

Reasonable people started going up there to live, people we had seen every day, the man from the Texaco, a roofer from Florence, the donut shop waitress, the dentist's wife. They left their jobs and lived up there.

The Greek wife stopped coming to town and pretty soon local women began to dream she had died. Hippie women are very impressionable and if one dreams something then they all go off and dream it. One woman dreamed he put her in a barrel and dumped her in the ocean. But someone else dreamed he buried her on the beach near Neptune Park. And a tourist from California just heard the stories and went right to her motel, fell asleep, and she dreamed he left her body in the woods. But nobody believed that version. Why would the Greek wife try to get a message to a tourist, they all said.

People claimed to see the ghost of the Greek wife, walking the beach at night. Every time you went to the Laundromat or stood in line at the post office, you'd hear someone arguing, well so and so dreamed her body is in a rain barrel but somebody else dreamed her ghost is walking alongside Highway 101.

You'd have thought they'd be embarrassed later when the Greek wife was spotted at Clark's Market, buying produce, but nobody batted an eye. They just stopped talking about that and started in on something else.

Later on the land was taken back by the government. Someone at the Post Office said it was because nobody paid taxes. Everybody who had been up there moved. We never saw any of them again except for the dentist's wife who settled down and went home.

In a reasonable place such an event would have permanently changed the people living there. It would have been talked about for years and anybody associated with it would be associated with it forever and anybody making a wild claim about the ghost of someone who turns out to not be dead in the first place - why, their humiliation would be complete. But it's like everyone had amnesia. Like they had been hit on the head and were wandering around dazed on the highway. They weren't embarrassed because they didn't remember long enough to be embarrassed.

Everybody forgot all about it but you can still look up, if you think you imagined it, and see the white cross, plain as day. You can still see the hillside, stripped naked and burnt. All the wild speculation and fuss, the end of the world, ghosts, murder, levitation, all of it came to nothing and was forgotten. The only thing left is the plain boring truth: someone cut all the trees and left the mountain bare.

If you drive through Yachats today, you'll see a white cross standing on the mountain above town, surrounded by a clearcut. Not long ago it was a forest. Although that much is true, the rest of this story is fiction, which means I made it up. This story is part of a novel I'm writing and I also made up the persona who's telling the story. While many of the elements are not true what's important about the story is.

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MUTTERINGS FROM THE MOUNTAIN

by The Opinionated Oregonian™

Mount Hood, March 5, 2001-- Once upon a time, there was a golden age of curiosity, when scientists were not skeptical of anything not in academic journals, a time when museums and zoos, circuses and news papers, sponsored expeditions to far distant lands to see if the natives really did know about animals not yet officially accepted by the scientific community.

That age is decades gone now, the science johnnies will tell you we've discovered all the 'unknown' animals and that such critters as Bigfoot, Nessie, Ogopogo, Champ and others are merely myths believed in only by those of a weak-minded and credulous nature.

Well, maybe so. I just keep remembering that some of those native tales preceded discovery of Mountain Gorillas, Giant Pandas, Komodo Dragons, coelecanths and other 'mythological' beasts.

Some tales did not produce a new creature, tho not necessarily because it did not exist but because those who searched didn't have the good luck of some of the others.

A fascinating account of one such hunt, which took place shortly after World War II ended, can be found in **The Search for the Buru** by Ralph Izzard [Linden Publishing; 2001; trade paper; 176 pgs; \$19.95]

Izzard, the India correspondent of the *London Daily News*, with field biologist Charles Stonor and photographer Frank Hodgkinson, trekked deep into north India, a region heretofore never visited by westerners. There, if the native tales were true, could be found the Buru, a large [perhaps 20' long] aquatic lizard.

It's a fascinating tale, this 1946 expedition report, but ends without resolution. The trio had to make a choice . . . go where the tales reported living burus had been seen or go to another area many miles from the first where burus killed by the natives were reportedly buried. Izzard and Co. chose to go for the live ones, but failed to find them.

The Search for the Buru reprints, for the first time in this country, Izzard's original account which appeared in Britain nearly a half century ago. There is no afterword, no account of any further expeditions, tho I have heard rumors of one that looked, unsuccessfully, for those grave sites.

Were there ever burus? Did we miss, by only a few years, adding a new creature to the roster of earth's animals? Quite likely I think. Armchair skeptics will disagree . . . but then they are cut from the same cloth as the naysayers of yesteryear who dismissed 'native tales' of other animals we now know.

"Science," my late friend and globe-trotting zoologist Ivan Sanderson once remarked, "is the search for the unknown."

Linden Publishing of Fresno CA has my thanks, and those of others interested in Cryptozoology [the study of unknown animals], for bringing Izzard's book back to life. Buy one for that curious child of yours.

Recently I was in my favorite office supply shop to do a bit of photocopying and on the way to the cashier, noted a large bin of CD-ROMs. "Take one" said the sign. "Free" said the sign. So I wandered over. Turns out it was the latest AOL software with an offer of "700 Free Hours!" Recalling that I only received 50 free hours when I signed up for AOL 3.0, I picked one up. And noticed the fine print. The 700 free hours had to be taken in the first month. Well, now . . . as a quick bit of work with pencil and paper can tell you, a month of 31 days has 744 hours, 30-days = 720 hours while February, which is when I saw this offering, has but 672 hours. I guess internet junkies are not expected to eat, sleep or make love. As Mr. Spock might say: This offer does not compute. But it is a prime example of the low regard in which the average ad agency holds the average consumer.

It has been a bit over a year since the U.S. Mint began putting golden dollar coins into circulation. By mid-year 2000 over 500 million of them had been issued.

So . . . how many have you seen? How many have you received in change? How many have you used to buy things? Damn few in all cases I suspect. Why? One reason is that the U.S. Mint is still printing dollar bills. Now bills have a useful life of maybe 6 months as opposed to 2-3 decades for coins. Another reason seems to be that folks are hoarding the goldies, tho given the vast quantities stamped out, the likelihood they will ever be worth more than a buck is scant.

Me, I like them for tips as well as purchases. You can still buy things for a buck . . . ice cream cones, soft drinks, newspapers, lotsa stuff. And no one needs to whack down trees to make paper money.

So stop by the bank, get a fistful of goldies and spread 'em around your town.

We hoard pennies too. The Mint stamps out some 13 billion a year [that's 130 million bucks]. Unfortunately, about half [65 million dollars!] of each year's Mint run disappears during that same year. They get lost, get hoarded [why?], get converted into souvenirs [at 50¢ a pop] . . . why do we bother with them? We all know advertisers love to offer their junk for "less than" some price or other and that price will be a penny less. Big deal! Are we really fooled by this sort of mind bending? Let's follow the example of our Australian cousins and eliminate the penny [in OZ they've also done away with their two penny coins and supplemented their dollar coin with a \$2 coin while we (why?) are still printing \$2 bills].

And if the bargain hunting American public needs persuasion to cough up all those hoarded pennies, let the Fed's stop printing dollar bills and sell golden dollar coins, for a limited time only, for "Only 98 pennies!" Such a bargain! 🍏🍏🍏

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