

Memorial Service

For

John Gilbert Prentiss

April 24, 1943 – February 13, 2005

Program:

Saturday, April 30, 2005

12:noon - *The Mesita de Juana Lopez Harmonic Power Boulder*

- Introduction and prayer
- Prayers and remembrances of John
- Closing prayer

3pm - 6pm -- *Evangelo's, 200 W. San Francisco (1 block west of downtown Plaza, 505-982-9014)*

- Celebration of John's Life with music and food
- Remembrances of John



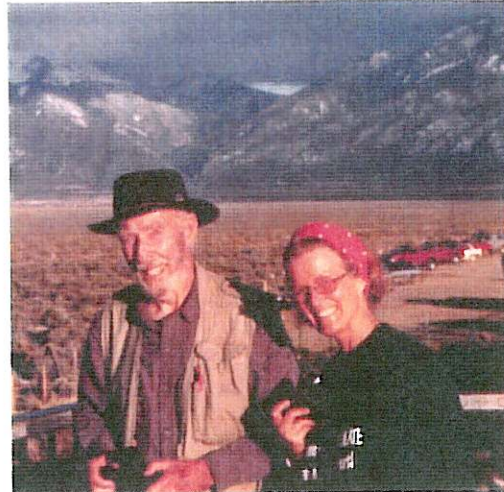
Card sent to Jen by Dad in January '05.

The Peace of Wild Things Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives
may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great
heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
and I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

From Dad, on Brigitta Prentiss' death, December 15, 2000:

I found a poem this morning by a 13th century Sufi mystic -- in the introduction to the Dhammapada -- you have a copy. He addresses the issues poetically, and makes the case for pursuing God. It is the best thing I can find at the moment to help you to understand that while this is a very sad time for all of us, including Brigitta, it is not a time to fear. We fear the unknown, by nature, but we should also be fully conscious of the fact that we are physically and spiritually part of the Eternal, Creation, God. The beauty of Creation is all the evidence of God's love that we need. Until you embrace that realization, you may live more or less in fear of death.



John's father Sam with Brigitta

"... why oh travellers are you asleep...With each moment a soul and a spirit is setting off into the Void.

From these stars like inverted candles, from these blue awnings of the sky
There has come fourth a wonderous people, that the mysteries may be revealed.

A heavy slumber fell upon thee from the circling spheres:
Alas for this life so light, beware of this slumber so heavy!

O soul, seek the Beloved, o friend, seek the Friend,
O watchman, be wakeful; it behooves not a watchman to sleep.

On every side is clamour and tumult, in every street are torches and candles,
For tonight the teeming world gives birth to the world everlasting.

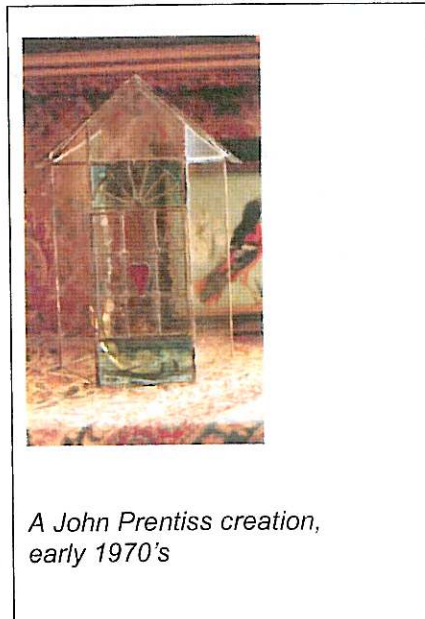
Thou wert dust and art a spirit, thou wert ignorant and art wise."

**Excerpt from
Homage to Brigitta
By John Prentiss**

Death as an end is ego's illogical fear
In the darkness of Love unrealized,
Frightening detached souls with extinction,
In the faithless finality of the great unknown.

Brigitta brightened the lives of those who knew her,
Always a vibrant child of God to me,
Celebrating the Soul of the World
With luminous cheer and enthusiasm.

As sure as the Divine Spirit of the Universe
Lives beyond the veil of life, Brigitta lives beyond life,
Basking in some romantic realm of Paradise
Yet to be revealed to earthbound selves.



*A John Prentiss creation,
early 1970's*

*The Mesita de Juana Lopez
Harmonic Power Boulder*

In October, 1997, while John and Brigitta lived in their remote straw-bale and tire home outside of Madrid, New Mexico, they addressed a letter to Dr. Sylvester Elgato, Director of the Waldo Mesa Institute for Harmonic Balance -- center for the study of the planetary locus of Harmonic Convergence. The letter reads in part:



"We are writing to inform you that we have made an astounding discovery on the Mesita de Juana Lopez, some three miles west of Waldo Mesa that will no doubt be of great interest to you. Specifically, it is a one ton boulder that has so profoundly been affected by the converging lines of cosmic energy that the blue green crystalline matrix of the boulder can actually be seen to luminesce by those properly attuned. Terrestrial and extra-terrestrial new age researchers from Sedona, Arizona, emphatically assert that the Mesita Harmonic Power Boulder (MHPB) emits a green and gold aura visible in daylight, and that it luminesces in pulsating intensities resonant with the convergent energies at exponentially powerful harmonics.

The inexorable powers of alignment inherent in this amazing boulder are so great that many are able to attain instantaneous chi alignment, chakral balance and aural alignment eventuating in spontaneous cosmic consciousness... simply by standing within ten feet of the MHPB. Sitting or laying directly on the boulder is the ultimate enchantment, and must be done only under close supervision, as permanent and irreversible terrestrial dissociation can occur in minutes. I myself discovered this phenomenon only after falling into a trance from which I was regrettably rescued after prolonged exposure of over 14 days. We suspect that your highly sensitive instruments long ago sensed this force west of Waldo, and we trust that this disclosure will assist you considerably in understanding certain anomalies in the vectors of specific flux lines on your instrument readings and in your quantum calculations."

In Dad's words: "We had much fun with the Harmonic Power Boulder -- a whimsical, beautiful birthday gift Brigitta gave me in 1997. This April first, friends and I relocated the boulder to a spot of unparalleled beauty, where Brigitta was most at home. Her ashes are buried beneath it in pottery we had together crafted when we lived nearby. Those wishing to pilgrimage to this sacred site in the Land of Enchantment are welcome."

Remembrances:

From those unable to attend the memorial service:



What an extraordinary man . . . an unusually gifted man I think. . . I personally feel such a profound loss of a friend that I hardly have the means to deal with it. John was truly a good and kind man in a difficult world. *Shanti Norris, friend.*

I just wanted to add that we felt he was a creative genius who saw the world in unique and exciting ways. . . The world needs people like John to keep us from being too similar. It is part of the adaptive genius of the human race that makes us able to cope with incredible odds. *Regina Schwabe, Pamplin, VA neighbor and friend.*

He was a wonderful, gifted man, sensitive and caring. I pray for him, may he find peace. *Ana Maria Mihalcea, friend.*

(John) was a fireworks in life. . . I met him when I was in my twenties and before I married Tylden and have so many fine memories.... He always did a small repair or sent a gift for the hospitality. I picked him up in the middle of the night from Marin General Hospital. He paid my way to San Diego as well as the rest of the Dixieland band with whom he played when he lived in Columbia. He was celebrating going on a "sabbatical" and wanted the band to play together again before he left. The remembrances form a jigsaw puzzle of places, laughter, serious conversation and snapshots of visits from all over the country. . . His mind was brilliant, his laughter was delightful and his accomplishments never ceased to astound me. [He was someone] on whom I could count for a thoughtful answer, advice or suggestions. My sincerest feelings from my heart to celebrate a man I held close in my heart as my oldest male friend. *Renee Powers, friend.*

John and I went to the Schodack Central School together. I forget when he came exactly, but we were in the high school together for at least 3 years. I will never forget an abusive math teacher named John Sullivan who terrorized many of us. The poor man needed anger management. He would boil over with rage at the slightest infraction in his class- if he asked you a question and you got the answer wrong he would assault you physically. One day he pulled that on your Dad who was certainly not a violent man-I think your Dad was a junior at the time. Your Dad fled the classroom and ran to the principal's office to complain with Sullivan in hot pursuit. As Sullivan came at him, your Dad punched him so hard Sullivan went flying into a 4 tiered bookcase and knocked the cases and the books all over the principal's office. At this point the principal broke things up but that incident made your Dad into the student's hero because he had the guts to do what many of us wanted to but never had the courage and that was to deck that SOB. He really had it coming.

Like many of us your Dad did not work up to his potential in high school. He had a Model A or T-can't remember, that he had restored down in Don de Weerd's barn which is still standing. Your Dad was extremely bright and undoubtedly completely unchallenged by school. I'll never forget when they lived in the little green cement block house about 200 yards from the nicer house that Sam and Evelyn built into the side of the hill, John took an old refrigerator apart and used the motor to make an air compressor. His natural mechanical aptitude was off the charts.

I don't remember the proximate cause but eventually his folks became exasperated with him-

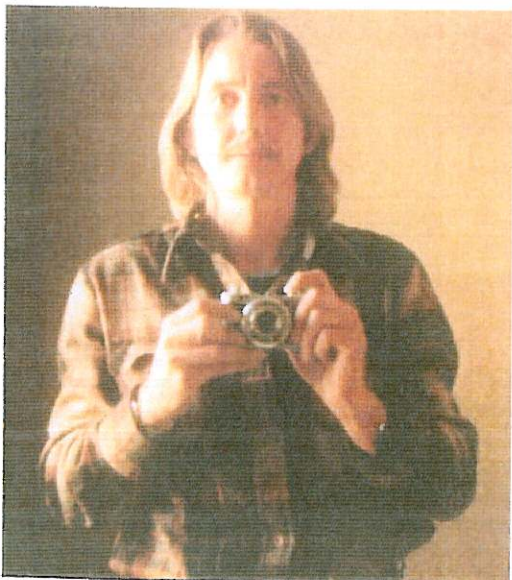
skipping school, etc. so they put him in the Darrow School in New Lebanon, N.Y. the place is still there. I visited him there once and he seemed to do better with their special atmosphere and more individual attention.

Its so difficult to recall what happened 40 and 50 years ago. I can say that your Dad always stuck out in our minds. Honest to a fault, brilliant, caring, a truly unique man-not one to "go with the flow"-he was really above many of us intellectually but yet a truly humble man. I really can't say enough good about him. *Peter Goold, childhood friend.*

When I last saw him at a Darrow reunion in 2002, he was like a breath of fresh air on Darrow's beautiful mountainside. To me he was always the optimist (even in the face of personal and business setbacks) and was genuinely interested in how my post Darrow life was panning out in the 'miles and miles' of Texas. *Kip Smith, high school classmate.*

George and I had such admiration for John. He was so charming, talented and easy to talk with. . . He was so creative. We have all his beautiful pottery that we purchased over the years out and displayed. We always appreciated the special trip he made in the middle of winter 28 years ago to attend our wedding. . . He was a good and kind person. *Debra Prentiss, niece.*

They were the times he was doing something nice for you and Jess, like putting the earthquake braces in for you or helping Jess with her place. I also know he was an extremely talented man of inspiration and creativity. He took on many challenges and made accomplishments that most people will never dream of. *Jerr Swanson, friend.*



John Prentiss was one of the first people I met when I came to Darrow in the fall of 1960. I was pretty much of a loner as a kid prior to my arrival and I got a rather rude awakening to the vagaries of the world of Darrow from John and John Cavallo. I was picked on by the two of them, mainly as I recall, for my Worcester/Boston accent, but for other things as well.

Little did I realize that this behavior, which I considered taunting at the time, was meant in good spirit and even with affection. I was soon to find out.

I worked diligently at losing my accent (which has been a very good thing for me over my life). John Prentiss and I soon became fast friends, sharing, as it would turn out, a love for jazz music together, among other things.

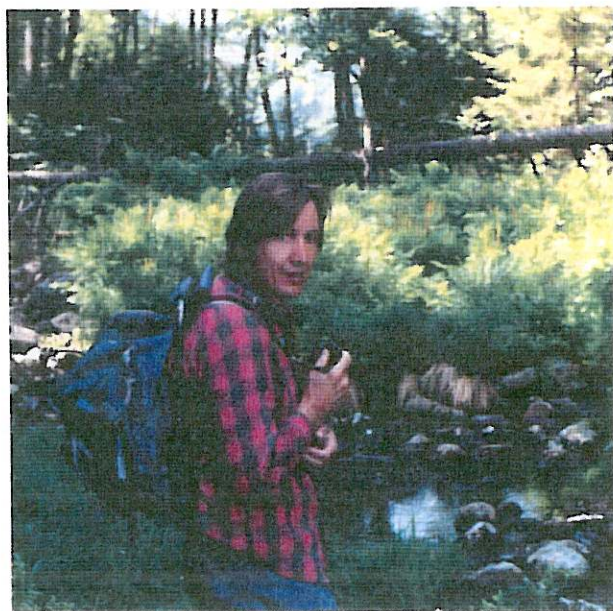
Our close friendship really developed during a weekend we spent at his home in Castleton-on-Hudson, New York. There, I met his parents and marveled at their home, a deck house that seemed to be in the middle of the woods—a home echoed perhaps by his place in Georgia.

I will never forget John asking his father if the “old banjo” was still in the attic on that Saturday afternoon. His father said that it probably was and John went off to look for it. A bit later, he appeared with it in the living room and opened the case as though it were a Christmas present. He, of course, could not play it but strummed a bit anyway. He commented on how he liked the sound and was going to bring it back to school with him.

His dad, and I as well, thought that that this was a little bizarre. But then again, John was often unpredictable, and he certainly knew what he liked--and did not like--and he made no bones about it.

Over time, I watched (and listened!) as he learned the instrument—entirely self-taught. It was amazing how he took to it and loved working at it. The images of John leaning over that banjo, learning chords and wrist techniques, are easily—and now sadly—brought to mind.

I played the piano, and it wasn't long before we started playing together. In a short time, we had a jazz band at Darrow. John quickly surpassed any abilities I had at music, but we had great fun—perhaps more than we should have. I guess it's OK to talk about it now, but we frequently snuck out of school on weekend nights and took the bus to Albany and other places to play in various bars, often until two in the morning. We had great fun, and people loved to hear us play. We never got caught and in fact no one even suspected that we were doing such things. We were stealthy in all that we did, from stealing cookies from the kitchen at night to lighting fireworks off under Mr. Nunley's bed!



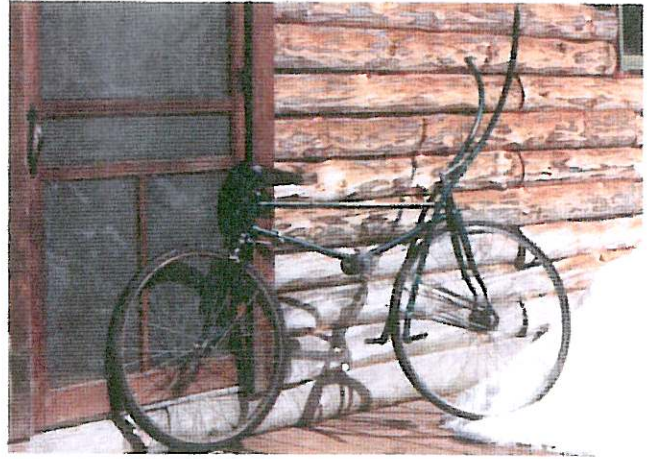
John got better and better at the banjo, and after Darrow he continued to play in various bands. I went to see him play a few times, but before long, time and geography separated us, although we managed to stay in touch occasionally.

One of the many great joys of our fortieth reunion was reuniting with John—in person. He was virtually the same man as boy. And he still made a little fun at my expense! Little did I imagine that this time would be the last we would spend together. We talked on the phone a couple of times afterwards, and exchanged e-mails often, enjoying our liberal views while we felt all around us our more conservative classmates.

Still bonding after all those years.

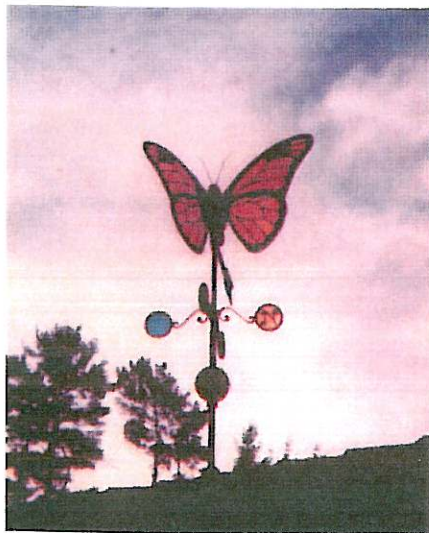
The simple fact is I never could—nor will I ever-- think of Darrow without thinking of John. They are inseparable ideas to me. I think that when I return there I will still be able to hear John's derisive, affectionate laughter at my pronunciations of "waddah" for "water," and "Caah" for "car."

But more certainly, I will hear in our old room that singular voice with its wry and perceptive comments, his mocking laughter at my expense, and of course that wonderful banjo echoing through the halls. *Limehouse Blues* and *Ja-Da*.



I am so sorry that it ever came to the point where I had to write such a piece as this about John. I wish there were a greater tribute I could make. Absent that, this will have to do, I guess. And so, goodbye, old friend. May God grant you music, laughter, love, and peace forever. *Carl Sharpe, high school classmate.*

John was blessed with all sorts of talents. He was one of the most extroverted, creative, artistic, loving, open, genuine, emotionally vulnerable individuals I've known. He nailed his own history with his 2000 characterization of his life as a roller coaster. So many ups and downs. So many painful lessons learned more than once. But there were so many highs, and so much good he accomplished. His real-estate work enhanced many local landscapes, and helped forge new societal ideas of what towns should look like. He created a product that lives on, and may ultimately change the world of infant-feeding devices. His music brought joy to thousands, and his pottery and stained-glass creations added beauty to innumerable individual homes and lives. He and Kris (mostly Kris) raised two talented, accomplished daughters who have begun passing on some of his talents to another generation. While the women who mattered most to him were the ones he loved and lost, he enriched the lives of many others (many more than he ever told me about) as well, even if only briefly. His political activity frustrated him because he was not able to effect change, but his ideals were strong and deeply held, and in our hearts we know the things he cared passionately about were the right ones. The joy John created and the good times he had and shared with the rest of us were so intense, and so plentiful, and his willingness to embrace life was so unstinting, that I frankly was often envious.



As long as we've known him, John was never afraid to take risks—sometimes, not as afraid as he should have been—and while many times he soared, he also crashed on more than a few occasions. He always seemed to pick himself up, dust himself off, and leap again into the unknown. I might have thought he was infinitely resilient; but no one is. I was astonished by his frequent sense that his life was a failure, and yet felt powerless to contradict him. My gentle efforts to reassure him simply bounced off. The depths of his pain, which I glimpsed now and then, were scary, but he'd always seemed to claw his way back up out of the black hole. I am so sorry that he couldn't do it this time. I will miss him terribly. Our class has lost a big part of its heart. *Ned Groth, high school classmate. (for a full biography of Dad written by Ned, see www.darrow62.com).*



Twilight: After Haying
Jane Kenyon

Yes, long shadows go out
from the bales; and yes, the soul
must part from the body:
what else could it do?

The men sprawl near the baler,
too tired to leave the field.
They talk and smoke,
and the tips of their cigarettes
blaze like small roses
in the night air. (It arrived
and settled among them
before they were aware.)

The moon comes
to count the bales,
and the dispossessed—
Whip-poor-will, Whip-poor-will
--sings from the dusty stubble.

These things happen . . . the soul's bliss
and suffering are bound together
like the grasses . . .

The last sweet exhalations
of timothy and vetch
go out with the song of the bird,
the ravaged field
grows wet with dew.

Thank you!

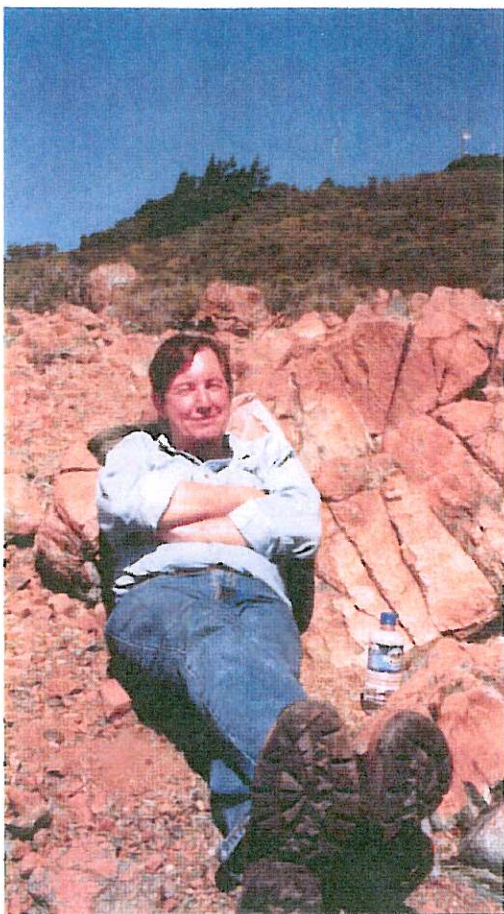
Our sincere thanks to the following people in Santa Fe who went the extra distance to make Dad's time on Earth the best it could be:

- Bill Dean and Pam Barisch, for their unconditional friendship and counseling to Dad, and for originally transporting the Harmonic Power Boulder over 10 miles of rutted roads to its current location.
- Greg Wells, Dad's friend of close to 30 years, and Cindy ^{Spolek} Wells, for originally bringing Dad to Santa Fe and perhaps his happiest time in the last 30 years, and for always being there to lend an indefinite place to stay, listening ear, or whatever else Dad (or his kids) might need. In Dad's words, Greg could "anticipate my needs before I knew them myself."
- Richard Miller, for working so hard these last years to keep Dad's dream -- Adiri -- going strong, and for helping Dad get resituated in Santa Fe.
- Jere and Linda Corlett, for providing Dad both friendship, support and employment.
- All the Santa Fe Chiles, for giving Dad such joy.

Also, thanks to Patricia Paige and Tim Cronin, Cheryl Aza, and Frank and Ellie Rosenberg for driving and flying long distances just to be with us, and to Rob Morrill for his love, support, poetry and photo selection advice, and formatting/editing of this program.



4-28-05



Woodpecker Thought Extinct Rediscovered By
RANDOLPH E. SCHMID, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - The ivory-billed woodpecker, once prized for its plumage and sought by American Indians as magical, was thought to be extinct for years. Now it's been sighted again and conservationists are exulting.

The striking bird, last seen in 1944, has been rediscovered in the Big Woods area of Arkansas, scientists and conservationists reported Thursday.

"This is thrilling beyond words ... after 60 years of fading hope that we would ever see this spectacular bird again," John W. Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, said at a news conference.

Since early 2004 there have been several independent sightings, including one caught on videotape, of one or more of the birds, Fitzpatrick said.

That video of the bird's 3-foot wingspan and distinctive black-and-white markings confirmed the presence of the creature that seemed to have vanished after logging destroyed its habitat.

The discovery of living examples of an animal believed to be extinct is rare, said Tess Present, director of science at the National Audubon Society. "Wow," she said. "This is tremendous."

Interior Secretary Gale Norton said, "Second chances to save wildlife once thought to be extinct are rare. ... We will take advantage of this opportunity."

Norton and Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns promised millions of dollars in federal assistance to work with the state and local residents to protect this bird.

"Don't love this bird to death," Norton added, saying there has not been time to make plans for public access to view the bird.

Fitzpatrick's report was released by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which is publishing the study in the journal *Science*, and also announced by the Nature Conservancy.

Alan Wormington of Ontario, Canada, said the discovery brought tears to his eyes. Wormington was part of a group that spent a month unsuccessfully trying to confirm reports of ivory billed woodpeckers in Louisiana in 2002.

"The implications are staggering," he said.

The ivory-billed woodpecker, one of the largest such birds in the world, is one of six North American bird species thought to have become extinct since 1880. The bird ranged widely across the southeastern United States at one time.

Once sought by Indians who believed that its bill possessed magical powers, the bird also was hunted for

its feathers so they could adorn women's hats. Loss of habitat was its main threat, however.

The ivory bill - sometimes called the white-back, pearly bill, poule de bois and even Lord God bird - was known for the two-note rap of its bill as it ripped into tree bark in search of edible grubs and beetle larvae.

Fitzpatrick said it became known as the Lord God bird because people seeing it would exclaim "Lord God, look at that bird."

He said the researchers reported a similar reaction when they spotted it from a canoe last year. The woodpecker suddenly swooped in front and might even have landed on the canoe, but they all suddenly shouted: "Ivory bill!"

There have been anecdotal reports of the birds, but the last conclusive sighting in continental North America was in 1944, in northern Louisiana. A subspecies of the bird has been reported in Cuba.

With a 3-foot wingspan, the bird is larger than a pileated woodpecker, which is similar in appearance. Indeed, one of the researchers termed it a pileated woodpecker on steroids.

The Nature Conservancy, which has protected a large segment of land in Arkansas where the bird was spotted, reported that the first sighting came on Feb. 11, 2004, by George Sparling of Hot Springs, Ark.

Tim Gallagher of Cornell and Bobby Harrison of Oakwood College in Huntsville, Ala., then went to the area with Sparling and also saw the bird. Other sightings followed, including one on April 25, 2004, in which David Luneau of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock videotaped the bird taking off from the trunk of a tree.