Mr. Cummings called me one evening. We set a date and I flew to Farmington, New Mexico, to meet them both. Mr. Cummings, who had been to Ararat fifteen times by then, is

now in his eighties, and Violet Cummings is the author of the book that first got my attention. I found Mr. and Mrs. Cummings to be two of the most gracious people I have ever met. I am very thankful for the hospitality and courtesy extended to me. I asked them how I could become a part of the next Ark expedition. How I would go about it? Whom should I contact? One of the names given to me was that of the former astronaut I had read about in the newspaper clipping, Colonel James B. Irwin, a man who had walked on the moon. I wondered to myself how I would ever be able to talk to such a man. I wrote Col. Irwin and he was kind enough to answer. I then called him on the phone, but I was at a loss for what to say. I mainly stuttered; I don't think that impressed him much. I went to his office unannounced to meet him, and I was to find him to be one of the most down-to-earth people I had ever met. He also was most gracious in taking time from his schedule to let me stumble across my words as I attempted to express myself. I stood in awe of the man; I was nervous. Nothing was decided.

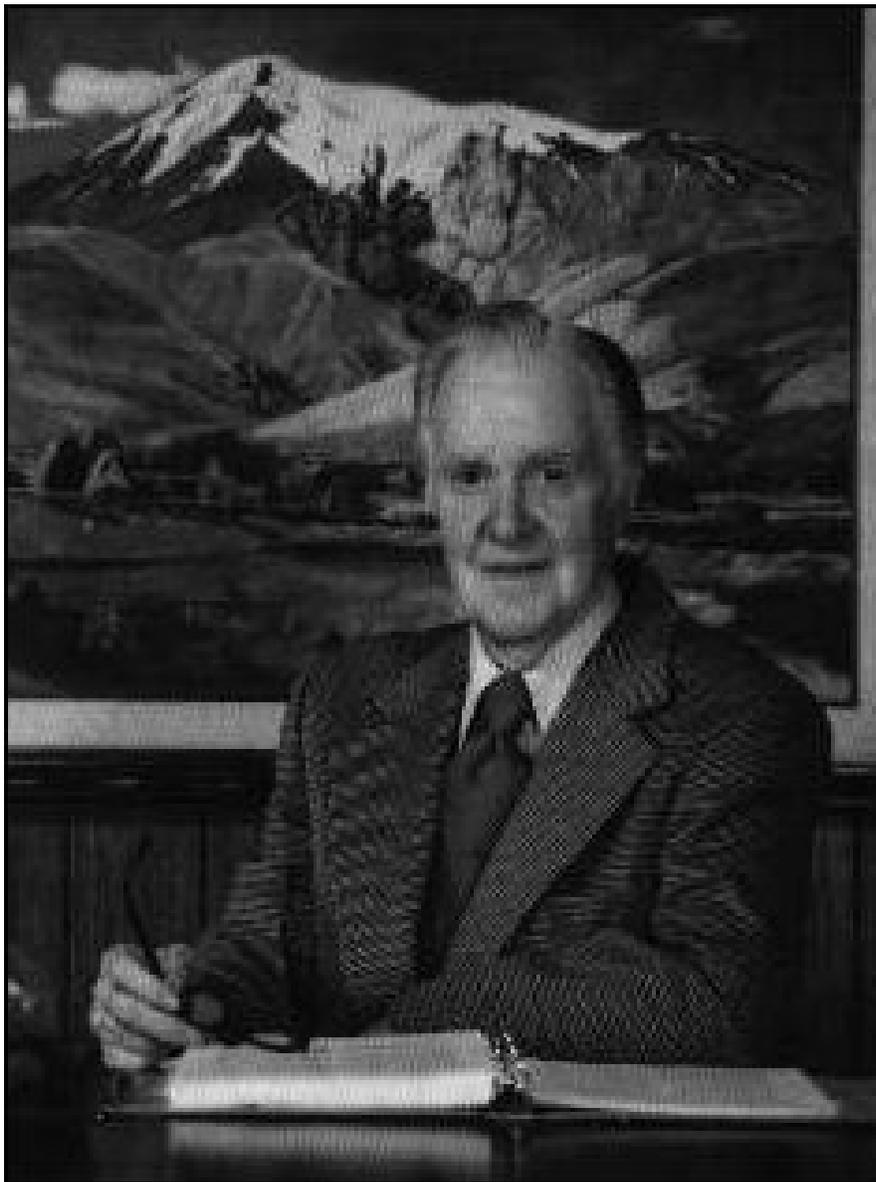
Two days later I went to work. It just happened that I had to fly to Colorado Springs for a twenty-minute stop to pick up passengers en route to Denver. This stop just happened to be on my schedule that month. Colonel Jim Irwin was due to fly to New York on business and just happened to pick Frontier Airlines out of Colorado Springs that day. One of the flight attendants, on reserve status,

just happened to pick up that trip. She just happened to graduate from the same high school that Jim Irwin had attended years earlier, and recognized him from a picture. She came to the cockpit and to tell us who was on board, and I almost jumped out of my seat to go back to the passenger cabin and reintroduce myself to the man sitting in the first seat in the first row, Colonel Jim Irwin.

After his flight to Denver, Colonel Jim Irwin and I talked for a few minutes. Then he was on his way to New York on business, and I was on my way to begin one of the greatest adventures of my life.

I had prayed and it was not to be in 1983. My year to join the team was 1984. Sixteen months would pass from the time I had applied for acceptance as a member of the expedition team until I would at last be on my way. In the meantime, I involved myself in considerable research and physical training.

In preparation for the expedition, I searched eight libraries for information pertaining to anything helpful in finding the location of Noah's vessel. I spent a lot of time looking for a photograph, which reportedly existed, to no avail. I read books by various authors and spent many late nights poring over the pages. I



Eryl Cummings with Elfred Lee Painting in Background  
Courtesy of Elfred Lee

prepared myself physically by losing 28 pounds.

I took instruction in ice and rock climbing and technical procedures, and did quite a lot of climbing by myself, and with others. Long's Peak was the last big climb, and was with Jim Irwin and John Christensen, another member of the expedition.

I jogged almost daily, with my personal best reaching twelve miles at an average elevation of 9,500 feet. I camped and climbed in rain, and spent a lot of time at the Nautilus.

I wrote to Jim Irwin in June of 1984 and briefed him on my preparations, giving a synopsis of my reading research. I hoped to convey to him my enthusiasm and sincere desire to join his expedition.

At 7:00 A.M. on August 15, 1984, I began what was the first of eight expeditions to the date of this writing. I expect there will yet be another in the not-too-distant future.

I must take a minute here and thank B. J. Corbin for asking me to contribute to this work compiling reports by the explorers of Ararat. In order for me to best do this, I can only relate to the reader my personal experiences. The reader should know that every expedition has proven to be costly, challenging, and disappointing. Each year the names on a team change. Yet, as in quest of a great goal, in body and spirit, we go on. I'm very blessed to be among a group of people dedicated to the search, to the solving of the questions surrounding his mystery.

In my mind, the questions which surround this particular mystery should not cause us to doubt the existence of the ark, but rather should encourage us to find just exactly where the ship rests, and when God will choose to reveal it. Then, of course there is the question, "Am I to be a part of this tremendous event?"

I include a few highlights from previous expeditions to give the reader an idea of what we went through in our searches. These excerpts are taken from my own book and give the impressions and details of that time. The information presented here is accurate to the best of my recollection.

#### My First Expedition—1984



Dick Bright, John Christensen and Jim Irwin with skis on Ararat's summit 1984  
Courtesy of Dick Bright via John McIntosh

It was a peaceful year, and the expedition of 1984 went well as far as the travel and the climb of Mount Ararat was concerned. Jim Irwin, John Christensen, Ridvan Karpuz (our guide), and I were the principals in this attempt. We began near the borders of Iran and the USSR, in Doğubeyazit, Turkey, on Thursday, August 23, 1984. Following are excerpts from the record:

We left the hotel at 6:37 A.M., and now we are on our way to Eli village near the base of the mountain. By 8:20 A.M. the horses are being saddled with our packs. The friendly Kurdish folk at the village are filling us full of juice, and the members of the press and the photographers who have accompanied us are in fine form. They are doing what they are paid to do. At the village during the photo session, the lady of the main household of Eli Village was asked to pose with Jim. She originally declined but decided that since Jim believed, she would allow her picture to be taken with him. John and I handed out gum and candy to the children. There were many of them who came back several times holding out both hands for our offerings. That was fun. I noticed that John was particularly good with the kids, and they seemed to love him. I believe it is his gentle, kind nature that attracts the kids to him. In my case, I expect it's the gum. Leaving the village at 9:15 A.M., our four-man operation, plus reporters, photographers, and followers, totaled 16 people and three horses. By 9:30 A.M. we were at low camp, about 10,500 feet (3,200 meters) or so. I'm told that it is time for a light lunch and rest.

The plan now is to sit around all day and get acclimated. I'm very impatient, but Jim is wiser than I and agrees with the guide that we're to sit tight. I must keep in mind that it's God's timing that will take us to the ark, not mine; but I hope it's soon. It is now 7:25 P.M. on Thursday. We went to a river and filled our water bottles. The water was cold and dirty. We had to purify the drinking water with iodine tablets, a must from now on. It's interesting that all of a sudden, water is of such importance. Clean water is one of those things you seem to take for granted back in the States, or in any area of plenty. Friday, the 24th of August, at 6:30 in the morning: We're up and breakfast is underway—a quick one to be sure. We're leaving a duffel bag full of stuff behind, and still we seem to be taking too much with us. The Turks and Kurds kept us awake well into the night; there must have been a party of sorts. It's 9:00 A.M. and we're finally underway. It's a slow start. The reporters are left behind; still one photographer sticks with us. It's noon now and we are at 4,200 meters, which is as far as the horses can go. That's somewhere around 13,800 feet. We made good time this morning, now we will carry our own packs. Our high camp will be at 4,900 meters, which is approximately 16,000 feet. There are a lot of loose rocks and it's a difficult climb. Water is at a premium. It amazes me how these Kurds can smoke so much and still climb like they do. We have a break now, then the toughest climb to come.

By Saturday night, August 25th we had reached our high camp. This is an overview of the day and plans for tomorrow. We made it to camp by noon. We rested until about 1:10 P.M., then we hiked to the west glacier and looked it over from above. We then climbed a finger glacier to search for the wood sighting of which Jim was made aware last year. We found it...a pair of skis and poles at 16,000 feet on Inonu Peak. We reached that summit with crampons and ice axes. We don't know why the skis are here. I can't imagine anyone actually trying to use them on this mountain. A photograph of the skis at a distance would cause them to appear like pieces of wood, or hand-hewn timber, sticking out of the ice. Were they planted to bring Jim back? I wonder why they are here. It's just past midnight early Sunday morning, August 26th. I find it hard to sleep at night; twelve hours is too much. Anticipation of tomorrow is great, and I'm slept out. The temperature is 22 degrees, a mild evening, and the sky is incredible. Stars are everywhere like I have never seen before. Like the lines in a Robert Service poem, "Night's holy tent, huge and glittering with wonderment."

With an early start at 8:00 A.M., we explored the west side on the ice, the north side above the Cehennem Dere (a "U" shaped cut-out or canyon in front of the Abich I glacier on the north-northeast side), above the Ahora Gorge, and across the Abich I and II glaciers to the saddle between Atatürk peak and Cakmak peak. I was looking forward to exploring the northeast area of the mountain.

It is now Monday the 27th at 8:55 A.M. I'm not sure where or how to begin. A lot has happened since my last entry. I'll try to begin where I left off. We were on the saddle between Atatürk and Cakmak peaks. At times we disagreed on some points and I began to wonder if we were under the influence of the principalities and powers the Bible talks about.

Discussion took place on how to reach the northeast side. We had to descend at least 2,000 feet to be near the edge of the ice where I'm sure the Ark must rest. When Ridvan and I unroped and took a walk to look down the ice and snowfields that were to be negotiated, he was not in favor of descending the steep slope. I felt that I could have made it. To me, it appeared as though the trip down would have been easy enough, hopefully not too fast. Climbing back up again, however, might well have been another matter. There was an area of jagged rocks, or peaks that I wanted to get down to, but Ridvan the guide, said "No." At the time, I was beginning to become confused. The northeast area was an area to which I felt we had to go. It was a must, but now, all of a sudden, we couldn't get there.

John and I agreed that the area needed to be searched. Jim wanted us to search the area. But Jim knew we could not get down and back up before dark and our camp was on the other side of the mountain. A plan was devised to approach the area from the bottom. We would need to descend the mountain, circle it, and climb up from that side. A move such as this might have caused legal problems in that the northeast side of the mountain was closed to all climbers.

Although Jim had been given complete search privileges of the mountain we might need additional police approval from Doğubeyazit, the town and area whose jurisdiction we were apparently under. Also, Ridvan mentioned that it would take more time than we had, to negotiate a hike to that side, search and return. There was confusion and some disagreement. In retrospect, we probably should have moved the camp and stayed another day. However, we descended.

The trip down was exhilarating. We spent four hours and forty minutes on the descent to base camp. The ascent had taken two days. We dropped our packs and ourselves for a few minutes rest. Then, in preparation for the rest of our day's

journey, we changed boots and clothes while drinking several bottles of pop that a few enterprising young kids had packed and offered to us for a price. We then descended from base camp to arrive in Eli village at 10:10 that night. From there it was a pickup and van ride to Doğubeyazit.

On Monday, August 27th, we received news that a British climber had been shot somewhere on the north side of the mountain while climbing alone. Reports of who shot him, or why, varied from the military, because of improper papers, to bandits, to villagers, for any number of reasons.

Jim and John had planned to stay for only two more days because of schedules and other commitments. There were no teams left on the mountain, and those that had been there had not been allowed to search—just to climb on the south and west sides. If I alone had stayed to continue the search, my guide would probably have been replaced, as he had a schedule, too. Chances are the replacement would not be able to speak English. Even had I been able to get a permit to continue the search alone, it probably would have been a sport permit and not one for research. I decided to leave with Jim and John. At that time, I did not have definite plans to return to Ararat. Because of time constraints and decisions made, 1984 was a disappointing year. But that was only the beginning of the Ararat experience.

#### Second Expedition—1985

My second trip began August 12, 1985. I said an emotional good-bye to my wife and daughter and was on my way to Ararat once again.

We had heard that Bill Crouse and his Probe Ministries group were chased off the mountain by an armed band of Kurdish terrorists. All of the group's equipment was burned or stolen. John McIntosh, one of the Crouse group, was reportedly waiting for us in Doğubeyazit, near the base of Ararat. Whether he wanted to join us, or just to brief us on the activities at this point, I did not know.

On this trip we had a big group of climbers. There were twenty-four climbers in all. Six were on a research permit which would supposedly allow us access to all areas of the mountain in our search for the ark. Eighteen climbers signed on with a sport permit which would only allow them to climb the mountain on a guided tourist climb, using only one path to climb the south side of the mountain to the summit and back down again.

There was a report that there was a lot of melt-back this year. That would possibly make the Ark easier to find. That is assuming, of course, that it was there for someone to find. It is our belief that it is. Now all we had to do was wait for the mountain to open. The military had shut down legal access to it, while they attempted to solve the terrorist problem.



Mount Ararat rises above the streets of Doğubeyazıt 1985  
 Courtesy of Bill Crouse

Upon our arrival in Turkey, Jim had scheduled meetings with the local police about additional permission needed for our climb. He was also to meet with the Agri Army Corps Commander, but it turned out the commander was out of town. Permission from the Army was necessary because of the current military operation. Even though we had received our government-issued permits, Jim and Ridvan spent four hours with the local authorities while the rest of us enjoyed sightseeing, bread by the homemade loaf, meysu juice, and watermelon (karpoos). Finally, we were again underway to Doğubeyazıt.

The road was dusty, and the ride was rough. Passing traffic as we hang on the side of the pavement or on the shoulder, which normally drops off rather quickly into a ditch or a canyon. While we were going as fast as possible, the driver continuously honked the horn. Little villages situated near the roadway occupy what seems to be a semi-fertile, tawny-colored landscape with scattered flocks of sheep, while the low-lying "mountains of Ararat" flank us on both sides. We view piles of hay and teams of horses and wagons, an occasional tractor, and the local farmer cutting his crop by hand sickle. Finally, late in the afternoon, Mount Ararat was in sight.

Mount Ararat towers above the landscape in all its glory, the undisputed ruling citadel, magnificent and beautiful in the western sun and clear skies. It is purple in the distance, crowned with the splendor of its white ice cap. The sight of the mountain, strong and majestic, sends chills across my spine. This is an incredible mountain; I had almost forgotten the power in its awesome appearance. We met John McIntosh who reported that the situation was not exactly positive. Jim needed to see the Army Corps Commander in Doğubeyazıt. The situation on the mountain sounded serious, and it was now doubtful the military would solve it anytime soon. Still, I was not overly concerned. We have more than two weeks to accomplish our task.

The terrorists seemed to be in control of the mountain. Apparently, they were Kurdish Communists seeking to have their own republic, and had chosen Mount Ararat as their own territory. To a certain extent, I can understand the Kurdish situation. Terrorist activities, however, are not welcome in the Republic of Turkey.

Margaret Kahn, in *The Children of Jinn*, explains it in the following way.

Kurdistan is a real place with its boundaries in the mountains of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the USSR. It has its own cities and language, even a national anthem. The Kurdish population

outnumbers the combined populations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, but Kurdistan has a way of appearing and disappearing. The last few decades of modernization have seen the Kurdish people fighting for their lives, and control of their land. The Kurdish people are fighting for recognition in a self-determined struggle, and the Communists are there to help.

Fortunately, only a very few have accepted their help, and are intent on establishing their new government on Mount Ararat. I'm sure these people have grounds for a legitimate complaint, and maybe should even raise a fuss, but this, no doubt, is the wrong way to go about it, and I was not too excited about their timing. The Turkish military was apparently having a difficult time finding the terrorists. I guess that's understandable, as the mountain is big, and places to hide are many.

Our group was ready to climb. However, the Turkish government wouldn't approve our climb because they wouldn't take the responsibility for our safety. The publicity would not be in the best interest of the Turkish government if they could not control their own territory. Neither would it be good publicity if we were to come into harm's way. If this terrorist group intercepted our large group, led by Jim Irwin, and we were to be detained, all the news services would soon be aware of the situation. The cause of these Kurdish terrorists would receive worldwide publicity, especially with ABC coming to town and CBS already here. A meeting was arranged between Jim and General Varol, the Army Corps commander. I was at the meeting. The general initially promised his support. However, subsequent "required" meetings with local police and local Jendarma officials cast a shadow of doubt on the seriousness of that support.

There were several phone calls back and forth about the size of our group and our exact intentions. We intended to climb the north side of Ararat with military protection. Since the Ark is reported to be near the edge of the ice on the northeast side, several people on the sports team would actually be involved in the search—those that would make it to high camp. We felt that since there were fifty or more commandos and only eight terrorists who had actually been seen at any one time that the protection should have been adequate.

While waiting between phone calls, we listened to stories about the terrorists lives including one of them who had killed seven people. When the decision was finally made, the mountain was to be off limits until August 22. (We were there on the 16th.) We were told there was a military operation on the mountain, which was the reason for the closing.

Most of the team was scheduled to return to the United States in about eight days. Consequently, they would not be able to climb. It was a time of anger, disappointment, and disgust at the situation and the powers that be in the offices of the Turkish authorities. Perhaps we should have been happy that the authorities wanted to keep us out of harm's way, but that was not the case. We wanted to climb no matter what the Kurdish separatist threat was claimed to be.

Finally, on August 23rd, with only the six members of the original research team remaining and available to climb, we received permission to climb—with an armed escort. The team members were Jim Irwin, John McIntosh, Elfred Lee, Dr. Ole Honningdalsnes, Bob Stuplich and me. A guide was also with us. His name is Ahmet Turan. There were also a number of Turkish soldiers.

By Saturday, August 24, we were at Eli village at Ararat's base. There were no children begging for candy this year and the presence of the heavily armed Jendarma reminded us that photographs were forbidden. A French and an Austrian team joined us. A *20/20* news team that was in Turkey to monitor our progress wanted to get us on film, and was trying to negotiate with the military to at least take our pictures as we were walking out of camp. None were allowed. Jim observed this exchange, but regardless of what he may have thought about it, he wisely thanked a military officer for providing our security, and we began our climb. We were allowed to climb the south side of Ararat—not the north side as we had desired, but at least it was on the mountain. We intended to work on the rest of it later.

Finally, at 5:36 P.M. (long after our scheduled departure time of 9:00 A.M.), our group, totaling in the neighborhood of sixty-one people, plus ten horses was at last under way.



Explorers Roped Together Hiking up from Mihtepe 1983  
 Courtesy of John McIntosh

Before continuing, let me assure the reader, and especially the Turkish people, that the climbing experience depicted in this chapter, is written from my personal and timely point of view only. It was written during, and shortly after, the heartfelt emotions of a difficult and troublesome time. My impressions of the events were without a doubt influenced by the struggles of the delays and the climb; nonetheless, they were my impressions, and I give them to you.

There is no intent whatsoever to insinuate that the government or the military of Turkey was less than cooperative with our efforts. If that had been the case, we would not even have been allowed into the country, let alone be protected as we were. We owe them a debt of thanks for their efforts.

At our first camp we were allowed no fires and no flashlights but I wondered why. The terrorist attacks had all been in the area of 4,000 feet higher than we were. I wondered if the Jendarma would be with us the next night when we really might need them. We found that our "escort" would take us only to approximately 3,200 meters, or about 10,500 feet. Here, they would wait for food to be brought to them, and we were to go no further.

After a series of delays, it turned out that the military unit along to protect us was not prepared to go on. This was in part because they hadn't brought along any cold weather gear. Eventually the military stayed behind at 3,200 meters, but allowed us to climb further, taking the guides and horsemen whom came with us.

We arrived at 4,200 meters and found the remains of many burned tents, packs, and other camping and climbing gear strewn all over the place. Piles of dried camping food littered the site of one of the burned tents. Terrorists had hit this camp just two weeks prior to our being here. The Probe Ministries expedition group was the fortunate folks to survive it, and our own John McIntosh was there. If the terrorists would return now, they would meet no resistance. Our military "protection" was camped at least one thousand meters (over three hours) below us. We had shown Ahmet Turan, our guide, photographs of the northeast side, and the area in which we intended to search. Turan seemed to understand completely, and agreed. To this point at least, everything seemed to be okay, and all the necessary authorities had approved us for our area of search. The only restriction was that we couldn't take pictures. Turan had been talking about leaving all cameras behind when we left on the next leg of the climb. If this happened, we still had Alfred Lee, our artist and illustrator, and he had brought his pencil and paper.

We moved on early the next morning. Jim, Ole, Bob, and I started out first, along with Ahmet. John and Alfred were to follow behind us after packing the campsite and would later join us on the ice. Ahmet was in contact with the Turkish

military by walkie-talkie, and about three hours into our climb, he received instructions that would cost us nearly half a day. We were not to be separated and were to wait for John and Elfred.

We realized that we were wasting time while sitting still. Knowing that this may cost us a half-day because of the new instructions, Jim made a decision that was of great sacrifice to himself, John and Elfred, but was designed to be a great time saver for the purpose of the expedition. He decided to go down and meet John and Elfred, and tell them they had to go down with him to the soldiers' camp, thereby freeing Bob, Ole and me, with Ahmet, to continue our climb. This was the only way Ahmet would agree to climb and save the time we so desperately needed for our search. We had prayer, then Jim began his descent. Bob, Ole, I, and our guide (who, as far as I was concerned, was playing his walkie-talkie entirely too much)—we were now on our way up.

My notes and memories of the next part of the climb are sketchy at best. The incline was very steep, and with 60-pound packs on our backs, it seems our energy level was somewhat taxed. We were climbing on rocks that roll with every other step. Sometimes one step up takes a climber two or three steps back. There were the occasional small rockslides to contend with, and along with the increase in altitude, comes the decrease in oxygen; the heavy physical workload proved to be a real challenge. Ole is quite the climber, but he was hard to keep awake. He scrambled fast for a few yards, and then sat down to rest, then began to fall asleep because of the altitude. We would holler at him, he would get up, scramble a little further, sit down, and go to sleep. This happened over and over again; I've never seen anyone climb like he does. Bob is steady and strong, and led the three of us. Ahmet had a light pack and climbed, or scrambled, way ahead of us. He would then sit and wait for us, who were more heavily laden, to catch him. Ahmet was in pretty fair shape, and had climbed this mountain many times over the last 20 years. For me, it was a difficult climb. My notes read like this: "Tough climb for me. We're near 16,000 feet now, on the ice—next, the ice cliffs—cold wind—slow going—slight mountain sickness—must overcome—3:22 P.M."

We finally got on the ice, and with my crampons on, the climb became a little easier for me, even though the slope was quite steep, but Bob and Ole were concerned about my chest congestion, which was beginning to get worse. From my notes: "I've got a headache—I'm not feeling very well. We're above 16,000 feet, just below the summit." (The goal here was not to get to the summit, but rather to go around it and down to the northeast side, to set up camp before dark) also, "We won't be able to do much searching today—a little slower than planned—I am the reason for that."

As Bob, Ole and I decided on our strategy for accomplishing this, Ahmet got on his walkie-talkie again. He came back with this short and shattering statement: "Northeast is forbidden!" The military establishment at Doğubeyazit had decided the northeast side of the mountain, the area of our search, our reason to be there, was now off limits and forbidden.

At first, I didn't think there was a problem, as Bob and Ole were the first to understand what Ahmet was saying. Ahmet, at our most earnest request tried again and again on that radio of his to convince those on the other end to come up with another decision, but it was like talking to the wind; the answer was always the same. Bob got on the walkie-talkie and tried to reason with the military on the other end, asking that we just be allowed to camp on the other side of the summit, and get out of the wind. Ahmet tried again, then I took a shot at it. I mentioned that Jim Irwin had permission from the higher echelons of command at Ankara, Erzurum, and even Doğubeyazit. Still, the answer came back "forbidden."

We had not come all the way to Turkey, waited at the base of the mountain, and delayed our climb for nearly two weeks, all at a great expense financially and emotionally, then risked our lives at the possibility of a terrorist attack, and endured the hardships of the climb, just to get a few hundred yards away from the northeast, our prime goal, to have some person in a stuffy office tell us our goal was "forbidden!"

Bob decided we should go to the summit and take a look. I wasn't at all interested in going to the summit. I could not have cared less, but it would give us time to think, which was what Bob had in mind. We dropped our packs and climbed the 500 feet or so to the top of the big mountain, and signed the book, which was encased in ice. We also wrote a word or two about being disappointed that we could not continue our quest.

From the top, we could see where Ridvan and I had stood the previous year, on the other side of second peak. We were five minutes from that spot, and maybe twenty to thirty minutes from the jagged peaks I had seen the previous year. We could see the place we wanted so desperately to set up our camp and begin our search operations. The word for the day now seemed to be "forbidden." Bob said he had agreed with God in prayer that if the Turkish government wouldn't allow us to go to a certain area, then he wasn't going to go. Bob has a cool head. I don't know exactly what Ole said. I just remember he was not exactly happy with what was going on.

We stood on the 17,000-foot summit of Mount Ararat, had a lengthy discussion with the people on the other end of that walkie-talkie, then, we did as we were told. Had we not done so, the situation might have gotten worse. Still, I am not convinced all the decisions we made were the right ones though making wrong decisions could impact research years down the road.



Dick Bright packing for his climb up Ararat  
 Courtesy of Bob Stupliich

We descended to a protected area in the rocks around the 15,300-foot level, set up camp, and slept on it. We hoped that by tomorrow the problem would just go away, and we could continue on. This move took us further away from our goal, back in the direction from which we had just come. As I look back on it, this did us little good psychologically. We were concentrating then on just finding a place to camp in the protection of the rocks, but it was a retreat.

It took us about an hour or more to descend to the rocks where we had decided to set up camp. The wind was very strong. I think out of the southwest, and we were on the south side of the mountain. Setting up a two-man tent became a four-man job. We were cold. My head ached like the devil, and I was congested to the point of concern. Bob and Ole were concerned; I wasn't yet fully aware of the potential problem. We didn't eat anything. No one was hungry. Bob said he was cold; he had chills, and was going to bed. This seemed like a smart idea. Ole bundled up in every piece of warm clothing he had, then crawled into his sleeping bag. We all settled down for a long, long night.

Bob suffered alternate bouts of chills and sweating, and probably fever, with no sleep at all throughout the night. I began to cough, a cough that seemed to start from somewhere close to my toes. I had been diagnosed as having a touch of pulmonary edema by Bob, the experienced mountaineer, and as also having a virus, by Ole, the doctor. Ole had given me pills to combat pneumonia. I understand pulmonary edema has to do with a leakage of blood plasma into the lungs, and its early symptoms are similar to those of pneumonia. All I knew was that I had an aggravating cough that I hadn't had a few hours earlier, and also one heck of a headache. It seemed as though an invisible someone was continuously hitting me on the head with a club. I was aware that this miserable headache, on which painkillers seemed to have little effect, was a definite sign of mountain sickness. Ole gave me a sleeping pill that put me out for about 3 hours, and that helped. It helped Ole too, as we were in the same tent. Bob and I had a long night, and Ole slept. I have to admit that I wasn't really concerned about Ahmet. The wind howled and the temperature dropped. I couldn't seem to get warm.

The morning found us not only thankful the night had ended, but also somewhat depressed. The weather on this morning however, was very good. Other than that, my body hurt from a cough that seemed to mean business, and my head still felt as though someone were beating on me. My lips were chapped and bleeding, and the Blistex was frozen.

At 8:00 A.M. Ahmet came back with his radio report that said that it was still forbidden for us to go to the northeast side. I don't know if we really cared. By this time we just wanted to get off that mountain. But we would certainly have gone back up and over to the northeast, had permission been granted. I'm sure Bob and Ole still had the reserve to get there, and I would have stumbled along too, but the word was "forbidden" and we, for some reason, were playing by the

rules. We descended the mountain and were probably in the area of 12,000 feet when we were suddenly given permission to return to the summit and continue our search. We didn't have the strength.

We looked at each other and then at Ahmet. I could do nothing but shake my head in utter disappointment. We knew there was no way we could go back up there, we just didn't have the strength. I felt as though we had been taken. It was as though we were the victims of a cruel joke, and the prankster had no intention of allowing us access to our area of interest. But he was able to save face by now making it legal for us to do so. Our inability to accomplish this was, from this point on, no longer prevented by limitations put on us by the Turkish military. They said we could go, but we were too weak, too sick, and out of time. There must be another explanation for this behavior of the authorities. The rest of the day passed with very few words. Blisters, sore toes, dehydration and fatigue accompanied us the rest of the way down the mountain.

We were later told that terrorists were again on the mountain and that had been the reason for withholding permission for us to go further. Whether this is true or not, I don't know. Disappointed, we went home. Elfred Lee later stated that he was on a flight with the American Ambassador to Turkey Robert Strausz-Hupé. When Lee asked the Ambassador about the team being asked to go back down the mountain he stated, "The Soviets were engaged in military maneuvers near the border and Turkey has an agreement to be outside a 20 kilometer zone from the border when that occurs whereas we were 14 kilometers away. Also, there was a serious terrorist threat and because of his high profile, they were looking for Jim Irwin and coming up the other side of the mountain."

### Third Expedition—1986

In 1986, I was a member of two expedition teams. The first one we called the "Summit Expedition Team." There were three of us on this climb. The first was Ron Lane, a retired lieutenant colonel in the U. S. Army Rangers. Ron lived in New York and was employed as a civil engineer. There was Ahmet Arslan, guide and translator, who holds a Ph.D. in International Comparative Folklore. Ahmet lived in Washington, D.C., where he was a voice on "Voice of America" to



B.J. Corbin Handing Candy to Eli Villagers with Deborah Redmer Looking On 1988  
Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

Azerbaijan. I was third. We were also expecting Dr. Ole Honningdalsnes, but he had not arrived by the time we were scheduled to leave.

On August 9 we began our long ascent on Ararat. Everything seemed to have gone quite smoothly, except that I was concerned about Ole. He was at least a day or two behind us, and we didn't have time to wait. We didn't want the mountain to close before we were able to climb. We left a letter of explanation at the hotel for Ole, and a guide will meet him right away as soon as he arrives, to assist him with the paperwork and the climb to join us.

Fortunately, we didn't have the restrictions placed on us by the military that we had last year. But we were told not to take pictures of the local inhabitants. The reason for this seems to stem from a picture of the Kurdish villagers, which is said to have been published in a French magazine depicting how the people of Turkey live. It was embarrassing, and not necessarily an all-encompassing, accurate portrayal.

Our research permit allowed us the opportunity to check our state of health as we climb. Each hour or so, we recorded our pulse, altitude, time of day, and state of health. Medical doctor, Ole Honningdalsnes was to be in charge of this, but since he wasn't there, we improvised.

Ron is having trouble catching his breath. He had had heart trouble in the past, and this was beginning to become a concern for the three of us. By Ron's own choice, he elected to stop at the 3200-meter camp (10,500 feet). He reasoned that Ahmet and I could climb faster without him, and the plan was to move as quickly as possible. A group of Kurdish horsemen stayed with him. I know he was disappointed, but it was better for him to rest than to be in a bad way higher up the mountain. I know. I remember the bad shape I was in just a year ago. Perhaps Ron's condition would improve after some rest. He seemed to require a lot of water, and may be dehydrated.

The Summit Expedition now consisted of just Ahmet Arslan and me. A Moslem and a Christian climbing and living together for a week, facing together the moods of Mount Ararat, in search of Noah's Ark.

Ahmet and I, along with one Kurdish horseman and two rock-scrambling donkeys carrying our packs, reach the 4200-meter camp (approximately 13,800 feet). We had made excellent progress, and the Kurdish horseman stuck right with us. I'll never understand how those mountain Kurds can climb as they do and still smoke so much. I seldom see a Kurdish guide without a cigarette in his mouth.

It is good that Ahmet and I hadn't stopped at the 3200-meter camp, as it could have affected our morale. We had



Photo From East Summit Overlooking Upper Ahora Gorge 1988  
Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

climbed 1000 meters higher on this first day than I had in either of the two previous years. This had been a good day for Ahmet and me, though not quite as profitable for Ron. Ahmet said we must stay here and acclimate for a day and two nights. For me, the impatient one, this would be a long rest.

While we spent a day resting at the 4200-meter camp, Ron had climbed up to join us. In his weakened, exhausted condition he had climbed and struggled alone for eight hours to reach us. He climbed for two reasons: first, to satisfy himself that he had met the mountain with his best effort; second, to let Ahmet and me know we didn't have to return at a previously decided date of August 16. Since he was the only one with a timetable requiring an early departure from Turkey, he would make his own arrangements, first to get down the mountain with the aid of another guide, then on his own go to the nearest airport, which is in Erzurum. I was proud of him. On August 11, Ron saw Ahmet and me off, before beginning his own descent.

Ahmet and I reached the summit and took the usual tourist pictures. Then we headed toward the place, which was to be our high camp near Cakmak Peak. It is the area just below this peak, the area of jagged peaks that I thought so intensely interesting just two years ago. We arrived at Cakmak with only one minor slip. Ahmet fell to his knees in a crevasse, but got out easily. By 4:20 P.M. our camp was set and we were resting. I was now utterly exhausted. The night was one of very little sleep, ferocious winds, and temperatures cold enough to freeze solid the water bottles we had inside our tent.

The next day, loaded with climbing gear and cameras, we roped up and proceeded toward the head of the Ahora Gorge, the top of the pie-shaped area, and the small jagged peaks we wanted so much to search. I walked down the steep ice slope to the jagged peaks (with Ahmet belaying me), the rocks of which top a vertical drop into the gorge. At the edge of the rocks I looked straight down about two miles, and into some of the adjacent canyons. Then, moving the anchor to several other vantage points, we searched with binoculars. For an hour and a half we searched. Our cameras photographed everything in sight—east, west, and down, trying to catch hidden areas on film. It is my belief that any areas we might have missed were too small to have hidden a ship.

We noticed one object on the east side of the gorge, and quite a bit lower down than our position. There appeared to be something resting on a ledge. I was more than willing to attempt a closer look at this object, but Ahmet succeeded in talking sense to me. He said the soldiers would see us, and if we were caught, we would, at the very least, be arrested. After an attempt to warn us three times, they could shoot at us. I wasn't concerned about that, but when he said that the shepherds would surely see us, and that they would shoot at us just for sport, trying to hit our legs. I decided that I probably should think it over just a little while longer. (In retrospect, I now doubt that would have happened. Ahmet simply didn't want to go down there). A solo descent and climb back out wouldn't have been wise on that steep ice. It takes two people and a rope. Ahmet wasn't about to go. The object on the ledge might be something to get a closer look at as soon as government restrictions are lifted, and we're legally cleared to search that area.

I was looking in the direction of what could well be a very special area of the mountain—the east side of the Ahora Gorge on the northeast side of Ararat, which is closed to climbers, and where the Ark may well be permanently parked. What sense did it make for me to be there if I couldn't go down there and take a closer look? Ahmet insisted that we not go down. It was illegal. So again, for some reason, I obeyed the rules.

If God had brought me here, then I believe I was here for a purpose. If this is only my idea, then I guess I'm just here. I did feel close to God, closer than in any recent time. I thought then that this must be his will. I prayed that this trip to the top of this mountain of rock and ice was not just my idea, but that He had a part in it. Did He? I don't know. I prayed very simply: "God, You are all wise. If You'll show me Your big wooden boat, then maybe through this book, it will have an impact on a few lives, even mine. But, if this is not to be, if this wasn't your idea, then you know that I'm just here, and I guess, on my own. I have tried to do what I thought I was meant to do, and I've done my best. Whether it is your idea or mine, thank you for bringing me here."

On the next day, August 13, we left the first plateau and descended to the Parrot Plateau for our look into the west side. We traversed the ice and crevasses in sort of a zigzag pattern, trying not to slip. We could hear the water running under the ice, and knew that if we slipped and fell, we could start some of this loose stuff moving, and possibly start an avalanche. We were roped together for safety, and thanks to the crampons we had strapped to the bottoms of our boots we did not slip.

Upon reaching the plateau and an area of rocks on the west side, we removed our crampons and walked the rocks, managing to get a good look across the gorge to the east, and up across the Abich Glaciers to the pie-shaped area at the head of the gorge. My notes state the following.

We crossed above the heart-shaped glacier, moving in a westerly direction. We were between the Cehennem Dere and the heart-shaped glacier, when I asked Ahmet to stop. I wanted to drop down to the very edge and look straight down in an attempt to see what was below. This area of the mountain holds a high interest, not only to me, but also to most of us who search for the whereabouts of the large vessel. Ahmet says this is a dangerous area. I remind him that's the reason we have the rope. We found a "bomb-proof" anchor in two boulders leaning against each other. Three long pieces of webbing tied together and threaded through the space below, where the boulders come together, and wrapped around one of them, eliminate the possibility of the webbing skipping over the top. Two carabiners, a third just for a little something extra, a figure eight connected to my harness with the rope in between, and I was on my way to the edge of the ledge. Ahmet fed me the rope as before, and asked if I were planning to rappel down. I said I'd take a look first. Ahmet



Chris Roningen Watching Guy Leduc Toss a Snowball  
Past B.J. Corbin at Mihtepe 1984  
Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

told me to be careful. We joked. "Ahmet," I said, "You've got my life in your hands. It'll be a piece of cake." "Yeah," he said, "New York cheesy style."

I walked about 50 feet down to the front edge of the heart-shaped glacier to what appeared to be a conglomerate rock outcropping that stuck out about 25 feet beyond the ledge. A conglomerate is usually made up of many small rocks cemented together, normally by some type of water action. Ahmet says these rock outcroppings are known as "shaky-teeth" that is, they have a tendency to fall out.

I told Ahmet to put some more tension on our three-millimeter rope. (A 3mm. rope is a little small but it will hold a thousand pounds, and is lighter to carry than a larger rope.) That he did, to the point I had to pull just a little slack. I walked out on the conglomerate outcropping, and looking straight down and beyond the ledge of the plateau, I could see another ledge. I looked left and right, and saw only rock. I moved out toward the end of the formation, and because the wind was strong, I lowered myself to crawl on my hands and knees. I was thinking that Ahmet is very capable with the rope, and I'm glad he's there, but just in case my educated Moslem friend needs a little help, I said quietly, over and over, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." It was a prayer. I looked below, left and right, anticipating to see what I was after, but the canyons in my view held only what appeared to be rocks, and the glaciers to my right were heavy with snow and ice. I saw shapes that were interesting, but as far as I could tell, all I saw was rocks and ice.

Except for descending the east ridge, or dropping down from the Parrot Plateau and into the canyons below, we had done all we could do from here. To drop into the canyons would be against Ahmet's promise to the military, and put us closer to the Kurdish mountain people who, no doubt, would not revel in our being there. We would have to get the necessary permission from the Turkish authorities to legally enter the area.

It took us two days to descend from the domain of ice and bitter winds to the blistering heat of the plain, on which is built the village of Doğubeyazit. Ahmet made the statement that in his 21 years of climbing this one was the toughest. We had covered a lot of area in the time we had spent on the ice. We had given a determined and concentrated effort to the search. I was pleased we had worked together as well as we did. We made a good team. My only problem was in agreeing to obey the rules.

At 3:30 P.M. on the 20th of August, a Lufthansa flight from the United States and Germany arrived in Ankara. On the plane were Jim Irwin, Mary Irwin, Bob Stuplich, Bill Dodder and Bob Cornuke, who had arrived to start the second phase of our 1986 expedition to Ararat. I met them at the airport. This phase of our expedition was to attempt to fly around Ararat, locate the ark, then climb the north side of the mountain to locate the structure.

Upon arriving at the Hotel Apaydin in downtown Ankara, we were greeted by Eryl Cummings, who had come to Turkey for the purpose of negotiating to arrange the flight around Ararat. With Eryl were two gentlemen, Mr. Eran Cakir from the office of the Department of Interior and Mr. Mahittium Baskam from Shell Oil Company. The Department of Interior is above all the police, Jendarma, all the offices of tourism, and of foreign relations in Turkey. Eryl, Jim, and Mary had been informed, in confidence, that permission had been given for us to climb the north side, but we must wait until August 25. There was to be a change in command at Kars, the controlling Jendarma facility for the north side of Ararat, and our climb would be discussed with them at that time. Meanwhile, there was a moratorium on the mountain for all climbers.

We discussed using a Cessna 206 or a Cessna 421 from the Em-Air Flying Service in Ankara to fly around the mountain to see and photograph as much of the mountain as we could in the meantime. This could be done either in conjunction with our climb, or before it. The flying service said we could have the C-206 on the 27th of August for three days, at the minimum pay rate for three hours flight time per day. In addition, we would pay for the flight from Ankara to Mount Ararat and back, plus for a truck required to carry barrels of fuel into the area.

It's 7:30 A.M., August 21. Jim and Mary asked for our company (all of us) in their room for a conference. Direction is given to each of us for the day's activities, with each of us having something to do. Items of high priority concern the possibility of flying the C-206. We have decided to use the C-206 mainly because of cost savings over the C-421, and because of its better visibility due to its high wing, versus the low wing of the C-421.

In a nutshell, here's the plan. The plane, a Cessna 206, is loaded with two 50-gallon drums and one 25-gallon drum of fuel, with the seats folded and carried as baggage. The pilot alone will take it to Erzurum early on the morning of



Kurdish children doing back breaking work  
Courtesy of Bob Stuplich

Saturday the 23rd. Bob Stuplich, Eryl Cummings, Ahmet Arslan and I will drive a rented van all night to arrive in Erzurum sometime around 8:00 A.M. We will then refuel the aircraft from the barrels of fuel which were its cargo on the flight over. We would fly from Erzurum to Ararat, an hour and a half away, spend up to three hours flying around the mountain, and return to Erzurum, arriving with at least one hour's fuel remaining. That would total six hours of flying in an aircraft that holds seven hours of fuel. Hopefully, in that time with the weather cooperating, we would be able to find and photograph the remains of Noah's Ark. The plane would then return to Ankara. Price? \$1,575 minimum. Permission for this project was denied by the Turkish Civil Aviation Authority.

There were many problems with obtaining the required permission over the next few days. There were problems too with scheduling aircraft availability. It would take pages to list it all. Six days later, on August 27, Eryl and I met Jim, Mary, and Ahmet, Willem Van Schaayh, a Dutch cameraman, and Jan Van Den-Bosch, an official of the Dutch Christian Television Network at the Erzurum airport.

The Cessna 206 that we had rented arrived and I got a special clearance from the airport authorities to go out on the ramp and meet the pilot, Engin Akaltan, and the mechanic, Alisan Soylu. Also, for my own peace of mind, it was a chance to look over the airplane over. Engin Akaltan from Ankara, was the well-qualified pilot. A former fighter pilot, he had 500 flight hours in Cessna aircraft, 300 of them as an employee of Em Air. He also seemed to understand English pretty well. I was pleased with that. I, unfortunately, do not understand the Turkish language and have to rely on English-speaking Turks in order to communicate. The mechanic, Alisan Soylu was the head of the maintenance department of Em Air, and had a few other jobs in the operation of the company. He had an excellent command of English and could act as interpreter when needed.

Alisan told me that we had the necessary Civil Aviation Authority's approval for the flight over Ararat. That was wonderful news! After talking with Engin, I mentioned that I would ride as his copilot, and probably encourage him to fly where I wanted to go. Engin and Alisan agreed that would be just fine. I looked the airplane over, and I must say that I was pleasantly surprised. It appeared to be very well maintained.

The following day, August 28, after what seemed like interminable delays for no discernible reason, we received the authorization to fly. We were told we could take off at 3:00 P.M. However, there was another problem. The airport closed at 5:30 P.M., and we wouldn't get back until after 7:00 P.M. According to the rules, we wouldn't be able to land. It was an interesting turn of events. We had permission to take off, but now we needed permission to land. The Army Chief of Staff and the Governor of Agri say it is okay to fly at 10:30 tomorrow morning, if we can't take off this afternoon. We contacted the Governor of Erzurum asking him to keep the airport open, and allow us to land a little late. We must fly today. They might change their minds tomorrow.

We lifted off shortly past 3:00 P.M. that same afternoon. The Cessna 206 didn't perform as I had hoped it would. The opening in the aircraft's fuselage, and the spoiler, which is a six-inch wide strip of aluminum, 90 degrees to the air flow (to help direct the air out around the photographers) caused extra drag, and worsened the aircraft's performance. We circled the field once, climbing at 300 feet per minute. I suddenly realized that of all the flight time I've logged over the past 19 years, this might well be the flight of my life! By 4:30 P.M. we had reached 14,000 feet, and Ararat was in sight.

At 5:00 P.M. we crossed over the west glacier of Ararat. As we flew over the ice rim of the Cehennem Dere, and by the Abich Glaciers, I looked up to the 16,000-foot peak, the top of the pie-shaped area atop the Ahora Gorge, and saw from a different perspective the area on which I had stood just 16 days earlier. We were doing what some people had wanted to do for many years. We were searching for Noah's Ark by air, and we had two still and one motion picture camera to document everything we could hope to see, everything, including the remains of a big wooden ship.

We crossed the gorge at 15,500 feet, and made a 180-degree turn just past the east ridge. There were clouds over and beyond this point. I wished the clouds had not been there, but we took what pictures we could and were thankful for them. We flew back to the west with the sun in our eyes. We made the next pass at 15,300 feet, directly over the edge of the ice, looking at the rocks below. Each pass we made was two or three hundred feet lower than the previous one. We were getting a closer look at the terrain, and testing the air for stability and effects of the winds. We wanted to make sure that if we caught a downdraft, or ran into severe turbulence, we would be somewhat prepared for it.

With each pass, the cameras recorded what we could see. Up to this time, Engin and I had taken turns flying. Now, Engin was doing the flying, and also doing his job exactly as I was telling him to do. Turn here, turn there, slow down, fly at 80 knots, stay here, drop 200 feet, let's go try it again, do this, do that. Whatever I asked of him, Engin did, and did very well.

We crossed the heart-shaped glacier and Cehennem Dere—it seemed just a few feet above the ice—in order to get a better look into the canyon areas below. The canyons weren't as open to view as I thought they would be, and the long shadows of the afternoon didn't help. We were looking for a dark object in the dark rocks covered in the shadows of the early evening.

We had flown the mountain for 50 minutes, and no Ark had been seen. We were due at the airport by 6:30 P.M. We knew we'd be late. I didn't much care; I guess I was disappointed. We didn't see the ark, but, of course, that didn't mean we didn't have it on film. Only a slide-by-slide and frame-by-frame inspection of what was photographed would determine this.

At what we guessed to be approximately 20 minutes before landing, Engin called the airfield and we found we had "special permission" to land. That was nice, but I don't know what else they could expect us to do. We sure couldn't stay up here all night waiting until the airport opened in the morning. Nor could we go anywhere else. We had one hour's fuel



Turkish tanks south of Ararat guarding the border area  
 Courtesy of Bob Stuplich

in our tanks, and the next closest airport was over an hour away, and was military. I can't imagine the permission we'd have needed for that landing! We touched down in Erzurum at 7 minutes past 7:00 P.M. It was sundown.

Friday, August 29, 1986, we were at the airport by 9:00 A.M. when it opened, prepared to make a second flight. Em Air had ferried enough fuel from Ankara to allow us two flights to the mountain. If we could get permission to buy fuel from the military, we were prepared to make two flights on this day, so everyone on our team would have an opportunity to fly, and photograph. The military said, "No!" Also, our permit had been put on hold. The governor of Erzurum said we did not have the proper authorization to fly on this day. He didn't have any written authorization from the Army Chief of Staff, so he would not allow us to take off.

We were then told that we hadn't had the proper permission yesterday. We had only had verbal permission, and not written permission. Apparently, the chief of staff hadn't signed the proper piece of paper. It had only been reported that he had. Everyone was supposedly in trouble. Apparently, there was so much red tape to go through to authorize this flight, that someone got tangled up in it, and sent out the wrong information. We had not been given the permission we actually received.

The following morning, August 30th, we were arrested by the police and our film confiscated. Our rooms were searched and the team of police entering Ahmet's room took not only the film he shot over the mountain, but also rolls of film he had shot of his family on vacation. This was understandable, as they had no idea which rolls of film Ahmet had shot over the mountain, and which he had not, but it made Ahmet angry. They didn't trust or believe him, and he's a Turk.

The police even took Willem and Jan's unexposed film. It irritated Willem when they delayed in giving him a receipt for what they took. Bill Dodder is the only tourist among us who didn't bring a camera—hence, no film. Bob Stuplich and Bob Cornuke also lost their unexposed rolls of film. Jim and Mary's room was searched. There was no film there for anyone to take. Some tempers were beginning to flare a little by this time, but not Jim's. He was as cool as he always is.

I had left five rolls of film on the plane in a little blue pouch. One of the Turkish policemen who had searched the plane tossed my blue pouch, with the film still inside, on the bed in Ahmet's room during the search. I casually walked over, picked it up, and put it in my back pocket. Then, I stepped out into the hall and stood there. In about five minute's

time, there was a frantic search for my blue pouch by at least four men. Ahmet translated their concern, and asked if I had seen it. I said, "Yep!" They all gathered around me and asked, "Where is it?" I said, "Right here." I pulled it out of my pocket and handed it to them. This thwarted an emergency of some sort, I'm sure. Then, I went to my room, and a police commissioner searched through my climbing gear.



Eastern Face and Ahora Gorge 1988  
Courtesy of John McIntosh

We were later to get the film back—at least most of it. What we did receive back had been developed by a Turkish photo lab and viewed by the authorities. We were actually held under house arrest and were not permitted to leave the hotel. The events of the next couple of days fill a complete chapter in *The Ark, A Reality?*, but rather than drag the story on here, I will simply say that we were released from house arrest in due time and had a party to celebrate. It was a combined celebration—that of our release, and a birthday party for Jan Van Den-Bosch.

As an apology members of the Turkish press presented two bouquets of flowers to Jan. The gesture was accepted and appreciated by him. The press represented a fine people in a country plagued by a very complicated bureaucracy. Ahmet summed it up when he said, "Our people are embarrassed by the police action, and I must say what has happened doesn't reflect the sense of the nation." I don't know if this was a kind exaggeration, or not, but I do know that the feeling at our table was one of "All's well."

Bill Dodder led the group of us in a very special grace. We stood with clasped hands around the table and sang a victory song: "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, you soldiers of the cross." Ahmet, the friend on my left, sang right along with us.

#### Fifth Expedition—1987

In 1987, I went to Turkey again. John McIntosh and I met in Doğubeyazit. Ole Honningdalsnes was there as well. It turned out to be a time of interviewing (through an interpreter) a few of the local citizens to determine what they knew, or were willing to tell us, about the location of the ark. The results are recorded in my book. The bottom line for that year, is that after eleven days in Turkey I left for the United States. Why? They denied permission for us to climb.

## Sixth Expedition—1988

On September 3rd, 1988, I once again arrived in Doğubeyazit, Turkey. In my pocket I had a copy of a letter from the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., that read: "I wish to inform you that you/your team have been granted permission to climb Mount Buyuk Agri (for expedition purposes) on the basis of the application forms you submitted to this Embassy." The mountain referred to is Ararat.

The letter had been written to John McIntosh, and I was to be a member of an eight-man team he was to organize and lead. That particular expedition had been canceled, but not the permission to climb, which was valid through the month of September. My name was included in the letter as a team member, so to this point at least, I had permission to do what I intended to do. I had been through this before. The second paragraph of the embassy letter requested that the Directorate of Security of the Turkish Province be contacted in order to obtain an additional permit.

The expedition McIntosh had intended to lead was canceled, in part because of a snow cover on Ararat that was heavier this year than in recent years, making discovery of the Ark less likely. After the expedition was canceled, John, who then expected to enjoy a complete summer in sunny California, was asked to join a very small group whose plan was to fly completely around the mountain in a helicopter. Having accepted this great opportunity, John was also in Doğubeyazit, Turkey. He was now on a permit to fly, and for him it had become another expedition entirely.

John flew, and the snow was heavy; nothing was seen. In fact, the day after I had arrived in Doğubeyazit, it had snowed. No doubt that anything I was looking for on that mountain was now hidden under its new white blanket. The highlight of the year for me was in a jeep ride up the mountain to a shepherds' camp and back again.

Early in the morning of September 5th, I left Doğubeyazit in the company of two new acquaintances in an old, beat-up, four-wheel drive vehicle. To honor their request, I will not mention their names, nor will I elaborate on the details of the venture. I will only say that I was looking for an "open door."

We stopped in the village of Igdir and purchased a fair volume of fruits and vegetables. I wasn't planning a feast; they were to help extend my hand in friendship. We then drove toward the city of Aralik. The Soviet Union, its border area, and the city of Yerevan were on our left, and the northern side of a white, snow-covered Mount Ararat was on our right. Weaving to dodge potholes, at least some of them, we passed cars, trucks, tractors, hay wagons, horses, oxen, cattle, sheep, pedestrians, bicycles, buggies of various types, wagons, and even pushcarts. It was a normal drive on an average highway in the far reaches of eastern Turkey.

We left the main highway and proceeded on small dirt roads and trails toward the big white mountain that seemed to appear larger than I had ever seen it before. We drove through villages constructed of stone and mud and surrounded by haystacks and pyramids of animal dung, the fuel chips used to heat the home and cook the evening meal. There were green bushes and a tawny landscape in the sunlight of the morning. We drove alongside and in riverbeds, several of them, then across fields and rocks; four-wheeling will never be the same. I wondered how the skeletal frame of the human body could handle it.

After passing a few shepherds' camps, sheep and sheepdogs, we arrived at a certain camp a short distance up the lower slopes of the mountain. I was welcomed after an uplifting introduction by my new friends. The hosts accepted our gifts, and I was invited to their tent. I took my shoes off before I entered, in accordance with the local custom, and then I was extended the comfort of a rather large pillow to sit on. We ate. Naney lewas and penir, a bread and cheese combination, along with chi (tea), stabilized my stomach after the thrilling ride I had just experienced. Then we had an interesting conversation.

I was told there were many, many soldiers on the mountain. This was because of the activities of the Kurdish terrorists, or freedom fighters, depending on whose point of view you were speaking from. Since my new friends were not able to interpret for me to the extent that I was able to understand, I do not know the shepherds' point of view. I had no intention of taking a political stand of any sort on that situation, so I didn't question them about it.

I don't have a well-informed point of view to express on the matter of terrorists or freedom fighters. However, my experience with the Kurdish people I have met has been one that I have thoroughly enjoyed. They have always treated me very well, and I admire their family unity and the contentment with their simple, slow-paced lifestyle. To visit a shepherd's camp is to step into the pages of the distant past. The "giving" hospitality and courtesy extended to me, a guest in their land, is far superior to much of what I've seen in the fast-paced, selfish, sophisticated, complicated, cosmopolitan world to which I am accustomed.

I asked the shepherds if they knew where the Ark was. The response was very encouraging. It was, "Maybe." I asked, "Will you take me there?" The elder person of the group said, "We have never seen it; we hear that it is there. We have not allowed anyone to go there." I responded, "But, will you take me there?" He replied, "This is the Kurdish freedom fighters' war area against the Turkish soldiers. There is killing. Many people have died and it is very dangerous to go there." I wasn't sure if the elder had said terrorist or freedom fighter, but the one who was doing his best to interpret said "freedom fighter." That could have been his own opinion. He did appear to be one with a tendency toward rebellion. It is quite probable that if he hadn't had this tendency, then he wouldn't have taken me to meet these people. The fact that there is killing would certainly be a valid reason for the Turkish military to want to keep people out of the area. No doubt, they wouldn't appreciate it if I had gotten in the way. I might have had a problem with that myself.

The shepherd told me, "There are so many soldiers on the mountain that a bird can't fly by without being seen. You cannot go any higher on the mountain without being seen or stopped."



John McIntosh and Dick Bright 1988  
 Courtesy of John McIntosh

I answered, "You mentioned that you have never seen the ark. Do you know anyone who has?" "No," he said. I asked, "Then how do you know that it's there?" He said, "We hear that it is there."

I asked, "Where is it?"

"It is in a place where it is very steep and one must be very brave to climb to it. It is above steep walls where there is a flat area that changes every year, or it could be in another place that never changes, and looks like ice."

It became apparent through conversation that they did not know where it was. They had mentioned two places. The description of both places made sense to me. I was not convinced that they knew where the Ark was, but I was convinced that they all believed that it was on the mountain.

We had more discussion as to where they thought the Ark may rest, but having failed to bring a picture of the mountain with me, and the mountain being now shrouded in clouds, it was difficult to determine what they were saying to me. I drew what I hoped would be an illustration of the mountain, and had one of the shepherds mark the spot, but he marked two spots with big circles. That didn't help much, but it was a lot more than I had before I made the trip. (At a later time I would conclude that the two circles could have been drawn to represent two pieces of one broken ship.) I was reinforced with the shepherds' belief that the Ark was indeed on the mountain. It's an encouragement to continue on. The "open door" I had been looking for led me to those nice people, beyond that, the door was closed. I had an inner peace about it.

In the late afternoon, as we made our way back down the slopes toward Aralik, seemingly from nowhere an army vehicle appeared and out of it piled about fifteen armed soldiers. They spread across the road and ditches and it looked as though an encounter was inevitable. My three Kurdish companions were in the front seats while I was in the back with two climbing packs. We pulled to a stop and as the soldiers approached us, I could sense a little tension coming from the front seat, but not so much as to draw attention. I was sure the focus was going to be on me, and what I was doing there. Then, of course, there was the matter of the climbing packs. We pulled to a stop and the soldiers approached us.

As I am an American and not Kurdish, I was not supposed to be on the mountain. If I were found out, it would no doubt have caused me great difficulty. However, By God's grace, I was somewhat prepared for this potential meeting. To explain: Many of the Kurdish men wear a sport coat or a suit coat and pants that reasonably match, even when they are in a shepherd's camp. It's common attire, and not to be dressed this way would almost always tend to draw attention. As it happened, because of my desire to partially assimilate with the Kurds for communication purposes, I was dressed that

way. I wore a wrinkled and dirty brown suit coat and a pair of pants that almost matched. I had a faded shirt on under the open jacket, my hair was a mess and my face was dusty and dirty from the day's activities. One of the Kurds said I looked like a "yellow-colored Turk." The Army looked us over, never said a word, and let us "shepherds" pass.

#### Seventh Expedition—1989

In 1989, I was in Turkey again. I spent some time near Ararat but was not allowed to climb. I didn't return to Turkey again until 1993. There were other expeditions during the intervening years in which I did not participate. Chuck Aaron and Don Shockey each had a team. Jim Irwin was there again. It was to be his last trip. You see, there was one event that hurt me deeply. My friend, and mentor, Colonel James B. Irwin had a heart attack and left this world in August of 1991. I had just spoken to Jim a few days before it happened. I was leaving the country to fly a trip to Europe when I called him. Jim was peddling a stationary bike and talking to me on a speaker phone. Jim's heart stopped beating twenty years and one day after his return from the moon, August 1991. I miss Jim Irwin and think about him often.

#### Eight Expedition—1993

Ararat and the search had been on my mind every year since '89. Still, I probably wouldn't have gone in '93, except that I had been encouraged by a few people to lead a team on another search. I must have been ready because a considerable amount of planning went into the expedition. I really jumped in with both feet this time. Our team originally consisted of twelve people and was called "The Search for Truth."

Truth is, it began to unravel the day before we left the States. We had intended to use a subsurface radar unit to look into Ararat's ice and locate the Ark if the melt-back of the summer hadn't left it at least partially exposed. However, a freak accident during a systems test left the radar unit inoperable. Consequently, two members of the team who were to operate the radar, remained in the states. Ten of us crossed the ocean. One man from our group, Al Jenny, a manufacturer and businessman from Cocoa, Florida, went to Moscow. He intended to do research on the reported Russian sightings of years past. In Moscow, Al managed an interview with a science/religion magazine and asked its readers for information pertaining to reports of previous Ark sightings by Russians. He succeeded in obtaining two reports from relatives of soldiers who had taken part in the 1916 expedition to the ark, which had been ordered by the Czar Nicholas II.

The reports also mentioned a Russian flyer that had seen the ship. This information gives credence to the much-debated Roskovitsky story first published in the New Eden magazine about 1939. In this story, a Russian flyer saw the ship and reported it to his commanders. Upon verification of his sighting, word got back to the Czar, who then sent a 150-man expedition team to climb Mount Ararat and locate the structure. It was found, photographed, measured, and documented, but the information was lost as the Bolsheviks took over in 1917. With this new information, it does indeed seem that there is some truth in the Roskovitsky story and that it was not totally fabricated as some modern researchers now contend.

The rest of the team ran into considerable difficulty. The next few paragraphs are from the 1993 "Search for the Truth" report. We departed our homes to join up on August 16th in Newark, New Jersey, where eight of the twelve-team members met. Present were Gary and Barnett Duce, Ray Anderson, Al Jenny, Richard Perkins, Joe Presti, John McIntosh, and myself. Missing was Ross Wutrich who would join us in Antalya, Turkey one day later. Ron Lane was delayed because of a painful back problem.

The eight of us arrived in Antalya, Turkey on August 17th. By the time we had arrived, the Kurdish workers Party, an illegal workers party, otherwise known as the PKK, had increased their offensive action dramatically. Thirteen foreign hostages (tourists) had been taken and, quite possibly, eleven of them were on Mount Ararat. People in eastern Turkey were being killed. These included local residents (mostly Kurdish) and Turkish military, along with Kurdish terrorists. The situation had become volatile and that turn of events was definitely not in our favor.

The terrorists (PKK) have claimed to be fighting for a place of their own. For centuries Kurdistan has been a nation without borders, a people living mainly in the mountainous areas of Syria, Iran, Iraq, parts of the former Soviet Union and Turkey. They have their own language and songs, but no official country of Kurdistan. Naturally, there has been some suppression of this vast group of people by the governments of the lands they live in.

The PKK have taken it upon themselves to violently change this. However, they realize that an independent State of Kurdistan, which would primarily be located in eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, and maybe other places as well, would not receive the financial benefit that Turkey offers them. They now want recognition and to be provided for. I am told by the Turks that as Turkey builds its economy and tries to increase the economy of eastern Turkey, the PKK ruin it. They blow things up and kill even their own kind. They raid Kurdish villages and kill people they claim to be fighting for. The Kurds have their own story, somewhat different than the Turks, but I won't get deep into politics in this writing.

Because of this ever-present problem, obtaining permission to climb again appeared doubtful, and the backing we had from certain senators and congressmen in the U.S. didn't necessarily have the positive impact we had hoped for. I spent a week in Ankara bouncing between offices of the Turkish ministry trying to obtain the necessary paperwork.

This was actually my second trip to Turkey in '93. The first trip, a month earlier, was in part to ensure the required permissions would be granted. There was no guarantee then, but there never has been, even in years past. I had the assistance of a reputable Turkish citizen, Mehmet Noyan of Attalos Travel, Inc., of Antalya, who was to walk the papers

through the proper channels for me. I also met with the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Richard Barkley, and Mr. Gursan of Em-Air who owned two helicopters.

On this second trip, I was told the problems with the PKK in eastern Turkey were getting worse. A major concern was for our safety. On the one hand, that we wouldn't get killed, and on the other, that we wouldn't get captured by the PKK. An excerpt from the '93 report read:

The bottom line here is that neither the Turkish government nor the U.S. Embassy will take any responsibility for our safety. The easiest thing for them to do is to deny our requests for research permits and assistance in obtaining them. Turkey will deny us in such a way as to politely encourage us to leave the country. I spoke with Mr. Akin of the Office of Foreign Affairs and I told him we would take that responsibility on ourselves and give it to God. Then they wouldn't have to worry about us. But that didn't do much good. He said they would not allow us to be responsible for ourselves.

Beyond that, Mr. Akin was most kind and hospitable, but offered no encouragement at all. He said that the ministries, five of them, have our applications, and that they will each have to make a decision. I asked which ministries had the applications, and was told that he couldn't tell me. He did say that a rejection from any one of them would be a rejection from all.

Even though he didn't tell me, I found out that, in addition to the Office of Foreign or External Affairs, there are also ministries of the Chief of Staff, Internal Affairs, the Erzurum Governor, Turkish Security (like our CIA), and Education and Culture. We were told that we must wait. I assumed that the process would take time—too much for our stay.

The Turks might have had a dilemma, of sorts—they had letters of support from members of the Congress and Senate in the U.S. and they had the Embassy, whose main interest was to see us out of the country— What to do?— Wait! They would wait us out until we had to leave the country and go back to the U.S.

In addition, authorization was needed from the Civil Aviation Authority before we could fly the helicopter. The helicopter itself was not up to the job I had contracted it for. The "job" was to lift what was now a nine-man team to the ice cap of Ararat, let us do our job, and then to get us out of there again. From the '93 report:

If we do see something that needs investigation, will we be allowed to land on the mountain? Will we even have a helicopter that can do that job? The pilots are firm (so far), in that they can't land any higher than 4,000 meters, which is only 13,200 feet. On Ararat, that's PKK country. We must land on the ice at 4,400 meters minimum (14,500 feet) to be above the danger to the team members and the helicopter. Then, there's the problem of weight. I'm told they can take only three passengers at a time to 4,000 meters. Therefore, a shuttle would have to be set up, which would then subject some members of the team to the PKK possibility as they wait at a lower elevation in order to go in the chopper.

None of this is satisfactory. The MI-8 helicopter under the Em-Air registration operated by Attalos Travel cannot do the job I contracted for. The answer had to come from the Ukraine in the form of the M-17 helicopter. It is bigger, and is powerful enough to do the job. Ersan, the number two man at Attalos Travel was supposed to be working on this while Mehmet and I were in Ankara. If we could not arrange the use of an MI-17, then I would have to find a way to convince the Turkish and Russian MI-8 pilots that the job could be done. I would get the aircraft performance charts myself and work with them to figure it out.

If we were not allowed to land, I believed the MI-8 does have the power to reach 5,000 meters (16,500 feet) and fly around the mountain with all of us on board. The aircraft's service ceiling may indicate less than 5,000 meters, but if we were light enough, I believed it could be done. I believed therefore, that as a last resort, a visual fly-by would be possible with the helicopter we now had. But how would I handle it if we saw something that needed investigation? We would find a way!

On Friday morning, August 27, I was in the office of the chief pilot, Mehmet Sakir. He and I and a Russian captain studied the manuals and talked about what his twin engine MI-8 helicopter could actually do. They seemed to be stuck on this 4,000-meter figure with only three people on board (plus the pilots) for a high landing capability. I did my best to convince them there is a safety factor built into the performance charts and the aircraft would perform better if they pushed it just a bit. We added in a wind factor and found that just 15 knots of wind would allow the MI-8 to make the landing at 4,400 meters with three people in addition to the pilots. They were reluctant, thinking they wouldn't have 15 knots of wind, but I assured them that we would. It's windy on mountaintops!

We were making progress. However, there was no way I would accept a landing at 4,000 meters. That's PKK country, and below the ice at 4,000 meters would put the team and the chopper in jeopardy.

If the MI-8 were used, we would land three of us, then the chopper would shuttle a second three-man team to follow the first three. The second team would be a four-man team if the wind were strong and the chopper performed well above their expectations. Two men would not get on the mountain, but they would be able to see Ararat, as we all would, on the initial fly-by. All nine of us would then be on board. I knew that the fly-by was possibly all we would get. The landing shuttle might not be approved, but we had the plan just in case. Because of the concern for the safety of our team regarding the PKK, the shuttle would have to originate in the security of the Kars Airport, just over 40 miles from Ararat.

Time, as expected, along with the other problems we were experiencing, began to be a factor in the possibility of an expedition. It had been two weeks since we had left the States, and the return trip was scheduled in just a few days. Still, we refused to give up. Also, the more powerful MI-17 helicopter would not be available to us. It would have to be the MI-8. From the report, our expedition attempt:



Fog looking down from Mihtepe 1990  
Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

Monday, August 30th: This morning, I wore a jacket and tie to the Attalos Travel office. I told everyone at breakfast that it was an "attitude change day." Because I was doing my best to hide a deep concern, the positive outlook was probably going to do me more good than anyone. I asked Ron and John to join me and we went to the Attalos Travel office where we met with both Ersan and Mehmet and discussed the flight. Sakir, the Turkish chief pilot, was there, and he fell back to the concern surrounding the landing. I was tired of dealing with this. Ron and I simply laid it on the line. We told him: "We are landing at 4,400 meters. Period! You figure out how you're going to do that, but that's what we will do!"

I then told Mehmet that we expected a green light in the morning. We wanted the flight to take off at 11:00 A.M., fly to Erzurum, and on to Ararat with two fuel stops along the way. (We had already considered our route of flight and were ready to file it with the Civil Aviation Authority.) I said, "Tomorrow is the last opportunity for the entire group. We have to fly tomorrow. Plan on it!"

That night, I prayed with the team and planned our flight. I shared with them that we would have the word by 11:00 A.M. and we would leave then. It was a faith thing. We still did not have permission.

Tuesday, August 31: I'm in Mehmet Noyan's office by 9:00 A.M., and we're on the phone to Mr. Akin in Ankara. I asked him, "When can I expect the permission?" He replied, "One of the ministries has said 'No.'" He wouldn't tell me which ministry. The phone call ended. Okay, now that we've gotten that answer, how do we get around it? I need a miracle!

Then, Mehmet got mad. He phoned the President of Tourism in Turkey, Mr. Basaram Ulusoy. I'm not sure what was said because I don't have a clue how to understand that language. All I know is that whenever a Turkish man operates a telephone in an agitated state of mind, he gets very loud!

I so believed we were going to get this permission that I think I had convinced Mehmet as well. We actually had the pilots standing by at the airport preparing for an 11:30 departure with the flight plan already filed! Mehmet had a van driver standing by to take the team to the airport, and we still didn't have permission. Mehmet ended his phone call seemingly in utter frustration that nothing could be done.

Then, the door opened! Mehmet Sakir, the chief pilot, informed us that the Governor of Erzurum had gone on holiday and a very good friend of his was the army commander of that region. Mehmet said the commander was now in charge of everything that happened there with regard to permissions out of Erzurum.

We knew that we could legally fly as far as Erzurum without any special permission. It was east of there that was the problem. Sakir called his friend and spoke with him for just a short time and the word came back, "Yes!"

It was a verbal approval and in a few short minutes, due to the marvelous invention of the fax machine, we had written approval. The restrictions were that we wouldn't be allowed to fly below 9,000 feet (so we wouldn't get shot down,) and we wouldn't be allowed to take photographs. It would be a visual flight around Ararat only.

We were on the move—two weeks to the day from our arrival in Turkey. The Bible verse from Isaiah 40:31 spoke to me in a big way: They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength—they shall mount up with wings as eagles. Finally, at 5:08 P.M., we lifted off!

I noticed something very special. The registration letters of the helicopter were TC-HER. I read it as "Touch Her." The Armenians know Mount Ararat as Masis, the "Mother of the World." We wanted very much to touch her. I expected we would.

I got out of my seat and walked up to the cockpit and watched the crew perform their duties. The nomenclature of the flight instruments, switches, and circuit breakers were all in Russian, so, much of what I was looking at I couldn't quite figure out, but I did recognize the vertical speed indicator, the altimeter, and the air speed indicator. The engine instrument needles were all registering in the green arc (or blue, as it was,) and this told me that both engines were performing very well.

We climbed at about 145 km/hr (90 mph) to an indicated 4,450 meters or approximately 14,685 feet above sea level.



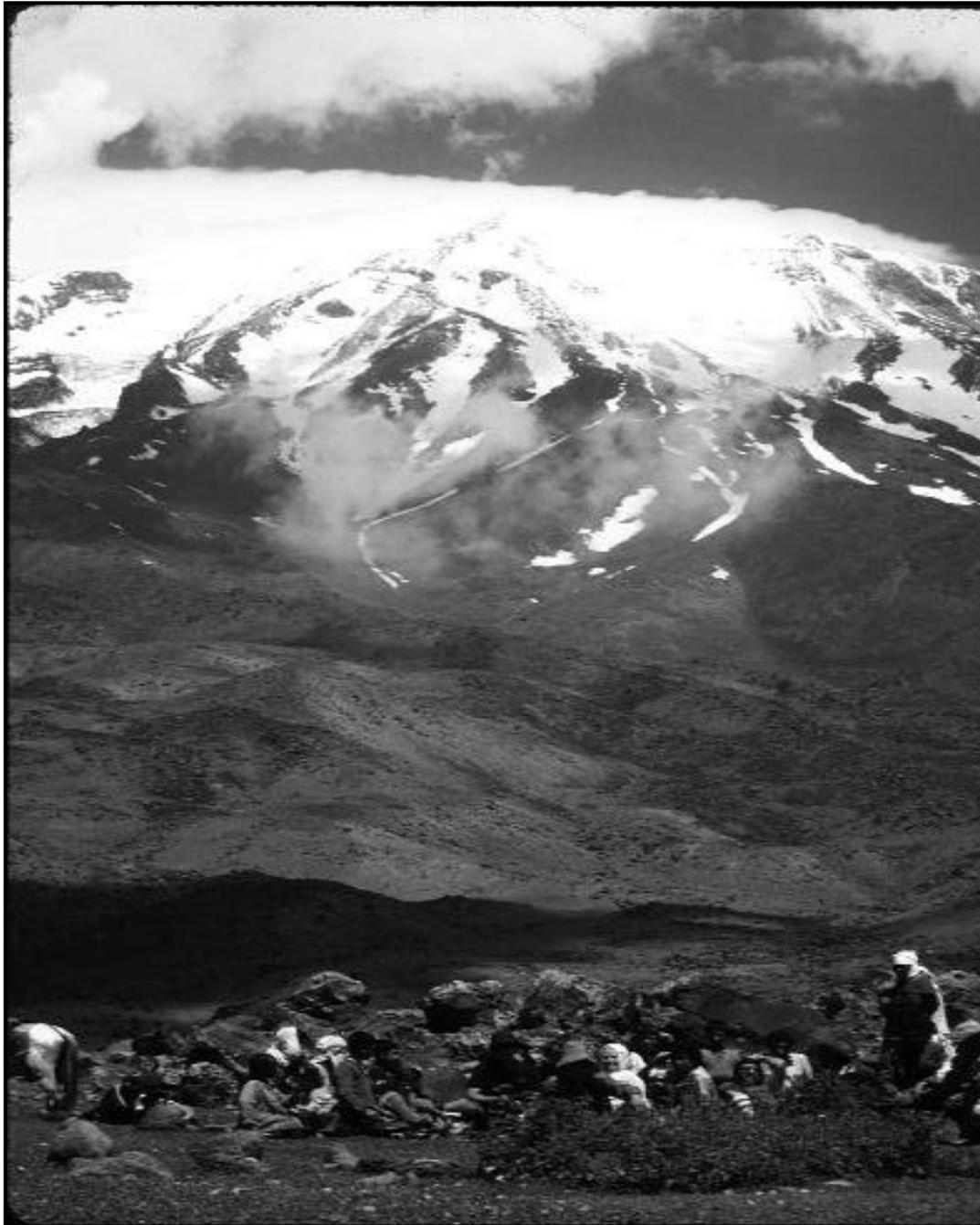
Bottom – unknown, Don Shockey, Yuri (pilot), Carl Baugh, Robin Simmons, Walt Brown, George Adams Top – unknown, crew, unknown, crew, Ayfer (flight attendant), unknown, unknown, Ron Charles, B.J. Corbin very top Ed Cassidy and Turkish co-pilot 1990

Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

We were heavy with three pilots up front, three relief pilots in the back, and nine team members, plus a lot of heavy luggage and a full load of fuel. Sakir told me that the helicopter was performing very well at this altitude.

We landed at the Adana Airport at 7:15 P.M., while it was still legally daylight, because the rules specified that we could not fly at night. We spent one night at the Sedef Hotel and were up by 4:15 in the morning. By 5:55 A.M. we were in the air again. In the early dawn we saw the full moon as the sun reached to try and find its way above the horizon in a clear sky. I watched the blades of the blue and white MI-8 spin above me as they lifted this grasshopper-shaped machine upward. Below, the valleys were shrouded in fog that wove its way into a blanket of white sprinkled randomly with specks of green, as the trees tried to claim the early dawn.

This particular helicopter had been the private aircraft of the onetime Soviet President Brezhnev. A thought occurred to me: Wouldn't it be ironic if this machine, once operated by an atheist government were to be the one to carry a Christian team who would sight the structure of Noah's Ark on the mountain called Ararat?



Doris Bowers in white surrounded by Kurdish villagers amazed by her blonde hair 1983  
Courtesy of John McIntosh

We rode above the top of an overcast and were "on top" till mountain peaks pierced the blanket of white on either side. Then, at 7:25 we saw the terraced green hills below, along with a river. We touched down on Runway 31 at Elazig for a fuel stop that took longer than anticipated, but we used that time to modify our plan.

Originally, we had planned the next leg of the flight to go from Elazig to Erzurum, then have a fuel stop and go on to Kars for a landing. I had wanted to fly around Ararat before landing in Kars. The legs would go as such: Elazig to Erzurum to refuel, then Erzurum to Ararat on a fly-by, and on to Kars for a landing. The pilots had argued that the helicopter didn't have the range. They said what I wanted to do would have them landing at Kars with less than minimum fuel and the Russian pilot who was the aircraft commander said, "No." They wanted to land in Kars first, refuel, then fly the mountain.

The Russian, who was in command of the aircraft, knew the machine. He was supposed to know the range it could fly. He was to have a fuel reserve on board when he reached his destination and he had to plan the flight appropriately.

However, as I studied the map and figured the

distances involved, I believed his educated guess on the amount of fuel, which would be remaining after an Erzurum-Ararat-Kars flight, was an especially cautious one. I think he was extremely conservative and wanted a very large reserve of fuel upon landing at Kars. I believe the flight I proposed, which included a quick fly-by of Ararat, then a landing at Kars, could have been made with an adequate reserve of fuel. The captain had said, "No." In retrospect, I think he and I could have discussed this further. Still, even if our discussion had reached an intense level, he was the captain; what he says is law. I certainly understood that.

I knew also that a fuel truck had been dispatched to meet us in Kars and it should be waiting there when we arrived. To the best of my knowledge, the military authorities in Kars were not part of this permission game yet, so we could possibly get in and out of Kars en route to Ararat before they stopped us. There was also the fact that according to our "permission," this was to be a visual fly-by of the mountain; no photos. However, I wasn't about to go along with that. We had our cameras. During an inspection by the military at Erzurum, our cameras, (those not very well hidden) could be confiscated. Bypassing Erzurum may indeed be the right plan. Because the chopper captain had said, "No" to the Erzurum-Ararat-Kars flight, I had proposed, and because of the reasons just given, I decided to bypass Erzurum and go straight to Kars. I believed we would be able to do the job from Kars as long as we moved quickly.

At 9:30 A.M. we lifted off and climbed above the rugged terrain enjoying an eagle's-eye view of eastern Turkey. A few puffy summer clouds accented the hot summer sky. Then flashes and smoke of artillery or tank fire were seen somewhere in front of us. We were about to touch down in bandit country. The PKK and the Turkish military were at war. At 11:46 A.M. we touched down at the Kars Airport. I had known the airport was reported to be secure so we hadn't tossed away safety, but I hoped the security police would leave us alone just long enough for us to refuel and take off.

We looked for the fuel truck, but it was nowhere to be seen. Sakir went to phone the company in Antalya to find out what happened to it. Ersan told Sakir that the fuel had been dispatched out of Erzurum and was supposed to have left there by 8:00 this morning. The condition of the eastern Turkey highways would mean a four-hour drive for the fuel truck. According to its timetable it should arrive at any moment. We waited, and waited some more.

Time dragged on and the pilot said it was now too windy to fly. I disagreed. He said he had just talked with a police chopper pilot and the policeman told him that it was too windy. Now we were getting the police involved. This was not a good sign. Sakir said that it was getting too cloudy. Well, the summertime convectional buildups can be expected, but from where we were, we couldn't see Ararat. We didn't know if it were covered or not. I didn't agree with that excuse, either. Then he said that the airport closed at 5:30 and that we could never get back by then. Sakir said that we would have to pay a fine.

I remembered the flight in 1986, when two Turks, a Dutchman, and I flew Ararat in a Cessna 206. We arrived in Erzurum after the airport had shut down and that probably contributed to the authorities' closing down our flight and not allowing us to fly the next day.

I quizzed Sakir on how much the fine would be. He didn't know, but he was tired and the flight was shut down for today. We had been awake since 4:15 in the morning, so he was probably tired. It was 3:00 P.M. and the fuel truck still hadn't arrived. A military officer who could speak some English walked up and asked to see all of our passports. I guess he was Passport Control. Then he asked to see my permission. I showed it to him. He looked at it, said it wasn't enough, then asked to take it. He promised to copy it and bring it back to me. I just smiled, said "Of course, you may copy it." I gave it to him and said nothing else. He smiled and walked away—with our permit.

That evening, when Mehmet Sakir showed up at the Turistik Hotel Temel in Kars, where our team had checked in, I was informed that the fuel truck had arrived and the helicopter was now about ready to go. The seats were being removed to lighten the aircraft and theoretically help our climb. I was then informed that the base of the mountain we wanted to land on top of was under artillery fire from the Turkish military and that aircraft were bombing PKK targets in the same vicinity.

We had been invited to dinner at the Turkish military officers club (at our cost) which we were enjoying when the Military Passport Control officer who had taken our permit walked in with a couple of other officers. Sakir and they sat together near me and had a conference. After about half an hour, the military officer turned to me and said, "I don't think it is a good idea to fly. A military operation is starting and it's very dangerous and we cannot give security." I replied, "We fly." The military officer then handed back the permit and said, "No photos, no landing, visual okay." That meant that we could still fly. I thanked him and smiled. Shortly thereafter, we thought it was best that while we were still ahead, the team should leave and return to the hotel. We thanked everyone and did just that.

It turned out that on this day and the previous day, in addition to the killing of a number of PKK, several Turkish soldiers were also killed. Eighteen were killed in the border town of Aralik in an ambush and twelve more were killed, apparently by a mine, as their truck drove over it while they were on the way to help the eighteen. Thirty-four soldiers were killed in a fight, primarily by a missile, or missiles, fired from the hidden areas of Ararat's base. It seems our timing for this trip was really lousy.

During the night, the local police chief had found out about us and arrived at the hotel demanding to see the pilots. I'd seen it happen before when we were able to get military permission, but some police chief would stop us. It had happened to me in 1985, and 1989, in Doğubeyazit on the southern side of Mount Ararat.

Also, during the night, and on a larger scale, Iran attacked Armenia in defense of Azerbaijan. This angered the Turks who were friendly with Azerbaijan. If anyone were to help Azerbaijan, the Turks wanted it to be themselves, not the Iranians. The main reason the Turks hadn't come to the aid of Azerbaijan was that they were waiting for the go-ahead, or for some action, from the United Nations. That action hadn't yet happened.

The border of Iran and Armenia is only a short dozen or so miles from Mount Ararat. Turkish troops were pouring into the area and they were on alert. This was not good for us. What was good for us was that anticipation ran high, and we expected a great day—we were greatly excited about what we believed would happen. Also, Ron woke up without a back pain for the first time since before he left the States to join us. This, too, was an answer to prayer. Everyone felt great!

About 5:00 the next morning upon reaching the helicopter we found it to be surrounded by armed policemen. We were then told that the governor of Kars had ordered the police chief to stop our flight. The stopping of our flight wasn't legal, because we had prior permission, but that was only my point of view. The permission we had was from the army commander in Erzurum. Up to now the military authorities in Kars had also allowed us to continue, but now the town cop had gotten the governor involved. Had the fuel truck been on time, and if there had been no war, we could have flown yesterday.

However, this was today, there was a war, and now we were in Kars. The governor of Kars had not been asked for his approval for our flight, and he didn't like that. We were told to wait until 8:30 or 9:00 A.M. until the governor arrived. Sakir was in an argument with the policeman present, and then on the phone to the police chief, but to no avail. We were not allowed to board the chopper and complete our mission.

Time passed, policemen came and went, and Sakir went with them to speak with the governor. We waited. There was silence and the team rested. More time passed. The local military commander showed up and took an interest in what was going on and decided he would see that we didn't go anywhere any time soon. Also, a telex or a message of some sort had come down from the powers that be in Ankara to order that our flight be stopped. Things were rapidly going from bad to worse.

We were ordered to fly back to where we came from and abandon the mission. They insured that we would do that by putting a policeman on the chopper with us to be our onboard escort. I became convinced then that it was time to pull back as far as Erzurum and regroup. Also, telephone contact out of Kars to Antalya in an attempt to reach Mehmet and Ersan was extremely difficult. Phone connections in the larger city of Erzurum should be better.

We landed in Erzurum and I checked us into the Grand Erzurum Hotel. We stayed there that night and into the next day. We were then told by Attalos, the people who owned the helicopter, to return to Antalya. Permission had been revoked for us to continue our mission. The telex from Ankara stood. Our expedition was over.

#### No Expedition—1994

In 1994, there were no expeditions to search for Noah's Ark in eastern Turkey. Instead, there was only war. Still, I was in the country. I went to Turkey during July to renew friendships and as a fact-finding trip. Ultimately, I learned (as had been expected) that because of the conflict between the Turkish military and the Kurdish separatists, no permission to climb Ararat would be allowed by Turkish authorities.

#### No Climbing—1995

I was in Turkey during August of 1995. Again, because of the conflict, the military would not allow me to receive permission to climb Ararat.

#### No Climbing—1996

Ron Lane, a very good friend of mine, died in 1996. I met Ron in 1985. He and I were members of Jim Irwin's team. Now, like Jim Irwin before him (1991), my friend's body rests in Arlington Cemetery. Both had been military officers—one a lieutenant colonel and the other a colonel. Ron had been on the 1986 and 1993 Ararat expeditions. Ron was there whenever I needed him. He was the publisher of my book. Like Jim, I'll miss Ron a lot.

An expedition was proposed for an American team to both fly a helicopter and climb Ararat. Included in this expedition were up to four Turkish climbers and Turkish Mountain Federation guides. We called it the "Turkish-American Scientific Quest" (TASQ). The American ground team was composed of three climbers, a photo documentation expert, a climber who was also a computer expert and myself. The helicopter team consisted of another photo documentation expert, a science teacher who also knows his way around a camera and an eyewitness of the ark's location. An archaeologist was waiting "in the wings." Did I say an eyewitness?

A minister, Vincent Will, of Springfield, Missouri tells us that he saw Noah's Ark in the late summer of 1944. At that time, he was a young military man, an avionics technician on a flight from Italy to the city of Yerevan in the former Soviet Union. Yerevan sits near the base of Ararat. The pilot of the C-47 (DC-3) knew of reported sightings by other pilots of what appeared to be the remains of a massive barge-like structure locked high in the ice cap of Mount Ararat. Taking advantage of the opportunity afforded them by the military flight, Vince and the pilot flew close to the mountain, and they identified what appeared to be a very large wooden structure protruding from the ice cap. Vince was able to see inside of the broken front end of the structure. I met Vince in 1995 and his contribution to the rediscovery of the Ark is of tremendous importance.

Even though my team had applications hand-carried to the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., and also to the offices of the ministry in Ankara, Turkey, permission was again denied. While our American team waited patiently in the States, I flew to Turkey to negotiate with the authorities in Dogubeyazit (at the base of Ararat) in Agri in an attempt to gain the legal permission to climb.

During this trip I met up with two mountain climbers from Switzerland—Karim Presti and Guiseppe Rezzonico. They also had intentions of climbing the mountain in search of the ark. This was a prearranged meeting between the Swiss climbers and myself. We had considered that they would work with TASQ. If permission for TASQ was again denied, the hope was for the three of us to get permission to climb. Guiseppe and I had communicated for several months. Guiseppe had first contacted me in 1994 and sent me an Ararat photo which he had taken in 1993. He had been held on the mountain as a captive of the Kurdish rebels. He was one of at least 13 people who had been caught on or near the mountain that summer and held as captives of the PKK. While being a captive, he was given limited freedom to climb on the ice and take a few pictures. Guiseppe told me that they actually treated decently by the rebels.

The photo he sent to me seemed to indicate a possible structure in the Araxes glacier. I matched his photo with my own file photos and three which matched the object in the Araxes glacier. I had taken two of the photos from an airplane in 1986 and John McIntosh had taken the other one from a high ridge on his first climb in 1978. Until I received the Swiss photo, neither I nor John had noticed the apparent structure in the glacier. Although the evidence on the photographs was not conclusive, I decided this location needed to be searched more.

During our time in Doğubeyazit, Karim and I (Guiseppe was sick) spent some time with the local military authorities. We had a discussion that lasted about an hour, and were politely informed that Ararat was off limits to everyone including Turkish citizens. It was even off limits to the Kurdish shepherds who would normally have their flocks of sheep on the lower grassy slopes of the mountain. I asked about the possibility of a ride in a military helicopter and told that also was impossible. Then on a table, which was between us, I put two photos of what I then believed was part of the ark. The two military officers immediately showed a level of excitement and interest that was new to our conversation. They wanted to know where I got the photos. I told them that I took the pictures ten years ago. One thing led to another and I said, "I know the Ark is on the mountain, and you know the Ark is on the mountain." The reply was, "We don't care! That is your problem. We have another problem." He was referring to the PKK problem but I think they knew more than they were telling us. I was not disappointed. I expected this answer but it was necessary that I ask. That's why we were there. Their parting words before good byes were "It's impossible to go the mountain. It's forbidden, maybe next year, maybe not for five years."

#### No Climbing—1997

I went to Turkey twice in 1997. On the first trip, which took place from mid-July to the end of August, John McIntosh and I traveled together. We spent nearly five weeks in the country. Much of our time (three weeks) was spent with Dr. Salih Bayraktutan of Atatürk University, located in the city of Erzurum. After phone contact, by the authorities in Ankara again denied our requests (Salih had been in Ankara to personally request permission just before John and I arrived in Erzurum). We traveled from Erzurum toward Ararat while stopping to speak with every civil and military authority we could contact. Even with the backing of the university, the military would not allow us on or near Mount Ararat. During the two remaining weeks that John and I spent together, we tried everyday to get the legal permission to climb. We also met some interesting Kurdish locals in Dogubeyazit. One of these men claimed to know of the structure in the ice on the mountain. I asked if he would take me there and was told no. He said that it was too risky. I then asked if he would go to the mountain, climb it, and take photos for me. He would use my cameras and I would pay him well for success. It took our Kurdish friend about nine days to first make up his mind, come up with a plan, and make the round trip to the structure and back. I met him upon his return and he was a very tired but happy man. He said I would be very proud of him. I was informed that he did indeed see part of the structure sticking out of the ice and he did photograph it. However, on his return he had to hide the cameras and film in a villager's home because of the military presence in the area, who would have searched him as he left the villages at the base of the mountain. I told him that he had to go back after the cameras. He and another Kurdish friend did just that. A day later the Kurdish friend returned. The military had caught the climber with the cameras. The military had caught him with the cameras, confiscated them, put him in jail and were searching for the American who gave him the cameras. Now, although I had not really broken any law, I guessed that the Turkish military was probably getting a bit irritated with me. So I got advice from the Kurds and John and I were in a fast taxi out of town within ten minutes. I later learned that the military arrived at our hotel about 45 minutes after we had left.

I made a second trip in 1997. This was at the end of September. Canadian Ark explorer George Kralik went with me on this trip. We met other local Kurds who attempted to help us by climbing the mountain with our cameras but a heavy snowfall hampered their efforts. After a little more than two weeks, we left the country.

#### No Climbing—1998

I arrived in Turkey on August 19<sup>th</sup> and left three weeks later. Most of the time John McIntosh and Dave Larsen (a friend and educator/businessman from Pasadena, CA) were with me. Because of discretion, the full details of this trip cannot be discussed. The full story will be published at a more opportune time. In spite of the problems, I have reason to believe that the Ark is indeed on Ararat and a discovery may be soon. I fully intend to make another trip—my 15<sup>th</sup>—to Turkey. As in the past, I intend to again be in the company of individuals who are highly dedicated.

The next year there will in fact be several fully financed organized teams entering Turkey. Revealing the Ark may have an impact on some people. On others, they could care less. Regardless, I believe it is our place to try and succeed in finding the truth, to tell others, let them make their own decisions and to God be the glory.

#### Conclusion



Dick Bright, Dave Larsen, and John McIntosh 1998  
 Courtesy of Dick Bright

This should give the reader an idea of some of the problems many of us go through in an attempt to search for the ark. Along the way, we've made mistakes, and hopefully, learned from them. It hasn't been easy, but then if it were, the Ark would have long since been revealed, and perhaps its impact on future events would be lessened.

Many of us are convinced the Ark is on Ararat and, even though we have trouble along the way, there is a level of commitment to make every effort to reach it. Why? I imagine each person who gets involved in this quest has his own personal reasons for his desire to do so. Could it be to do what we believe is the will of God in our lives? Maybe. Is it to do something to show where we stand in our beliefs? Maybe. I've heard it said that people may doubt what you say in your life, but they will believe what you do. Is it to hope God will say, when the time comes, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" Is it, that in doing this, we hope to reach the lives of other people? Is it to help get the Word out? Maybe. Is it just the adventure? I think most of us have reasons that are similar, and those reasons are, for the most part, good, and hopefully acceptable to God. In my mind, some of the people mentioned here in this small effort are giants in this undertaking for God. Among them are such people as Jim Irwin, the ex-astronaut, evangelist and team leader, who had a tremendous impact on my life; Eryl Cummings, who researched Ark stories for over 40 years; and Violet Cummings, who wrote two books on the subject. John Morris, Ph.D., a creation geologist, author, and veteran of Ararat was once struck by lightning while on a climb. He survived, is a leader in this effort and he was kind enough to write the foreword to my book. There are others not mentioned here. Their contributions and efforts, according to their own beliefs, I think, will be accepted as gold.

From a personal standpoint, I was taught in college that theories of evolution, particularly the Darwinian Theory, natural selection, and chance, were responsible for my existence and that of every person and type of animal. In essence, life was an accident. I was taught that Uniformitarianism was the guiding geological principle in the history of the earth. There was no room for cataclysm.

I sat in anthropology classes and listened to the way anthropologists, paleontologists, and other scientists of one name or another could take a tooth, a jawbone, or a portion of a skullcap determined to be of great age, and then build a model of some gigantic beast to fit the fragment. They even put fleshy and hairy exteriors on the products of their imaginations and sold it to the students as part of our heritage. I didn't buy it.

I took the classes, passed the tests, giving the appropriate answers, and I graduated. But, down deep, I didn't believe that which I was being taught was, in fact, the complete truth. The subjects are too involved and complicated to be discussed here. It would mean defining evolution and natural selection, and discussing mathematical probabilities of chance and mutation. It would involve discussing creation, the Laws of Thermodynamics, and the fossil record. It would involve defining Uniformitarianism as a geological doctrine versus the extent of cataclysm. I discussed these things to the best of my ability in *The Ark, A Reality?*

I will not attempt to do so here. There are many books by creation scientists who do a far better job than I could. Besides, I don't think those topics necessarily fit in well with the topic of this book.

The bottom line is that I am of the belief that we are not here by random chance, having so evolved from as simple a form as a unicellular organism. Accidents and random chance cannot be the creator. I believe there is purpose to life; there is someone with a "blueprint." We were created by purposeful design. "Chance" is not my God.

Geology has not been uniform throughout history. The geologic column in its entirety does not exist outside of the textbook. The history of the earth has signs of cataclysm all over it—cataclysm by water. All of this is obvious as we open our eyes and do our own study apart from the college classroom. This is my opinion, and I was heading in this direction even before I opened page one of the Bible.

According to the Bible: "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10,12). The problem, I think, is first a spiritual problem. At age 35, I bought my first Bible and started reading it voraciously. Then I started to read the scripture. A couple of years or so later, I read Violet Cummings' book, *Has Anybody Really Seen Noah's Ark?* I then met her and her husband Eryl, and Jim Irwin. You know the story.

During the years since I read that first book concerning the ark, I have read as much as I could find on the subjects of Noah's Ark and the Genesis Flood. Over the years, I have read many accounts of reported sightings of the ark. I have even spoken with people who claim to have seen the ship many years ago as it lay in the ice and rocks of Ararat. By the vast numbers of reported sightings alone, (200 or more since antiquity) one would tend to believe there is something to the reports. When one considers the similarities of many of the reports the tendency to believe is further strengthened.

Details vary from one report to another. Some of the reports may have no basis in fact, or there may have been a misidentification of what was seen. However, it takes just one true sighting to put the Ark on Ararat. Let's consider the possibility of truth by a comparison test.

From the pages of my own book:

"There are four reports of the Ark with the door off. There are seven reports of one end broken off, and eighteen of its sticking out of the ice and snow or with snow on the structure. There are nine reports of a meltwater pond, eight reports of a ledge, and ten reports of a ravine, valley, gully, or some such place, which the ark, sitting on a ledge, could be in. There are three reports of a very difficult or hazardous climb to reach the ship.

There are at least two reports to my knowledge of the ark's leaning against a rock or ridge, and two reports of its sitting in a north-south direction. There are three reports of the pond's overflowing in a stream down the mountain and two reports of the Ark as having openings around the top. There are many more comparisons that I could include, and with the addition of more reports, the numbers you have just read would increase. However, these should be enough for us to come to a conclusion and to the point of this exercise. We can choose to believe that all of these reports are based upon lies, or, based on the information presented, we can choose to believe that the Ark or a large wooden barge is on Mount Ararat, if just one of the reports is true."

## THE YEAR 1999 & 2000

I made three trips from the United States to Turkey in 1999. The first trip was in April. Why so early? It was expected by the local Kurds that the military would declare the mountain open to the shepherds and allow them to take their sheep to their summer mountain villages. From there they would be allowed to find pasture to graze. My plan was to go to the mountain with the shepherds and their sheep when the military, for that purpose, declared the mountain to be open. I thought it was a good plan, and I had a good reason. For one thing, I would not be expected in eastern Turkey in April. No one in his "right mind" would try to look for the Ark in April. There is too much snow. George Kralik, my Canadian friend was with me. Perhaps that says something about his frame of mind as well. That's the way it sometimes seems to be with those of us in the quest to find the Ark. That isn't the reason, this is:

Before I had left the country the previous year, I had spoken with a Kurdish shepherd (through an interpreter) who believed he knew the location of a structure on the mountain that appeared to be made of dark wood. This Kurdish man had been brought to me by Kurdish friends of mine in order to tell me what he knew of the structure. According to what he had told me, the snow would melt so that part of the structure could be seen in the late spring of the year. He said that the sheep would graze as high on the mountain as the snow would allow, and he would walk up to a waterfall above the "pasture" in order to get water for himself. He said that from the location of the waterfall, the structure could be seen in a canyon close by. With the Kurdish man's permission, George and I were planning to dress as shepherds and join the flock.

After the April arrival in eastern Turkey, a few things turned out not to be in our favor. For one, the Kurdish shepherd had changed his mind. He said he didn't understand what we were looking for, and that what he had previously seen was the remains of an old house located at an elevation of a little over 3,000 meters (almost 11,000 ft.) It seemed to me that either someone had convinced him to change the story, or we hadn't communicated very well when I had spoken with him the previous year. I was sure at the time that I had, since I had shown an illustration out of a book to him of what the Ark is thought to look like, and he seemed to recognize the likeness. He had said then that the only difference to the illustration was the color. The illustration in the book was brown. He said the structure was black. That is what many of the others who had reported to have seen the Ark had said. It was "black."

I still would have joined the flock as a "shepherd in training" except that the military decided that they would not allow the Kurds to set foot on the area of the mountain we were interested in. Their mountain village was off limits. The Kurds then decided it was in their best interest not to graze their sheep on Ararat at all.

It was evident from this point that our planned April parade up Ararat had met with April showers. The military had rained on our parade. Being that we were there anyway, and so were the military, George and I devised a plan to convince them, the military, that we needed to climb that mountain. It didn't work. We went back to the states and Canada in early May. The full story is to be published this year, (2001) in my own book by New Leaf Press/ Master Books.

The second Trip of the year to Turkey took place in July. I was determined to get on the mountain on this trip, and did so. A "special permission" was arranged with the local military authorities that originally allowed me (and a few Kurdish friends) five days on the mountain. We would climb up the Ahora Gorge straight into the heart of the northeast side of the mountain. Our special military permission did have a few restrictions tied to it. It also had a few "liberties." We had the liberty to begin our climb at night if we so desired, and we did. We began our climb at night. In the lower part of the gorge there were rivers and deep ravines to negotiate our way in, out, over and through, and although the course of our chosen travel at night was somewhat challenging, the morning light found us to be enjoying the ascent toward the heart of the mountain on a rather steep, and safe grassy slope. It took us three days to climb to a place high in the gorge that provided with an excellent view of the Araxes, and the Abich glaciers. It was from this high place that we saw something we couldn't identify. It looked like a giant houseboat "hanging" out of the end of the Araxes glacier. It seemed to have a "bow." I focused the binoculars on whatever it was I was looking at, and I thought I could see a "roof" - a dark red roof. I could even imagine broken ends of timber making up part of the roof. Between the bow and the roof was an indistinguishable mess that could have been a collapsed "cabin." It was a "big" whatever it was. Next question: "How do we get over there?"

There was a deep chasim between us and the Araxes glacier. It looked like an impossible task for us to descend from our high place of observation into the chasm, cross the terrain inbetween, and then climb up the near verticle and unstable approach to the object at the end of the glacier. Could we do that and still be off the mountain in two more days? I realized - I didn't care. We had to find a way. My heart seemed to be racing. What was I looking at?? Was it ice and rocks somehow masked by dirt and debris of the mountain? Was it a giant houseboat? I'm not looking for a giant house boat; especially one with a red roof. I'm looking for a giant black barge!

Somewhere in my jumbled thoughts of the moment I remembered something about a story of a report that said the ship looked like a house on a barge. Somewhere in my jumbled thoughts of the moment I remembered something about wood being deep red in color. Somewhere in those same jumbled thoughts I remembered someone reporting a structure in the Araxes glacier. Was this the - whatever it is- that someone else - whoever that was - had seen? Then, somewhere in the middle of these confused thoughts, the phone rang! One of my Kurdish partners had a cell phone so as to be in constant contact with the Turkish military. He answered. We were given an order. "Be off the mountain by midnight, or by early dawn we would be captured, or shot!"

The conflict between the Turkish military, and the Kurdish separtests (PKK), was not necessarily over. Something had happened on the other side of the mountain; I think it was a minor clash of some sort, and the mountain was now closed. Our special permission had been revoked. A new military commander was moving into the area and the mountain would be sealed off by dawn or before. I was told the new military commander didn't care about our special permission. We took photographs, and left. I had decided two things: Since we had been warned, my Kurdish friends lives would be in danger - as well as mine; we would get off the mountain. Also, I would have to return - someday. By the grace of God, and despite the tumbles, bumps and bruises along the way, we were off the mountain before dawn.

It was now August. I was in the United States, preparing to return to Turkey for the third trip of the year. George Kralik from Canada would join me again. So would a guy I had met in Turkey in 1985, again in 1986. Bob Cornuke, who heads the Bible Archeology, Search and Exploration (BASE) Institute of Colorado Springs would be there. So would Bob Stuplich, an "extreme" mountaneer and good friend from Colorado. Bob and I were together on the nearly disasterous climb of 1985. That was the year that I had met both of these guys through astronaut Jim Irwin. The man I hadn't met till then was Dave Banks, a professional photographer, explorer, and mountain climber who, with his wife, Teresa, worked

as “Team Banks” with such organizations as “Discovery” and “NOVA.” The Kurdish and military connections I had were to make it happen.

Again, “special permission” was provided. Again, because of certain restrictions of the special permission, we would begin the operation at night. There were five, plus two Kurdish guides, plus six horses to carry the gear. Seven people and six horses, and we were climbing at night. The story in it’s entirety is told in my own book to be published this year by the afore mentioned company. I will briefly outline the events.

The nighttime climb was far more difficult then anyone had foreseen. I think we were lost until the dawn. We camped twice on the way up the mountain. The second day we found a place to call our high camp. It was at 12,000 feet. We left the horses and the two Kurds there. On the morning of the third day, Bob, and Bob, and Dave, and George and I, climbed a painstakingly difficult 2,000 feet to the edge of the western glacier of the mountain. Around noon of the day, we stepped on the ice cap at 14,000 ft and crossed from west to east till we found the places above 15,000 ft. on the edge of the high reaches of the Ahora Gorge. It was now about 3p.m.. Due to the lay of the rocky and ice-covered terrain, we could not see the end of the Araxes glacier and the object I had seen on the previous climb. We did see a lot of ice. Because of the time of day, we observed the gorge to be impossible to descend into and climb back out of again before dark. We looked over, and photographed everything we could see. We did not see the Ark. We left the edge of the gorge around 4:30p.m., and returned to high camp, reaching it more than an hour after dark. Along the way we crossed above the heavily crevassed area of the ice cap known as the Cehennem Dere (hell’s canyon). It was about there that I managed to trip over my own feet, and after a “somersault” I arrested my slide by thrusting the jagged tip of my ice ax into the glacial ice. When I stopped sliding, my legs were hanging over a wide crevasse which was maybe a hundred or more feet deep. As I crawled to safety and thanked God for saving my life, I saw George nearly to his waist in another crevasse. It was one of the many “highlights” we had on this particular Ararat experience. On the following day we began a descent which ended two days latter in the middle of the night. Again we got lost. The places we descended would have been out of the question had it been day; had we been able to see what we had gotten ourselves into. All of us had a turn at falling down somewhere. One such event took place when a horse lost its footing and crashed into Bob Cornuke so hard he was knocked probably 20 feet down a rock face til he landed in a “V” shaped by two slabs of rock. He thought for a minute or two that he had broken his arm. He didn’t. Bob’s tough. We continued down the mountain. It proved to be a great test for all of us. We made it - alive. I don’t know why. I guess God does.

It was now September. George and I had stayed in Turkey. We were recovering from our “wounds” of the previous Ararat experience. The others had left the country. Paul Thomson of New Zealand joined George and me. Paul had recently returned from a climb on the mountain that proved to be a test in itself. He spent 4 days in a cave he fashioned out of rocks and ice, and waited out a snowstorm on the mountain. He’s a real mountaineer. He would have to be. He survived the ordeal, and he, along with George and I, have decided that we needed to see the object that I had seen on the first climb of the year. Therefore, we would climb - again.

It took us about 5 days to go up there and back. Perhaps I should say 5 days, and nights. We took a different route to get to the inside of the gorge than I had taken the previous time. We came in low from the west side, and not straight up the gorge. The special permission had changed.. The climb was tough. It always is on this - “the mountain of pain.” The rocks almost got us. Rockslides are no fun. I’ll elaborate a little on that as you read of the experiences of the year 2000. Right now we’re still in 1999. Ultimately, we reached the same high place where I had observed the “whatever it was,” nearly a couple of months prior to this climb. There was more snow then there had been on that previous climb. A Result of the same storm that had trapped Paul on the mountain for 4 days. Still, the object of interest was easy to see. We looked again with binoculars, and Paul used a telescope. It was now obvious. The object that was a source of some excitement on that previous climb, was - - ice, - and rock. Look at the photograph that was taken on the first climb. That is ice, and rock. It could well be the same rock and ice that confused someone else at an earlier time. Someone who had talked about a giant house on a barge; and there was dark red wood.

We descended the mountain, and went home. Again, we were disappointed, but that’s ok. We did our best, and there’s still next year.

#### TURKEY AGAIN - YEAR 2000 -- TO OLD TO CLIMB?

It is July 31st, 2000. I am seated in “business elite” class of Delta flight 72. This is my second trip to Turkey this year. The first one was a stopover for a few days to take a good look at the ice melt on the mountain, then go on into Iran. I joined Bob Cornuke, businessman, author, and explorer Larry Williams, Author Dave Halbrook, Dan Toth, fitness director and a former navy seal, and several others to climb Mount Sabalan. The result of some of Bob’s research indicated to him

that the Ark could be in Iran. I believe it is on Ararat in Turkey, but Bob was gracious to invite me along, so I went. I will say that we did not find the Ark in Iran. The story of the climb is told in a book about the search for Noah's mountain, by Cornuke and Halbrook of the BASE Institute of Colorado Springs.

This time my intention is not to go into Iran, but to - one last time - again climb on Mount Ararat in search for the Ark. Certainly I must be nuts. This is my 19th trip to Turkey. Most of those times I actually managed to set foot on the mountain called Ararat. That is where I think the Ark rests, and will be revealed for what it is. If I am going to be a part of the discovery, or re-discovery of Noah's Ark, then it will have to be on this trip. I'm to the point in my life that age (55 years) is challenging my physical abilities to climb as I once did. Even I have to admit this is the case. I think people I love are beginning to worry about me. Yet equally, they hope for success. I think.

We push off the gate at 5:48 p.m.. It's raining. There will be a delay. What else? I'm on my way to Turkey. We lifted off at 6:27 p.m., and touched down nine hours and 16 minutes later at 10:43 a.m. August 1st (there's a 7 hour time change) in Istanbul.

I hadn't had time to previously reserve a flight on THY (Turkish Airlines) to Van, Turkey and consequently I found that all flights were full for the next three days. I called the Airport Inn and Mehmet, the owner, and (due to my several visits to his hotel,) a friend, sent Hussain, (driver and bartender) who I also know fairly well, to the airport to pick me up. From the Airport Inn I phoned the Asur Hotel in Van and spoke with my influential friend Remzi Bozbay, a part owner of the hotel, and told him of my predicament. There is a THY office on the street level below his hotel, and Remzi knows the people who work there. A couple of hours later, I was confirmed on a flight from Istanbul to Van for the next morning, Wednesday August 2nd. The ticket was in my hand. It is all in who you know.

August 2nd

At 11:25 a.m. and now at the airport in Van, Turkey. I met with Paul Thomson who had just flown in from Auckland, New Zealand, and My very good friend Murat Sahin of Dogubeyazit, Turkey. After a lunch of donner kabob, and greetings at the Asur hotel, (where I had the opportunity to thank Ramzi for the favor), Murat, Paul and I were on our way to Dogubeyazit.

This might be a good time to re-introduce Paul Thomson. At the time of this writing, Paul is 29 years old. This will be his 7th time on the mountain, his 4th time in Turkey. On two of the previous climbs, Paul was taken hostage by the PKK and spent more than a month on the mountain. I believe the years were 1992 & 1993. He is a survivor of a motorcycle/bus accident, where he was run over. Paul tells me he was a "judder bar." That's a New Zealand term for a "speed bump" for the bus. That happened on July 7th 1997. Paul miraculously survived several operations to put his pelvis and a few other bones back together, plus fix his liver that had been cut in half. He beat all the odds against him to return to climbing mountains. He was with me on one climb a year ago. Watching him climb, one would never know that only a short time ago his body was badly broken in several places.. He's a Christian who is well studied. He has a degree in Accounting and Finance from Auckland University, and makes his living working part time for Levi Straus as an accountant. Paul spends his "free" time in studies of nuclear physics and closely follows the "speed of light" work of Astronomer Barry Setterfield of Australia. Ultimately, Paul's goal with his current studies is to use the knowledge learned to the "pulling of energy from the fabric of space." He's an intelligent man as well as a great mountain climber. This story gives testimony to his strong Christian faith. The following story gives testimony to his ability as a climber.

At five minutes to seven p.m. on this 2nd of August, Ararat the magnificent, the massive, the monster, was in sight. As I looked at the giant volcano I heard myself saying "Do we have to go up there - way up there?" I wasn't expecting any answer. Like a magnet it draws me back - yet again. Why can't I get this out of my system and just go to the beach like other people on vacation? We drive then in silence. We study what we can see of the mountain. The ice melt back seems to be good. It seems to be very good. Soon we'll find out if it's good enough. The thought of what lies ahead seems to make my heart beat loud, maybe even faster - in a nervous sort of way.

Upon arrival in Dogubeyazit, we make our way to Murat Camping. That will be our new home for a while. Murat Camping, owned by Murat Sahin and his brother Siam, is located on a hill above Dogubeyazit, below Isak Pasa Palace and amongst the ruins of the old city Bayazit. Murat Camping offers a campground, rooms and a restaurant as well as a great view of the city and the surrounding hills decorated with ruins that date back to 800B.C. and the Urartu culture. This summer a new restaurant is being built to replace one which they just tore down. Murat Camping is a gathering place for hikers and campers and adventuresome people from nations around the world. No passport number is required to check in as it is with the hotels in town; therefore, it is my secret place to hide. I thought.

I learn that a couple of days prior, there had been a knife fight at the camping place Mousa, a cousin of Murat had been attacked by a drunk, and stabbed high in the left leg. When the drunk tried to stab Mousa a second time, this time in

the stomach, Mousa took the knife away from the attacker and then stabbed him - several times - 32 times I was told. Then, to top off the event. Mousa cut off the man's right ear.

Amazingly, the man did not die, but was recovering in the hospital at the time I heard the story. This event did however arouse the anger of the families of the two knife fighters. Now a 3rd party of individuals belonging to a third family were trying to negotiate and settle the matter before violence escalates to the next level. In the mean time, pistols, rifles, shotguns, and knives were seen in the area and on the persons of some of the members of the family I was visiting.

For instance, it was such a nice night that many of this Kurdish family were sleeping on the roof (under the stars) of the small "hotel" at the camping place. They were armed with a pistol, 2 shotguns, a sword, and a knife. That is just what I was able to observe. I assume the other family was armed in the same manner. It was protection in the event members of the other family would seek to retaliate in behalf of the wounded son. I trusted the negotiations would go well - I prayed that they would.

It might be understood here that the police were informed of what had happened. They are Turks. The victims are Kurds. The police just said: "Why should it matter that they kill each other? Let them." The Kurds will settle this problem among themselves.

As we organize ourselves in our room, in enters Mahmut. He is a tall rugged looking Kurdish man who sometimes resides at Murat Camping. I am to learn that he occasionally works for Murat. Now, however, he will work for me.

The entire story is told in my own book to be published this year by New Leaf Press/Master Books. What you have here is much of the action in an abbreviated form.

## JUMPING AHEAD

August 10th.

I'm up at 6 a.m. and feeling quite well; so much so that I decided to climb a hill in back of our camp site. That exercise took about 2 hours with the return to camp. Then I made what I later considered to be a mistake. I went with Paul to downtown Dogubeyazit. We needed to pick up a few things to better ready us for the hoped for climb.

Because of my many visits to Dogubeyazit over the past several years, several people often recognize me the moment I set foot in the city. Sure enough, I hadn't been out of the vehicle for 10 seconds and 2 people, relatives of Fatih Tan, who I worked with in the 80's welcomed me to sit next to their place of business (a clothing store) on a corner location of a busy street, and have cay (tea). After accepting the courteous gesture, and drinking the tea, Paul and I politely excused ourselves and started to walk up to another shopping area. Within a minute or so, we met Mustafa, who Paul and I both know. Mustafa was to be Paul's guide on Paul's first attempt of last year. On that climb, Paul and Dave Larsen, Paul's climbing partner on that attempt, had arranged a deal with Mustafa. However, on that attempt, Mustafa had entrusted the guiding duties to another man by the name of Mehmet, and after starting Paul and Dave on their climb, Mehmet turned around and went down the mountain leaving Paul and Dave to figure it out for themselves. Because of time constraints, Dave descended early. Paul had wanted to stay on the mountain longer than Dave was able to, and this decision got him caught in the snowstorm I mentioned in the last report. He spent 4 days in a small snow cave he hollowed out for himself, then he too descended the mountain. I tell you, Paul's a mountain man.

After meeting Mustafa, I elected to go back to Murat Camping and let Paul do the Shopping. I had originally wanted to keep out of sight in the city of Dogubeyazit, it is easier to accomplish what I want to accomplish (getting on the mountain) if the local authorities don't know I am there. It's not that I intend to do any thing illegal, I'm not and I don't. But I can get permission to do what I want to do without giving every one who wears some sort of a uniform, authority over me. Years ago, I've seen where a local cop would deny a person the permission to climb which had been authorized by a military general. I had hoped not to "enjoy" an experience like that again. But now I knew the word was out that I was in town, and people who know me, know that I am there for one reason. That reason is to climb Ararat, and find the Ark. They also know the door to the mountain is closed, and the military controls the door. At least that is what some of them think. If one person mentions to the police or to a military officer that I'm in town, then I will be watched. Others will just say "en-sha-la," which translates: "if God wills" and let it go at that. As I find out, I really didn't have to worry about my trip into the city spoiling the secret of my stay in Turkey, and at Murat Camping. I didn't have to worry about the military finding out. They already knew.

Back at Camping I had tea with a Kurdish man who worked at the camping place. He speaks a little English. I was then told that 2 days ago an army officer had asked him if a American was staying there at Murat Camping. This fellow

had said "yes." The soldier wanted to know if the American (me) was planning to climb Ararat to search for the Ark. The Kurdish fellow told the soldier: "He used to, but now he's too old. He just comes here to visit." How about that? I'm too old! I hope that doesn't sink in till after we have one successful climb and a discovery.

Apparently the army officer was reasonably satisfied with the explanation of my presence. Still, the Kurdish fellow was instructed to tell him (the officer) if I suddenly decided that I wasn't too old, and decided instead to climb Ararat. I thought: "Suddenly? There is nothing sudden about it. I decided quite some time ago; even if I am too old." I might add that up to that point the Kurdish fellow did not know my plans. I was at this point just visiting. There was no fabricated story told to the soldier. I probably am too old to climb.

Over the course of the next hour, I talked some with this Kurdish fellow, and sat alone for a time thinking of what I had been told. Being somehow curiously content with the new knowledge that I was too old, yet without fully realizing that fact, I thought about how we were going to go about the next climb. I thought about where we would search. And, with a feeling of some peace over the prospect of it, I began to see my surroundings.

I'm sitting at a table in the garden at the camping place. I look out at the picturesque and towering Isak Pasa Palace, and the ruins of old Bayazit. The old city, once constructed of mud and rocks had been partly destroyed by an earthquake a hundred years ago. The residents who survived, then moved and built the new Dogubeyazit on the plains below. Parts of each structure of the old city, - a wall, part of a wall or a section of the foundation still in place; are monuments to destruction in this earthquake prone land. Beyond them, the story of a violent earth history is evidenced by the giant slabs of limestone rock uplifted to form an impenetrable wall with peaks side by side almost evenly spaced appearing as a colossal picket fence pointing - even reaching for the sky. Ancient ruins of a civilization long gone (Uartian time-800 B.C.) decorate high on the wall of rock with an ancient mosque at the base. The mosque is about a thousand years old and for a few hundred years it was an Armenian church. The Ottoman Turks converted the church to a mosque. All of this now a peaceful place of beauty colored in various shades of sandy brown and gray punctuated by the likeness of an oasis in a desert, the green trees of the garden. This is what I see as I listen to the music of the high pitched sound of a Kurdish saz and an accompaniment of singing.

In this setting I learn that an Armenian climbing team is in Dogubeyazit and that they have been refused permission to climb. Turkish police are keeping very close track of them; even following them around.

Rod Baber, Jiles Pittman and Mark Anstic are the names of three Englishmen here at Murat Camping. They too want to climb Ararat. However, they are not really interested in finding the Ark. These three gentlemen have been on a record breaking European tour climbing the tallest peak in every one of the 47 countries of Europe, and Ararat is #47. They are quite delightful chaps to talk with and are quite concerned about their hoped for permission to make the Ararat climb. As I write these notes, there is a work in progress to improve that possibility. Jiles is writing a book about the experience. It is to be titled "A Natural High." Since meeting these guys, I'm looking forward to its publication and reading the book.

Army people are here at the campsite. They keep their distance, but seem to take notice of me sitting in the garden. Obviously my hiding place is no longer a secret. I too am being watched.

## JUMPING AHEAD

August 12th.

It's early in the morning and I'm in the garden having my 1st cup of tea of the day. Two workers (employees) are wrapped in blankets and are sleeping on the tops of two long tables. A hawk is on a tether is perched above me on some sort of a cupboard-like contraption. An Egret, or white stork is standing about 30 feet to my right, and 3 rabbits hop from one grassy area to another in front of me. A dog lies just to the side of the steps that lead down to the garden from the roadway above. The worker who made my tea is busy with a hose watering the dirt. I've sort of have been wondering about that. I guess the purpose is to keep the dust down - or make mud? Off to one area of the garden, tourists are speaking languages I don't understand; I think it's Italian. Sparrow - like songbirds are above me in the trees and seem to happily greet the day. This is the assortment of wildlife and activity around me at this present time.

It's peaceful in a way. a warming by the sun gives comfort on a windless morning. I'm in an oasis and surrounded by the ruins of a city (Bayazit) long ago destroyed and deserted and on a hillside dominated by the long abandoned palace of Isak Pasa. I feel quite confident as I'm assessing the situation. The British climbers, Mark and Rod are climbing, or at least they left the Camping last night with a guide and the intent to get on the mountain with military approval. If they get approval, I expect through a certain amount of negotiations, we will too,

As I await the developments of the day in expectation of good news, I am twice surprised. First John McIntosh arrives at Murat Camping. He's the "Rock of Research" and is there to keep up on events of the search and to help when he can. It was good to see this old friend, but the meeting was short. My new friend and partner, Mahmut, shows up, and the plan is to move, and to move now. He has managed to secure a "special military permission." We are ready to move. That's my second surprise of the day. The "we" is our climbing group. "We" are Paul, Mahmut, myself and two people who will act as porters and carry some of our luggage. I will call them Ironman and Kannot. They are both young and very strong.

#### JUMPING AHEAD - AND CLIMBING

Up, up, up the steepening high hills we walked, over rocks, and scree and past nomad camps. Finally at 7:15 p.m. on this 12th day of August, we set our 1st camp adjacent to a nomad camp. Several of the residents of this home in the eastern Turkish hills came out to meet us. They are a friendly group. Most Kurdish shepherds are. Many times in the past, shepherds have prepared a glass of tea (cay, or chi) for me; or us, as the case happened to be. My only concern being that the water was contaminated with bacteria that my tourist body couldn't handle very well.

August 13th.

The night was reasonably warm and the stars were everywhere. I slept a little and then was awakened by a shepherd's whistle and a flock of sheep as they were brought down from the hills yet above us. They passed close by our camp.

We were up at 5:30 a.m., and muesli served as our quick and cold breakfast. With the tents and sleeping bags secure, we're moving and on our way by 6:40 a.m.. I expect that today will be a workout. For starters, the melt water stream that provided us with water last night at the camp, is now dry. We should have expected that would be the case, but didn't. Therefore, having not planned ahead, we have very little water to begin the day. Water is crucial for us. It will be mid-morning before we will find water, and that will probably be in about 2 hours when we reach Lake Kop. The water will need to be purified. Lake Kop is a watering hole for sheep.

The sun is rising over Ararat. It will be a nice day. The direction is up: always up, and the hills are steep. With a pack on your back it is challenging - even painful. At 8:14 we take a rest break. Our water bottles are nearly empty. At 9:25 a.m. we're at Lake Kop. At this place we fill our water bottles and add the purification tablets. It is a rest stop. We're tired. It doesn't matter. We're on the mountain. At 12:15 we are up to last year's high camp at 12,000 feet. This is where we had horses last year, and the dung the horses left behind is now the fuel used to boil water for our tea. The Kurds insist that they have got to have their tea.

At 2:45 p.m. we started what turns out to be the most difficult part of our rocky climb. This is an area of the mountain that proved a real test a year ago, and I determined then that I would never be fool enough to attempt it ever again. What does that say about me? Up-up - straight up, or nearly so. Rocks and more rocks and more rocks still, big rocks, little rocks, rocks that roll and fall and rocks that are unclimbable; and I begin to hate rocks. Eventually, the climb takes us to an almost flat area next to the glacier. It's an exhausting effort that takes us past and high above the Parrot Glacier on our right to this place which is to be our new high camp. The elevation is 14,000 feet. We are there to set our camp just before dark. The time is nearly 7 p.m. By 8 p.m. there is a full moon over the glacier in front of us; the west glacier of Ararat. That turns out to be a blessing as we eat a dinner meal cooked over Paul's cooker. None of us brought flashlights with us. We didn't want to be seen at night. Besides, they were too heavy to carry. A couple of other things we simply forgot. Eating utensils for instance. We had one spoon (Paul's) and one knife (mine). We were fully dressed and in our sleeping bags and tents by a few minutes past 8 p.m. It's cool and quiet.

August 14th.

We're up before 6 a.m. The sun is up. It promises us a nice day, but the wind is a bitter cold. A quick and cold breakfast made up of some concoction Paul dreamed up was in order, then it was time to begin the search. By 7:30 a.m. Paul, Mahmut and I are on the ice and moving up the long ascending glacier. We left Iron man and Kannot in camp. The glacier affords us another thousand feet in elevation as we proceed up toward the Ray Anderson site, our 1st priority. (Ray Anderson, an Ararat veteran of the '60's, 70's, and '80's and a diligent researcher who was with me in 1993 on the failed helicopter mission, believes the Ark rests high in the ice in two pieces between 15,000 and 16,000 feet above the

Ahora Gorge). Then at approximately 15,000 feet, Mahmut and I both fall to our knees and nearly our waist in a crevasse that was covered by a snow bridge. We quickly rolled out of that predicament and as I did, I saw the snowfall into the ever-widening opening in the ice. I peered into the opening, the place I had nearly gone, and I couldn't see the bottom. We roped up. The time was 10:45 a.m.

The climb from that point on became one of a grueling physical exercise for each of us. It was a slow - painful climb up a heavily crevassed steep mountain glacier that we couldn't seem to reach the top of; nor even a flat place along the way. Paul and Mahmut each had headaches. This was due to not allowing the time to acclimate, or get used to the altitude before the experience of this strenuous climb. I did not have that problem. I was more concerned about the workings inside my chest. I had been taking vitamin "O" (oxygen) to possibly add more oxygen to my blood and hope to dilate the blood vessels. This probably prevented me from a headache such as Paul and Mahmut were enjoying. Also, I would take an aspirin or few, to thin the blood, and a couple of Advil's to eliminate the chest pain. This may sound little foolish, but keep in mind I was intent on keeping my heart beating. Under the circumstances this was my best effort at doing just that, while doing my best to keep up with my climbing companions who were 25 and 26 years younger than myself. (The two we left back at camp are 32 years younger than I am). At 55 years of age, I need all the help I can get. After all, "I'm too old to climb."

Above the Ahora Gorge just below 16,000 feet, we found the area thought to be Ray Anderson's "lower object" location. Ray had shown us a photograph of what appeared to be a doghouse type of formation sticking out of the ice. Ray is sure that formation is not ice or rock, but part of the Ark. We found nothing but ice. We even peered into a couple of large openings in the ice to see nothing but the inside of a crevasse and more ice. We photographed everything. This is not to say that part of the structure is not there; this is to say that we couldn't find it. We climbed to a place abeam the upper portion or "long piece" of the Ray Anderson site at 16,000 feet and took photos from a relatively close distance of maybe 100 -200 meters. I carried a GPS (Global Positioning System) with me and the reading at this location gave a coordinate of 39 degrees 42 minutes 41 seconds north and 44 degrees 17 minutes and 64.4 east. There were three or four evenly spaced "holes" which could have passed at a distance as having the appearance of windows, but when Paul looked through his telescope, they were seen to be only rocks.

Our intent was to climb higher and past this point to walk over "the long piece" and then toward Cakmac peak which is behind and above Ray's site, but the weather turned bad on us in a hurry. The wind was ferocious; maybe 50 - 60 miles per hour and driving ice pieces like sleet, piercing bits that slashed at the face threatening the eyes through the glasses we wore. The ice flew at us horizontally or parallel to and across the surface of the glacier. We kept low in an attempt to keep out of the full blast of the ice-cold wind. It would not let up. The time was 4 p.m. Nothing could be seen at 16,000 feet at the Ray Anderson site from our perspective. With the weather closing in we began our descent to the 14,000-foot high camp on the edge of the glacier. The descent took 2 hours. When we arrived, Kannot and Ironman had dinner and tea waiting. I'm not sure what the dinner was, but I think it came out of a package. I didn't care. It was warm. It had been a full day. Now it was night, and there was a full moon. I thought about Jim Irwin who had walked on that moon. I wished he was there with us. Maybe he was.

August 15th.

We're awake at 6:25 a.m. and begin our preparations for the day. Paul and I move a little slower today and deal with the various pains earned from the climb of yesterday. The plan today is to reach the Ahora Gorge at about 15,500 feet. This is high enough to look into the heart of the glacial areas of the gorge and determine if a structure can be seen and recognized. We also plan to find a place to view the rocky walls of the gorge. Mahmut's feet are terribly blistered and he's in some pain as a result of yesterday's exercise. He stays in camp to doctor his feet, heal and rest.

Paul and I started out at approximately 8:30 a.m. Before we left camp, Paul asked me to put the coordinates of the camp into the memory of my GPS. Up until now, I had intended only to use the GPS to mark the coordinates of a discovery, but as per Paul's suggestion, I did put the coordinates of the camp into waypoint 1 of the GPS. They are 39 degrees 43' 45" North and 44 degrees 17' 22" East.

By 10:30 a.m. Paul and I are on an out cropping that extends from below and just N-W of the Cehennem Dere (hell's canyon). We slid down a snowfield from the glacial ice to this rock outcropping. That was an exhilarating exercise in itself. The blade of the ice ax was the brake used to stop the slide from becoming a "flight" into the gorge. Paul slid down first. Then I decided to enjoy the slide. As the speed increased, I just thrust the blade of the ice ax into the ice and snow, and that slowed my rapid descent at just the right time. It was a chance to "live on the edge."

The cloud cover in the gorge was heavy, and although we waited and hoped for the clouds to clear, they only seemed to thicken. We were unable to see the Araxes Glacier because of it. We did however, on occasion get a pretty good (and fleeting) look at the western wall of the gorge and the canyons formally thought to be Davis canyon. (The place

thought by some to be where Ed Davis had reportedly seen the Ark in 1943). We were able to see two interesting objects in two separate canyons, but we determined them to be too small to be the Ark.

After a couple of hours (I don't recall the exact time), Paul and I climbed the steep slope of ice and snow that we had previously slid down (I used 2 ice axes and crampons), to reach the glacier above. Then we proceeded to hike to the edge of the gorge. Along the way we found the skeletal remains of some type of goat that Bob Cornuke, Bob Stuplich, George Kralik, Dave Banks and I had seen last year. Paul thought the animal to be a "Thar." Apparently this animal, if it is a Thar, is normally a resident of the Himalayas. I guessed it either had gotten lost, or had been a resident of the mountains in this part of the world as well. No doubt, it has been on this mountain a long, long time; maybe centuries.

If my memory of last year serves me correctly, then the goat had moved, or turned about 180 degrees from a previous position of head pointing down the ice, to the present position of the head pointing up the ice. Also, the body of the animal seems to be more "on top" of the ice than last year when it appeared to be more "in" the ice. This indicates to me that there has been more of an ice melt than we experienced last year. I was encouraged. Maybe the melt would be enough to expose the structure we were after.

From the edge of a rock outcropping near the Heart Glacier, Paul was able to see fairly well into the Avalanche Canyon which is below the finger of the Abich 2 glacier. He had thought that there might be part of the Ark in that canyon. During his days as a captive on the mountain by the PKK (1993), Paul thought he could see part of a barge-like structure in that canyon. He has now pretty well decided that what is there is only rock. However, that decision is not written in stone.

I was more interested in photographing all I could on the Araxes. The clouds did part just long enough to allow me to do just that - and as expected, there is always an object or two that raises the question - "What's that?" We wouldn't find out. Paul and I would be unable to descend from our perch at 15,000 + feet to the lower Abich and then the Araxes. The ice is so broken, and the distances so great, that an attempt would be suicide. There would be a probability that we, like the goat, would become permanent residents of the rocks and ice below. I'm not quite that committed to this place.

We walked on upward along the Abich ridge above and west of the gorge photographing everything in sight. There was a broken piece of ice that looked like a piece of a barge; but it was white and in a moving glacier full of similar white pieces. There are so many things on that mountain that look (imaginatively) like what we think the Ark looks like. I wonder, when the real thing is sighted, if not already, then will we be able to recognize it? Davis and Hagopian had said that it looked like a big blue rock until they finally recognized it as a ship. If it is still covered in ice, the melt back has to be greater till the "blue rock" is seen.

Paul and I decided to move on up the ice toward the upper area of the Ray Anderson site. That place was yet above us about 600-700 feet. I wanted to see the back of the site and if possible, even the 16,500-foot plateau by Cakmak peak. I had camped on that plateau in 1986, but then there was a lot more snow than there is now. I wanted to see that same place today. Paul thought that if he felt up to it, he would summit the mountain. Ataturk peak is 16,946 feet high. I had done that in 1984, 85, & 86. I would not summit again this year. I would save that energy to descend back to the high camp. After all, I need all the energy I can get. "I'm too old to climb."

As we began our climb in the direction of the Ray Anderson site, we were suddenly in a fog. It quickly became so thick that we were actually in a "white out." We could barely see each other and we were only about 3-4 feet apart. The time was somewhere close to 3p.m. We roped up. Our plans to climb higher were now suddenly changed. In this "white out" we had to find our way to our high camp which was nearly 2,000 feet below us and generally west of our present location. I figured the descent would take us about 2 hours.

Here is where the GPS came in very handy. Because Paul had suggested I enter the position of our camp into a waypoint in the GPS, which I did do, we simply used the GPS to guide us back to camp. Along the way, Paul, who I called the "warm-hearted ice-man," an experienced glacier traveler on the glaciers of New Zealand, led us around and over the openings in the heavenly crevassed Abich and West Glaciers of Ararat. Paul led us across the crevasses, and I handled the GPS. We were a team. As we came upon the crevasses, which in the white out we couldn't see till only a couple of feet from them, we would crawl across a snow bridge, or find a narrow place to step over. We did this while being guided by following the "highway" the GPS provided to us. At about 1/10th of a mile distance remaining to the destination, I hollered for Mahmut, and he answered. We couldn't see him; we were still unable to see more than a few feet in front of us, but we had found our way back to camp. Dinner was ready. The time was 5:10 p.m.

It rained on us that night, and the wind howled. The temperature dropped. It must have; it got cold. I expected it would be snowing on the summit and at the Ray Anderson site. Maybe even it would soon be snowing on us. Four people crowded into Paul's two-man tent to keep out of the weather, while I alone in my one man tent was protected from the

same elements. The tents were secured to the campsite by pegs and rocks. Fortunately, they didn't blow away. Over all, we held up quite well in what turned out to be - a storm.

August 16th

It did snow last night. Everything above us on the mountain had a new covering of white. If any part of the Ark was located at an elevation above us, and had it been visible before the snowfall of last night, then certainly it was covered this morning. Our plan was now to descend below the ice on this day, and move around to the Ahora Gorge and look at it from the rocks and the high hill where we had seen the object on the Araxes glacier a year earlier. We cleaned up our camp and began the decent from the 14,000-foot camp at 8:20 am.

I hate rocks. (I know, it's illogical to hate rocks. It's the exercise of the climb and descent that I'm not fond of, but I found it less threatening for myself - to put the blame on the rocks; Indulge me for awhile). This was a treacherous and miserably rocky descent, and I swore to myself (like I did last year) that this was the last time I would ever set foot on this miserable over grown rock pile. Was there a danger? You bet, but then I've heard it said that the only way a mountain climber can be safe is to stay home. Well I'm not a mountain climber, at least I don't think of myself in that circle. I don't even like to climb. So what am I doing here, why do I continue to struggle to climb this mountain and deal with all the problems? I'm looking for a boat, I should be at the beach. A warm beach with no ice, ice is cold and beaches are warm. That's where I should be, I'll find a boat there. The problem here is I'm after one certain big boat. A boat that no longer can float. so I ask myself: "What sense does it make to look for a boat that can't float?" Then I think I've been up here too long. It seems that Noah and God parked the big boat on this rock pile. "When I get to heaven I'm going to have to talk to someone about this." I wonder if I'm losing my mind.

Big boulders and small rocks, and shale and stuff that moves is all around us. One wrong move and its off to a wild ride which could be a bit more than I would want, under any circumstances. Somehow I managed to find a short stretch of weeds and grass between the rocks on the steep slope and I was almost thrilled for a few minutes. I enjoyed that walk in the park. Then there were more rocks of almost every size and shape imaginable till we reached the 12,000-foot camp of the previous year, and collapsed for a few minutes of rest and discussion.

We had a slight disagreement. Mahmut is afraid that if we circle around and head toward the Ahora Gorge, the Ahora army will see us and take us. I don't even give that a second thought, neither does Paul. We were going to the gorge, planning to camp there and do the work we had to do in the best way we were capable of doing. At the time of our discussion I had my shoes and socks off and was putting Band-Aids on the beginning of a few new blisters. Then Mahmut apparently discontent with what I had to say threw caution to the wind and said "Ok we go to the Ahora Gorge, we go now." Mahmut, Paul, Ironman, and Kannot, picked up the heavier packs, including the one that held my tent and sleeping bag, then they left me.

Well I wasn't quite sure of the exact direction of their travel as the terrain prevented me from this view. So, I finished "fixing" my feet, put shoes and socks back on, and threw the few things back into my lighter pack (which I had tossed out when looking for the first aid pouch and Band-Aids). Then proceeded to find my way toward the Ahora Gorge.

What I had somehow missed was that Mahmut had planned to descent to the plain below (11,500 feet) and set up a camp and further discuss the Ahora Gorge trip. They, including Paul, were waiting for me 5,00 feet down, and I was staying high and without realizing where they were, I went into the direction of the gorge. I was now, certainly in forbidden territory. The Ikdir army controlled the area of the mountain I was passing through and the Ahora army camp controlled the area of and around the Ahora gorge.

I hate rocks. Again I crossed boulder fields and climbed hills (they seemed to me to be almost straight up and down forever) and crossed steep slopes of rocks that move in mass when you're just getting close to them. Again I was crossing an area that I had crossed last year and had promised myself that I would never do it again. I hated that broken promise.

Then the dreaded thing happened, rock slide! I was caught in the middle of it and it was taking me for a ride. I landed on my back and pack and tried to roll free but it seemed to keep me in its grip and moved faster. Rocks tumbling over me and on me and the direction was down. I heard myself holler "God stop this!" Then in a second, it stopped. I laid still trying to assess the situation. My left knee hurt. Was it broken? Was I able to move it? I tried and it worked fine. I eased myself out of the slide area and found that outside of the back side having been torn out of my trousers, a bloody finger nail and a sore knee. I was in good shape. My pack had taken much of the punishment and saved me from other hurts. I thanked God and moved on toward the Ahora Gorge. I do not like rocks.

I heard Paul and Kannot holler "Richard." I looked back and they were topping a hill some distance behind me. Paul had figured that I had left the 12,000-foot camp, stayed high and turned towards the gorge. He and Kannot were following and intending to catch and join me. They did. In fact after a short time of conversation with Paul, they passed me. They're a lot younger than I am, and I was not really in a hurry. The gorge was there, only a few valleys ahead of me. Besides I'm too old to climb. When I reached the gorge I forgot the time it had taken me to travel from the 12,000-foot camp to the gorge. (I was probably about 12,000 to 13,000 feet) It had been approximately four hours. Paul, Kannot, and I in that order, eventually reached the high spot in the middle of the gorge where I had stood and looked at the object in the Araxes that had gotten my attention a year ago. This time it was obvious. The "bow" of what last year I thought may be the Ark (or a giant houseboat), had now melted to form the shape of a triangle. We were looking at ice at the end of the Ararxes glacier. Somehow, the dirt, rocks, sunlight of a year ago had "created" the deception I mentioned earlier.

We photographed everything we could and although we could see areas of ice and rock that looked like they might be a section of the Ark., we could not say that it could be so identified. Mahmut and Ironman joined us, differences were settled and we made our way off of the high spot and retreated about 1/2 hours walk toward the direction that we had just come from. This took us pretty well out of jurisdiction of the Ahora army and their binoculars. Camp was setup. Mahmut had brought my tent to me, and Kannot had brought my sleeping bag. The night was clear and cold and disappointment was quietly ever present in the depths of my very being; yet again.

August 17th

We left camp at 6:45am. Eight and a half hours later, after walking, stumbling, falling, and sliding across some of the same rough terrain we past over the previous day, and after a couple of minutes hiding against a rock out cropping in order to not be seen by a low flying passing airplane, we passed lake Kop. After lake Kop we found some relief as the flat plain beyond the rugged area provided (for a time) an easy decent. On this plain at 11,500 feet, we experience a high moment with being invited to tea with a nomadic group of Kurdish shepherds. With them were their dogs, donkeys, and perhaps 2 - 3 hundred sheep. After a rest and the social exchange, we made our way over and down the hills of rocks and grass until the late afternoon turned into early evening and as we got closer to Dogubeyazit, we found a road where we hitched a ride to Murat Camping. The next couple days would be days of rest.

August 20th

Today is Sunday. The time is 2:24 p.m.. We have healed somewhat from the physical experience, except that I still have a sore knee. I think I may have developed a minor limp. On the day following our return to Murat Camping, we had our photographs of the Ahora gorge developed; and we've studied them. John McIntosh had waited for our return, and being the consummate researcher that he is, we invited him to join us in our study of the photographic results. We decided that according to what we could determine from those results, there are 3, possibly 4 objects of Interest. Paul, Mahmut, and I decided that we must get a closer look. Consequently we immediately made a decision and took action to put the wheels in motion that we hoped would take us to a favorable result. If Mahmut can manage to get us a 4 wheel drive and a certain amount of army permission, we will drive partway up the east ridge of the Ahora gorge. Then climb up the east ridge to 14,500 feet or so and if able, drop into the gorge and try again to find what we're after. We could also climb higher to Cakmak peak and take a look at the Ray Anderson site from the backside. I just hate to quit and I am definitely tired of going back home without a discovery yet again. It's like going home "empty." As John McIntosh had to leave for the states, Dave Larson from California, an Ararat Veteran, has arrived in Dogubeyazit and he will join us on the next climb. This will be my last climb on this, or probably any mountain. When this is over, the beach is next. That's guaranteed! I will want to climb nothing higher than a beach at today's sea level. That's how I feel so then that's it - period! (I wonder how many times I've said that)?

August 23rd

We have been waiting for permission from the authorities in Ankara to climb again. What? did I say Ankara? Why? Didn't I do that over and over again for years with only negative results? Yes, and now I'll try yet again. The point here is that it has never been my desire to break any law. However, I admit that on several occasions in the past years I haven't exactly agreed with what I was told I could or could not do. Sometime back I came to the conclusion that the authorities had a different agenda than mine. That doesn't mean I was determined to go against the wishes of the people who were in a position of authority. I did however, sometimes try to find a way to change their minds and find something that we could both live with. Usually Ankara didnot become involved with those kind of decisions.

I want to climb the east ridge of the Ahora gorge. I have never done that before and the east ridge may be the key to the discovery or the Ark. From the east ridge I can see the east glacier, and if I decide, I (we) can climb to the 16,000-foot peak and beyond to see the plateau at 16,500 feet near Cakmak Peak. I camped on Cakmak peak in 1986. There was a

lot more snow and ice at that time than there is now. I want to see that plateau at a point of a great meltback of the ice; such as now. Also I want to see the backside of the Ray Anderson site. As previously detailed, we attempted to reach those areas twice on this climb, but bad weather in the form of strong winds and sleet on the first attempt, and dense fog - the "whiteout" on the second attempt stopped us. New snow on the summit put the "kabosh" on the consideration of a third attempt. I am beginning to wonder if "someone" is trying to keep us away from there at this present time. If that's a consideration, then a person could possibly think that there must be a reason. Is the opposing force too strong, and/or is the time yet not right for a discovery?

There is an advantage of a climb up the east ridge to Cakmak and the back side of the Ray Anderson site. We could then take a short walk to the place on the ice where the wind and sleet stopped us a few days ago. We could descend at least partway down the Abich to the lower part of the Ray Anderson "lower object/short piece" site, and then return to the higher site. Then we could descend back down the east ridge a short distance and repel from the ridge into the gorge. There would be tremendous opportunity to search areas from close up and to see those areas from an angle that was not possible from our previous viewing position on the west of the gorge; or even from above the gorge. If the structure is still not found after the climb to the top of the ridge, Cakmak, the Ray Anderson site and areas near there, as well as on the ridge side of the inside of the gorge, then we could descend to and reach at least 3 and possibly 4 objects that are of great interest to us. One is on the inside of the gorge on the ridge, another is below the "pie-shaped" area at the top of the gorge, another is on the Araxes glacier, also there appears to be a large "something" in avalanche canyon below the Abich. If that is accessible, I'll go there, if not, then I can at least photograph what there is with my 200 mm lens. Along the way we could study the hidden areas below the ice finger of the Abich 2 glacier.

The reason for the permission is because the Military complex and company of soldiers will see us as we try to climb the east ridge. If they see us, they will very quickly find a way to stop us. I don't wish to have our lives put in that potential position of jeopardy. With this in mind, we have 2 avenues to choose from. We could attempt to obtain permission from the authorities in Ahora, or go over their heads to the authorities in Agri, and subsequently to Ankara. We've already quickly and quietly made the proper contacts with the city and military officials in Ahora, and found them to be unreasonable. This was done right after we studied the photographs on the day following our descent of the mountain on the 18th.

Subsequently we've contacted the Vali, (Governor) of the Governing District of Agri with a hurriedly delivered letter of application from Murat's travel agency, and photo copies of our passports (Paul, Dave's, and mine). Since this is an attempt to do everything with permission of the authorities, I can get Murat's travel agency involved and I am quick to do so. The travel agency will do all it can legally to help us. This application sent to Agri by the agency was forwarded by the Vali, along with a letter from him, to the authorities in Ankara. We are waiting for a fax from those authorities in the hopes that the permission we seek to climb the east ridge will be granted. Upon receipt of a favorable response, we will climb immediately. If the response is unfavorable, then perhaps we'll come up with a new plan. The delay we've experienced while waiting for Ankara's reply is costly. It's been five days at last count. Paul could wait no longer. His time is up. He left today for Istanbul and eventually Auckland, New Zealand. I've got a week before I must be on my way. Dave also has just one week before he must return to the states. We want to move now and get this job finished.

August 24th

Nick Balaskas was born in Greece, Today, he is a citizen of Canada. He is also a laboratory technician in the physics and astronomy department of York University, Toronto, Canada. Yesterday, I met this man in Dogubeyazit, Turkey. The information he shares I think you'll find very interesting.

He relates that a year and a half ago while visiting Panajie, a Greek Orthodox monastery, in Bartow, Florida, about 50 miles south of Tampa, Florida. He met a fellow he remembers as "Fred" who told him that he had for a while lived in a monastery in eastern Turkey. In that monastery he saw artifacts and wood that he was told had come from the Noah's Ark. Is this possible? I asked Murat's brother, Siam about the possibility and he said: "There is a monastery in 'Mardin' a city south of Dogubeyazit in eastern Turkey. There is a Armenian population there". Looking back into history, the Armenians once had a monastery in the Ahora gorge that reportedly had artifacts from the Ark. That monastery was destroyed and covered by debris in the devastating "blowout" on Ararat in 1840. According to the report (The Ark A Reality),<sup>1</sup> All who were in the village near the monastery, and all who were in the monastery at the time of that disasterous event, were killed. The monestary was covered by the debris from the mountain during that disaster, and Turkey has yet to allow anyone to excavate the ruins. Is it logical that shortly after that event, Armenians from neighboring villages could have dug into the ruins and recovered the artifacts which were believed to have previously been found in the Ark? Is it possible those artifacts are now in the old Armenian monastery near Mardin?

There is no fax from Ankara – they say tomorrow.

August 25th

Its 6:25 pm and today has been one of negotiations. Mahmut assures me that an agreement with necessary authorities has been reached. We will act according to that agreement, with or without the fax. Our time is short. There is no more time to waste waiting for the fax. It's time to move. The problem we still have however, is that the agreement reached in today's negotiations does not include the east ridge.

August 26th

At 4:48 a.m., A man I'll call "Hollywood" (wants to be a movie star), Kannot, Dave, and I drove out of Dogubeyazit. Family and employment responsibilities had caused Mahmut and Ironman to stay behind. Due to the time constraint we decided not to wait for a time that was convenient for them, so we left without them and drove west and north toward Igdir, then we had traveled toward the mountain to embark on another "last climb." We are now in a 4-wheel drive vehicle which Hollywood (a Kurdish friend of several years) managed to borrow from a distant relative who happened to be visiting in Dogubeyazit. Our intent is to drive to lake Kop on the road which the military had constructed on Ararat during the years of conflict with the PKK. We're on that road a few minutes after 5 a.m.. At 6:15 a.m. we can drive no further. Large rocks in the road make the travel by even this 4 -wheel drive, impossible. The road, it seems, is in need of serious repair. Dave, Kannot, and I put on our packs and start walking. Hollywood turns the 4-wheel drive around and returns back down the road just traveled.

There is a bitter cold wind against our face and the way is long, strenuous, arduous, and we're climbing. After some time, perhaps a couple of hours, we reached the top of a rise where the travel toward lake Kop promised to be relatively flat. It's the plain, or plateau on the western side of the mountain where had we continued in the direction of lake Kop, we would have passed the area where Kurdish shepherds had treated us to cay (tea) a little more than a week ago. As it is now, I expect to walk over the plateau, pass lake Kop, climb up the steep and rocky hillside that follows, and then cross the few yards of relatively easy terrain which slopes down to a wide area of grass, rocky moraines, an extensive flat area of difficult rocky terrain. The rocky terrain is bisected by numerous glacial melt water streams at elevations of approximately 11,000 - 11,500 feet. Then we would get to the place where we can begin our long and slow climb to pass by last years camp at 12,000 feet, and continue up (and I mean up) the most difficult area of the mountain I've experienced till now. I expect that we'll be at the 14,000-foot camp by late afternoon. We would spend the night there. I've done this before. Why do it again?

This is the plan: Dave and I will do just what Paul and I did except, we will push on past the place the weather had stopped us on that previous climb, and walk over and pass behind the upper part of the Ray Anderson site and continue up to Cakmak peak at 16,500 feet. Then continue down and around the 16,000 foot peak to descend the east ridge (quickly) to a place we can descend (repell if necessary) into the gorge and investigate the 3 or 4 areas of interest. We would find a place in the gorge to spend another night. What we would find along the way would influence our decision on how long we would stay in the area. Our direction of departure would be over the same miserable terrain I left the mountain on the previous decent. That was the plan. However, as should by now be expected, the unexpected happened.

Kannot said something about wanting to stop and camp. We said "no, we go to the ice." [Although He was well aware of the plan, and since he was with me on the previous climb, Kannot certainly knew the way, in retrospect, perhaps I should have been more specific about the ice we go to. Then again, maybe not. He had his own plan]. A short time later, Kannot says (in the motion of hand and only the few English words he knows) we must go to the right of Kop and climb a ridge. "Why?" I ask. "Jandarma" he says. I argue that there are no Jandarma and we will not be stopped. "Jandarma" he says, and turns to the right. I thought maybe he had a phone call (cell phone) when I wasn't paying attention and maybe too there is something I don't know. Maybe our agreement with the authorities wasn't exactly solid as rock and he had found this out in by a phone call. But, if that is the case, then why wasn't I given this information? If the agreement had been breached, then Mahmut would have phoned Kannot and asked to speak with me. This had not happened, and Kannot was climbing fast away from us and going in a direction I was beginning to question.

We had little choice except to follow Kannot. He had a largest of my 2 packs on his back. That was his purpose on this trip, to carry the weight. I knew that even in this new direction we traveled then, that we could reach our destination. It would just be a longer and more difficult trip. The terrain ahead of us was steep and the rocks promised to be the kind that cause you to slide down a few steps for each few steps gained. They are loose and miserable to try and climb over. So what's new?

Then Kannot, who at 23 years of age and strong, is far ahead of Dave and me, turns further to the right and heads toward the ice cave - the "eye of the bird." I do not want to go there. That is entirely the wrong direction and takes us away from our objective. He has my pack and he moves quickly. He is way out in front and won't respond to as we hollar for him to stop. I need that pack and he is taking it in the wrong direction. Kannot has his mind set on the ice cave. We have to follow him; he has my stuff!

Something else is beginning to be of a concern. The cloud cover is heavy, and the weather is closing in. I realize that I am not able to see the ice cave much of the time and the upper part of the mountain in front of us is obscured in clouds. What I don't seem to realize however, is how close to vertical the ice and terrain is above the ice cave. The reason that is becoming important is because if Kannot continues in this direction, we'll have to climb the mountain to the ice cap from wherever Kannot decides to stop. We're on a time schedule and this new direction of travel is rapidly cutting into that schedule. We may not have time to retrace our steps and get back to the climb we had planned, and too, we may not be able to climb the ice or the rock above the ice cave in order to reach the ice cap.

Over rocks, sliding down rocks, falling down, getting back up and climbing over big and bigger rocks, splashing through a melt water stream that has found its place between, over, under and among the rocks. We're tired, aggravated, a little wet, and generally "ticked off." By the time Dave and I caught up with Kannot, He is resting on a ridge below the stretch of ice that leads to the ice cave. The pack he had been carrying was on the ground.

The argument (I'll call it a "discussion") that followed was one to behold. Kannot and I have a definite language problem but I endeavored to made myself completely understood as to how I felt about his direction of travel. Kannot says, "we camp here." I said : "No, we go to our camp." I pointed back to my left which was in the direction we had planned to climb. He said : "No, we camp here." In anger, I tossed my pack to the ground. Then I said (among other things) : "We can not camp here, we must go to the top." He said : "No -- can not." He also replied with a few more things in his language which I couldn't understand. Kannot, who had wanted to camp shortly after we had begun the work of this day, had made up his mind to take charge of the events of the day and camp right on this spot and go no further. As far as Dave and I were concerned, to agree with that decision was absolutely out of the question for the success of this mission.

Kannot, Dave and I had a further "discussion." When I decided the discussion was over, I picked up the pack that Kannot had been carrying, removed his sleeping gear, leaving it with him, and put the pack on my back. Then in my right hand I took my other pack, the smaller one which I had been carrying and said to Kannot: "You go back to Dogubeyazit." He was fired! "We camp there." I pointed up beyond the ice cave to the top. After I made that statement and looked up in the direction above and beyond the ice cave, which I then could see were two identical caves side by side looking to me like the top half of a double barrel shotgun pointing right at me, the heavy cloud cover gave way for a few seconds and the near vertical and the seemingly "impossible to climb" terrain above the ice cave came into view. Then the clouds took over again. Everything above us was obscured.

Dave and I had a decision to make. Do we go back down the more than a thousand feet we had just gained – (it took us nearly 4 hours to do that while we were trying to catch up to Kannot), do we climb the rocky ridge to the ice, put on crampons and walk up to the ice cave (or caves) and maybe camp there if a climb above the caves was out of the question, or do we attempt to climb the rocks well to the left of the ice cave till we reach the ice cap? Could we short cut the distance and the time to the 14,000 foot camp site by climbing this direction among all these rocks? Certainly not by the end of the day. Then, would we find a suitable place to camp if we chose this latter direction? Would the weather get us before we were ready for it?

I knew we had wasted a lot of this day, and the mountain yet above us was enshrouded in a dense cloud cover. What was clear was that if we descended to the plain that takes us to lake Kop, then we could no longer reach the 14,000-foot camp we had initially intended to reach before dark. Most likely we could not even reach the 12,000-foot camp. It was now early afternoon, over 6 hours had past since we had left the 4 - wheel drive truck. By choosing to descend and pick up on the planned route and continue past lake Kop, it would take the rest of the day and all of the morning tomorrow to get us from where we then were to a place on the ice just above the camp site at 14,000 feet. We would be exhausted and to go on the ice at that time could be suicide. There is also the fact that we now have more weight to carry. Kannot is no longer on the team. Could I even climb any higher, let alone to the 12,000 and 14,000-foot camps with this extra weight on my back? Another factor, the weather was closing in.

During the "discussion" with Kannot, he had said: "Go there," (pointing toward the ice below the ice cave along with everything above it which was now covered in clouds) "Crampons" and motions a left turn and climb-- "No problem" he said. I replied: "You're a problem - big problem." He countered with a like observation he had made of me, and I told him: "Go back to Dogubeyazit." Dave and I divided the weight of the three packs into two, and proceeded to climb a ridge in front of us toward the ice cave.

That was a bigger job then I ever thought it could be. Rocks of all sizes rolled when we stepped on them. That slowed us down all the while we needed to hurry to try and accomplish something in our favor before the end of the day. Discouragement was lingering in the background as we continued toward the ice cave without a clear cut plan. Then we reached a very deep vertical drop-off that completely changed our direction of travel. "No problem Kannot?" I said aloud--- "It's a big problem."---of coarse Kannot could not hear me. He had long since started back down the hill and was out of sight.

Kannot had lied to me about the Jandarma. There were none. Our way of travel according to the original plan would have been clear. In the middle of our "discussion," I had asked Kannot for his cell phone to call Mahmut. Kannot said: "No credit"- meaning there was no credit left on the phone. Dave's cell phone we couldn't get to work and I didn't have one. Then a few minutes later, Kannot was on the phone. Obviously he had "credit." I have no idea who he phoned on that call. Finally he did call Mahmut and was told to do everything I told him to do. However, Kannot and I had a communications problem. I was angry and I told him to go back to Dogubeyazit. I couldn't depend upon him and that kind of relationship is the last thing we need on a mountain. Kannot had indicated we would have no problem reaching the ice

below the ice cave, but there was a problem. It was inaccessible from this approach. The deep vertical drop-off that threatened to prevent Dave and I from climbing higher, extended as far in either direction that we could see.

Basically, Kannot did not know the terrain, and even though he was being paid for his help, he was too lazy to carry my expedition size pack to the previously planned 14,000-foot camp. He saw ice that was “low down” and decided he would take my pack there and then lay down and sleep a few days while Dave and I would try and figure out how to climb the near vertical ice and rocks above the ice cave to the ice cap and places beyond and back again.

Dave and I had our ropes and could have repelled off of the ridge, but to climb out of the “pit” that repel would have put us into, just didn’t seem to be an option. We turned to our left paralleling the vertical drop and continued to climb toward the far left of the glacial ice finger that surrounds the ice cave. It was at least in generally the correct direction toward the camp site at 14,000 feet. We crossed the glacial stream previously crossed when trying to catch Kannot, and we stopped long enough to fill our water bottles. We stumbled in the rocks and were blessed when we found a solid sandstone formation that provided us with good footing for at time that seemed all to short.

Dave and I reached the end of our uphill climb when a few raindrops promised that the rest of the day and probably the night would present us with a problem we really didn’t care to face. There was going to be a storm. With the weather closing in all around us, we talked it over, prayed, and decided we had better head back down and find a reasonable place to camp and wait out the storm. Still, we were hesitant in doing so. In trying not to lose too much altitude we initially traveled to our left in the general direction of lake Kop. We didn’t want to quit this attempt to complete our job, and delayed our descent as long as we could. There was some hope (though not much) that we could find a sheltered place to sit out the storm while we were still on this part of the mountain. Then the rain and sleet began to fall and we did begin our descent. It was downhill, and I mean downhill. That was a trip I’ll not forget anytime soon.

Considering all the descriptions of the rocky travels you have read that I have experienced so far in this book, take those combined experiences and multiply them by a factor of 10! Then you’ll appreciate what I’m about to share (Maybe I’m exaggerating a little, but not much). The mountain moved, and rocks of every size and description were on the mountain. Every step turned into an adventure and not the kind that I thought I had “signed up” for. Rock slides were our constant companion. Dave and I slipped, fell, slid, rolled, and simply crashed at least 20 or 30 times each on the way down on this treacherous and dangerous part of Ararat. It’s a part of the mountain that I’ve never heard of anyone trying to climb up or down. There was the rain and sleet, then too there was the wind. The wind was blowing I would guess about 40-50 mph and every time we’d try to stand - down we would go. Fortunately, the fall was usually backwards and I would land with my back pack protecting me from the jagged rocks, and I would slide till I stopped. Dave had similar good fortune. On at least two occasions I went head over heels and I experienced a tumble or two that should have left me with broken legs, ankles, and arms. But, by the Grace of God, I survived. By the Grace of God Dave and I both got through the ordeal with only minor bumps and bruises. I did pick up a new limp not unlike the one I “earned” on the previous climb a week and a half earlier. We “rolled” onto a fairly level place and tried to hide from the wind behind a row of rocks, and make some sort of a camp. We were beat-up and absolutely exhausted. Nine hours had passed since we had gotten out of the vehicle for what we had hoped and expected to be a profitable day. It was 3:15pm.

Dave Larson’s a nice guy. A Christian 1st, back in the states he owns a small business. He runs a modest picture frame business out of his home in California. Dave has a Masters degree, and is also a math and physics teacher as well as a part time preacher. Dave is a very knowledgeable - quiet spoken man, with a lot to say. He gives a lecture tour on invitation, to churches and other events mainly in the California area. He’s 44 years of age and will spend his 45th birthday while still in Turkey (I think this adventure was part of his “party”). He’s in good physical condition. One day I watched and counted him do pushups to the number of 80 (he didn’t realize I was paying attention). To his credit he cooks a mean chicken stew (out of a package) and carries a supply of metro (or some such Turkish brand) candy bars. I was exhausted; Dave did the cooking, and shared the results. I sure was glad he’s a nice guy. Chicken stew and candy bars; that was our supper! Despite the wind and the rain, it was a pleasant ending to a rather rough day.

August 27th

Last night we were treated to a wind that must have reached 60 mph; a drop in temperature and a rain that we weren’t really prepared for. I kept dry in my one man tent-which I used as a bivey sack since I couldn’t put up the tent in the wind. But Dave’s bibby sack turned out not to be as waterproof. His experience was a bit wetter than mine, yet he still laughed it off (at least I think he was laughing). The morning found us a bit chilled and ready to get off of that mountain. We had wasted a day of valuable time, and Dave and I each had a plane to catch. I believe that we could have completed our job and located the objects which we saw on my photographs and on Paul’s video, and maybe even found the Ark had Kannot had given us a bad steer that cost us a day of valuable time. But it happened. If you consider the 2 attempts on the previous climb, as well as give credit to the serious consideration of the third attempt which was decided against due to reasons previously mentioned, then this could possibly be considered the 4th attempt this year to reach the top of the Ray Anderson site, Cakmak peak and now the east ridge. Again I am faced with the questions: Was the opposition just too strong, or is it just not the right time for a discovery? I choose to believe that the time wasn’t right. The opposition is not too strong. God’s in charge. He must be, He kept us alive.

At 8:15 a.m. we started another descent. From this part of the mountain, the remaining descent wasn't too difficult, it was just a walk down a very long, steep, and rocky hill. We did manage to find a couple of boulder fields to cross, I guess we just couldn't pass up those opportunities. But we also found the lake Kop road and that was a relief. Dave's cell phone worked just once, that's all we needed. He got a hold of a friend of ours in the city, and Dave told him to send someone to find us. That was at 12:30 pm and by 2pm Mahmut with Hollywood driving had reached us as we walked on the lake Kop road. They somehow managed it in a 2-wheel drive car. Dave and I were on our way back to Dogubeyazit. Kannot was nowhere to be seen and hadn't been seen.

August 28th

The status of things are thus; The expedition is over, for now. Dave and I have to return to our responsibilities in the states. Now what about Kannot? Why did Kannot act this way? Why was he, or why did it seem that he was instrumental in the failure in this climb? Here's a thought; In the book of Daniel chapter 10 verse 13, the answer to Daniel's prayer was delivered by an angel, but that answer was delayed 21 days because of a battle between the angel and the "Prince of Persia"; a fallen and powerful member of Satan's angelic force. The "Prince of Persia" is still in Satan's force. Mount Ararat can be considered on or within the border of Persia. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians (chapter 6 verse 12) "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Could this have been the case with the fellow I refer to as Kannot? I think it could have been. It's reasonable to think that Satan and his force would not want the Ark revealed. Then again, perhaps the time was not right.

I followed up on the information that Nick Balaskas gave me on August 24th. The information I refer to is in reference to the monastery in the S.E. Turkey that is supposed to have wood and artifacts from Noah's Ark. Through phone calls from Mahmut and the people who work in Murat's travel agency to a few selected people in and around the city of Mardin, we learned that there is indeed such a monastery. It's an old Armenian monastery in the town of Moralkin. It's either named the "Moralkin Monastery" or "Zaceran Monastery." We would not have the time to search for and visit this monastery, and I guess at this time that is just as well. The monastery apparently is not open. It is located in an area near the Iran border and the military has determined that entry to this area is forbidden! Is it the prince of Persia- again?

On August 29th, Dave and I left Murat Camping on our individual journeys back to the states. Journeys that include the usual traffic stops, passport checks and occasional automobile searches by the police and the army. We, as every other traveler, would be subject to the security measures imposed by the airline on which we traveled. That airline would bring us back to the United States and the end of this phase of our journey by August 31st. One month to the day since I left the states on this second trip of the year, the 19th since my 1st trip in 1984. Another "vacation" is over. This time I didn't come back completely empty-I have a limp. It's a temporary thing.

It is now January 10th, 2001. Last night I spoke by phone with Nick Balaskas. He is the Canadian who visited me in Turkey and shared the information of the photographs of the Ark as seen in the high office of the United States government in the 1960's or 70's. You will recall this from the information presented on the previous pages of this report, and recorded on August 24th. I do not know if that information is accurate or not. I have learned that after Nick and I parted company in Turkey, he went to what he calls the "Turabdin" region of Turkey and investigated the possibility to any truth of a monastery in the region that might contain wood from the Ark. The results of his research, although not conclusive, give him reason to believe that there is such a place. Based on what I had learned on August 28th, there is such a place. On his journey, Nick found a Christian community (Armenian) that still speaks the Aramaic Language. It was indicated to him by these people that the wood does exist.

Then there is this: Some time ago, I spoke (in person) with another man who at present, happens to be in Canada. This fellow has family in northern Europe., and he is living temporarily in Montreal. Because of some fear on the part of the individual, he asked me not to reveal his name or any details about him. I know this puts some doubt on the story I'm about to share, but that's all I've got, and that being the case, I wouldn't share even this, except to make a point. I was told by the man in Montreal, that his uncle, now deceased, had been an officer in the US air force during the 1960's. He was a pilot. He was also a man who spoke Russian fluently and because of this he was invited into the offices of the higher levels of the US government. Again, to honor the man in Montreal's request, I will not mention any names. I admit that there are some things in the story that are somewhat unclear, and as I write this, I am also in the process of trying to get the facts. Granted, it has the undertones of some sort of a "spy" story, but that may not be the case.

It is because of the desire for secrecy concerning the officer's family members, and also the timing of this writing, that I will not be able to share all of what I hope to learn on the pages of this report. According to what I was told, the officer saw the Ark from an aircraft as he flew around Ararat. The officer, had told his nephew (the man I spoke with) that a small part of the Ark was visible, while the rest of it appeared to be buried. It was unclear if it was buried in ice or in rock, but the nephew thinks the uncle meant it was in ice. It appeared to the uncle (officer) to be in a place that could only be seen from above, as from an aircraft, and that it was located in a place that would be "impossible" to reach by climbing. Through various discussions of the event, I was told that photographs were taken and the information was given to authorities in the offices of the higher levels of the US government. Is the story true? Maybe. Maybe not. However, It is one of several stories that has in some way involved some branch of the military, or the US government. Here's the point:

When the facts are in, I'm sure we'll find the US government knows all about the location of the object on Ararat which could well be the Ark. If so, then they have purposely suppressed the information. There could be a couple of reasons for this action. One could be to protect their military interests and investments in Turkey. A finding such as the Ark would no doubt bring Christians, Jews, and Moslems from around the world to see this truth. The discovery of tremendous historical and scientific implications could bring about a religious revival, and in Turkey, any increase in the Islamic party because of the discovery would possibly threaten the political arm of government as well as the military control over the country. It serves the interests of the governments to keep the information suppressed.

There is also the fact that educational institutions of the world would be threatened. In the battle of Creationism vs. evolution, consider if you will - the plight of the scientist; the teacher of "scientific" thought, and those whom he has influenced. Henry and John Morris say: "The evolutionary philosophy thoroughly dominates the curricula and faculties of secular colleges and universities today, as well as the schools of the large religious denominations. It is not well known, however, that this philosophy has also had considerable effect on many evangelical Christian colleges." 2 "It is bad enough for theological `liberals' to embrace evolutionism, but absolutely inexcusable for those who profess to believe the Bible and to follow Christ." 3 The key word here is "inexcusable."

I sat in church on two occasions this past year when I myself heard a preacher speak of long ages and in so doing, indicated evolution with some rationale for his belief. I confronted the preacher on each of the two occasions by letter, and what I thought to be a reasonable approach to a future discussion. Although I was complimented on what the pastor referred to as "a scholarly work" on my first contact, on the second I was ignored. I no longer attend that church, but that's not the point; the point is he is a product of what he has been taught, and I'm of the belief that what he, and others with a similar background and belief teach, is a compromise, and not the truth. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20).

The Apostle Paul said "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 4:3,4; & 3:7) So, The question I have is; "What were you taught in school?" I believe it is important that you seriously entertain that question. Consider this:

Drs. Henry and John Morris of the Institute for Creation Research in their exhaustive three volume set "The Modern Creation Trilogy," discuss the subject of Creation verses evolution and it's effect on society in the greatest detail one might ever want to read. I will not attempt to discuss the subject except to quote the question, and the answers. "'Did the very first one-celled organism evolve naturalistically from non-living chemical molecules, or was life created supernaturally? 4.

The simplest one-cell organism contains over 200 interrelated parts. To function, they must be perfectly integrated. Life is organization of the parts. The probability of the correct alignment of parts is one in 10 to the 375th. The idea that the simplest of organisms could be arranged by chance is absurd. Consider the human cerebral cortex. It contains over 10 billion cells all arranged in order. By chance? Not a chance. Disorder never spontaneously turns into order. Organization requires an organizer; A Creator. 5. Consider the first and second Laws of Thermodynamics. The first law says: "Energy can be transferred from one place to another, or transformed from one form to another, but it cannot be created nor destroyed." 6 That's because the creation is finished. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him." 7. The second law says: "The total quantity of energy in the universe is constant, but the quantity of available energy is decreasing." 8 This means that disorganization, or entropy increases and an evolutionary theory would require just the opposite; an autoorganization. It doesn't happen.

The Laws of Thermodynamics, open and closed systems, entropy, probabilities, Biogenetic Law, cause and effect, etc. etc. is discussed in scholarly detail in particularly volume 2 of the trilogy. The bottom line is that although there can be some limited environmentally influenced horizontal movement within a kind, evolution is not possible. An intelligence is needed to organize the molecules into life. The scientific facts show there was a plan, therefore there was a planner; a Creator. You are not here as the result of an accident. There is a purpose. You and I have a purpose. The truth is evidenced in true science, and written for us in God's Word. This truth is not what we are taught in a secular university! We are taught a lie! I think it is this fact that drives me.

The Scripture says: "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 9. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the Ark, And knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." 10 That's the Rapture. Are you ready?

It'll be business as usual, then without warning, people disappear, and "as the days of Noah were," -- so shall it be. God said then, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and I will destroy them with the earth." "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." He provided a way. What would you have paid to get passage on that boat? Think about it.

He provides a way now: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM should not perish, but have EVERLASTING LIFE." 11 What cost is eternal life? The price for eternal life has been paid, for those who choose to accept it.

Those of us who search for the truth realize the re-discovery of Noah's Ark could be seen as a warning, perhaps a final warning of things to come. Scripture does not tell us the Ark will be revealed before the Rapture. If He allows this to happen, then possibly a few people will be wise enough to pay attention, and choose to accept the gift. "For BY GRACE are ye saved THROUGH FAITH; and that NOT OF YOURSELVES: it is a GIFT of God: NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast." 12.

#### A BRIEF UPDATE ON THE SEARCH FROM MY PERSPECTIVE.

Since my earlier entries into this collection of experiences by many who are in the search for truth, I have climbed on Ararat several times. The record of those climbs will be published in what is hopefully the reasonably near future. I don't have that record with me as I write this, but I trust what I will say here will provide some interest, and surely make one aware of some of the dangers of the mountain. I'll recap here just the past three years events as I remember them. In this report I will not include the names of the Kurdish and the Turkish climbers. The reason is because of their safety should this publication reach the hands of anyone who would take it upon themselves to cause them or their families harm.

Dave Larsen was with me in 2003. As I recall, we had a team of four climbers, four horsemen and four horses. We also had with us two of the grandsons of Abas, the man who took Ed Davis to the location of the Ark in 1943. We climbed on the east side of the mountain, and I'm not sure if the Abas brothers really wanted us to find the right location. After about 3 days climb they pointed us toward a general direction and said they had never seen the structure, and their father, now diseased had made them promise they wouldn't go there. They would obey their father, and wouldn't go any further.

We continued to find our way across the rocks and attempted to find where the structure was resting and probably mostly buried, but The Kurdish climbers were connected to the world below by cell phone, and we got a phone call from the military demanding that we get out of the area. The Kurds obeyed, and what were Dave and I to do? Well, the Kurdish men carried most of my luggage, and all the camping gear. We left the mountain.

Were we in the right area? A year earlier I climbed the into the same general area, and according to one man who was with me, his father had been chased out of the area 50 years earlier by the Turkish military, and this was the "Ark Area" The soldier had said that to the man's father. Exactly where the Ark area happened to be wasn't exactly clear, but it seemed to be in the east, or north east on the mountain.

The year 2004 has its moments too. Russ Cook from Australia teamed up with me and we climbed the mountain twice. The 1st climb was up the east ridge above the Ahora Gorge to an elevation of approximately 15,500 feet. We intended to search a canyon that Russ thought looked like the canyon described by Ed Davis from what he had recalled of the 1943 climb.. We reached the canyon about the time thunder clouds sent its lightning down on the mountain. Along with it came a sleet storm. We tossed our metal ice axes and crampons to a rock formation a distance away, then hid among other rocks while trying not to slide down the mountain. After the storm we gathered the Ice Axes, and crampons and slowly made our way down to camp about 2,000 feet below us. That was interesting to say the least. We were descending a steep and rugged area on rocks covered by a couple inches of sleet and snow. It was slippery, and the descent went slowly into the darkness of the night. We knew the general direction of our camp, and well before we reached it, two of our Kurdish teammates had come up to find us. They were successful.

The following morning we decided to find a place to drop down into the gorge from high on the east ridge. Eventually we did, and Russ (a good man with a rope) and I set up a rappel down a vertical rock face for about 70 feet, then it was a scramble and slid and went into the Gorge low down at about 12,000 feet. The Kurdish teammates had never rappelled before and it was fun watching them have that experience. Once in the gorge, Russ and one of the Kurdish climbers set up camp while I and 2 Kurdish climbers proceeded to hike up the east side of the inside of the Gorge. What I didn't take into account was that there are a number of rock slides and avalanches into the gorge when the warm air allows the ice to melt. The rocks loosen up and fall into the canyon. I had sent the two young Kurdish men on ahead because they are much faster than I am, and told them that I would be along as I was able. I had given them my digital camera to take pictures of what looked like a structure and return to me if I hadn't caught up by then.

I was in the middle of an obvious rock slide area when I heard a tremendous roar high off to my left. I looked up and what I saw immediately got my attention. A side of the mountain had let loose, and "all the rocks in the world" were coming straight at me -- and they were almost here. I had nowhere to go. I was in an open area on a steep grassy slope with nothing to hide behind. The only big rock which I could have hide behind was about 20 yard ahead of me. I knew I would not get that far. A smaller rock, or one that was imbedded in the earth with about 2 feet of it exposed above the ground, and that portion being about as wide as my shoulders was about a 3 second move up the hill from me. That is about all the time I had. The decision was immediate and that is the direction I went. It was a difficult up hill move as I was

on a steep hillside, and I tried to dive to the rock, but ended up short and crawled and clawed my way up to hit. I was prone behind it and laying on my belly and face, and as soon as I reached the rock, so did the avalanche.

Rocks, and boulders of every imaginable size fell from the rocky heights above and landed all around me. I was right in the middle of an avalanche and the roar was deafening. Boulders bounced past and over me and down the side of the mountain to the heart of the gorge landing below me on the Black Glacier. Rocks hit near my left side so close that at least a couple hit my jacket sleeve, Rocks hit to the right of me so close the dirt from the impact sprayed over me. They showered down from above and hit the rock I was laying behind. It seemed every couple of seconds that happened. They bounced in front of me and just behind me missing my legs and feet by inches. It continued for a minute or more. Russ, who was a distance down the mountain was so impressed by the size and duration of the avalanche that he had the notion and time to pick up his video camera and get nearly a minute of the avalanche on tape. He knew we were somewhere up there, but wasn't sure where.

Then it there was a pause in the rock fall for a matter of 3 or 4 seconds. I looked up only to see what I thought was the biggest rock on the mountain, and it was coming my way. I saw it bounce and the trajectory of the bounce looked to me that the next landing was bound to be right on top of me. If that would happen there would be body parts for miles.

I had no time to move. I prayed, I mean I had been praying constantly up to then But now I really prayed. "JESUS I NEED YOU NOW!" I put my arms over my head (they had been there most of the time any way, but now I was really serious. "ANGELS COVER ME – COVER ME WITH YOUR WINGS -- I NEED ANGELS WINGS NOW! GOD I NEED THEM NOW! JESUS – JESUS NOW!!!"

The massive boulder hit directly on top of the little outcropping I was laying behind. It hit little more than a foot above my head and glanced just over me landing again a few feet below my feet. The ground shook – and so did I. I laid there, I couldn't move, but I realized I was doing something I never do. I was trembling. Then, slowly I realized it was over, and I had been spared. I was not hurt. Certainly God had saved my life on that mountain that day.

I checked my arms and legs to see if they were ok. They were. Then I noticed my right index finger from the middle joint down to the finger nail was bleeding. A splinter had hit me. There was no pain, only blood trickling from a small cut. That was my only wound. I laid there for a few seconds and just looked at my finger. I think I was suffering from a minor case of shock. Then it seemed to dawn on me little by little until I seemed to realize that I had been given a message. I've been reminded of it ever since, and I'm reminded of it now, and every time I touch that finger – usually with the thumb on the same hand, that God did save my life. That I know for sure.

When all that was happening, the two Kurdish guys who were now a ways ahead of me heard the avalanche and turned to witness the event which they were certain had killed me. When the rocks stopped falling, they dropped down on the Black Glacier and were running to get to a place just below my position with the intent to climb reach me – hoping that somehow I had survived. One of the guys stepped on a soft spot in the ice and it gave way opening up to a large hole which took him nearly to his death. He fell in to his shoulders and somehow the walking sticks he had were in such a position jammed in to the ice that they prevented him from falling completely in what had become an open crevasse.. He looked down and he saw a raging river beneath him. Had he fallen into that river it would have taken him beneath the ice, and to his death. He couldn't move. There was nothing to grab onto to pull himself up and out of the crevasse. He was slipping down when the hand of the other Kurd grabbed his jacket by the collar behind him, and the strong man pulled him out of the grasp of certain death.

I didn't know that was going on at the time. It was all I could do to move out from behind that rock, and gather enough sense to realize I had better get out of there and call it a day. I tried to walk, but slipped and landed on my back side and slide down the steep slope till I reached an area that dropped to the gully at the edge of the moraine and ice of the Black Glacier. Then I made my way back down toward the camp. Russ and the Kurdish man at camp saw me, relieved that I was alive they met me as I reached the camp. I then sat down, still a bit shaken, and said a few words into a microphone while Russ had me on camera. Then I saw the 2 Kurdish climbers coming toward the camp across the black ice and Moraine. When they reached me they realized I was ok, and then they shared the experience they had just survived. My Kurdish friend who had nearly lost his life got emotional, I just held him and we prayed and thanked the Lord God that we were still alive and in one piece.

After a few minutes we decided to pack up and move the camp further down the gorge and away from any rock avalanche threat. We did so, and then after a good nights rest, we left the mountain.

Russ and I did climb up the gorge again a few days later. We climbed the west side of the Gorge till we got to the area of the rock slides, and then up the middle of the Black Glacier keeping away from the sides of the gorge where the majority of the rock would fall if another avalanche would occur. Watching the ice for dangerous areas, we roped up and climbed as high as we could in order to get a good look at the black, and Araxes Glacier as well as the Abich Glaciers. When we got about as high as we could go before dark, the weather began to close in on us, and we decided it best to return to camp. The next day we left the mountain again.

This year 2005 Dave Larsen joined me again and we climbed from the south side and around the east side to the northeast and we searched everywhere we were able to reach. Dave and a Turkish mountainier rappelled onto a glacier from a place above and at an elevation of around 14,000 feet. They the crossed a glacier and investigated a hole in the ice which turned out to be an ice cave. I watched from a ridge above. One of our Kurdish climbers was still eating breakfast when we started our climb, and he was to carry some of my gear up after me. Included were my crampons. He got sick on his climb and didn't reach me. No crampons, no work on the ice for me.

The Turkish climber with Dave descended into the ice cave which was 50 or more feet deep, and Dave had him on belay. They were still holding on to the thought that the Ark may have been in there, but no wood was found. They left the area and descended down the glacier while I walked down the ridge above them. A few falling rocks did get their attention especially as one large boulder bounded by them only a few feet away. It is a dangerous mountain ; Agri-Dagh – “Mountain of Pain.”

Dave returned to the states after that climb, and I climbed again. I carefully reached a point beyond where Russ and I had been a year earlier. Again, I could distinguish only ice and rocks and was not able to find a structure.

This past year I spent 12 days and nights on the mountain. I had decided before the climb that this would certainly be my last year. However, after my 2nd climb of the year, I was given another clue by a Kurdish man from the village. Do I think it is something to be serious about? I'll see when next year rolls around.

So, what does this all mean to me? It means I believe the Ark is on the mountain. If so, why hasn't it been verified? By what you've read in these pages, you can understand that it is presently difficult to even get to the mountain. Beyond that, I can only guess that the time hasn't been right. There is other evidence not mentioned here that leads me to believe the time for the Ark to be revealed will be soon.

Will there be other expeditions? Absolutely! Why? It's a search for truth. Pilate said to Jesus, as recorded in John 18:37-38, "Art Thou a King, then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Pilate saith unto him, "What is truth?"

If a huge, partially petrified, frozen wooden structure, resembling a barge or ship with cages built inside, were found in the ice and rocks high on a mountain, what would you think? Jesus said, as recorded in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

We have all heard so many times that the new millennium, the approaching turn of the century, signals the return of Christ. Is this true? Is the Ark of Noah a biblical type of the Ark of salvation through Jesus Christ? When will Christ return? From Matthew 24:36-39:

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days of Noah were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

The majority of the people will not expect the discovery of the ark. I would guess that most of the people do not believe in its existence now or probably even in the past. If the Ark is revealed, could that be a warning—maybe a final warning that Jesus Christ is on his way? Most people also would not expect that. Again, as I hate to say it, most people may believe very little about Jesus, and the fact that he will return as he promised. I believe it will happen. When? "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt 24:37) It could be a day like today. It will be "business as usual" and he won't be expected. Will the Ark be discovered first? Whether or not this is to be the case, I believe we have a responsibility, and that responsibility is in part, to give reason for, and to share with the best of our ability, what we believe is the truth—To God be the Glory!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Ark, A Reality?* by Richard Bright, Ranger Associates, 1989. Reprinting and updating by New Leaf Press, 1995. (Title pending)

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