



ANCIENT SKIES

"Come Search With Us!"

Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society

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LAKE PETHA - WE FINALLY FOUND IT!

BY GENE M. PHILLIPS, Founder of the Society

We arrived in Tenosique during the dry season, and the full moon which brightened the clear evening sky augured a beautiful morning - at least so said the local soothsayers. By midnight it was raining cats and dogs and the downpour continued for 36 hours! I wondered what it would be like in the rainy season.

Guillermo (Willy) Stein, the leader of our Ancient Astronaut Society Member Expedition to the Lacandon jungle, had cancelled our wake-up call to let us sleep, but we were all in the dining room by 8 AM, hoping the rain would stop so we could fly into the jungle. But we soon learned (again from the locals) that this was a "norther" coming off the Gulf of Mexico and we could expect clear skies in 60 hours - not before!

What to do? It was March 1, 1982 and we were pinned down in the San Juan Hotel in Tenosique, Tabasco, Mexico. The only comforting thought was that if we could not fly out, neither could the Presidential candidate, Miguel de la Madrid, fly in, as he was scheduled to do. We certainly did not want to be caught up in the midst of a Presidential campaign rally.

After a leisurely breakfast we settled down to getting acquainted with our travelling companions, swapping stories, looking out the window to see how hard it was raining; until finally Willy Stein produced a guitar and the newest member of the Ancient Astronaut Society, Jan De Vos, entertained us with song and music until his fingers became too sore to play, some eight hours later. A Belgian who has lived in Mexico for nine years, De Vos is a university professor who has authored a history of the Lacandon Indians of Chiapas, Mexico. He joined our expedition at Palenque for the express purpose of visiting Lake Miramar, our destination and scene of the ruthless massacre of thousands of Lacandones by the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th Century. On this rainy morning, Jan was regaling us with Spanish and Mexican songs as well as ditties from his native country.

In the early afternoon a weather-beaten, middle-aged gentleman with a twinkle in his eye appeared in the dining room. Pablo Montanez, a professional cartographer, wrote a book on the plight of the Lacandon Indians entitled *La Agonia de la Selva* (The Agony of the Jungle), as a result of which he had met the Lacandon historian, Jan De Vos.

Jan, Montanez and Willy Stein began discussing the questionable future of the Lacandones and the jungle itself, pointing out that thousands of acres of jungle are cleared and burned each year and turned into pasture land. It soon became apparent that Montanez probably knew more about the topography of Chiapas than anyone since Frans Blom, hav-

ing used aerial reconnaissance to locate rivers and lakes, and he knows the Indians and their language.

We could hardly wait to ask him the crucial question: "Have you heard of Lake Petha?" We anticipated his answer: "'Petha' is the Indian expression for 'round lake'. There are a lot of pethas in this area."

We explained to Montanez that for three years we had searched for the Lake Petha described by the Austrian explorer, Teobert Maler, in 1898. We told him of Maler's precise account of leaving Tenosique on foot, crossing and recrossing the swollen River Chocolja and its tributaries, and arriving at Lake Petha, which was only 4 or 5 leagues beyond.

Maler had described the lake as having an almost circular basin more than two kilometers in diameter, which together with the western arm of the lake totalled six kilometers in length. He had found the lake to be deep enough to accommodate steamships, and on the distant shore of the round basin, a waterfall plunged into the lake. Using Frans Blom's 1953 map of the Lacandon region of Chiapas, we carefully followed Maler's directions and concluded that Lake Santa Clara, near the Usumacinta River at Chiczapote, had the proper size and shape. (See *Ancient Skies* 7:1). We knew we were wrong when we flew over Santa Clara in 1981.

Further research and discussions with local pilots convinced us that Miramar in southern Chiapas was the only lake large enough and deep enough to fit Maler's description. We made contact with Willy Stein, an engineer whose avocation is to conduct expeditions into the Lacandon jungle and to Miramar. (See *Ancient Skies* 8:1).

After months of preparation, we were on our way; however, when we gathered at O'Hare Field in Chicago for the present trip, Beatrice Kusch, one of our experienced travellers, whispered to me, "I think we are going to the wrong lake." Having re-read Maler's account just the night before, I agreed. It was now obvious to us that Miramar is much too far to the south to have been reached by Maler.

Pablo Montanez studied our copy of Frans Blom's map and then informed us, "Of course, we know now that Blom's map is not entirely accurate. It lacks a lot of detail and he did not attempt to show the exact shapes of lakes, or even to include them all. Your Lake Petha is not shown on Blom's map." No wonder we could not find it!

Montanez then began to draw for us a very precise map of the area starting with Tenosique, the Usumacinta River, the Chocolja River and then he drew a road running roughly parallel with the Usumacinta, but considerably to the west. He drew in Lake Naja, Lake Metzadoc and Lake Itzonocu, then nearby he drew a lake not shown on Blom's map: "This is Lake Petha!" Then he inserted the village of Santo Domingo near the road, and drew a road from the village to connect with Lake Petha.

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Montanez continued, "I have been to Lake Petha. The road is good all the way to Santo Domingo, with only a half mile of dirt road to the lake. You can make the trip easily in one day. It is only a two hour drive each way from here."

We were teeming with excitement. We turned to Willy Stein - if we cannot fly out of Tenosique the next day, perhaps we could drive to Lake Petha? Willy's typical answer, "Why not?" He went to the phone to see if arrangements could be made.

We realized that it would be difficult to obtain transportation for 13 people on such short notice, especially in Tenosique and in bad weather. But we were determined to go, if at all possible, and if we could not fly into the jungle the next day.

We were finishing a very late lunch when Willy was summoned to the hotel lobby. We kept our fingers crossed until he returned.

"We have transportation, if you want it," Willy advised. "Look out the window."

All we could see through the driving rain was a one-ton cattle truck, with a tarpaulin stretched over the stake bed. The cattleman was willing to drive us to Lake Petha, and back, for US\$250.00, take it or leave it. Of course we took it; we were delighted to have this opportunity to at last find the long lost Lake Petha!

It was still raining the next morning when we left the hotel at 6 AM sharp, but by the time we crossed the Usumacinta River, the rain had stopped and our spirits soared. Jan De Vos led us in song. We were huddled on narrow benches that had been hastily installed in the back of the cattle truck, which was covered with the canvas. We could not see where we were going - only where we had been.

"We sure were lucky to get this truck!" Willy Stein exclaimed, and all agreed. We were off for adventure in search of the elusive Lake Petha!

After fifteen minutes of paved road, we turned off the main highway and the truck stopped at a small village. Apparently the driver was seeking directions. After a few minutes of consultation, the driver informed us that the rain had made the road pretty bad, that it was 100 kilometers to the small village of Santo Domingo, where we would turn off to the lake. It would take at least four hours each way! Did we still want to go? Of course! It was only 6:30 in the morning, we had all day and plenty of time to be back at the hotel in time for dinner with no problem - or so we thought!

Immediately after leaving the village, the road became difficult. It was gravel and full of chuck holes. The driver made good time, but every now and then he braked quickly for a mud hole, bouncing us off our already precarious benches. It was easier to stand - at least for a while. Then we alternated standing, then sitting, then changing places, and holding on for dear life when the truck plowed through another hole or rut. After two hours of this agony, we made a rest stop and were informed that we had come more than halfway. We had reached the point of no return!

We tried not to think of what lay ahead: at least two more hours to get to the lake; then four more hours to return. When would we eat? We finally reached Santo Domingo, and turned off the "main" gravel road onto a narrow, muddy road twisting into the dense jungle. At one difficult steep grade the vehicle stopped, its wheels spinning wildly in the slick mud. After a few minutes of wheel spinning, we were informed that we must get out of the truck and walk ahead. As we alighted, we stepped into several inches of yellow mud and our new boots, bought especially for this trip, got their first, but not last, baptism of mud.

The truck managed to slip-slide up the incline and made it to the top, where we climbed back into the truck, this time carrying great globs of mud in with us.

After about two miles of this torture, the truck came to a stop at the bank of a swollen stream, beyond which was a Tzeltal Indian village. Normally the truck could have forded the stream and gone into the village, but the heavy rains had made the ford impassable.

"O.K. All out!" Willy ordered. "This is it."

As we surveyed the situation, it became obvious that the way across was on a large log which was almost completely submerged. On the other side, we asked the Indians if there was a lake beyond their village. The answer, "Yes, about two leagues beyond the mountain." (We had learned that a "league" is the distance an Indian could walk in one hour.) At least a two hour walk for us, each way!

"Still want to go?" Willy asked. It was unthinkable to have come so far under such grueling conditions and not get a look at Lake Petha. We agreed.

The Indians were friendly enough, but they were teen-agers who had no authority to let us pass through their village. The adults were working in the fields. One of the boys asked if we had a permit to enter. No, of course not, a permit from whom? Why, the government of course. They could not let us proceed without a permit.

We began to walk slowly through the village in the direction of where we thought the lake might be. It was obvious that we had no chance of finding the lake without a guide. Finally, the boys stopped Willy and took him aside. We waited. After a while a man neatly dressed in a white shirt and grey trousers appeared and introduced himself as the local schoolmaster. He was very affable. He knew where the lake was. Of course he could guide us there. He wanted no fee, but it would be nice if we could make a small donation to the school. "Of course," Willy replied. The "permit" was obtained.

We followed the smiling schoolmaster to the outskirts of the village, through a cattle pen, over barbed-wire fences, through maize milpas, and then found ourselves in the midst of a deep jungle. The rain-soaked trail was filled with mud and cow manure. Our new boots were now totally covered with black, stinking mud!

Emerging from the jungle, we climbed the side of a steep mountain, where the Indians were felling huge mahogany trees. Every now and then a tremendous crash resounded close by.

The jungle growth became thicker again in the forest and many large trees had fallen or had been cut. It was extremely difficult to negotiate this passage. Only by crawling on hands and knees over and under the logs were we able to get through.

Our smiling guide had so preceded us that we became lost in the jungle just a few feet from the shore line. We waited until we were "found" and then we saw it - our first view of Lake Petha! And unbelievably, there at the water's edge was an old cayuco (dugout canoe) just as Maler had described almost 100 years before. We doubted if it was the same cayuco, but it could have been.

We were somewhat disappointed because we had no vantage point from which we could see the broad expanse of the lake. We could see only a small part. Nor could we see the waterfall or any of the landmarks Maler had described.

A huge mahogany tree, which had fallen into the lake, afforded a "pier" which enabled some of us to get a little better view of the lake. Willy's warning that we should not go out on the log came too late and one of our party could report first hand that the water was warm and about ten feet deep!

The return march was exhausting for most of us. Our boots were soaked through with mud and when we finally reached the river, we walked right in and sat down for a soothing rest in the cool water, while washing the mud from our boots and clothing.

It was about 4 PM when we arrived back at the "main" gravel road, where we stopped for lunch at a small "greasy spoon." Willy Stein said the food

was good, but most of us had little appetite for it. We preferred to wait for dinner at the San Juan Hotel, where the food was uncommonly good.

After the rest, we climbed back into the truck for the long return trip. Since there was no light in the truck, we were in total darkness during the last two hours, but this afforded an excellent view of the brilliant evening sky. Jan led us in song: "It's a long way to Tenosique, it's a long way to go." This of course to the tune of Tipperary. Then Willy Stein broke us up with laughter when he exclaimed in all seriousness, "We sure were lucky to get this truck!"

When I suggested to Willy that he probably would never take another group to Lake Petha, he looked at me in surprise and gave his classic: "Why not?"

It was almost 9 PM when we straggled into the lobby of the San Juan Hotel. We learned that the weather forecast was for clear skies the next day and the pilot had left a message that we should be prepared to fly out early the next morning.

I was disappointed that we had exerted so much effort to get to Lake Petha and then could see so little of it. In fact, we were not sure that we had even seen Maler's lake. I asked Willy if it would be possible for us to fly over the lake on our way to Miramar to satisfy ourselves once and for all that we had really found Petha. His answer: "For a fee, everything is possible." The arrangements were made.

There was not a cloud in the sky the next morning. The 60 hour curse had passed. Capitan Pedro Mandujano had been instructed to fly over Lake Petha en route to our destination. After a thrilling flight through the Boca de Cerro Canyon of the Usumacinta River (we had to look up to see the tops of the towering canyon walls), we diverted westerly. After ten minutes, there it was - a royal blue jewel, glistening in the morning sunlight. There was the round basin about two kilometers in diameter; a long arm extending westerly from the main basin; a small island to one side, and the waterfall; all exactly as Maler had described. The dark blue water proved that it was deep. Capitan Mandujano said there were paintings on the cliffs in the lake, but that would have to wait for another time. We circled low over our lake once more, then headed the small Cessna for Lake Miramar with a feeling of accomplishment.

MORE ON THE CRYSTAL SKULL OF LUBAANTUN

BY GEORGE FATHMAN*

The story of the crystal skull in Ancient Skies 8:5 triggered a great deal of interest for me when I read that it had been analyzed by Hewlett-Packard. I sent the article to my good friend at H-P, Larry LaBarre, to see if he knew about it. To my amazement, he not only did but had taken part in the analysis of the skull. He sent me a tape recording of his participation. Here is his fascinating account:

"Sunday evening, February 7, 1982. What a beautiful article on the crystal skull. I do know a lot about it. I was with Hewlett-Packard and I can tell you about that crystal skull - it's interesting. It came to H-P about ten years ago, or maybe a little longer. We looked it over and analyzed it very carefully. We had the means of looking at the crystals and analyzing them for their X, Y and Z axes. Right and left is one axis, up and down another, and vertical the third. We can analyze for these axes and find out just where they are. Actually we built a machine in our department for such work. We probably have the greatest ability of looking into the formation and working with crystals of anybody in the nation, so people come to us when they want a crystal analyzed. I suppose that is why Frank Dor-

land brought his crystal skull to us. Actually, it is Miss Mitchell-Hedges skull. She had loaned it to Dorland, who then lived north of San Francisco, in Mill Valley, and he brought it to H-P.

"We analyzed the crystal skull for the X, Y and Z axes and found it to be composed of 3 or 4 different growths. Since each growth has an axis, we could determine how many growths there were.

"The crystal skull is about the size of a human skull - rather big. In analyzing its several growths, we found that its growths are all from one central headquarters, but it was one, solid crystal. We also discovered that the skull is cut with the jaw intact - in other words, from the same piece of crystal. Now, let's talk a little about crystal. A crystal is very hard on the Mohs scale. From 0 to 10 all hardnesses exist, with diamond being the hardest and chalk being the least hard. This crystal is about 9 on the Mohs scale. Nothing will touch it except diamond, as far as cutting it is concerned. Yet, some ancients have cut this crystal so as to form a skull out of it. Not only that, but they cut that jaw out of the same piece of crystal and the hinge points up in the jaw back in there are still hinging. They did not disrupt or break the crystal in the process of making the skull and the removable jaw. With that hardness, that's truly miraculous. Let me point out to you why it is so miraculous: crystals have stresses in them, especially when composed of more than one growth, and because of these stresses, when you touch the crystal with the head of a knife, it could fall into chunks - break, that is. You cannot cut it because it would shatter. Yet, somebody was so careful in making this crystal skull from one solid piece of crystal that they never touched it hard enough in the process of cutting it to break it. I'm not saying that this particular crystal would have broken if hit that hard, because they don't all break, but that is a chance you take. The proof is that this one was cut by some method and it still exists.

"We analyzed the surface of the skull and found that it was ground on the surface with three different grits. It was finished with a grinding process. We also found that there is a prism, sort of carved at the back of the head and down below the back of the skull, so that any light entering the eye sockets radiates out through the back of the head. Also, anything coming from the head comes out through the eyes. Look into the eyes and you can see the entire room in either eye. Isn't that clever? I don't think anyone at Hewlett-Packard realized what had been involved in producing that skull, other than myself.

"Frank Dorland gave talks on this crystal skull and has taken pictures of the crystal with a 100 power microscope, focused a few centimeters within the head, then again a few more centimeters, and so on, to look at what the crystal is composed of inside. I saw those photographs displayed on a screen and believe me, they are psychedelic pictures to end all psychedelics I have ever seen - they are so beautiful.

"Many people who have considered this skull do not seem to question very deeply why it was made and simply say that it was carved to scare people with. Can you imagine? Anyone carving a crystal that hard to carve which we with our modern technology might take 100 or 200 years to carve, just to scare people? I think our past civilizations were more intelligent than we give them credit for and that they created the crystal skull purposely for some reason unknown to us."

Larry LaBarre is still with Hewlett-Packard, and nearing age 65. He is involved in some fascinating projects which he told me about on the tape. I think you would be interested in them:

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"I like very much what I am doing at H-P. I am building a robot right now - it's finished mechanically, the part I am doing. Only the electronics remain to be done.

"I am also building a different kind of typewriter which will write 2 or 3 times faster than any typewriter before, because the head will not move - only the paper will move, up and down and back and forth. Paper moves a lot faster and a lot easier than a head with its motor, a solenoid and things necessary to make it type. It's revolutionary because everything stays in one spot, not sprawled out the length of the typewriter. No carriage has to move. The only thing is that there must be wings for the paper to be on when it moves to the left and right. I've got the typewriter designed, but it is not built yet. I'd like to finish that project before I quit.

"Also, Dave Packard is building a marineland down here in Cannery Row. It will be the biggest aquarium in the world - the most modern in the last 20 years. I understand they have the first building finished. It is entirely over the water and people will be able to descend into the water to actually see the fish. Dave told me he might want me to do a little mechanical work with them."

*Mr. Fathman's address is 4600 Monroe Ave., N.E., No. 69, Salem, Oregon 97301 USA. For further reading see The Crystal Skull, by Richard Garvin, published in paperback by Pocketbooks, New York.

MEMBER EXPEDITION TO EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA - NOVEMBER 1982

Arrangements are now complete for a most unusual and adventure-packed Member Expedition beginning on Sunday November 7, 1982 when the group will depart Chicago for Vienna, Austria, the site of the Ancient Astronaut Society's Eighth World Conference. Arriving Monday afternoon the group will have three full days before the Conference to enjoy the sights and sounds of the old-world capital, sometimes called the "City of Song." Organized tours by private motorcoach will include visits to the Hofburg, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Bevedere Garden, the Spanish Riding School, museums, music halls and the 1400 room Schonbrunn Palace, summer home of the ruling Habsburg family. A special evening tour will include a visit to the Prater, the Viennese fair-ground on the "blue" Danube, featuring a giant Ferris Wheel with boxcar-size gondolas; then on to Cobenzl and to Grinzing. Another tour will include an excursion to the Vienna Woods, the Seegrotte, the Cistercian Abbey Heiligenkreuz, Mayerling and the Spa of Baden.

Erich von Daniken, author of the world best seller, Chariots of the Gods? and many other books in the ancient astronaut field, will host the two-day conference on November 12 and 13 at the Vienna Hilton Hotel. About 500 persons are expected to attend the gala banquet at the close of the conference.

Sunday November 14 the Member Expedition will fly directly to Amman, capital city of Jordan, with its Great Mosque, the Archaeological Museum and the ruins of the Roman Amphitheatre, the Odeon and the Forum. After a tour to the Greco-Roman ruins of Jerash, the group will drive south along the mountain road via Madaba, Mt. Nebo and Kerak to Petra, the "rose-red city half as old as time." The Swiss explorer, John L. Burckhardt, disguised as a Bedouin sheik, "discovered" the lost city of Petra in 1812. In 1836, John Lloyd Stephens became the first American to visit Petra. A member expedition of the National Geographic Society went to Petra in 1934.

Petra is reached on horseback through the Siq, a narrow chasm twisting for over a mile between 100 foot high cliffs, which ends abruptly at the so-called "Treasury," an enormous Greco-Roman style building facade, came out deep into the living rock.

The group will spend one and a half days exploring the many fantastic sites of Petra and will overnight at Nazzal's Camp, the site of Agatha Christie's thriller "Appointment with Death."

Back in Amman on November 18, the group will drive into Israel, via Jericho to Jerusalem, holy city for Christians, Jews and Moslems. Two full days will be spent visiting the numerous sites of Jerusalem and its environs, with an excursion to Bethlehem and Hebron.

On Sunday November 21, the expedition will depart Jerusalem for Tel Aviv and a surprise flight to Cairo! Because of air connections, the group will have a 12 hour layover in the Egyptian capital, time enough for lunch at the Mena House, a visit to the Pyramids and Sphinx at Gizeh, a city tour and after dinner, a late night flight to Nairobi, capital city of Kenya in East Africa.

After a few hours of rest, the group will enjoy an excursion to the Nairobi National Park for their first views of the wildlife. Next day, in private minibuses, the group will drive north to Nanyuki, crossing the equator en route, to the posh Mount Kenya Safari Club and an afternoon of leisure. The perpetual snow-cap of Mt. Kenya with its 12 glaciers offers a breath-taking sight.

The next day the group will drive to Lake Naivasha and spend the day and continue on Thursday, November 25 to the Masai Mara National Reserve for two days of game viewing. Game is plentiful here with a fantastic wealth of plains animals shared with the Serengeti Park in bordering Tanzania. Wildebeest, zebra, gazelle and other plains game are in vast numbers, along with the predatory lion, leopard and cheetah. Elephant, buffalo, rhino and hippo are also plentiful. The Mara Serena Lodge will provide a Thanksgiving dinner for the group.

Back to Nairobi on November 27, the group will depart for London in the wee hours of the morning of November 28, arriving in Chicago the same day.

But wait, there is more! For those with more time, an optional trip is offered to the Mediterranean Island of Malta, with a stopover in Rome. Early Sunday morning November 28, this group will arrive in the Italian capital with time enough for a quickie visit to the Colosseum, the Forum, St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel.

A short flight from Rome will bring the travelers to Valetta, capital city of Malta. Two and a half days should be plenty of time to see all the ancient ruins of this fantastic little island, with its now-famous "cart-ruts." (See Ancient Skies 8:3). The group will depart Malta in the morning of December 1 and after a short stopover in London will arrive in Chicago the same day at 4:45 PM.

Members in the United States, Mexico and Canada can join the expedition in Chicago. Others can join the group in Vienna on Sunday November 14 and end the journey in Nairobi, Malta or London.

Anyone interested in participating in this adventure-packed expedition should contact the Society headquarters immediately for prices and a detailed itinerary. Recommended reading for the trip:

1. Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea and the Holy Land, by John Lloyd Stephens.
2. Signs of the Gods?, by Erich von Daniken.
3. National Geographic Magazine: Feb. 1935, Dec. 1963, Dec. 1964, Dec. 1965, Dec. 1967, June 1968, Dec. 1968, Feb. 1969, June 1969, Sept. 1977.

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