

# The Mystery on the Mound



By Timothy R. Board Jr.

"Ahh, help!" screamed a far off voice. "Hey Dad, did you hear that?" exclaimed ten-year old Henry Morten, as the Morten family stopped abruptly on the stairs, hearts pumping fast! "I sure did, Son, and it didn't sound good!" The Morten Family were camping at a state park and going for a morning hike up the several hundred stairs of the Yorkland, California mound right on the Pacific Ocean when they were interrupted by a scream.

"It sounded like it came from the top of the mound," said Jonathan Morten, Henry's older brother age twelve. "We're almost there," said Mrs. Morten.

"Let's go see what's wrong." Just then three people came running down the stairs, all as white as ghosts.

"Hello, guys, what seems to be wrong?" asked Mr. Morten. One of the three was a little girl, she was crying! The father stepped forward stuttering a couple seconds before he finally said, "We were on the observation deck when my daughter screamed. I turned around and saw a g...g...ghost! We need to get out of here!" "Wait!" said Mr. Morten, "Where did it go?" "The ghost grabbed my daughter's arm and started pulling her to the rail, then it let her go and disappeared over the north rail. We looked over the rail but it wasn't there."

"Are you sure that you're not telling stories, or that your eyes are playing tricks on you?" asked Mr. Morten. "We all saw it, right Honey?"

"Right," said the mom. "Well, we'll go up there to



see what we can find out about what you supposedly saw. Let's go!" said Mr. Morten.

The Mortens climbed the rest of the stairs to the top.

When they got to the observation deck they looked at the breathtaking view. "Wow," exclaimed Jill Morten, age nine. "The ocean is beautiful," said Mrs. Morten. "I like it up here," said seven year old Jack, "as long as there are no ghosts!"

"It's a long way down," he said as he started climbing on the rail! "Jack, you need to get off the rail, you could fall," said his father.

"Yes Dad," obeyed Jack.

"I'd like to see if there's anything over the north rail," said Mr. Morten. They all walked over to the north rail and looked down.

"All there is is a rock ledge. I don't see anybody, do you?" said Jonathan. "I don't see anything," answered Mr. Morten. "Something's not right here!"

"Anyway, we should have lunch now," said Mrs. Morten. They ate a packed lunch of ham and cheese sandwiches. "Mmm, this is tasty," said Jack with a mouthful of ham and cheese.

After their tummies were refreshed, Mr. Morten said, "We should head back down the mound now."

"But, Dad," protested Henry, "what about that ghost?"

"Those people must have gone crazy," he answered. Then all of a sudden there was a scream. "Oh no," exclaimed Jill, "Jack fell over the rail!" They ran over to the north rail, and saw that he had landed on the rock ledge!

"Jack, are you okay," shouted Mr. Morten urgently.

"Oh he's unconscious!" exclaimed Mrs. Morten, trembling. "It's about twelve feet down and it looks climbable," calculated Jonathan, "I'm going down there to see if he's okay." "Be careful," his father warned him, "I'm praying that he's okay."

Jonathan climbed over the rail and carefully went toward his brother. He safely got to the ledge. The ledge was twenty feet long and five feet wide. Jonathan sat Jack up, "He has a goose egg and a cut on his forehead!" Just then Jack woke up and started to cry, "Ow, my head hurts," he said. "I'll help you get back to the observation deck," said Jonathan. "I think I can climb the ladder," replied Jack. "What do you mean?" said Jonathan, "there is no ladder here." "Yeah there is, look." Jack pointed to the rock wall. "Wait, you're right!" exclaimed Jonathan. "Dad," he shouted, "there's a ladder going up the face of the mound!" "What?" exclaimed Mr. Morten, "how did it get there?" "Hey Jonathan, look what I found," said Jack. "Where are you?" replied Jonathan. "Behind this bush," said Jack. A bush had grown out of a crack between two rocks.

"Whoa," exclaimed Jonathan. Jack was standing next to the small entrance of a cave!

"Look inside," said Jack, as they ducked inside. There was a wall on each side, three feet across. The ceiling was six feet from the floor and there was a staircase that went down! "Let's go explore," said Jack. "Not now," said Jonathan, "we have to go tell Dad what we



found." They got out to the ledge and shouted, "Hey Dad, we found a cave." "No way!" exclaimed Mr. Morten, "let me come down there and see." "Henry," he said, "stay here with the girls, alright?" "Alright," replied Henry, "I'll stay here."

Mr. Morten climbed down the ladder. "Wow this is cool," he said as he looked around the rock ledge. "Where's the cave, boys?" "Right over here behind this bush," replied Jonathan. "Yikes," exclaimed Mr. Morten, "those stairs look man made."

"They sure do," said Jack. Before long Mr. Morten was walking down the stairs with his sons behind him. The stairs came to an end at the entrance of a dark hallway.

"Man, we're going to need a flashlight!" exclaimed Jack. "In fact," said Jonathan as he reached into his satchel, "I've got one right... right... ugh I don't have one." "Well we can go without one, our eyes are adjusting," said Mr. Morten.

Jack and Jonathan looked up. "You're right, I can see better now," they chorused.

"Shhh..." said Mr. Morten, "hasn't it occurred to you that those people we met on the way here could have been right about the supposed 'ghost?' They said it disappeared over the railing. It could've climbed down the ladder and ducked into this cave! Stay alert and be quiet."

The trio walked quietly down the hallway.

It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

The hallway turned right onto another hallway.

As soon as they turned the corner, they

heard footsteps walking down the hallway toward them! The Mortens ducked back around the corner. The footsteps got closer and closer. Mr. Morten peeked around the bottom of the corner. He saw the outline of a man. The man stopped and opened a door in the wall!

A flood of lamp light illuminated the hall! The man walked in and shut the door. "Come on," whispered Mr. Morten. With a wave of his hand, they headed toward the door. They all listened under the door. "Sir, the gold shipment is ready." "Good, I just heard back from Tom and his gang. They scared everyone away from the coast. They disguised themselves as ghosts."

"Ha," said the other man, "that must have been fun." "Anyway, let's go and join the shipment." The Mortens jumped back around the corner as the door opened and the two men stepped into the hall. "This just got big," whispered Mr. Morten, "lets follow them."

The three Mortens followed the men at a distance. As they walked down the hall, more doors appeared on each side. The men they followed turned a corner and started down a spiral staircase! "This is getting crazier by the second," whispered Mr. Morten. "Jack and Jonathan, go get your mom, Jill, and Henry. Tell them what happened and call the police." "Yes Dad," they said. And they ran off.

Mr. Morten walked down the stairs of what was a long staircase. He turned the corner and found that he was standing on a dock in a bay that



was in a cave in the mound! There were lots of docks with stacks and stacks of crates, and there were men loading the crates onto three speedboats!

Suddenly it occurred to him, He was out in the open! He turned around and was going to hide when a man blocked his path! "Who are you?" asked the man. "Uh, Jim Miller," replied Mr. Morten who knew that this place was the crooks hideout. "You're not one of us!" exclaimed the man. Before Mr. Morten knew it, there was a fist in his face and he was out cold!

Meanwhile, Jack and Jonathan ran up the stairs and out onto the ledge where they met the rest of their family and two police officers!

"Where have you been?" asked their mom. "Where is your dad?" she continued. "Where is the cave?" asked Henry. "What have you been doing?" asked an officer. "We couldn't find you or the cave so we called the police."

"The cave is right over here," said Jonathan.

Jonathan told them the whole story. "We need to go find him and make sure that he's okay," said the officers. "The ladies and Jack should stay here and away from the action!" "Here," said

Jonathan, as he reached into his satchel and procured two walkie-talkies, "These will keep us

in touch." "Thanks," said Jill. Henry, Jonathan and the two officers descended the stairs into the mound. "What should we call you guys?" asked Henry.

"I'm Officer Sherman," said one. "And I'm Officer Kent," said the other.

The four headed down one hallway and the next in search of Mr. Morten. They found the spiral staircase. "He went down here," said Jonathan.

They headed down the staircase.

Suddenly the officer in back was banged on the head by a man that was following them! He blacked out and fell forward causing the three in front of him to fall around the corner and onto a dock!

They picked themselves up only to be knocked back down by the waiting outlaws!

"What will become of us?" thought Henry and Jonathan as their hands were tied behind their backs! "You are never going to get away with this," exclaimed Officer Kent! "Oh yeah? You just wait and see," said a crook, "All our loot will stay nice and safe." Then without warning, blasting over a megaphone came the words, "FREEZE, POLICE! YOU ARE ALL UNDER ARREST!"

Everyone spun around and laid eyes on a Coast Guard cruiser on which stood a police force that dispersed onto the docks! "Who called them?"

exclaimed Henry. "We did," said some voices. Everyone turned around and saw Jill, Jack, and Mrs.

Morten standing in the entrance of the spiral staircase with more officers behind them!

As the outlaws were being rounded up and forced onto the cruiser, the police chief walked up to the Mortens and said, "Thank you for finding these guys. They have been a long-wanted gang of thieves. And this magnificent cave that they found to be their hideout seems to be an ancient Indian hideout or something like that.



"Wow, I can't believe we just did that," said Henry. "We will get to be in the newspaper," exclaimed Jonathan. "Wait, we forgot. Where's Dad?" exclaimed Jill. "Oh, yeah," said the chief, "stay here." He ran down a dock and onto the cruiser where he picked up the megaphone and said, "Where is Mr. Morten?" Several thieves pointed to a giant pile of crates on a dock. The Morten children ran to the pile and started knocking down the crates. They demolished the mountain and, sure enough, there lay Mr. Morten bound and gagged!

After they took off his gag he said, "Wow, I'm so glad you found me!" "We're so glad you're safe Dad," exclaimed Henry. "I'm glad YOU guys are safe," said Mr. Morten.

The Mortens bid the officers goodbye after answering all their questions and went up the stairs to get back to the observation deck.

Once on the observation deck, they breathed a sigh of relief as they watched the Coast Guard cruiser motor out of sight.

"That was a great adventure," said Jill. "Let's head back to our campsite," said Mr. Morten, "I'm glad we're all safe and together again, but I'll bet we could all use a good night's rest!"

THE END.