

Tuesdat January 24, 1995

Dear George....

Today Mother and I spent a couple hours in the local library trying to find some information about George Van Tassell. We found three different spellings of his name...Tassal, Tasel, and the way I have *it* spelled. Can't find out which is correct but quite certain that I have it right.

One of the enclosed articles says that he wrote five books but in all these years I have heard of only two. The library cannot get the one titled "I Rode in a Flying Saucer" but will try to get, from another library....."When Stars Look Down", by George Van Tassell.

Mother found the enclosed article about Hawksbill turtles in the February issue of Sunset Magazine.

The library had this "really awful copy about Giant Rock" which they let me copy. Perhaps you might be able to read some of it!

CAN'T FIND ANYTHING ABOUT VAN TASSELL IN THIS STORY ABOUT GIANT ROCK.

FINALLY GOT IN TOUCH WITH JOANNE WILSON BY PHONE BUT SHE CAN'T GIVE ME ANY INFO. ABOUT VAN TASSELL EITHER.

LOVE
ALL OF
TO YOU!
MOM
&
DAD

History of Giant Rock



The following is a copy of "A Brief History of Giant Rock Covering the Last 90 Years, 1887-1977," which was written and published by the late George W. Van Tassel, owner and operator of the Giant Rock Airport, originator and host of the Giant Rock Space Conventions and creator and builder of the Integratron.

The copy was loaned to this publisher by Arthur De La O, of Joshua Tree. De La O filed on his five-acre claim in 1955, and became interested in George Van Tassel and the activities at Giant Rock from his very first trip to the Hi-Desert. He also became a good friend of the late Billy Royal who is mentioned in Van Tassel's history. Royal, who went to school, grew up and lived all of his adult life in Yucca Valley, was surprised to find he was included in the history, said De La O. The full text follows:

"When I came out here in 1947, I became a close friend of Charlie Reche. Later, I bought Charlie's property, which was known as Reche's Wells.

"Charlie Reche had been here since 1887, at which time the people living in the area were all Indians. Most of the information I gathered concerning the history of Giant Rock was from both the Indians and Charlie Reche. So I figure this information is right from the horse's mouth, so to speak, because they were the ones who were here before it became what it is now.

"According to the Indians, this was an Indian Holy Ground, where the North and South Tribes met annually. The Chiefs held their seances and meetings close by the Big Rock, which they called the 'Great Stone,' because to them it was the largest single object in the area. Today, it is still known as the largest single boulder in the world.

"The Indians assembled for their meetings here for up to three days at a time. During their meetings, none of the tribesmen were allowed close by as the meetings, per se, were actually the V.I.P.'s in the tribe. The rest of the people in the tribe had to camp about a mile or so away so as not to be near the actual meeting place.

"I had the honor of being able to speak to the son of an Indian Chief. This man was ten years old when his father put a mark on the Giant Rock, on the North side. The Indians called this mark 'The Sign of the Scorpion.' To the Indian's understanding, this means a good place. Also, wherever an Indian Chief put a sign, no other Indian was allowed to put other signs. This being the reason for only the one sign on the Big Rock.

Whenever one finds an area where there are numerous Indian Hieroglyphics on the rocks, this is an area where Indian children have been practicing the art.

'Charlie Reche, having homesteaded here in 1887, was allowed the privilege of meeting with the Indians many times. Reche's homestead included the area where the Integratron now stands, as well as several acres besides.

"In 1930, while I was still in Santa Monica, a very interesting person arrived at my uncle's garage. This fellow had taken up prospecting because he had been in a fishing fleet and also in the Merchant Marine, and as a result, had acquired too much moisture on his lungs. Therefore, under doctor's orders, he had discontinued these activities where he had to be in fog and moisture all the time. He had a four cylinder Essex car which had a rod knocking in the engine and he had no money.

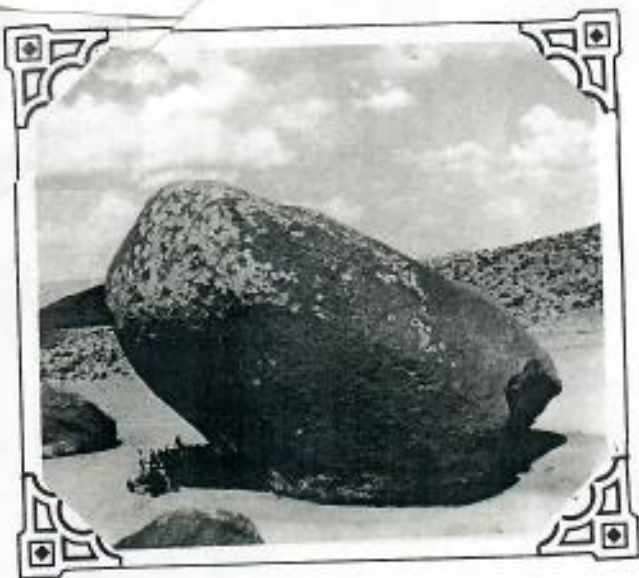
"My uncle, Glenn Paine, had his garage on 2nd Street, just off of Broadway in Santa Monica, across from the Carmel Hotel. He engaged mostly in the selling of overnight parking for the Hotel inside his garage. He also did repair work and was a Buick specialist.

"When I came to California from Ohio, in 1930, to see my uncle, he needed someone to help him. So I stayed with him and that's how I happened to be there.

"This man I spoke of, happened to be Frank Critzer. When he came into my uncle's garage, he was looking for someone to correct that rod knock in his Essex, who would do it without charge.

AT RIGHT. Walter Critzer who built his home under Giant Rock. He needlessly died there in August of 1942.





THE SIZE of Giant Rock, given dimensions, doesn't sound awe inspiring. However given a photograph like the one above, with a large group of people to scale the size, it becomes "one big rock."

"Being interested in mining and having a period of lull during the depression, we just happened to have a little time on our hands when this fellow drove in with his Essex. So, that same day we took him to lunch with us. We discovered he was a very intelligent person and that he did know quite a lot about prospecting. Thus in the course of getting acquainted we became instant buddies, so to speak. My uncle allowed him to sleep in the garage and we repaired his Essex.

"When Frank Critzer was ready to leave, we gave him \$30, which was a lot of money in those days. We also stocked his car full of canned goods and we headed him out. He told us that wherever he would settle down then he'd write to us and also that we would be included in any mining claims he should happen to declare.

"A year went by before we finally heard from him. We had practically given up on him when we received a letter in which he had drawn a map showing how to get to Giant Rock. The following weekend my uncle and I went to Giant Rock to see him.

"Frank had already started to dig under the Big Rock to make a place to live. Banning was the closest town in which one could purchase supplies for building so Frank was getting by with what was there. Too, he had only squatter's rights and a mining claim on Giant Rock. He didn't own the property, for it was government land. By digging under the Rock he could have a place to live without having to purchase materials to amount to anything.

"Frank had shrewdness and comprehension, so he reasoned that if he dug a room under the North side of the Giant Rock, that the boulder would take all summer getting warm and hold the

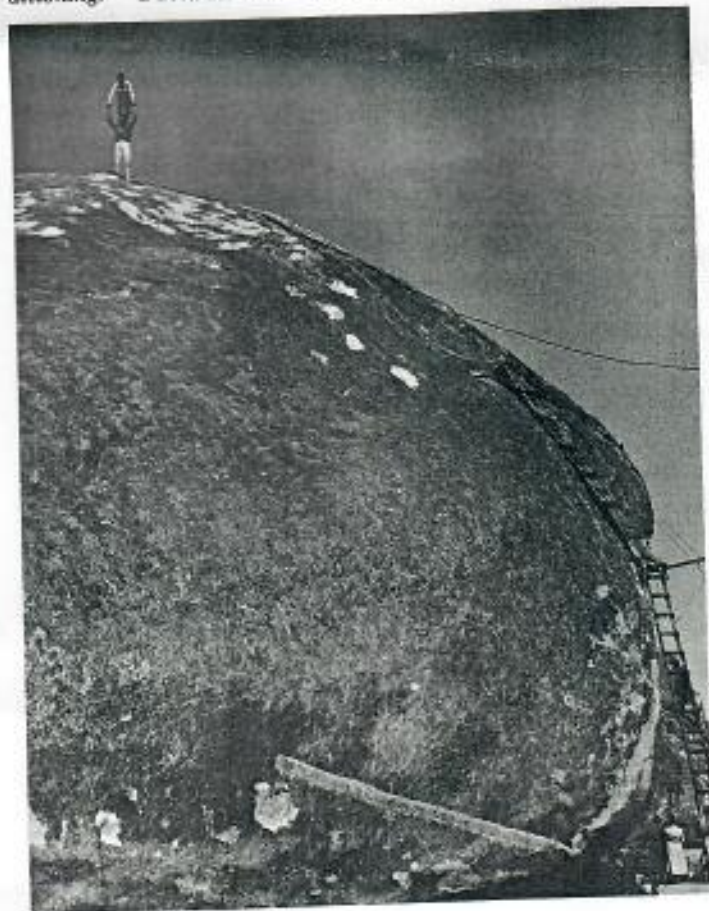
warmth beneath it during the winter. By the same reasoning the Rock would get cold during the winter and keep the room temperature cool during the summer. Thus, there would be little need for heating or cooling. This would amount to six month's delayed thermal reaction.

"This had proved to be good engineering on Frank's part because the maximum temperature under the Rock is 80 F. without any refrigeration in the summer time, and a minimum of 55 F. in the winter time with no heating. The outside temperature will vary from approximately 25 F. to 115 F.

"The Giant Rock covers 5,800 square feet of ground and is seven stories high. The rooms dug out beneath it amount to approximately 400 square feet, so one can readily see that this is a very small fraction of the total area of the bottom side.

"Frank was falsely accused of stealing dynamite, failing to register for the draft, and several other things, in 1942, while the U.S. was at war with Germany. Having a German name, it was assumed by many people that he had to be a German spy in order to live in such a desolate place as Giant Rock.

AGAIN! The scale is immediately obvious. The dark area in the lower right corner is the area where Critzer excavated his home. It was a 900 square foot apartment, with temperatures ranging from a low of 55 degrees to a high of 80 degrees without air conditioning. David Harmon Barney Copley Virginia Coulik



"The only radio Frank Critzer had was one that Charlie Corell (of the 'Amos and Andy' radio comedy team) had given him. I spoke to Charlie later about this as he made frequent trips to Giant Rock. The radio was a little three-dial, A & B dry battery, Atwater Kent, with the tubes exposed and no case around it. It wasn't any good for transmitting messages to Germany, although it was a superhetrodyne receiver (the first efficient receiver to be produced up to that time).

"The stories had generated from some people's erroneous thinking. Frank did have a German name. He had served in the German Navy as a mess boy on a German submarine in World War I. But he had come to our country, worked in our Merchant Marine, and was a naturalized citizen. Besides, he had no further affiliation with Germany whatsoever. But because he did have a big radio antenna on top of the mountain, some people assumed he was using his radio for spying purposes and without first checking with the F.B.I. these people started the rumor that Frank surely must be a spy. Consequently, in August of 1942 three deputies came to Giant Rock, supposedly to take Frank in for questioning.

"I spent many weekends visiting with Frank at Giant Rock. Frank had a big kitchen table, and a big wood-burning cook stove, on which he prepared, cooked and served German pancakes for anyone who happened to stop in. He usually had a case or two of dynamite and a partially opened case under the big kitchen table. We would put our feet on them when we were with him. He also had some caps, as he was doing some prospecting and dynamiting, and he knew how to use these things.

"When the three Deputies came to take Frank in the first thing he noticed was that they were from Riverside County. Giant Rock being in San Bernardino County and Frank being a man of principle, he knew they had no authority in this county and he told them so.

"According to Bill Royal, who had brought the Deputies out here—as they didn't even know where Giant Rock was, Frank after a lot of arguing, said that if they were going to take him in anyway, that he needed to get his coat. When he went into his living quarters beneath Giant Rock to get his coat he pulled the 2 x 4 bar, which he had across the door on the inside to hold it in place, and thus barricaded the door. The Deputies immediately assumed Frank was defying them so they lobbed a tear gas grenade in through the North side window. The unfortunate part of this whole incident was that the grenade landed underneath that table, thus setting off the caps and dynamite. The explosion killed Frank Critzer, blew the windows out, and injured the Deputies.

"Newspapers ran the story that he was a German spy. I had personally talked with the F.B.I., they knew the newspaper stories were not true.



IN the late forties, Life Magazine ran a photo of Giant Rock with an automobile perched atop. Here is a similar photo, just for scale.

Lerrain Goodhall Keleff

"Frank had written a manuscript called the 'Glass Age' which he'd given to a friend to type. In 1936 he had already in print all of the plastics we use today, and some of which we do not have yet. He was an advanced thinker—in his own right with a brilliant mind.

"When I finally had the time from work to come to Giant Rock, after reading about Frank's death in the newspapers, there was nothing left but the hole under the Rock. All of Frank's belongings had been hauled away, including the 4-cylinder Essex. The place was literally stripped. I was working for Douglas Aircraft at the time and about a month had passed before I could come to Giant Rock.

"On numerous occasions, after the death of Frank I came with my wife and family to spend our vacations here camping out—because we all loved this place.

"When the war ended, in 1945, I made application to the Bureau of Land Management—to acquire this property, and wanted to make an airport here. Frank had already cleared an area and many airplanes had landed. However, it wasn't on the airmaps. Being of hard decomposed granite it is a perfect natural runway. But it was not until 1947 when the paperwork which was involved was finally completed and we were able to move to Giant Rock.

"It was in 1953 when we began the weekly meditation meetings in the room under Giant Rock which led to the UFO contacts. This resulted in the information which led to the principles of rejuvenation and to the creation of the Integratron.

"I operated the Airport from 1947 until December, 1975, at which time I sold it to Phyllis and John Brady, who in turn turned it over to Jose Rodriguez and his family in 1977.



GEORGE VAN TASSEL 1910-1970. Author, Inventor and controversial U.F.O. advocate. Some agreed, some disagreed with his Philosophy. None found him boring.

"Giant rock has been known world-wide for a long time for its unusual UFO activities and for the many unmatched Annual Space Conventions which have been held here."

After Van Tassel's death, the government ordered that the hole under Giant Rock be completely filled up and sealed. The small restaurant that Van Tassel had built at the Airport was also ordered to be taken down. But the government cannot erase the memory of the man or the discussions held at Giant Rock. Van Tassel, although he dealt with abstract (and what some believed to be unreal) subjects, was an uncomplicated man who believed and kept the faith.

Van Tassel, who was born in Jefferson, Ohio, on March 12, 1910, sponsored and presided over seventeen Spacecraft Conventions held at Giant Rock. The first one was held on April 4, 1954, and the last on October 10, 1970. Events of this kind seem bound to attract a certain number of "kooks." But at each of his conventions Van Tassel had a number of fascinating and knowledgeable guest speakers and the audience was made up, predominantly, of people vitually interested in the subject of UFOs.

Van Tassel died unexpectedly of a heart attack on February 9, 1978. At memorial services held for him the following March 12, at The Institute of Mentalphysics, Yucca Valley, two of the songs he had composed, "Say I'm Not Dreaming," and "There I Am," were included. Printed on the program was a statement typical of Van Tassel's philosophy and faith:

"And the Lord said Go

*"And I said Who Me?
And he said yes, You,
And I said*

*But I'm not ready yet
And there is company coming
And I can't leave the kids
And you know there's no one to take
my place
And he said you're stalling*

*"Again the Lord said Go
And I said But I don't want to
And he said I didn't ask if you wanted to
And I said*

*Listen I'm not the kind of person
to get involved in controversy
besides my family won't like it
And what will my neighbors think?
And he said Baloney*

*"And yet a third time the Lord said Go
And I said do I have to?
And he said do you love me?
And I said*

*Look, I'm scared
People are going to hate me
and cut me up in little pieces,
I Can't take it all by myself,
And he said where do you think I'll be?*

*"And the Lord said go
And I sighed
Here I am, send me.*

"Casebook of A UFO Investigator"
by Raymond E. Fowler

Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

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CONTACTEES AND CRITICS

In 1950, Frank Scully, a columnist for *Variety* magazine, published *Behind the Flying Saucers*, based upon a lecture Scully had heard by Silas Newton, a self-proclaimed millionaire and Texas oil man who stated that a personal scientist friend of his had been involved with an Air Force investigation of three crashed UFOs. He claimed that the government had retrieved sixteen, four-foot-tall dead occupants from the crashed spacecraft.

Scully's sensational book was probably the catalyst for yet another group that claimed to have been contacted by UFO occupants and taken aboard the flying saucers. Some typical examples:

George W. Van Tassal, one of the earliest contactees, was an aircraft mechanic and flight test engineer. At age forty-two he published a book with the misleading title of *I Rode in a Flying Saucer*.¹ The book makes no mention of such a ride. Instead, it recounts personal telepathic messages, received in trance and through automatic writing, warning earth scientists against exploding atomic bombs.

Orfeo Angelucci, also an aircraft plant technician and an amateur scientific experimenter, had been in poor health from childhood. His book claimed that extraterrestrial beings had chosen him for the first earth contact because of his "higher vibrational perception."² A voice began to communicate religious messages to Angelucci, saying that life on earth was endangered and that the spacemen had come to help mankind. Later, Angelucci claimed that on July 23, 1952, he was actually taken aboard a spaceship and transported to another world, where he was given a new

because of his association with UFOs. These factors plus other pressures were probably conducive to what happened next. On June 13, 1971, Jim was found dead in the desert. A note and a .38 revolver were found beside the body, and it is presumed that he took his own life. Nonetheless, his professional contributions to atmospheric physics and future UFO studies have not gone unrecognized.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. G. W. Van Tassal, *I Rode in a Flying Saucer* (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1952).
2. O. Angelucci, *The Secret of the Saucers* (Amherst, Wisconsin: Amherst Press, 1952).
3. D. W. Fry, *The White Sands Incident* (Los Angeles: The New Age Publishing Co., 1954).
4. D. W. Fry, *Steps to the Stars* (El Monte, California: Understanding Publishing Co., 1956).
5. T. Bethurum, *Aboard a Flying Saucer* (Los Angeles: De Vore & Co., 1954).
6. Personal files.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. I. S. Shklovskii & Carl Sagan, *Intelligent Life in the Universe* (San Francisco: Holden Day, Inc., 1966), pp. 13-18.
11. D. M. Jacobs, *The UFO Controversy* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 130, 131.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
13. J. Vallee, "The Conspiracy Theory," *EASTWEST Journal*, February 1979, p. 40.
14. *The New York Times*, August 1, 1952, p. 19.
15. APRO: 3910 E. Kleindale Road, Tucson, Arizona 85712.
16. E. J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1956), p. 225.
17. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
18. Robertson Panel (now declassified), pp. 18-24, Tab. A (As quoted in: E. U. Condon, *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, p. 525).
19. *Boston Herald*, April 24, 1967.
20. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 220, 221.
21. Resume of telephone conversation between Colonel Stanley, (SAFOI) and Colonel Holum, 4 April 1967, n.a. (typescript at MAFB).
22. U. S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings, Civil Supersonic Aircraft Development (SST)*, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 1-4 March 1971, pp. 587, 592.

"Mysteries Of The Unknown"

"The UFO Phenomenon"

by "Time-Life Books"

Alexandria, Virginia

The laborer listened in wonderment as the skipper described the idyllic life lived by the Clarionites on their own planet. Why, then, he asked, would they want to visit Earth, with all its problems? Because, she explained, the Clarionites wished to reaffirm the values of marriage, family, and fidelity in the face of the "dreadful paganism" that was loose in the land. Like Orthon before her, Captain Rhanes greatly feared the possibility of atomic warfare, which would certainly create considerable confusion, as she put it, in outer space.

Bethurum was entranced by the visitors, finding them "very religious, understanding, kind, friendly and . . . trusting." By his own count, Bethurum met with his new friends on eleven separate occasions before they returned to their paradise somewhere behind the sun. George Adamski was one of the few to believe in Bethurum's tale, and he urged the contactee to rush into print with his story, which Bethurum subsequently titled *Aboard a Flying Saucer*.

With contactees and believers in extraterrestrial visitors proliferating, there arose a need on the part of these people for a gathering place, a need that was met by another contactee named George Van Tassel. During 1954 the forty-four-year-old Van Tassel was managing Giant Rock Airport in California's Mojave Desert north of Yucca Valley, and it was here that he began to construct a four-story-high domed machine he called the Integratron. Its purpose, he explained, was to "rejuvenate the old and prevent aging of the young." The intricate engineering design, which included an electrostatic armature fifty-five feet in diameter, was dictated to Van Tassel by the so-called Space People with whom he claimed to be in constant contact.

Van Tassel had twice been aboard alien craft as a guest, he said, and once had been whirled aloft to meet the Council of Seven Lights, which comprised former earthlings who were now living in a spaceship that was perpetually orbiting



Unarius leader Ruth Norman, also known as Uriel, shows an artist's rendering of the benign space fleet that, followers believe, will help solve the earth's problems.

the earth. When he hosted the first of the annual Giant Rock Space Conventions in the spring of 1954, more than 5,000 devotees appeared. During the day they listened to a nonstop series of speakers, and during the night they waited hopefully—and futilely—for the majestic sight of unidentified flying objects gliding across the sky to honor those gathered below. The conventions were attended by most of the well-known contac-

tees, including Adamski and Bethurum, and resembled the religious camp meetings of the 1920s and 1930s.

Van Tassel enjoyed a long run with his new career as intermediary with the Space People. He died in 1970 after guest appearances on 409 radio and television programs, after writing five books on his out-of-this-world experiences, and after delivering 297 lectures in the United States and Canada. But to his great disappointment, no alien ever showed up at one of his space conventions—which ceased at his death—and the Integratron was never completed.

Still flourishing is the contactee cult called the Aetherius Society, founded in 1956 by George King, a former taxi driver, in London. King, who had an interest in Eastern mysticism, was sitting in a trancelike state one day when he allegedly received messages from extraterrestrial beings. Through them he learned, he said, that Jesus and several saints were alive and living on Venus.

King and the members of his society believe in "thought power" and "prayer power." They have built metal and wooden cosmic batteries, which are charged by the extended hands and prayers of the members. Because the batteries are said to work most effectively from mountains, Aetherians have trekked with their singular apparatus to several uplands, including Mount Kilimanjaro. They claim that their batteries have exerted a power for good in the world and have averted many catastrophes.

Even more flamboyant than the Aetherius Society is the

↑ - UF: 29 Palms - GIANT ROCK
1942

How the Hermit of Giant Rock Sealed His Strange Secret

Nobody Will Ever Know, Now, Whether the Mysterious Desert Rat of the Mojave Was a Smuggler of Aliens, Nazi Saboteur and Spy — Or Just a Harmless Sun Worshiper Trying to Get Away From It All



Frank Kritzee Seated in the Cozy Underground Chamber He Carved for Himself Beneath Giant Rock and Where He Sealed, Possibly Forever, the Secret of Himself and His Mission — With 30 Pounds of Dynamite.

"SHERIFF, you're not taking me out of here alive. I'm going, all right, but you're going with me!"

Frank Kritzer, hermit and cave-man of California's Mojave Desert, bellowed the words in a voice so thunderous that its power is one of the many mysteries of the man which the FBI is trying to solve. Voices of hermits are notoriously feeble from lack of use.

Before Deputy Sheriff Claude F. McCracken, of Banning, California, realized what Kritzer was doing, the mystery man had thrown a detonating switch wired to 200 pounds of dynamite which he had cached in the cave.

The hermit's prophecy was right about himself. He was not only removed dead but in several charred pieces. The blast played strange tricks in that underground chamber whose roof was the bottom of Giant Rock, a boulder, as high as a three-story house.

The first wave of the explosion bent the deputy's body backward until his head and shoulders had almost touched the floor. But just before this could happen, the pressure-wave, rebounding from the wall behind him, lifted McCracken up and bent him in the opposite direction until his face was but a few inches from the ground.

Re-echoing from the wall in front of him, the wave lifted the officer's body and bent it over backward a second time, but not quite so far. Back and forth he vibrated, in a rapidly-decreasing arc, like a horsewhip in the socket of an old buggy.

After what was probably less than a second, the deputy found himself standing on his feet, every shred of clothing, except his shoes, blown from his body which was bleeding from nearly 100 gashes, caused by rock splinters.

He was able to stagger out of the passage and into the arms of his two fellow deputies, Harold Simpson and Fred Pratt.

McCracken saw their mouths working, but no sound seemed to come from their lips. Both his ear drums had been burst.

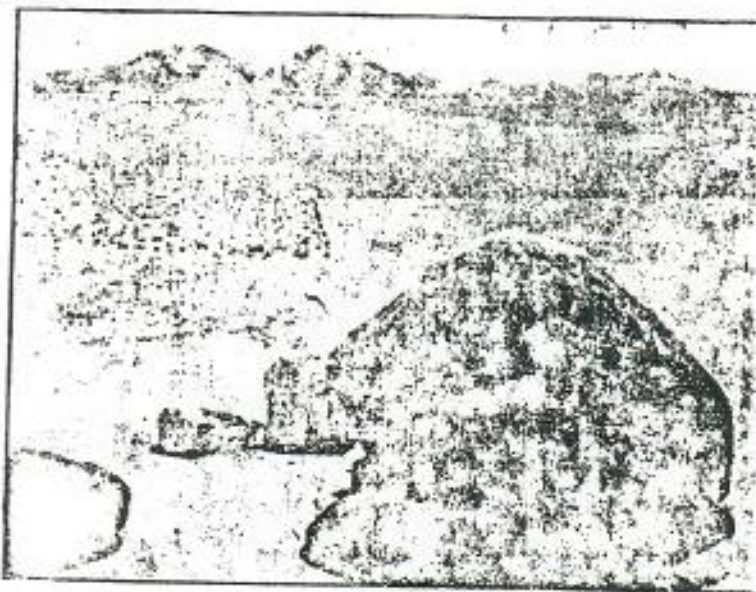
The two uninjured officers were about to attempt the rescue of the hermit, who might have been alive for all they knew, but paused at the sound of a fusillade of shots, as if a lively battle were going on within the cave. This was followed by a torrent of flame and smoke from the passage, as a gasoline storage tank within the cave blew up.

They lost no more time in rushing the injured man to the nearest telephone, where an ambulance was summoned from Banning.

The reason old Kritzer's dynamite failed to take all three deputies with him, was a defect in his wiring, so that only 50 pounds went off, permitting the remaining 150, hidden in an alcove, to sleep peacefully even through the gasoline fire. Did it may have taken away the secret of the desert rat's mysterious purpose in living there.

Yet there remain a few tantalizing clues which the FBI is pursuing and the truth about this man of German origin, may come after he was found in the archives of the Gestapo or perhaps never be cleared up.

NOVEMBER 9, 1942
November 8, 1942



Giant Rock and the Runway of the Lonely Airport Frank Kritzer Working Alone and With Only His Ancient Automobile and a Cave Is at the Left Side of the Largest Boulder. The Whitewashed Carried a Wind Sock. The Mysterious Hermit Did a Good Business to Flying Clubs That Dropped in on Him.

In 1929, a gaunt, sinewy man arrived in the region in a four-cylinder jalopy. He said he was Frank Kritzer, 59 years old, "from back East." Except for a vague mumbling about relatives who did not like him, this was all the man's past that has ever been known.

Presumably he was just another prospector and evidently knew where he was going, which was down the San Geronimo Pass, over the forbidding mesa known as "Devil's Garden," through a canyon in the Little San Bernardino Range and finally into the sun-scorched emptiness of the Mojave Desert.

Then he did the first in a long series of things that did not make sense. He settled at the foot of Giant Rock, a spot known to have no mineral value whatever. The man seemed a true hermit, wishing to have as little contact as possible with his fellow man.

He knew that the section was so worthless that it had never been surveyed and therefore was his for the taking. He made it his property legally by filing claims, though there was nothing to mine.

If the white man scorned the place, it was not so of a long-vanished tribe of pottery-making Indians who for centuries, perhaps thousands of years, had inhabited a cave at the side of the great boulder. The dirt of its floor contains broken fragments of the pottery, its roof is black from smoke of millions of fires and its walls have a patina, formed by sweat and grease, where it has been touched by countless generations of hands and bodies, long since dust.

Kritzer took possession of the cave and immediately began improving the ancient residence by digging a passage under the rock itself. Then he excavated a chamber about 20 feet by 15 and added two alcoves, which he curtained off with any old bits of cloth that

came to hand. He m

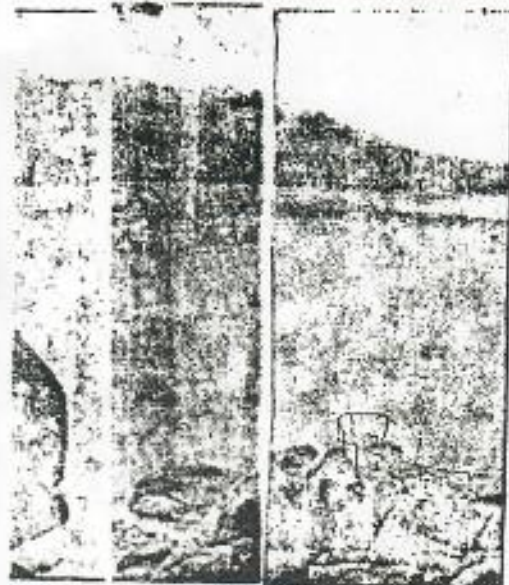
concrete and cut with advantage. The year 70 degrees Fahrenheit the entire year, never degrees above or below

Most hermits are prodigiously industrious, pick, axe, shovel and constructed a flying lake that had dried up after the last ice age

He stuck up a wind sock, installed a gas tank and pump and waited for customers. The first was an Army plane, with engine trouble.

No more business came for some time and it was not until Gu Parrish, manager of the airport at Fair Springs, sighted the landing field on a flight from Las Vegas that he made money. Parrish dared not set a plane down on what might be "an aviator's mirage" until he had visited the place by automobile.

As a result, Giant Rock Airport was "discovered" and did quite a trickle of business with ships from various flying clubs, sell-



Kritzer Fashioned From a Dry Lake Bed, a Crude "Drag." The Entrance to His Washed Cave Beyond Served as a Marker and Business Selling Gasoline and Renting Camp on Him Occasionally.

He made the walls solid with cut wind-
saws at the top.
ranean clamber had one unique
The average temperature was
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or below that point.

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Weird legends arose, as they
always do, around a solitary
figure and the craziest of all may
be true, that he was some sort of
sun worshiper. There were re-
ports that just before dawn, he
would scale the barren hillside
near his rock to greet the rising
sun with stentorian howls, at
the same time beating his chest
like a gorilla. In some such way
he must have built up and main-
tained that tremendous voice,
which he used so rarely in con-
versation.

That was nobody's business,
but other things were. In 1938,
Immigration Officers, watching
the Mexican border, were moved
to investigate Kritzer and his
airport. Various planes, coming
up from Laguna Salada, ghost-
ing across the border at night,
seemed to vanish in the vicinity
of Giant Rock.

It was suspected that the
desert airport might be the land-
ing place for aliens, smuggled
into the United States. Investi-

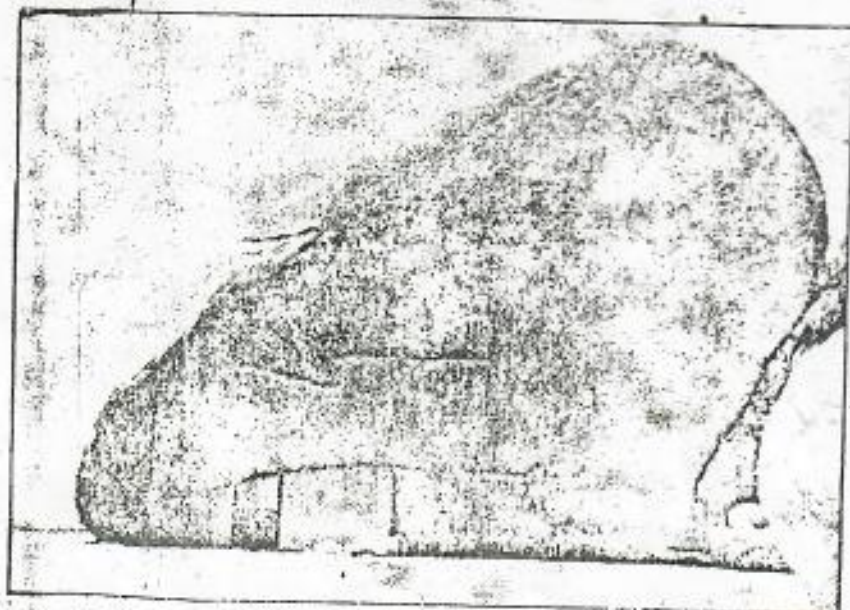
gators actually found a "hangar" for planes,
concealed in a rock fissure, in a near-by moun-
tain-side.

"What's that for?" the officers demanded.

"I hope to do big business here some time,"
the hermit replied.

"Why is it camouflaged with canvas hang-
ings?"

"That ain't camouflage. The canvas hap-
pens to have weathered the same color as
the rock."



Entrance to the Mystery Man's Cave at the Base of Giant Rock,
Showing His Old 4-Cylinder Car and the Porch Where
He Greeted His Few Customers.

The investigators had their doubts but
there was no evidence of law violation, so
they had to let the hermit alone. A more
serious threat to Kritzer's privacy appeared
in 1941, when members of the FBI at San
Bernardino began to take an interest in the
desert recluse.

A guard at the Army Gliding School, in
Twenty-Nine Palms, some 25 miles southeast
of Giant Rock, reported mysterious flares
illuminating the night sky in the direction
of the rock. Since the Army was now occasion-
ally using the Giant Rock field in bomber
maneuvers, the Federal men immediately
looked the place over but found no justifica-
tion for arrest.

Baffled, like the Immigration men, they
went away but, secretly, they kept the hermit
and his place under surveillance. It was this
watchfulness which indirectly led to the visit
of the deputies and Kritzer's dynamite suicide.

For six months before that visit, con-
tractors at Garnet, Twenty-Nine Palms and
other near-by settlements had been complain-
ing about thefts of dynamite and gasoline.

So the deputies called on the hermit and
when McCracken explained the purpose of
the visit, Kritzer said:

"Don't know anything about it."

But McCracken said they'd have to search
the cave and the hermit replied:

"Come. I'll show you."

McCracken followed Kritzer down the
passage to the underground chamber. The
other two were just entering the passage when
a blast of air knocked them flat on their
backs.

The caveman had shown them what he had.
The deputy's wounds on the body were not
dangerous and the hospital doctors believe
that even his ear drums will eventually heal
without much damage to his hearing. Besides
the dynamite within the chamber was
found a high-power rifle and more
ammunition than Kritzer could reason-
ably expect to use in ten years.
Some of this had exploded causing
the shots they heard.

What was he intending to do with
all those cartridges and 200 pounds
of dynamite which he had evidently
stolen so there would be no record
that he had it?

If he was a Nazi saboteur, he may
have planned to lay mines along the
narrow runway of his field, to de-
stroy at least one of Uncle Sam's
bombers and its crew. Or he may
have meant to deliver it to Nazi sabo-
teurs arriving at the field by night.

In support of this theory is the
fact that there was also found in the
chamber, the crushed remains of an
expensive short-wave radio set much
too costly for a hunk in Kritzer's
circumstances to have acquired by ill-
means. His hand, cunningly hidden,
was carried up the hooded hillside
near the rock.

Whatever his motive, the desert
rat is safely interned, now where in
the next world.

THE AMERICAN