

*1976 is not only the year in which we celebrate our 50th Anniversary—it is the year in which the United States celebrates its 200th Anniversary. With that in mind, Robert F. Young, whose stories were a regular fixture here fifteen years ago and who returned to our pages a few years ago, contributes a Bicentennial story—*

## **GHUR R'HUT URR**

**ROBERT F. YOUNG**

**Illustrated by TONY GLEESON**

*(Compiled from the files of the Institute of UFO Research, Historical Division.)*

### **EDWARD GIBBON**

*(Lausanne, Switzerland; June 27th, 1787):*—I have presumed to mark the moment of conception (of the *Decline and Fall*); I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of Acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters and all Nature was silent—\* (\*From Edward Gibbon: *Memories of My Life*, edited by Georges Bonnard, Copyright © 1969 by Funk & Wagnalls With permission of the publishers.)

Poorly acquainted as I am with certain phenomena much commented upon but little extolled by my scientific contemporaries, I do not presume myself qualified to describe the strange object which I presently descried rising above the eastern horizon and proceeding in a westerly direction across the heavens; but since I was the sole observer I have no recourse save to make the effort. That the object was a large and curious star would have been my initial conjecture had it not been so far below the celestial plane and had it not been traveling at a clearly perceptible velocity. I will make no attempt to estimate either its height or its dimensions, other than to state that both were considerably. The branches of the Acacias obscured it as it passed overhead; afterward, I obtained a second long look at it as it receded westward, and it was then that I perceived that in shape it rather remarkably resembled a gigantic inkwell from which all the ink had been drained. For some time after it vanished from view I pondered what it might be, whence it came, and whither it might be bound; but my head was too taken up with my deliverance for me to entertain for long such far-flung speculations, and at length my thoughts returned to the realm they had but so recently left.

—I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion (the *Decline and Fall*), and that, whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious—\* (\**Ibid*)

From his "Notes"; discovered 1995; first published, 1996.

### **JAMES BOSWELL**

*Fontainebleau, France; June 27th, 1787:* Two and one half years have now passed since his (Sanuel Johnson's) burial in Westminster Abbey, and the sense of loss I knew in London during those gray dreary days still lingers in my heart. My purpose in visiting the continent is to trace the footsteps he made during his only tour here, as commemorated in the "paper-book" in which he jotted down his impressions while in the company of his two traveling companions, Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. I have, to date, visited the *Ecole Militaire*, the *Hotel de Chatlois*, St. Roque's Church, the *Place de Vendome*, the palais Royal, the Tuilleries, and the Palais Bourbon, and now I have come here to Fontainebleau, the place that he described so succinctly in his "paper-book": *The forest thick with woods, very*

*extensive—Manucci secured us lodgings.—The appearance of the country pleasant.—No hills, few streams, only one hedge. I remember no chapels nor crosses on the road.—Pavement still, and rows of trees. N. Nobody but mean people walk in Paris. \* (\*From Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson, edited by C.P. Chadsey, copyright © 1946 by Doubleday & Company, Inc.)*

It is not my intention in penning this Epilogue to add to his concise and pointed descriptions or to dwell at any great length upon the physical properties of my itinerary, but rather to try to reabsorb, by viewing that which he viewed, by touching that which he touched, by hearing that which he heard, and by exposing my nostrils to the scents and fragrances that once touched his, the *Johnsonian aether* that I knew so well during those all-too-short years of my association with him. An Epilogue such as the one I contemplate requires for its life-blood not the concrete but the intangible. There occurred tonight, however, an event of such unusual nature that I fear that I would be doing posterity a disservice were I to refuse to take leave of my avowed purpose long enough to record it. There follows, then, a brief digression, for which, it is to be hoped, his many admirers will forgive me.

Having obtained lodgings near the perimeter of Fontainebleau after arriving on the diligence late this evening, I set out at once that I might drink in some of the bucolic sights and scenes *he* once drank in. The hour was approaching midnight when I left the last of the outlying houses behind me; the moon was an argent orb, shedding silvery radiance over fields and forests and little ponds; the air was laden with the fragrance of sleeping flowers, and the sky was remarkably clear. I had never before seen the stars shine quite so bright, and it was their unprecedented resplendence, I believe, that caused me to direct more of my attention heavenward than earthward, and it was this temporary tendency that presently brought to my notice a singular astronomickal display which I might otherwise have missed altogether.

The display consisted of a peculiar celestial object which rose suddenly in the eastern sky and began making its way across the heavens in a westerly direction that soon brought it directly over the field in the middle of which I had halted upon first espying it. I had up until that moment half-believed it to be a falling star; but stars do not fall on a horizontal plane, and moreover this one—if star it was—possessed characteristics not in the least consistent with such phenomena. It was not merely a speck of brightness soon to be extinguished from the face of night, but a large and lusty glow that seemed to be gaining rather than diminishing in intensity; moreover, it appeared to be propelled by some mysterious means.

Although it passed between the moon and the earth, it was still far too high in the heavens for me to ascertain its shape with any degree of accuracy; nevertheless, as it passed overhead I received the distinct impression that it was artificial rather than natural, and for a moment I had the uncanny feeling that I was gazing at a much magnified version of the lamp that hangs above the entrance to the Mître tavern, and, during the ensuing several seconds, I had a vivid mental picture of myself and Dr. Johnson crossing the cobbled pavement of a summer's evening and pausing briefly in the street before entering the establishment and taking our usual table by the hearth.

The seconds, fleeting though they were, left me dazed, and during the time it required me to recover from my stupor the strange astronomickal object completed its journey across the heavens and disappeared into the dark distances of the west, bound I know not whither, nor for what cause. But I have dwelled too long already upon this singular occurrence and will return at last to the central figure of this Epilogue.

He said to Trianon—

From Boswell's *Johsonian Epilogue*; discovered 1985, first published 1986.

## ISHMAEL PLUNKETT

June 27th, 1787; 43' north, 38' west; 10:51 P.M.: Sighted strange star moving across heavens in westerly direction. Appeared to be losing altitude rapidly and may plunge into sea before reaching coast of N.A. If it does not, I fear for well-being of my countrymen, as 'tis like no falling star this ship's master

has ever observed before. In general outline it brings to mind a huge harpoon.

Second mate's ~~ee-ean-ee~~ Second mate's skin rash is worse. He—

From the log of the *Nantucket*

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

*Philadelphia; June 27th, 1787*

Dear Dr. Gurney:

Knowing the keen interest you take in celestial phenomena, I would like to relate to you, while it is still fresh in my memory, an observation which I made this evening while walking home from the State House between the hours of nine and ten P.M. after a long and gruelling session. The moon was newly risen, and so struck was I by the singularly fine texture of its silvery radiance that I look'd eastward whenever I came to a square or other open place that permitt'd, in order that I might feast my eyes upon the silvery orb itself. It was indeed a splendid sight to behold, but it was not its pockmarked face that presently arrest'd and held my gaze, but yet another celestial body that had risen in the east. I assum'd this second body to be a star at first, but no star ever travell'd at such a high velocity or at such a low altitude, hence I knew my first surmise to be incorrect. Indeed, it seem'd that I had hardly taken three breaths before this strange object left the moon behind and climb'd to zenith, trailing blue fire in much the same manner that a kite trails its tail.

As I continued to stare skyward, oblivious to the occasional passers-by, not one of whom was aware of the drama being enact'd in the heavens overhead, I gradually realiz'd that the tail was affix'd to a similarly analogous object, and that the two phenomena compos'd a gigantic kite that had broken free from its mooring and been borne aloft by earthly winds into the aether, there to be driven by winds of a nature mortal men such as ourselves can only guess at. But from what far land did it come? Who on earth could have built and sent it aloft?

These are questions which perhaps you can answer. Before leaving you with them, however, I would like to add two more details. The object, during the time I observ'd it, lost considerable altitude and veered from a westerly to a southwesterly course. This leads me to believe that, not long after I observ'd it, it landed or crashed in the mountains far to the southwest. But this is pure conjecture, and moreover it is quite possible that the long day I endured at the State House and my failure to establish accord among the various factions engag'd in the framing of a workable constitution wearied me to a point where my perceptions were adversely affected.

Most sincerely & truly yours,

B. Franklin

—A previously unpublished letter that Franklin penned to his friend Dr. Gurney and apparently never posted.

## DAVEY CROCKETT

*What his pappy told him when he was 8 years old, as writ down with his own hand:*

Davey, his pappy said to him one day, someday when you get growed up you're going to meet up with a b'ar and you're going to have to fight it. So you listen now to yore pappy, about how he fought a b'ar when you was only 1 year old, and scared the critter so bad he ran away and took his den with him.

I remember well, though I didn't know it at the time, 'twas the day afore they signed the federal constitution in Philadelphi-a. You'un was but a wee scalawag in yore maw's arms, but 'twouldn't be long afore you'd need deerskins to put on yore back and I warn't about to see you go without. So up into the hills I went that day, a-carrying my shooting iron and a-hunting deer.

'Twarn't long afore I came to the Chiltenuokee Ridge, and I climbed it and went down t' other side, but I didn't see no danged deer, I didn't see even a rabbit. And then I come to this here clearing in the woods, a great big one, 'twas, and there in the middle of it stood this big tall tree. Say, it was the dangest tree I ever set eyes on in all my born days. Tall and straight, 'twas, with nary a branch on it, and with real shiny bark—sort of silver, like the way the crick gets 'when the moon shines. And some thing high up in it

kept going hmmm , hmmm, hmmm, like a nest of yaller jackets, only different.

Well, I walked farther into the clearing to get a better look, and I saw then what a really whopping big tree 'twas. Five men a-holding hands couldn't have reached around the trunk, and it had these three great big roots a-sort of sprouting out the sides and curving down to the ground, which made it seem bigger yet. And just above the ground there was a big square hole in the side that a growed man could of walked into without bending his head. I had a hunch right then and there that the whole danged tree was hollow, and I was just about to go over to it and find out when out of this hole comes the longest b'ar I ever seed in all my born days, *a-walking on its two hind legs!*

But it warn't just its walking like a man that throwed me. It was the clothes it had on too. That's right—clothes. Not ordinary kind of clothes like us civilized folk wear, but shiny things sort of like the armor them knights used to gallivant around in, only not anywheres near as much of it. Just pieces here and there—on the shoulders, around the hips, and on the feet, and a piece like an upsidedown bowl on top of the head. And that b'ar warn't the least bit afraid either, mind you, like some b'ars are sometimes. Walked toward me just as big as you please, a-growling to beat the band. "Grrrr-rutt-urrrr!" it went, a-pounding its barrel chest. "Grrrrrutt-urrrr!" Over and over. Craziest danged growl I ever heard come out of a b'ar's mouth in all my born days.

I had my shooting iron all primed and ready, and on the fourth 'Grrrrrutt-urrrr!' I let go fiill blast at that b'ar's chest. But the ball hit on the shoulder where one of them pieces of armor was and glanced off, and I thought I was a goner for sure. I warn't, though. D'you know what that danged cowardly b'ar did, Davey?—it gawped at me for a second as if it just couldn't believe I'd do such a terrible thing as try t'kill it, then it turned tail and ran back into its den and closed the door.

That's right—closed the door. Bet you never heard of a b'ar's den afore that had a door on it, but this one did. And such a door you never did see in all yore born days. It looked like the rest of the tree so much you could hardly see where 'twas. And no power on earth, 'cept maybe a lightning bolt, could've opened it. I know, cause after I primed my shooting iron again I tried. But 'twarn't no use. That door was closed solid.

Well, I come back home, knowing 'twarn't no use t'hang around any longer, and next morning I come back, intending to hide in the woods till the b'ar opened that danged door himself and then let him have it right between the eyes. But—and here's the craziest part of the whole story, Davey—when I got there, that danged tree was gone, and the b'ar with it! And right were it'd been, looked like somebody'd built a big bonfire and let it burn right down into the ground.

*And that was what his pappy told him when Davey Crockett was 8 years old, as writ down with his own hand.*

From the 1836 *Davey Crockett Almanac*, brought to light in 1991 by, and a part of the collection of the famous Davey Crockettite, Jason W. Wheeling.

## **GHUR R'HUT URR**

DATE (*Theirs*): September 17, 1787

DATE (*Ours*): The 7th Ra of the 3rd Ruhen: XX:P

TO: His Eminence, Harut Ul Farr Overseer, Out-planet Historical Department  
Glandis 6

FROM: Ghur R'hut Urr

Peripatetic Research Engineer 8B Ionosphere, Planet X-YB-4K

VIA: Red-band Yellow.

This humble subject of his Eminence, Harut Ul Farr, proceeded as directed to the sector of Planet X-YB-4K where the transscopes indicated an Event of Considerable Magnitude to be taking place. He landed, also as directed, in a secluded area well within 800 setads of the ECM site, and activated the ship's trans-tapes. Indecision and discord on the part of the participants of the ECM delayed its completion until a short while ago. Otherwise, mission uneventful, save for one encounter with a ferocious indigene that nearly cost this subject his life, and a number of probable sightings, all of which were

undoubtedly personalized and promptly forgotten.

This subject will forthwith depart for his next assignment area. Meanwhile, the transcribed text of the document constituting the ECM follows:

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

ARTICLE 1 . . .

Included among the Glandis 6 documents presented to Earth during the first Earth-Glandis 6 cultural exchange.

—ROBERT F. YOUNG