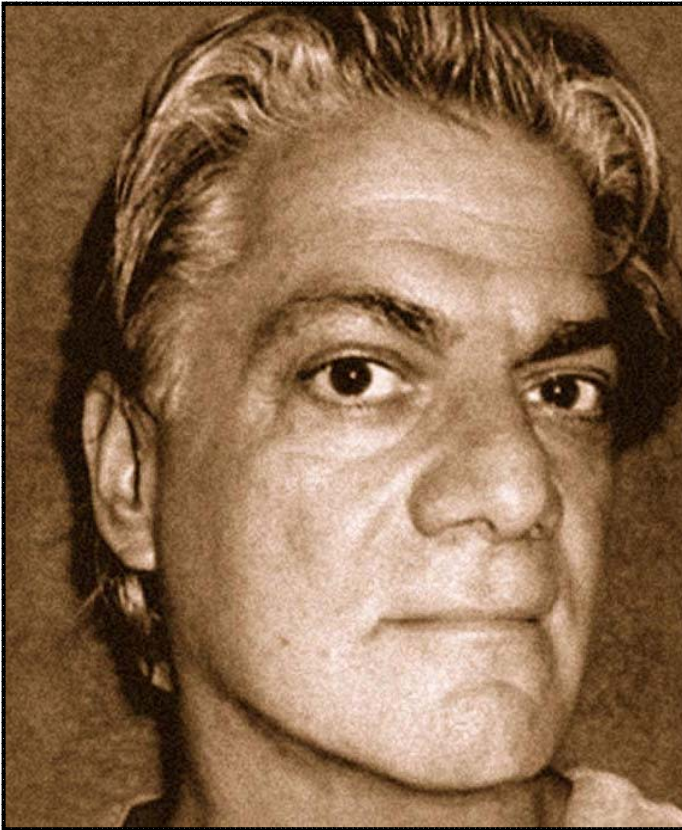


In a slightly different form, this chapter was the cover story for the British magazine Fortean Times (March, 1999). In the early 1990s, Simmons coproduced a segment of NBC's "Unsolved Mysteries" that included original aerial footage of Ararat, statements from eyewitness Ed Davis and satellite imaging specialist George Stephen, III. Robin Everett Simmons is an artist, writer and filmmaker. You may contact him at FindTheArk@aol.com.

Chapter 28

1989-1990 Robin Simmons



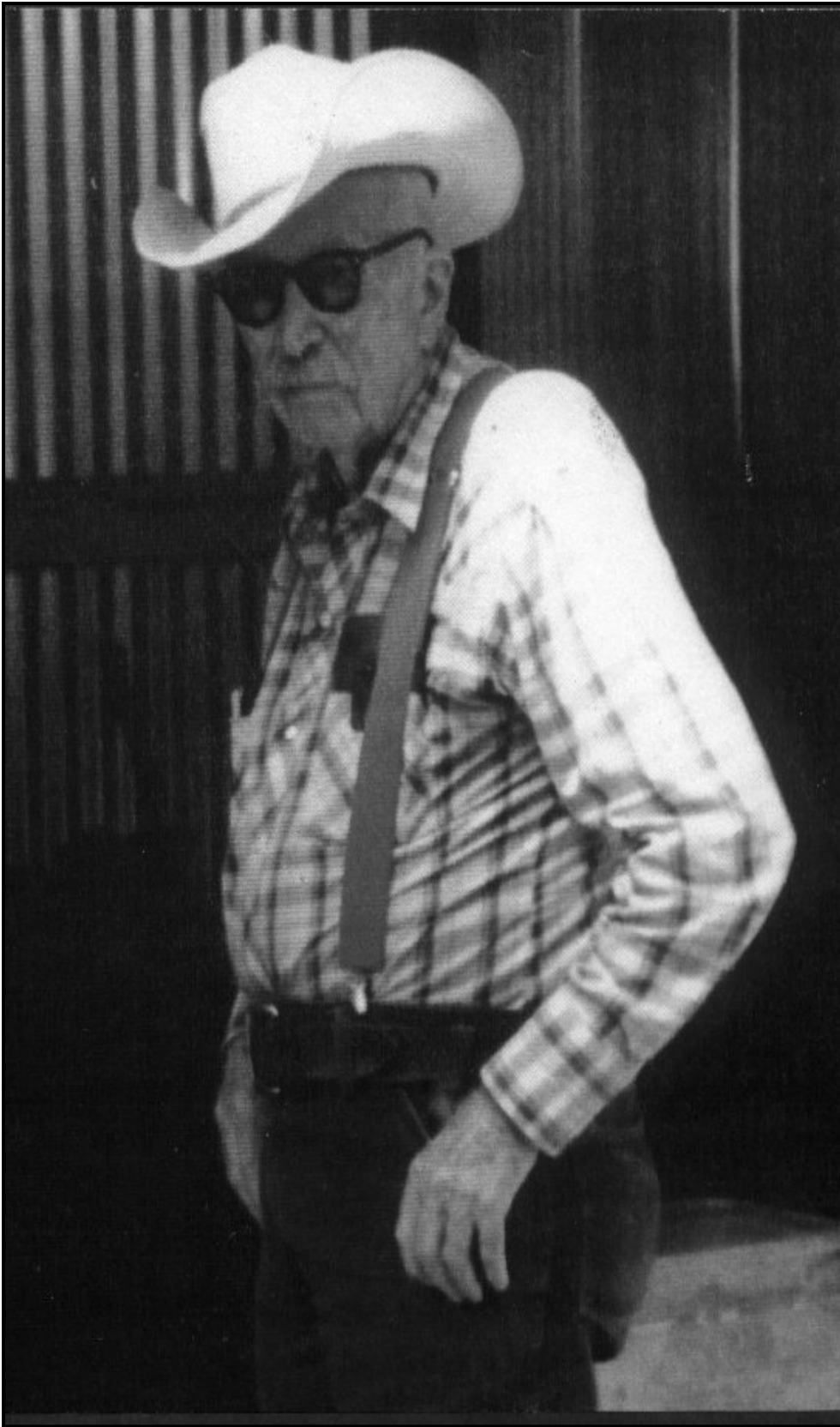
Robin Simmons with Helicopter Pilot Yuri Poskrebyshch 1990
Courtesy of Robin Simmons. Photo by George Adams

The story of a cataclysmic flood and a lone family that survives in a hand-made boat is one of the oldest stories of our global culture. Hundreds of similar but apparently independent versions exist all over the planet. Is it possible that this epic myth is based on fact? Even more fantastic, could the great Ark of Noah be preserved, right now, in the icy reaches of Mount Ararat?

There's a well-known account of ten-year-old Georgie Hagopian, who saw Noah's Ark while climbing Ararat with his uncle in 1904. The date isn't precise but this was around the time my grandfather was in the region and heard convincing stories of the ark, preserved in ice and snow, still occasionally visible.

My grandfather died in 1980, aged 106. As a boy, I listened to his adventures as a doctor in eastern Turkey and Russia between 1904 and 1910. He worked in the very shadow of Greater Ararat—the legendary biblical landing place of Noah's ship. My grandfather said some of the Kurds and Armenians he treated confided that the great Ark was preserved on Ararat. They said, it's "high on the northern side, a little below the saddle" of the twin-peaked dormant volcano. He showed me the spot on an old photograph of Ararat. He said the oldest place names of that area preserve antique meanings that translate as "Noah's Village," "First Vineyard," "House of Shem" (Noah's son), "First Market Town" and "Place of First Descent" and so on. Most of these names, he thought, are no longer in general use but are very specific in old-style Armenian.

My grandfather's story so impressed me that over the years I noted any material pertaining to this enduring enigma. It seems as if, every couple of years, someone claims a new Noah's Ark discovery in a book, documentary or TV special. Some are laughably amateurish; others are clumsy hoaxes.



Ed Davis
Photo by Robin Simmons

Even supermarket tabloids regularly exploit this mystery. Before long, I had a veritable flood of questionable and unverifiable data. There were arks everywhere – all over Ararat as well as boat-shaped earthen impressions in nearby lower elevations and many more in the pass between Greater and Lesser Ararat.

The Koran speaks of the Ark landing on Al Cudi; there's a mountain by that name 200 miles south of Ararat. (Some researchers suggest that the Arabic root for Cudi mean "the highest" and refers to the upper part of Greater Ararat.) Kuh e Alvand, yet another "Ararat" is in Iran. It has a long tradition among locals as the ark's landing place. More contentious sites exist in other countries and continents. I spoke to several living eyewitnesses—like Georgie—who claimed to have seen the Ark of Noah, or big parts of it, on Ararat.

And there's the tale of a months-long expedition by Czar Nicholas' soldiers, during which the Ark was supposedly entered and photographed. It's location was allegedly mapped somewhere in the rugged, canyon-riddled upper regions on the "Armenian side." This expedition was just prior to the Bolshevik Revolution during which, it is said, many of the Czar's soldiers were hunted down and slaughtered and the Ark photos, maps and artifacts disappeared. Relatives of the few soldiers who survived have family records that seem to confirm the authenticity of the expedition.

A recent story hints that some of Czar Nicholas' personal items may have been transferred from their secret vaults in Moscow and Leningrad to the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in California. The SRI is a federally funded 'institute' that serves the intelligence community. Could the cache of alleged transferred items include documents pertaining to the Czar's Ararat expedition?

Then I met the late Ed Davis, an octogenarian and breeder of prized Nubian goats in the American southwest. His story of seeing the Ark has been circulated widely among Ark hunters and dismissed by many as the pipe dream of an old man with a big imagination and a faulty memory. I

spent a day talking with this smart and kindly gentleman. This is a condensed version of what he said:

Something happened to me in '43 that's haunted me all my life... I'm in the 363rd Army Corps of Engineers working out of a base in Hamadan (ancient Ekbatan), Iran. We're building a Way Station into Russia from Turkey. A supply route. My driver's a young man named Badi Abas. One day while we're at a quarry site loading rock, he points to a distant peak that's sometimes visible and says, "Agri Dagh, my home."

We can see it clearly on the horizon with its year-round snowcap. "Mt. Ararat, that's where the Ark landed?" I say. He nods.

"My grandfather knows where it is and has gone up there," he says matter-of-factly. I thought, Boy would I like to see that...

One day in July, his grandfather, Abas-Abas, visits our base and tells Badi the ice on Ararat is melting to where you can see part of the ark. Badi tells me if I want to see it they will take me there. I had done a favor for their village that put me in good stead with the Abas family. In fact, they now have water, where before they had to walk two miles to get it...

So I go to my commanding officer and ask for a leave. He says, "It's dangerous, you'll get killed." I

tell him how much I want to go. He says, "I can give you R&R in Tehran and you could take the long way." I stock up on extra gasoline, oil and tires.

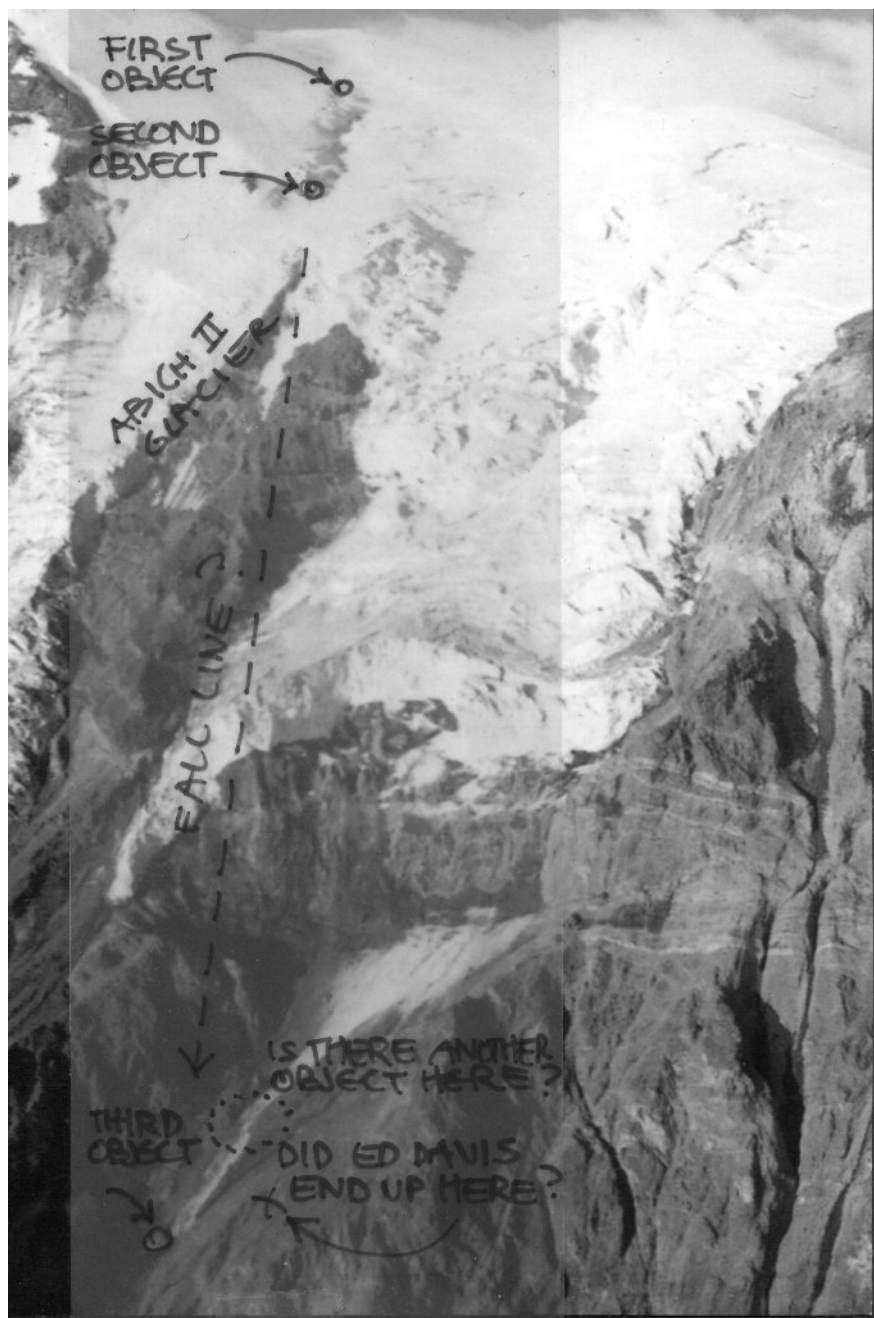
A few days later, we get up early and Badi Abas and I drive down along the border as far as Qazvin until we get to his little village. This was the settlement I had helped them get water. We spend the night there...

At dawn the next day, we reach the foothills of Ararat and arrive at another primitive village. Abas tells me the name of the village means "Where Noah Planted The Vine." I see grapevines so big at their trunk you can't reach around them. Very, very old.

Abas says they have a cave filled with artifacts that came from the ark. They find them strewn in a canyon below the ark, collect them to keep from outsiders who, they think, would profane them. It's all sacred to them. That night, they show me the artifacts. Oil lamps, clay vats, old style tools, things like that. I see a cage-like door, maybe thirty by forty inches, made of woven branches. It's hard as stone, looks petrified. It has a hand-carved lock or latch on it. I could even see the wood grain.

We sleep. At first light, we put on mountain clothes and they bring up a string of horses. I leave with seven male members of the Abas family and we ride—seems like an awful long time.

Finally we come to a hidden cave deep in the canyons of Greater Ararat. They say it's where T. E.



A View of Upper Ahora Gorge, the Summit, Saddle, and Abich II as well as the Relative Positions of Three Possible Ark-like Objects.

Photo by Robin Simmons 1990

Lawrence (of Arabia) hid when he was doing reconnaissance. There's a huge pot of hot food waiting for us. There's fungus there that glows in the dark. And they say Lawrence put it on his face to convince the Kurds he was a god and get them to join him in his war against the Turks.

We eat and then climb back on our horses and continue riding higher on the narrow trail. They tell me we're going through the "Back Door." It's a secret route used by smugglers or bandits.

Along the way, they point out a pair of human legs sticking out of the ice and tell me he shouldn't have been up there. I believe them.

I don't know how the horses are able to follow the route. In some places you can tell we were riding along a high cliff but most of the time it's hard to see because of the rain and fog. A freezing wind is blowing and it feels like it's going right through me. Soon, Abas tells me to be quiet because we're at a place where Russian sentries, stationed below, might hear us.

We ride in silence for the rest of the day. Sometimes they'd communicate in their own private code by short whistles.

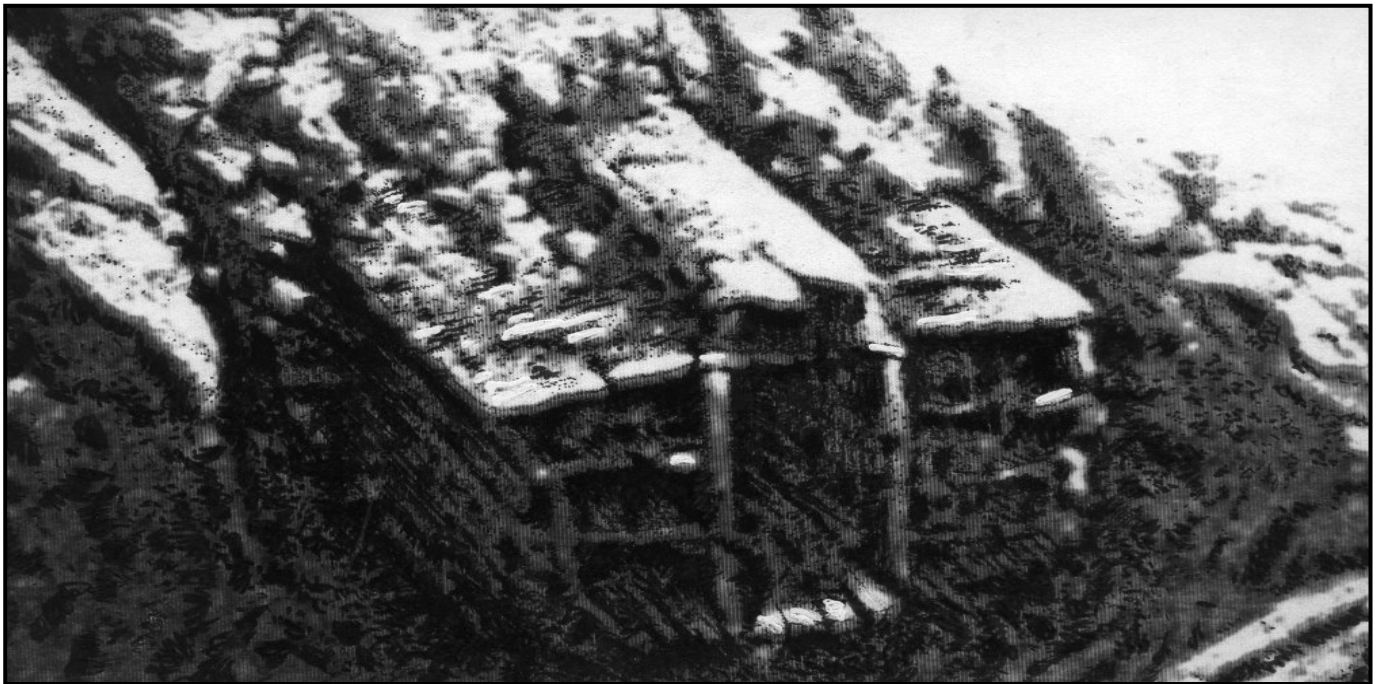
Eventually we run out of trail. Someone from the Abas family is waiting for us, takes our horses and we are roped together and climb on foot much higher to another cave. I can't tell where we are. The rain never lets up...

After three days of climbing we come to the last cave. Inside, there's strange writing, it looked beautiful and old, on the rock walls and a kind of natural rock bed or outcropping near the back of the cavern. Another pot of food is waiting for us. Everything's prepared for my visit by the Abas family. It rains hard all night.

The next morning we get up and wait. The rain lets up and we walk along a narrow trail behind a dangerous outcropping called "Doomsday Rock." I guess it's called that because it's a place you could easily die and many have. Some not of their own doing. We doubled back around behind the imposing rock formation and come to a ledge. We are enveloped by fog.

Suddenly the fog lifts and the sun breaks through a hole in the clouds. It's a very mystical sight as the light shimmers on the wet canyon. My Moslem friends pray to Allah. They speak quietly and are very subdued...

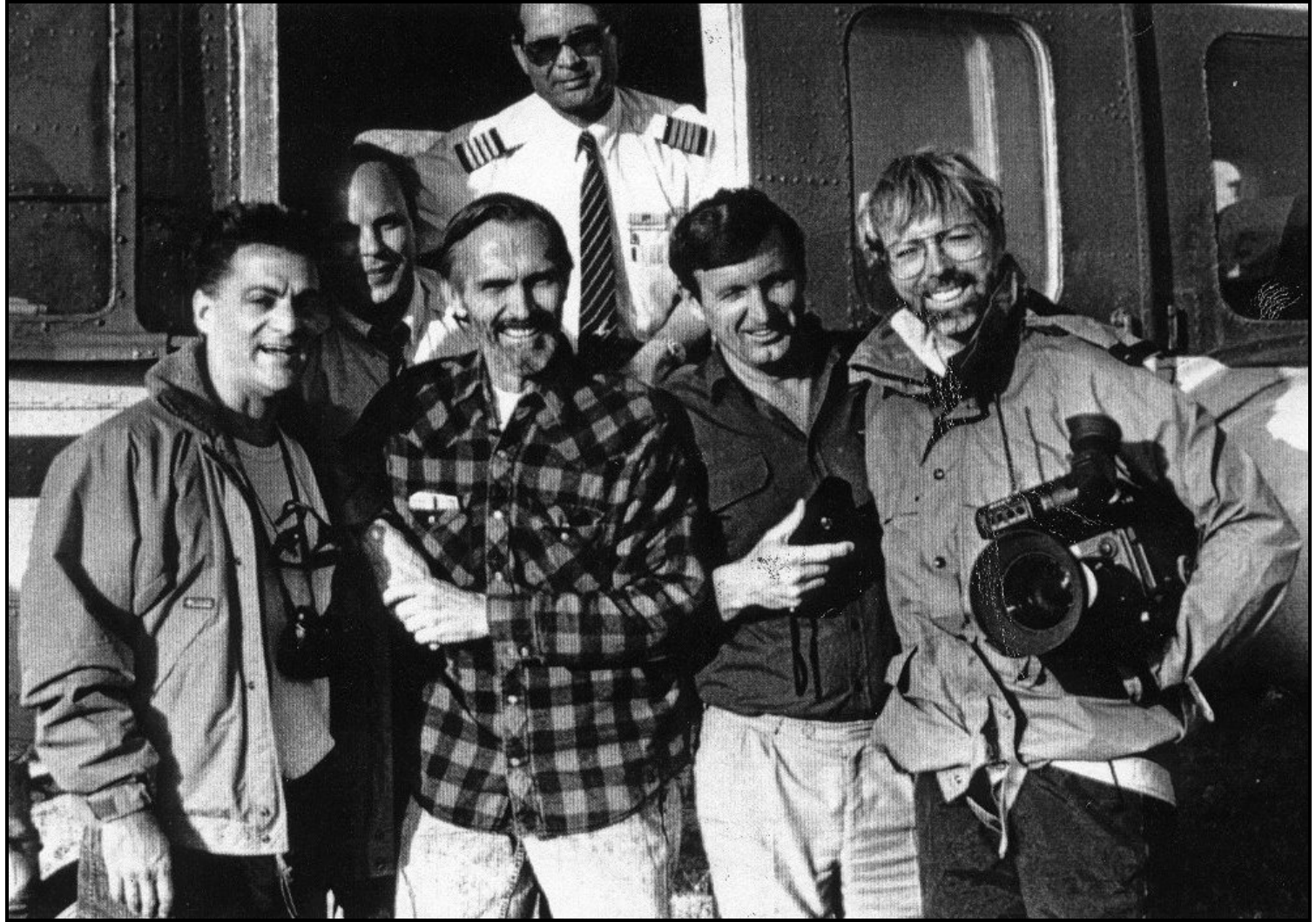
After they finish praying, Badi Abas points down into a kind of horseshoe¹ crevasse and says, "That's Noah's Ark." But I can't see anything. Everything's the same color and texture. Then I see it—a huge, rectangular, man-made structure partly covered by a talus of ice and rock, lying on its side. At least a hundred feet are clearly visible. I can even see inside it, into the end where it's been broken off, timbers are sticking out, kind of twisted and gnarled, water's cascading out from under it.



An Illustration Based Solely on Description of One of the Ark-like Objects Ed Davis Saw. Compare it to the Third Object Photos.

Illustration by Elfred Lee

¹ It is interesting to note that on the Tom Pickett Corona Satellite picture in the Introduction, there is a horseshoe-shaped valley in the Abich II glacier below the saddle of the peaks



Shooting of *Riddle of Ararat* with Director Robin Simmons, Don Shockey, Pilot Yuri Poskrebysheb, Producer George Adams

Background Russian Navigator, Turkish Co-pilot 1990
Courtesy of Robin Simmons

Abas points down the canyon and I can make out another portion of it. I can see how the two pieces were once joined — the torn timbers kind of match.

They told me the Ark is broken into three or four big pieces. Inside the broken end of the biggest piece, I can see at least three floors and Abas says there's a living space near the top with forty-eight rooms. He says there are cages inside as small as my hand, others big enough to hold a family of elephants.

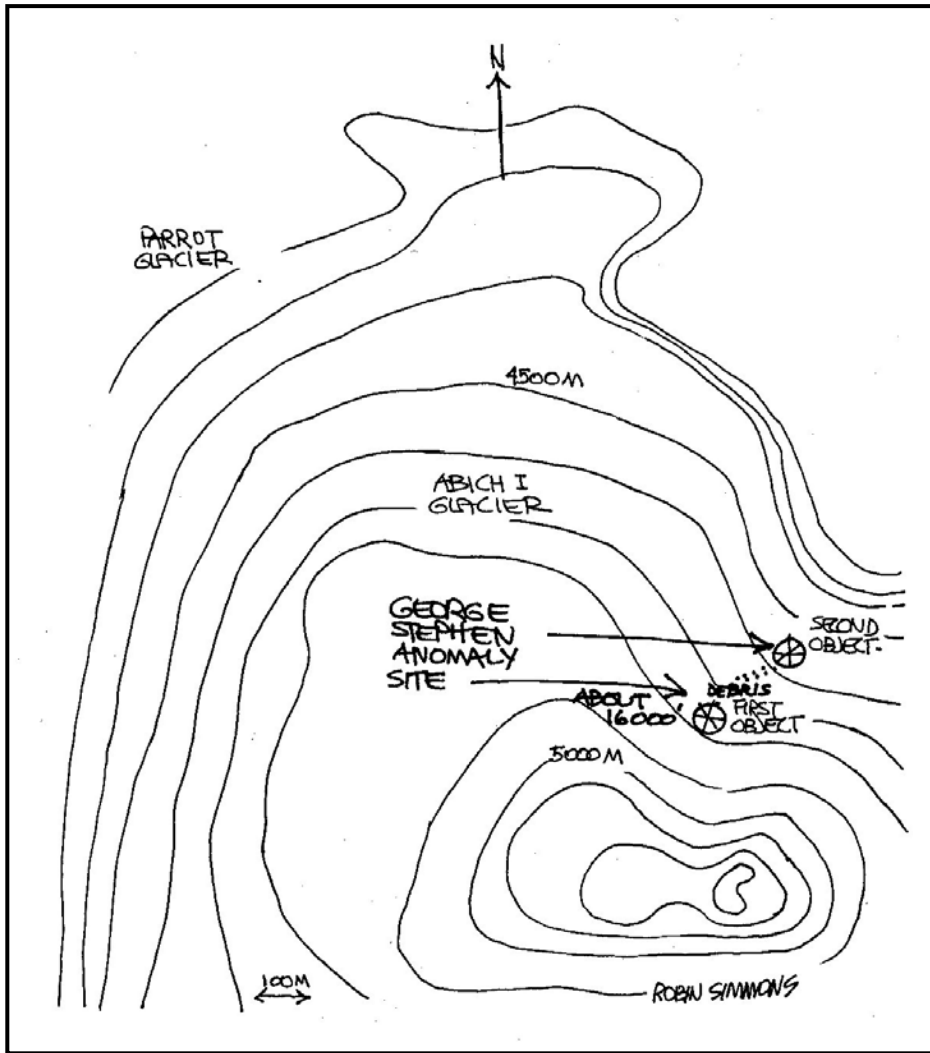
I can see what looks like remains of partitions and walkways inside the bigger piece. I really want to touch it—it's hard to explain the feeling. Abas says we can go down on ropes in the morning. It begins to rain and we go back to the cave...

Next morning when we get up, it's snowing. It had snowed all night and it's at least belt deep on me. I can't see anything down in the canyon. The Ark is no longer visible. Abas says, "We have to leave, it's too dangerous."

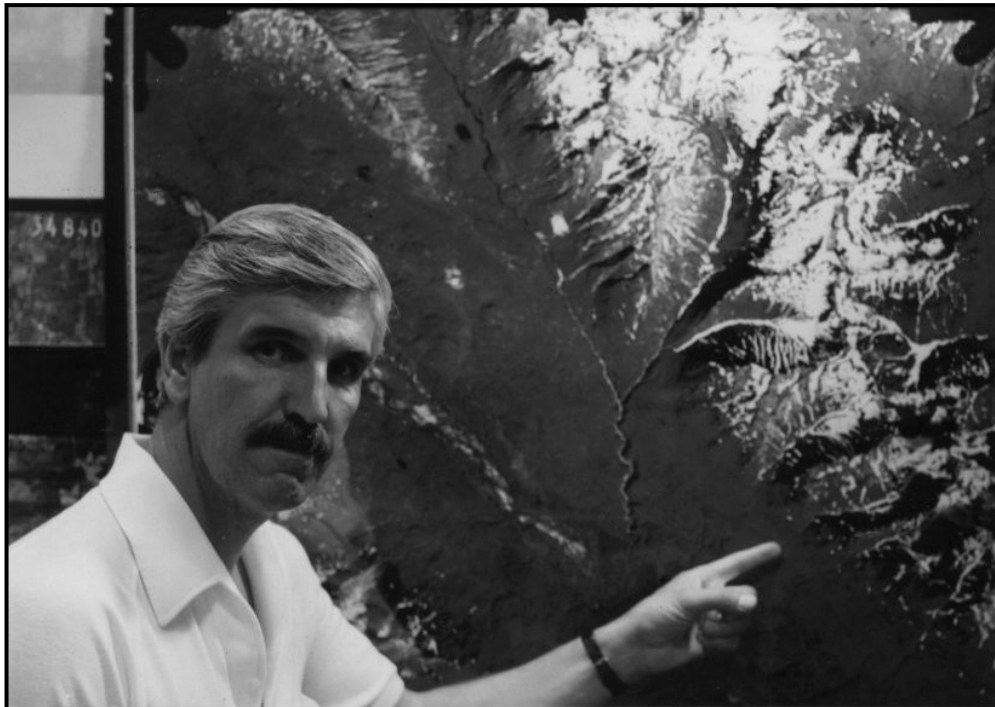
It took us five days to get off the mountain and back to my base. I smell so bad when I get back to Tehran, they burn my clothes. And no one seems interested in what I saw, so I quit talking about it. But I dream about it every night for twenty years.

There's something up there...

As part of my ongoing film project called *RIDDLE OF ARARAT*, we (producer George Adams, cameraman Paul Zenk and myself) recorded Davis' amazing tale. Although Ed Davis' story struck me as unusually detailed and unpretentious, it was almost too good to be true. When it was privately printed and distributed by one of his friends, Davis says he received bizarre phone threats warning that he had betrayed an ancient family secret and as a result "the Black Hand of Allah was upon him."



George Stephen III Approximate Site Map 1989
Courtesy of Robin Simmons



George Stephen III Examining Infra Red Satellite Image (not Ararat but Alaska)
taken by Space Shuttle Astronaut with a 35mm Hand-held Camera
Photo by Kathy Stephen

Intuitively, I believe Davis but have many questions about his details. For instance, how is it possible to see Mount Ararat from Hamadan, over 400 miles away? Davis supposes peculiar atmospheric conditions that create mirages. Again, Kuh e Alvand, the Iranian 'Ararat' is close by Hamadan—did Ed go there?

Using archival photos and old maps, I see a likely and possible route for Davis from Hamadan to Tarlabas ("Village of Abas"?) near the new village of Ahora (some say the old name translates as "Where Noah Planted The Vine") into the Ahora Gorge and to a place beneath the massive ice finger that curls off the Abich II glacier (but it's difficult to clearly discern an obvious route to the higher elevation just below the saddle).

About this time Adams and I got a promise of full funding for *RIDDLE OF ARARAT* from entrepreneur Ed Shaida, a man referred to me by Eryl Cummings. An initial deposit of a \$1.5 million to cover initial filming and expedition set-up expenses was to be made on a specific date. I had accumulated a great amount of data pertaining to Ararat and the possibility of the ark, or parts of it, being preserved. In fact, a specific target area that stretched from below the twin peaks into the upper Ahora Gorge seemed a very likely and unexplored zone to explore. We needed a helicopter and pilot and permits. We also wanted to frame our movie around a colorful Ark hunter and we decided on Don Shockey, an optometrist-treasure hunter with pronounced cowboy tendencies. Shockey agreed to let us pay his expenses for multiple trips to Ararat in exchange for all filming rights.

Out of the blue, Dick Bright called and suggested that I contact Chuck Aaron, a fellow pilot who had a Turkish military approved permit to fly a chopper around and on Greater Ararat. I invited him to join our team. Assuring him that in the event we found something, that information would be made available to all. That our film project was to record the steps that led to any initial discovery so people could decide for themselves without bias or preaching. I liked Aaron a lot and we hit it off immediately. Adams and I invited Aaron to check out a remote sensing expert that

we planned to visit with Shockey. It seemed to me that the pieces of the puzzle, to not only locate the possibly preserved Ark but to document it, were falling into place almost too easily. Chuck Aaron and I were especially in agreement that this was not just another treasure hunt and that personal agendas, or profit, were not to be motivating factors.

George Stephen III is a military-trained, 30-year veteran of remote-sensing, high-resolution, infrared and other satellite type photo interpretation – a specialist who says he had access to "every square foot" of planet earth. When Stephen was asked to look at upper Ararat for any man-made anomalies, he agreed. When we met some time later, Stephen said:

I looked at the mountain from the 10,000-foot altitude to the top. I'm a hundred percent sure there's two man-made objects up there on the north side of the mountain above the 13,000-foot elevation. What amazes me is a structure at this altitude. The terrain is just treacherous! And the amount of ice on it...

It's definitely not a military object or device because it couldn't be used since it's under ice almost all the time.

The process I use is a Photo Analysis Material Spectra (PAMS). We pull up a photo from a satellite, I can't tell you which one, but it's available. The photograph is put into one of our own processes which is a laser process that takes a spectra reading. We work with 64 different shades of *every* color. Each one of those shades means something that is going on with that anomaly or target. Then we use "perforation" in which we take "plugs" out of that area. In other words, instead of looking for the needle in the haystack, we remove the haystack. We perforate the area and pull those plugs until we come up with an "image" of whatever is in the target area.

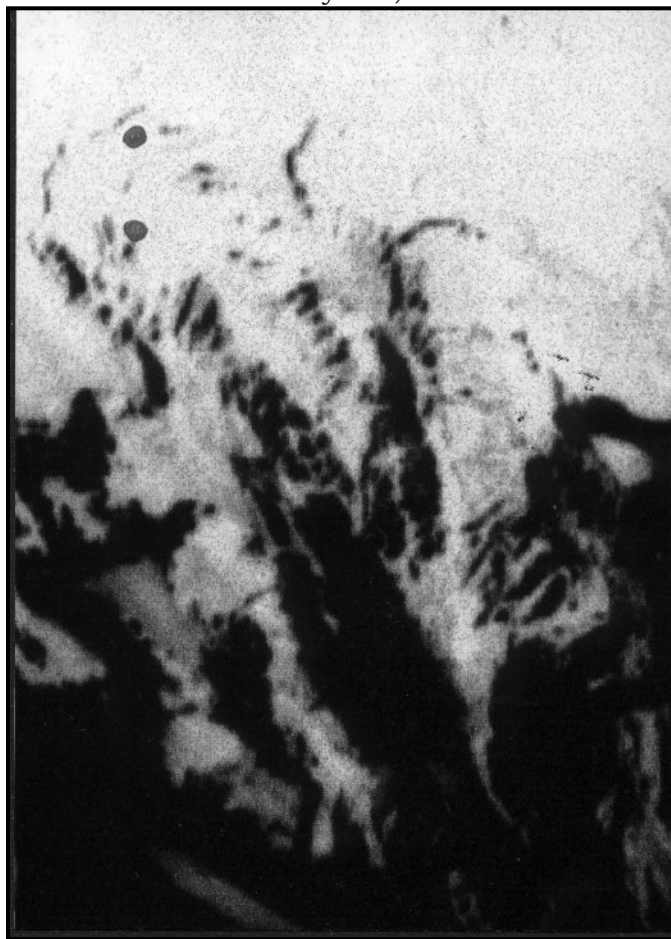
On that mountain (Ararat) is the rectangular shape of two man-made organic objects. One above the other. Looks like maybe 1,200-foot difference. Both objects look like they were joined at one time

because there's a spectral trail going down from one to the other. They're sitting in a fault on a ledge. The upper one is hanging. They are both in a glacier. Last time I looked there was about 70 foot of ice over the upper object. The lower one I can't tell because it's at too steep of an angle.

I can't tell you what it's made of, but it's not metal and it's not rock. It would have to be organic, perhaps wood. It's ancient but I'm not saying it's the Ark because I haven't "seen" it. All I can say is that I'm a hundred percent sure it's a man-made object. But for somebody to take something up there, to haul it up there, to build a thing of this size would be an amazing feat.

The most peculiar thing about this anomaly is that there are no trails to it that indicate it was constructed on this site. I don't know if this is the original location of this object. Maybe it's been raised up from a lower elevation. Or maybe it was higher and slid down throughout the centuries. It's almost like it crashed or landed there...

Perhaps this glacier melts back and this object being hollow, up there on this ledge like it is, with thousands of tons of ice in it and around it,



George Stephen Marked Approximate Sites on Corona Satellite Photo

breaks off and takes part of it on down the canyon.

Personally, I don't believe in Noah's Ark. And frankly, I've no idea what it is.

When Stephen marked his two part, broken anomaly site on the topo and satellite graphics we gave him, Shockey, Aaron, Adams and I leaned in unison like novelty dipping birds. We couldn't get close enough! I immediately saw that the Stephen Site was in the same area my grandfather indicated to me many years before—a little below the saddle. Actually it was the upper Abich II Glacier.

However, this area did not match with Davis' story—he never mentioned crossing ice fields on being anywhere near the summit. Is it possible to reconcile the apparent discrepancy? Was the Abich II cleared of ice in 1943 and did Davis get there without going over the ice cap? Or is the Ark broken into at least two more pieces in a lower location?

Immediately after our meeting with Stephen at his former lab near Ridge Crest, I noticed a somber change in Chuck Aaron. Much later I learned that Shockey talked privately with Aaron and made certain private contractual demands. Shortly thereafter, Aaron disappeared and went to Turkey and Ararat to fly on his own. I was puzzled by this turn of events and even more disappointed at Shockey when I found out why Aaron exited our team. A real loss. What else was in store for us? To some, it seemed like certain dark forces were conspiring to prevent us from accessing and documenting this potentially significant anomaly. What else could go wrong?

Our promised funding was delayed, but Shaída said to go ahead and secure confirmation of security permits, research, photo and trekking permits from Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC, and we would be reimbursed. Adams and I flew to DC and got clearances in writing from the Turkish Embassy—a building with no name or street address marker—for filming in all areas except Korhan, which they said "did not exist." A further curious restriction: we were allowed only 35mm still and 8mm cameras on Ararat. We also were required to use an approved guide for Ararat.

While in Maryland, Adams and I met with Turkish citizen Ahmet Arslan, a former Azerbaijani broadcaster/translator for *Voice of America*, who agreed to be our guide and to film on Ararat—off the trekking route if necessary—for a fee in the thousands in addition to, of course, round trip air fare and hotel, meals, etc., as well as his hiring a climbing assistant of his choice and his fee, also in the thousands!

I was determined to visit the area in a recent August when the thaw should be at its maximum. George Adams, my film-making partner and I made arrangements to get funding to document this anomaly, the security clearance and research and climbing permits for Greater Ararat.

I kept in touch with Stephen as he updated the amount of ice covering the upper object. I calculated that at the apparently extraordinary rate of evaporation and melting, that by mid August something would be visible.

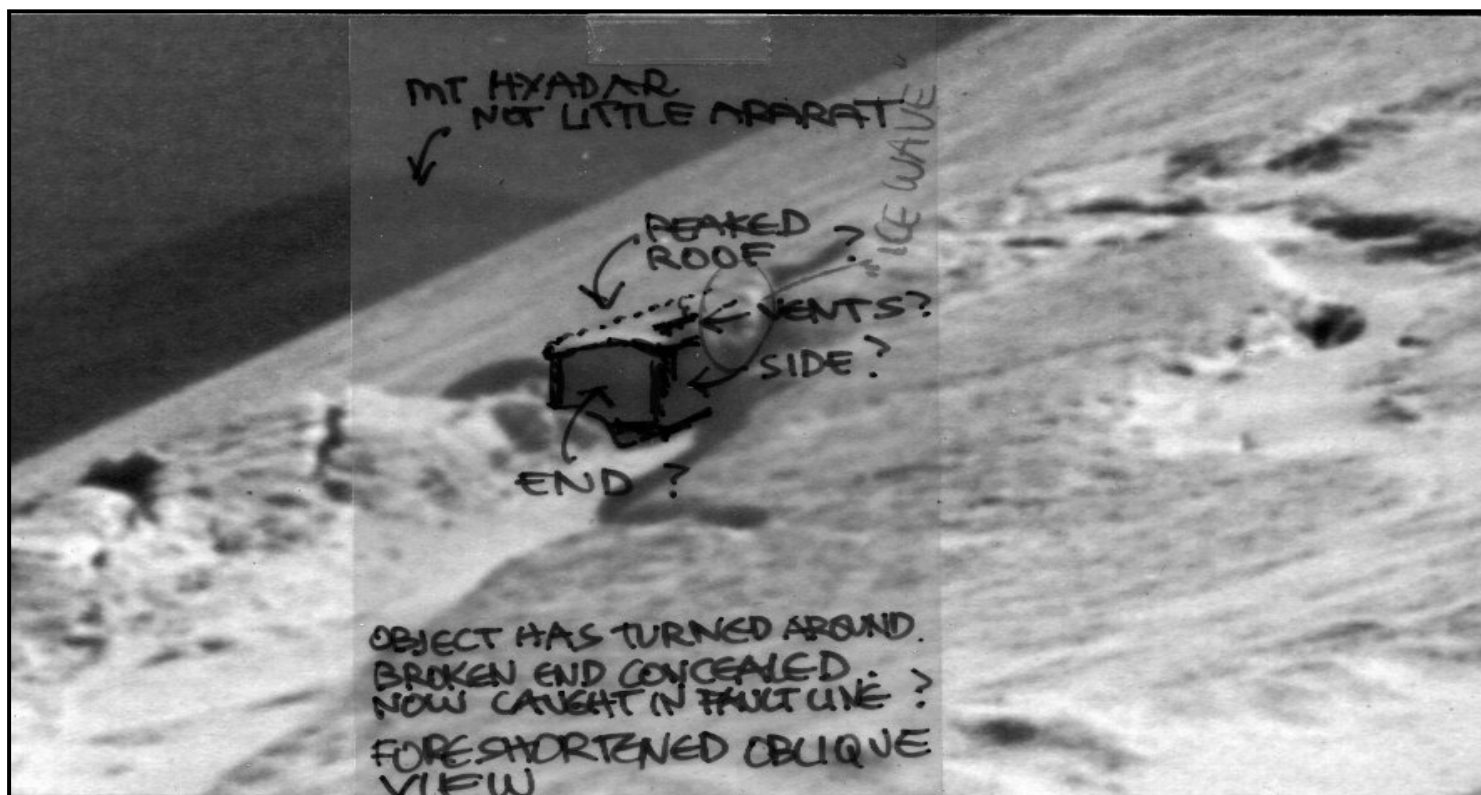
Even though Shaída's promised funding inexplicably evaporated like the ice over the anomaly, I was determined to get a camera aimed at the target! On our own, George Adams and I arranged payment and airfare for Shockey, around whom we still planned a documentary. In addition, we officially hired Ahmet Arslan—an Azerbaijani-Turk who grew up in the Ararat foothills—to hike to the target zone and take some pictures for us.

Shockey and I took off for Turkey. We met Arslan in Ankara. He seemed surprised, and strangely upset, to see me.



Photo of First, or Uppermost Object as Pinpointed by Satellite Interpreter George Stephen III. The Object Looks Like the End of a Boxcar Embedded in the Ice. Photo Similar to 1973 Hewitt slide 1989

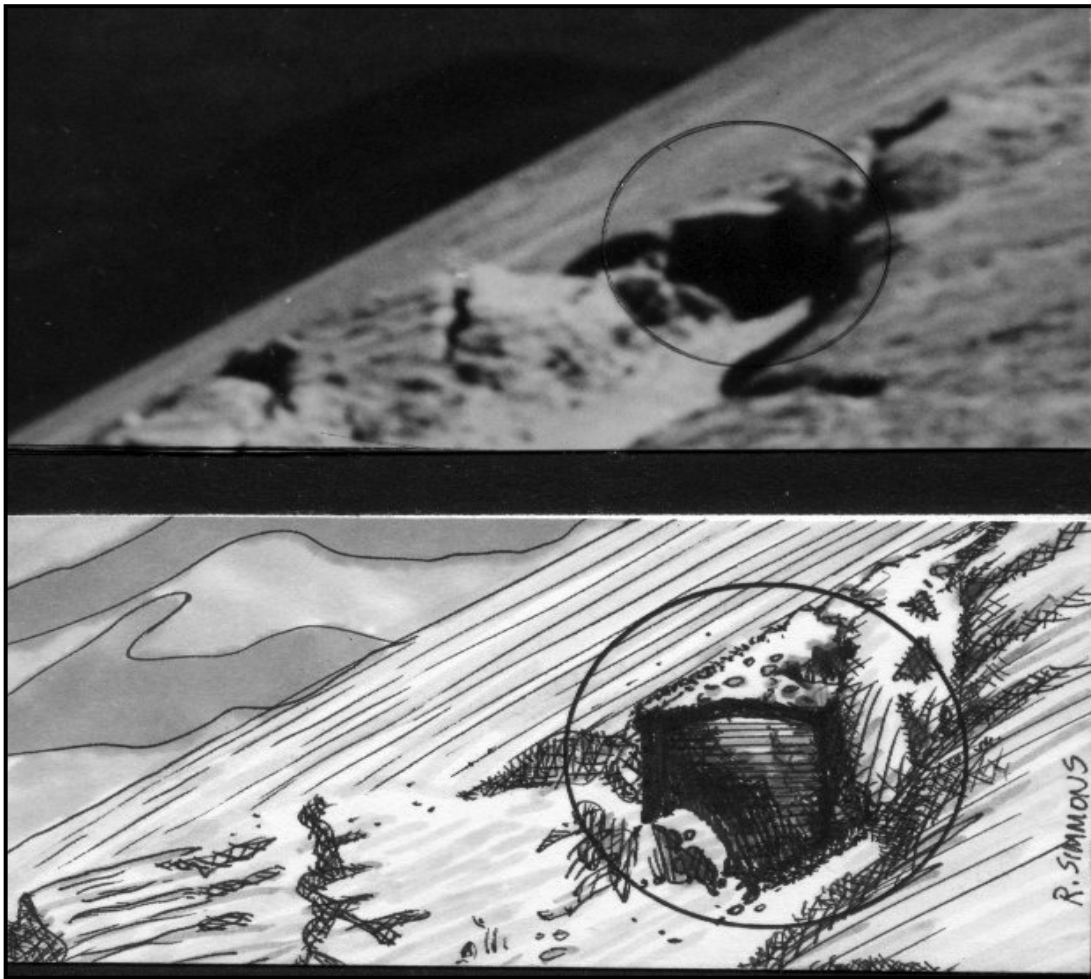
Photo by Ahmet Ali Arslan was taken about 1,200 (?) feet distance



Writing on Photo by Robin Simmons of First, or Uppermost Object as Pinpointed by Satellite Interpreter George Stephen III. The Object Looks like the End of a Boxcar Embedded in the Ice 1989

Photo by Ahmet Ali Arslan was taken about 1,200 (?) feet distance

Somehow Arslan got the impression that he was working solely for Shockey. I went to the various government



Drawing of first or uppermost object based on eyewitness description of Ahmet Ali Arslan and an Armenian businessman in Istanbul 1989

Courtesy of Robin Simmons

agencies to get confirmation of my permits and security clearances. All were in place. Arslan said he would pick them up and arrange to have them wired to the Ararat region where the military would hold them.

Arslan talked about his previous fifty some climbs to Ararat's peak as well as stories he heard from childhood regarding the legends of the Ark being preserved. Arslan received a doctorate (University of Edinburgh?) collecting mostly Kurdish folktales from the Ararat region. Unfortunately, these stories did not pertain to the Flood or the ark. Strangely, Arslan also spoke of a 40 day mission, guiding and accompanying the late Bud Crawford onto Ararat's ice-cap when an electronic cache of listening devices were planted in the ice for the CIA. Bud Crawford died alone at 1:45 AM on 16 October 1970 in what some say was a bizarre and suspicious auto accident on an otherwise empty Colorado road.

We went to Ararat and prepared for our trek. We showed Arslan the Stephen Site on the topo map and told him what we wanted him to do. I showed Arslan how to operate the personal video cam and where and what angle to shoot footage as well as still photos. Suddenly, Arslan demanded that an additional \$5,000 plus be wired into his wife's Maryland bank. Since the anomaly was off the approved trekking route, and since my climbing permits had "disappeared" during the transfer to the Ararat region, according to Arslan, Adams and I felt we had no choice and arranged to have the money wired as demanded with the understanding that Arslan was being hired to photograph the anomaly site and it, the photographs, were our property.

At the last minute, Arslan refused to take the video camera and battery belts. He only wanted to use a still camera. Shockey accompanied Arslan and his climbing assistant part way up the sanctioned tourist trek route on the easier southern slope. Early the next morning, I waited in the foothills by my short-wave radio as Arslan set off by himself, leaving the sanctioned climbing route to a place overlooking the Stephen Site on the upper Abich II.

Arslan left Shockey on the trekking route and continued to our target area. Eventually, I got an excited coded call that he had reached an area overlooking the target, that something was visible and he was going to photograph it from a safe distance then come and get me as agreed.

The next day he arrived back at the base camp shaken and apparently frightened. His behavior was odd, punctuated with unexpected outbursts. He refused to take me back up the mountain as originally agreed. He would hardly talk but,

gradually, I pieced together his account: "I grow up with mountain behind my village." He said, "I climb to peak over 50 times. As a boy, I hear all the Ark stories but I never see anything before this time when ice is melt back more than I ever know... I see a dark area in ice... Like a coop (barn) but still most inside the glacier. You can see the object—backside stuck in the ice—front exposed. Looks like a roof with snow on it. Shaped rectangular. I see timbers and brown gray color. Not rock or natural. Very dangerous there. Ice crust—but under it is empty! Deep crevasses. Can hear water rushing beneath. Gorge breaks off down below. Steep. I couldn't push in closer..."



About a year after Ahmet took the photo of the first object area it then looked like this. There was about 24 feet of ice covering it according to George Stephen III. This photo was taken from a distance of about 1,500 feet 1990

Photo by Robin Simmons from Helicopter



This shadowy shape similar to the first and third objects, seems to protrude from a place about 1000' below the first object. It is approximately the position of a broken part of object one as "seen" by George Stephen III. Are these parts of the same object? Are they Ark parts? 1990
Photo by Robin Simmons

Arslan claims he got about a quarter mile from the object, from where he took a few photographs. Later, when

George Stephen saw the pictures, he said it was indeed the uppermost of the two objects he 'saw' using his specialized satellite software.

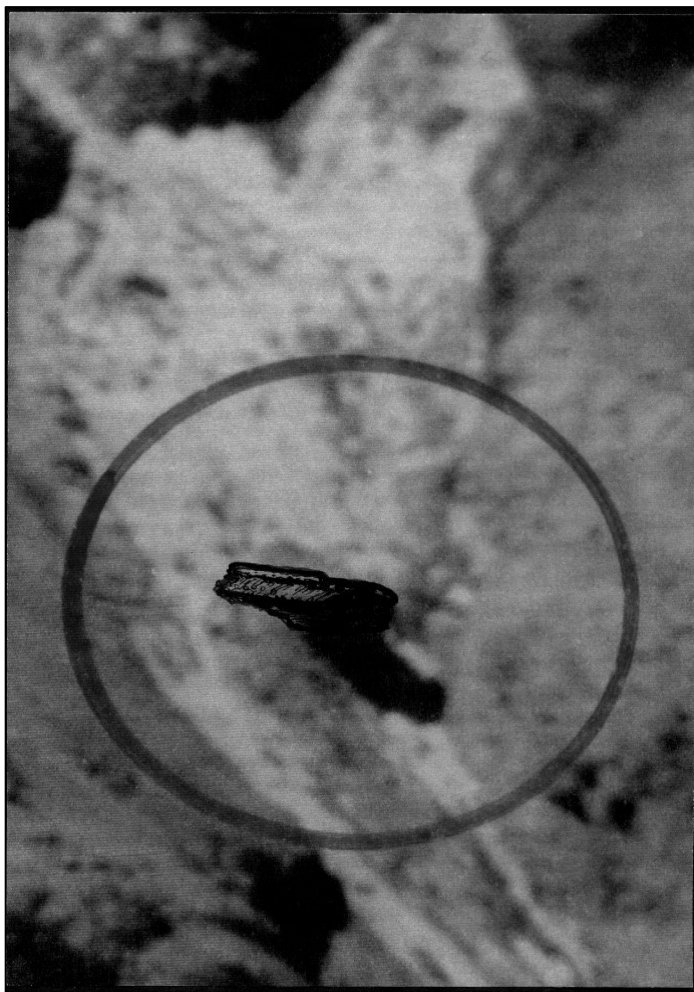
Dr James Eberts, a highly regarded forensic archaeologist, examined Arslan's photos under a high-resolution process and said: "This does not appear to be a natural part of the landscape. Looks strikingly man-made to me. With a peaked roof and rectangular sides or walls. The only way to be sure is get on it."

Strangely, Ed Davis did not recognize the high altitude photos as resembling what he saw. Months later, I am flying over Ararat in a sturdy Russian built MI-8 chopper with my filmmaking partner George Adams. The Turkish military refused to let us land on the mountain so we photograph and videotape Ararat and the Ahora Gorge from the air. Despite the estimated 23 feet of additional ice over the object area, we quickly identified the spot. It looks like a frozen wave-like formation of ice hanging over something embedded in the glacier.

As we circle the mountain, I look for evidence of the lower, broken part of object that Stephen says is perhaps 1,200 feet below in a steeper part of the glacier. I take some long-range shots of what appears to be a similar-shaped broken-ended, roofed structure barely visible in an ice wall. Is this the second, broken object Stephen described?

As we make another pass over the awesome Ahora Gorge, I look down to the spot, about 2,500 feet distant, where I theoretically located Ed Davis' object. In a debris-ridden canyon of ice and rock, there appears yet another similar-shaped anomaly jutting out from a steep scree. Water courses under it. The end appears broken and there's a peaked roof-shape with parallel sides. It looks battered. Is it a rock formation? Or something man-made?

This object closely matches Ed Davis' description. If it is that ark-object, then there's another big part buried in the rubble above it.

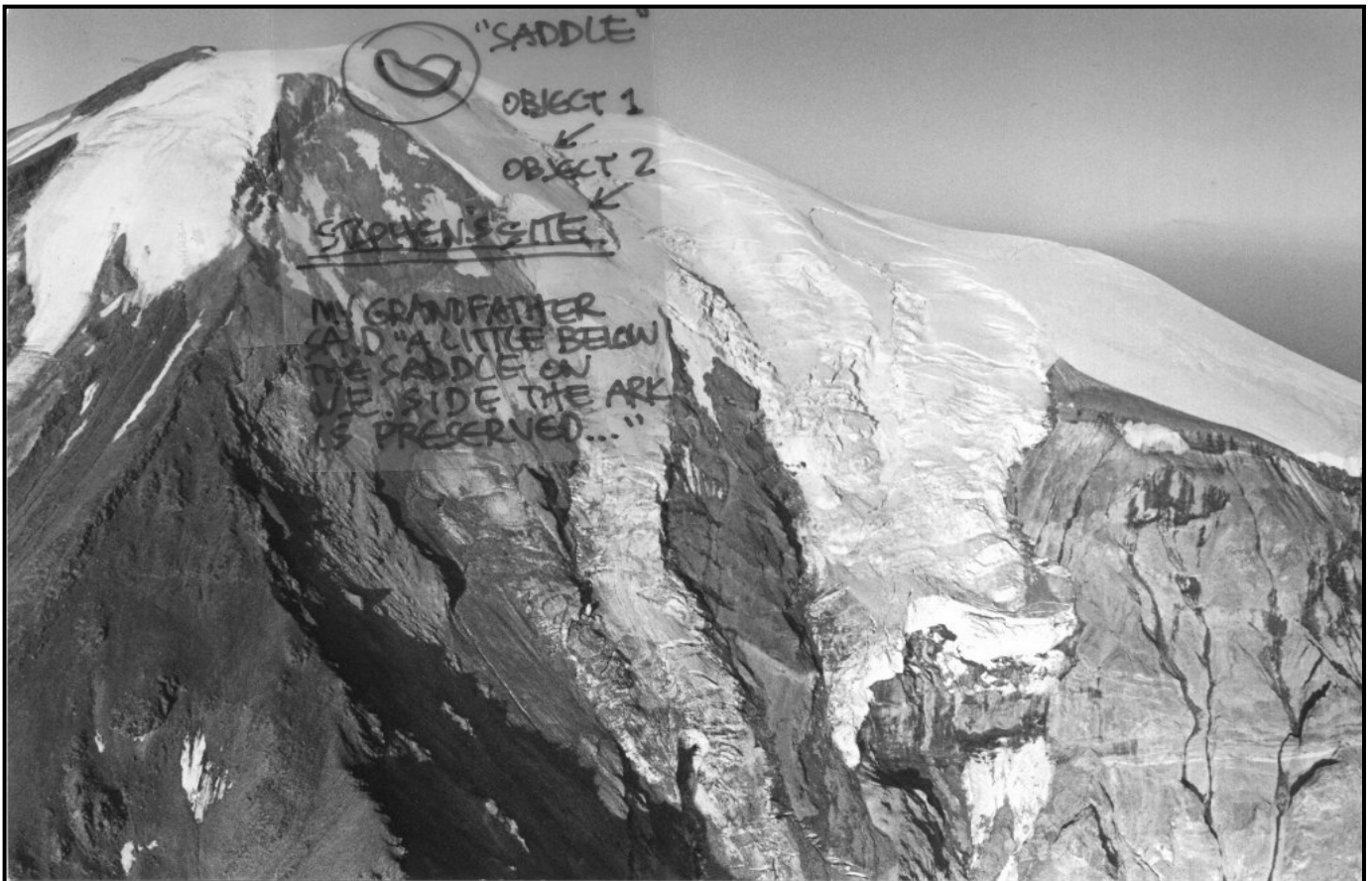


Hand drawn outline of third object. From extreme enlargement (1000x Plus) taken from below in Ahora Gorge. Notice shadow of protruding rectangular object embedded in scree.

Photo by John McIntosh



Upper Ahora Gorge and Abich II Glacier 1990
Photo by Robin Simmons



Upper Ahora Gorge and Abich II Glacier and objects of interest 1990
Photomap by Robin Simmons

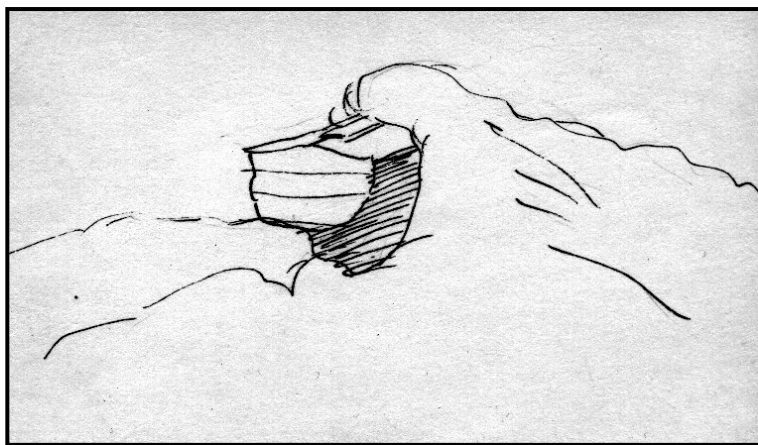
There are those who call it a rock (McIntosh, Van Dyke, Kneisler) and those who see something provocative and

worth investigating (Setterfield, Thomson). No one has been on it, to my knowledge. McIntosh, Thomson and myself have looked at it from a distance and widely different perspectives including from above and below.

All three anomalous shapes are extremely similar and could in fact be broken parts, all fallen from the same singular source still lodged in the fault line high in the icecap. Unfortunately, there's no accurate scale cues for any of these objects. The biblical original is described as at least 450 feet long—longer than that length if the cubit is a "royal cubit." So is it possible that the Ark could have broken into at least four large pieces? The answer is just out of reach—but maybe not for long.

Now the story gets even stranger. According to a source, who would talk only if guaranteed anonymity, in 1974 a US "special operations" team was engaged on a secret mission to photograph a Soviet radar device that was tracking SR-71 flights out of Turkey into Soviet air space. Returning over Ararat to avoid detection, the team was caught in an ice storm and sought shelter in a crevasse. They literally fell into a huge structure they at first thought to be an ancient Byzantine shrine. As one, the team suddenly realized the elevation was far too high for such a structure and they all concluded it must be the Ark of Noah. Code named "Black Spear," their report apparently went to the White House for the President George Bush (41) to read. A friend of Presidential advisor Jim Schlesinger told me that the advisor saw the still classified report in the Oval Office and it included a specific reference to what the special ops team believed to be a preserved, ice-encased portion of the true Ark of Noah.

From an illusive source, another story has recently come to light, full of details which seem to partially check out. Between December 1959 and April 1960, a pilot made between 40-50 flights from a secret base in Turkey into the Soviet Union as a 'decoy' for Francis Gary Powers' U-2 flights under an ID of 'DET TWO TEN TEN'. Many of these flights included documentation of the construction of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant [expedition members on the 1966 and 1968 Archaeological Research Foundation (ARF) expeditions testify to Rex Geissler that this research did in fact occur].



An Armenian explorer made this drawing around 1973. It is an object he saw protruding from the ice of upper Ararat. Compare it to the photo of the first object. Notice the "ice wave."

Courtesy of Robin Simmons

They would return to Turkey over the Russian/Iranian border zone and head up towards Ararat. Out of his left window, the pilot said he saw, many times, an oblong, rectangular ark-like object protruding from the ice at an altitude maybe between 14,500' and 15,000'. The pilot says the photos are stored, today, seven floors below the Pentagon. A request has been made to obtain these high-resolution close-up images of the anomaly in Ararat's ice cap.

In talking to people about this persistent enigma, there's one thing I hear over and over; the notion that the Ark has been preserved for a purpose as a witness in our time. But a witness to what?

At the University of Erzurum, [an Islamic scholar told me]: "The Ark is a bomb in the world." There is a

widespread belief in the region that the revelation of Noah's ship will be a sign that Mohammed is returning to purge the earth of heretics in a holy war. All true believers will then go to heaven in a restored golden ark. One of Ed Davis' guides told him: "When the Master returns, a light will shine on the Ark and restore it."

An Old Testament professor at a respected liberal arts university once reminded me of the Gospel's warning—"As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." The text's true meaning, he said, a reminder that when the 'sons of God' (the fallen angels in Genesis 6) again breed with the 'daughters of man', the great deception of the Antichrist that precedes the Second Coming is imminent. This puts so-called alien abductions in a whole new light.

The same scholar asked me: "What would happen if the Ark were conclusively proved to be preserved in the ice of Ararat and then it became apparent that it had been looted by the West? And further, that it was a long-known secret kept by the powers that be? That this sacred mountain and its treasure had been profaned by the 'great Satan' (America)?" He went on: "And what if the Ark were revealed to be on Ararat and not on Al Cudi, as some translations of the Koran say? Would that further aggravate the situation by making it appear that Mohammed was a liar?"

The idea of the great Ark of Noah actually existing—to say nothing of being preserved into our day—goes against consensus academic and scientific opinion. However, as every researcher knows, geologic anomalies abound that challenge standard models of slow, uniform changes over millennia.

Colonel James Irwin, the late moon-walking Apollo astronaut, apparently had access to information not generally available. He made several high altitude explorations of Ararat. He told me he thought the preponderance of evidence indicated there was something ancient and meaningful hidden on the heights of Ararat. Something that would affect the

way all mankind relates to each other—and the Creator. Irwin said, "It's not about walking on the moon, it's *who* walked on earth."

Perhaps the real riddle is why the solution to this mystery remains just out of reach. Are there forces that actively protect it? Greater Ararat is off limits to scientific exploration. The Ahora Gorge is a forbidden zone to climbing and to photography of any kind. The trails have been mined and military encampments ensure enforcement.

If this ancient riddle can't be satisfactorily explained, then a new paradigm is needed to explain the observed out-of-place artifacts. Perhaps they are evidence of an antediluvian world that included human beings like us who were suddenly drowned in a global cataclysm. On the other hand, perhaps it's too late and too dangerous for the true identity of the Ararat anomaly to be revealed?



Robin Simmons Photographing Mount Ararat from Helicopter. Next to Robin is George Adams who is roped into the open door while filming Mount Ararat from thousands of feet above the mountain 1990

Courtesy of Robin Simmons