



Mystery Stalks The Prairie

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Chapter 6

Law Officers Go On Merry Chase

The idea that helicopters were possibly being used by those mutilating was not new to the Cascade County Sheriff's Department. They considered this possibility many, many times. But the thought had added emphasis when, in the late summer of 1975, they started receiving numerous calls from people who saw helicopters that could not be identified or heard strange noises, some like a helicopter, but saw nothing. There were also instances when they saw a helicopter, but could not hear it.

At almost the same time, the sheriff's office started receiving reports of UFO sightings and of strange bright lights. Officers contemplated the possible connection between unidentified helicopters and cattle mutilations because on several occasions a helicopter was seen hovering over some cattle.

Earthfiles, news category.

There was some question as to whether *helicopter* was an accurate description of the craft. In most actual sightings, the person seeing the vehicle described it as a helicopter, and a number of people saw them at close range. But some of the sightings took place on a day when the wind velocity was high enough that all of the Air Force helicopters were grounded because flying conditions were unsafe.

If Air Force choppers couldn't fly in such weather, what kind of a helicopter could? Some of the unidentified helicopter sightings have been by law enforcement officers themselves, or members of their families.

One of the first reports came from the wife of a former deputy. She told officers that she was in a bedroom in her home caring for her baby when she heard a noise approaching which she described as *like some kind of machinery*.

The noise became very loud, as though the object from which it was coming was located in her back yard. At the same time, she said there was a very bright light - or actually two beams of light - coming into the room where she and the baby were. She said the entire room was lit up. She described the top beam as red and the bottom beam as white.

After a few seconds, the noise diminished *like a combine going down the field* and the light left the room. The sound seemed to indicate that the object, whatever it was, had gone over the house. The woman ran to the opposite side of the house, but did not see the light or anything else.

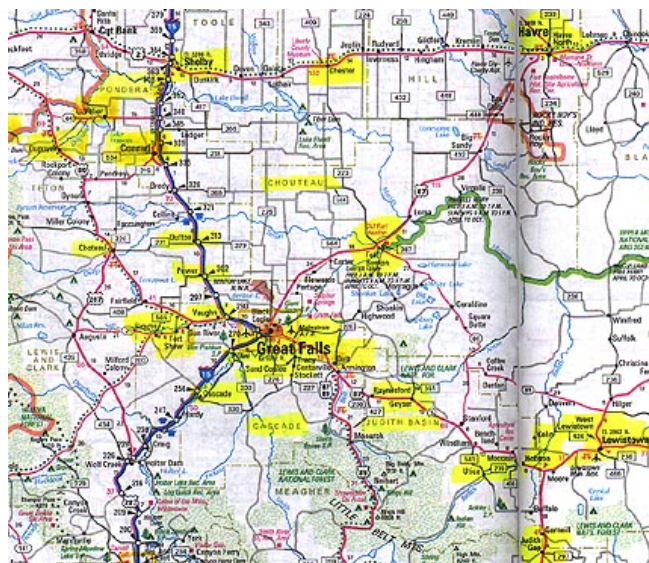
Adding a strange quirk to the incident was the fact that the family dog that ordinarily barked at strangers failed to make a sound, despite the fact his kennel was located directly in front of the window through which the light had come.

The next day a man who lived in the same general vicinity phoned in to report that he had seen a set of red lights close to the ground. He said the lights flashed

for about one minute and then he was unable to see them any more. He was baffled by the fact the lights were in an area where there was no road and they traveled in a southerly direction, which would have been impossible for a regular vehicle since there was a ditch in the way.

Three days after the former deputy's wife reported the strange lights and sound, the wife of one of the present deputies called from her home near Belt to say that a helicopter had just flown over her house at tree top level. She said it circled their band of sheep so she herded the sheep into the barn. She described the craft as navy blue with yellow lettering.

On checking with officers at Malmstrom Air Force Base, deputies found that the base had two navy blue choppers, but they had white lettering. After investigation, it was assumed that this helicopter, which was also seen by another resident of the area, had to be one of the Air Force choppers.



Yellow indicates the towns, counties and areas affected by animal mutilations, unidentified helicopters and mysterious aerial craft during 1974 to 1976. Twenty-seven years later, in 2001 to 2002, Pondera County and surrounding region experienced more than a dozen animal mutilations associated with unidentified lights and other high strangeness. See [Earthfiles 08/18/01](#).

At this time the Cascade County Sheriff's Department started checking with the Air Force, other federal and state agencies, and private businesses to get descriptions of the helicopters that ordinarily flew over the north-central Montana area. A list was compiled to aid officers in trying to establish identification of the helicopters reported.

Deputy Arne Sand, who lives at Fort Shaw west of Great Falls, was arriving home in the late evening of September 15, 1975, when he heard what he thought was a helicopter directly overhead. Although it was a clear night, he was unable to see the craft. Judging from the sound, it was headed in a southerly direction. So, he got back into his car and drove about a mile south and again got out of the car to listen. While he was standing there, he judged from the sound that the craft had flown directly over him. the sound, Deputy Sand said, was not like any helicopter he had heard, but made more of a *quiet whirr*.

That same evening, a ranch couple living to the north of Fort Shaw, near Choteau, reported seeing a helicopter that turned off its lights and flew south as they watched. Whether it was the same one Deputy Sand saw a little later could not be confirmed.

About ten days later, the Police Department at Lewiston, 100 miles southeast of Great Falls, notified the Cascade County Sheriff's office that there were several

helicopters flying over missile sites in that area with spotlights. A check was made immediately with Malmstrom and officials there reported that there were no Air Force choppers in the Lewistown area that night.

A few days later, Undersheriff Jerry Skelton of Judith Basin County reported two cattle mutilations in his area, along with the fact that unidentified helicopters had been seen in the area the same date that the mutilations had taken place. A heifer, killed southeast of Stanford, had two teats removed, a two-inch square of hide taken from the left side of the belly, all blood removed, and the female organs, bladder and tail were gone.

The second mutilation involved a cow on a ranch near Geyser, northwest of Stanford toward Great Falls. This cow was missing the rectal area, lips, tongue, nipples and all but one of her teeth. This second cow was apparently killed during daylight hours. It was verified that the cow was seen alive at 3:30 p.m. and the mutilation was discovered at 4 p.m.

A grey helicopter had been seen in the area between 3 and 3:30 p.m. A green chopper had also been seen circling the area between 4:30 and 5 p.m. There were also reports that two choppers had been seen running together that night. Undersheriff Skelton also received reports of yellow, green and silver choppers with no numbers on them.

It was later learned that a construction company working in the area had a large silver colored helicopter and a smaller yellow one with black letters. It could not be established whether these were some of the same choppers seen by individuals. Nor was it possible to definitely prove a connection between the helicopter sightings and the mutilations.

Farmers were growing uneasy and Cascade County deputies feared a situation might develop like the one reported in Colorado. That state had had many reports of sightings of unidentified helicopters, coupled with a rash of cattle mutilations and ranchers were threatening to shoot down any choppers they saw over their land.

Captain Wolverton went to the Air Force officials at Malmstrom and explained the potentially dangerous situation. He suggested that a spokesman for Malmstrom go on television and tell area residents just what the Air Force helicopters were doing, how they flew at low altitude to check lines between missile sites and the fact they were not in the air at night, except for rescue missions. Air Force officials were glad to do this and the result seemed to be a better attitude on the part of area residents.

However, reports of sightings - or sometimes "hearings" - continued to come in, many of them with no logical explanation. For example, one man who was camping in Moose Creek Canyon near King's Hill southeast of Great Falls, told authorities a helicopter came through the canyon flying so low that it vibrated his mobile trailer, yet he was unable to see it.

A resident of the Milligan area south of Great Falls, reportedly heard a helicopter in his area for an hour and a half, but couldn't see it. Nine helicopters were reported flying together one night in the Hobson, Utica and Kolin area near Lewistown.

A man in Teton County reported that he, his wife and their two sons watched a helicopter hover over their cattle one evening. The craft, with red and blue lights, was only a quarter of a mile away, but they could hear no noise.

A Sand Coulee woman told deputies she saw a black helicopter with no markings flying about 100 feet above her property. The bubble on the front of the craft was of dark or tinted glass, so she was unable to see inside. The sighting was during daylight hours.

A woman living near Great Falls reported that she was watching television when

a helicopter flew over her home. She said it hovered and buzzed the area for about 15 to 20 minutes. She recalled that the same thing had happened about a month earlier, but she had not reported the first incident. Checking revealed that there had been a cattle mutilation in the area at the time of the first incident.

The reports of helicopters hovering over cattle led Cascade County deputies to search further into any possible connection between the choppers and cattle mutilations. It was decided to do a little experiment, using an Air force helicopter. A site was selected north of Great Falls, with the permission of the landowner.

Deputy Ken Anderson, the department's highly trained photographer, was lifted over the experimental area in a "cherry picker" device on a boom-equipped truck. He took pictures of the test area, which was marked with orange cones. The chopper then came in and hovered over the area. As it flew off, Deputy Anderson returned to his "perch" to get an "after" shot of the area.



A U. S. Air Force helicopter from Malmstrom AFB hovers over a field of tall grass in an experiment with the Cascade County Sheriff's Department . Photographs taken before and afterward showed no evidence that the helicopter had been there.

The experiment was performed to help check any association between unidentified helicopters seen in the area and cattle mutilations. Photograph © 1975 by Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

That first site was in grass ten inches tall. The procedure was then repeated over a dirt field, seeded to winter wheat. In both cases, the pictures taken after the chopper left showed no evidence of its being there. However, a shot taken after the chopper landed in the tall grass showed two eight by three inch impressions left by the skids. It seemed safe to assume that unless the helicopter landed, there was no way to prove it had been there.



The same experiment was repeated over a dirt field seeded in winter wheat. Photos taken by Deputy Ken Anderson, Cascade County Sheriff's Office, showed no sign of the helicopter's presence earlier and it was assumed that a helicopter would leave no evidence unless it landed and left its supporting gear tracks on the ground.

As reports continued to come in, Air Force officials at Malmstrom notified Cascade County officials that they would have two helicopters standing by with armed teams, ready to be launched if any helicopters were reported in the vicinity of missile sites. They agreed to keep the sheriff's office informed, if the crafts were launched. This followed a report November 8, 1975, that several people saw a helicopter hovering over a missile site in the Lewistown area. A check was made and no agencies had helicopters working there that night.

The night of December 2-3, 1975, was a busy one for both Air force and Cascade County officials as reports poured in of sightings of both unidentified helicopters and UFOs. During the evening, a report came in from the Juliet missile complex north of Malmstrom that a low flying aircraft, believed to be a helicopter, had been seen in the area. The airman, who reported the incident, said the craft was so low at times that it appeared to almost touch the ground.

Checks with Malmstrom, Great Falls International Airport at Gore Hill and the Air National Guard, revealed no helicopters in that area. Since the craft was headed north toward Dutton and Brady, sheriff's offices in those counties were alerted. Eighteen minutes later, the unidentified chopper was seen east of Dutton over the Diamond Valley Road. It was spotted again 38 minutes later over some Minuteman missile sites 15 miles north of Malmstrom. Thirteen minutes later, the aircraft was seen about ten miles out of Great Falls and headed toward the city.

In the meantime, about 45 minutes earlier, a law officer on patrol reported he was under the chopper and estimated that it was hovering at an altitude of 500 feet. He radioed in that the helicopter was taking off at a high speed, traveling toward Brady and that he was unable to keep up with it. Air Force radar was unable to pick up the craft, but said that their coverage was only to the Dutton area.

Air force officials then reported that there seemed to be more than one helicopter, as they were getting sighting reports from two different missile areas. All law enforcement cars were notified. At 10 p.m., at the request of the sheriff's office, announcements went out over local radio and television stations asking anyone who had seen any helicopters, or observed them landing within the past half hour, to notify the sheriff's office.

The appeal brought an immediate response. One man phoned in to say he had seen a helicopter flying over his ranch at tree-top level the night before. He said

it had navigation lights, but no landing lights. Another man, who declined to give his name, said he saw *something* land about a mile and a half north of Fairfield shortly after the time of the broadcast. It had one landing light, he said. A Havre man phoned in to say he had seen a helicopter four or five miles northeast of Carter that had lights on and was moving toward Great Falls.

A little after midnight, Malmstrom received a report that a helicopter was hovering about 300 feet above a missile site in the Conrad area. It reportedly moved toward Brady, then returned to the Conrad site. An hour and fifteen minutes later, there was a report of a helicopter hovering over a missile site at Vaughn, directly over the overpass. A law officer sent to investigate said he saw a strobe light headed east, but was unable to verify if it was a helicopter. He talked with a sergeant at the missile site who said the aircraft did not sound like a conventional helicopter and had only a single strobe light and no running lights.

Twelve minutes after the law officer saw the strobe light, it was reported by Malmstrom seven miles east of the base and headed in that direction. Seven minutes later, when it was within five miles of the air base, it disappeared. Radar units at both Malmstrom and Gore Hill tracked the vehicle until it disappeared.

A little over an hour later, Air Force officials again reported seeing what they termed a UFO with strobe light near Juliet, the same missile site 25 miles north of Malmstrom where one was seen the previous evening. Eleven minutes later, the sheriff's office received a call from a man who lived in the Highwood Mountains east of Great Falls, saying he had seen a UFO there. This was in the same general area where the craft had disappeared a little earlier. Law officers were dispatched to investigate. the object was not visible on radar at Malmstrom.

In the meantime, the man who reported the sightings was contacted by telephone and he said clouds were starting to cover the object. He added that he had watched the object as it was close to the ground and it appeared to be more yellow than white. As it climbed, it seemed to turn white.

Despite the best efforts of both sheriff's and Air Force personnel, the frustrating game of hide-and-seek ended without any identification of the craft or crafts and no explanation of what they were doing except leading everyone on a merry chase.

To be continued in **Chapter 7 - Chasing Lights in the Sky**

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