

## SUNDAY SCENE

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SECTION L

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People of the night  
are wondering: What  
happened to Art Bell?

ERIK LACITIS

Seattle Times staff columnist



Paul Kay, 37, of Lynnwood, a mechanic and a musician, has his theory about what happened to Art Bell. "I don't want to sound too far-fetched," he tells me.

Far-fetched? We are talking about Art Bell here, where the paranormal and supernatural found a home.

It made him one of the most listened-to radio personalities in America.

The night people in this country are worried, all of those with the graveyard jobs, all of those with insomnia, all of those for whom Art Bell was that rather formal voice on the radio, coming from the high Nevada desert, bringing them the news nobody else would. Bell was proud that his show wasn't focused on Bill and Monica or politics.

Who's going to tell the night people about the latest UFO sightings, the alien implant photos, the Third Secret of Fatima, the Crop Circle Connector, the Chupacabra monster images, the Area 51 mysteries of that secret Air Force base and the true meaning of the Mayan calendar?

The night people worry about what possible threat had caused Art Bell to quit his show. All he told his listeners was, "... a threatening terrible event occurred to my family, which I could not tell you about ..."

Boom. That was it.

The country's highest-rated radio talk-show host was gone, his phone disconnected from the double-wide mobile home in Pahrump, Nev., from which he broadcast. The local sheriff did visit and said that Bell was unharmed.

Was it all a prank? The night people don't believe that.

"What can we do? Art has been my friend in the dark of night, every night, for three years now. I don't know what I'll do without his program ..."

That's a woman named Vicki, posting her message at the Web site [www.artbell.com](http://www.artbell.com), which boasted more than 22.7 million "hits" this year.

The calls this week just kept coming to the receptionist for KOMO Radio, which airs the show here. What happened to Art? the listeners asked. As I write this piece, with its deadline earlier this week, the answer is that no, nobody knows.

Bell, 53, had become a gold mine for the industry. From 10 p.m. until 3 a.m., he ruled the airwaves in 400 stations nationwide. In city after city, his "Coast to Coast A.M." beat out the rock stations, the "serious" talk shows, the sports jocks. Every week, something like 8 million to 10 million people tuned in. In Seattle, his show clobbered the competition, after midnight generating nearly three times the ratings of the closest competitor.

The mainstream press never paid much attention to Art Bell. I doubt there was an op-ed writer who had ever listened to the show. How could you take seriously a talk-show host whose callers expounded, "What we're thinking of as aliens, Art, they're extra-dimensional beings that an earlier precursor of the space program made contact with ..."

A few years ago, a taxi driver first told me about Art Bell. Driving at night, flipping through the radio stations, he came upon the show. Bell was never judgmental about his callers or guests. A face on Mars? A time traveler? Psychic predictions? Fine, tell us all about it. Even if you didn't believe it, you listened to hear what new, amazing tale would be told.



BARRY WONG / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Neglected loganberry vines at historic Greenbank Farm, which was a model of agricultural innovation at the turn of the century.

## Island preserve

WITH TIES TO WHIDBEY'S PAST,  
A FAMILY'S STORE IS A CATALYST FOR  
GREENBANK HOLDING ON TO ITS RURAL SOUL

BY SHERRY STRIPLING  
Seattle Times staff reporter

GREENBANK, Whidbey Island — Three speeds are visible from the front counter of Coupe's Greenbank Store, which sits on the narrow waistline of Whidbey Island.

First are the customers. In and out, in and out. Cigarettes. Milk. Penny candy. Deli sandwiches. Happy Hippie coffee.

Next are the cars. They fly by on Highway 525. After years of slowdowns and detours from a road-widening project the Coupes say almost bankrupted their store, the cars look like racehorse trotters breaking into a gallop after the finish line, unshackled at last from their restrictive gait.

And then, on the horizon over Holmes Harbor, with Camano Island in the background, herons and eagles drift.

If Coupe's Greenbank Store were an am/pm, a 7-Eleven or any other artificially flavored convenience store that doesn't have feed prices still visible in pencil on the rafters, Greenbank might be just another highway wide spot.

Instead, this century-old neighborhood, once likened to Eden, still has an identity, now as The Little Community That Could.

The highway, a few buildings, and, far-

ther north, the big red barns and dying loganberry bushes of the old Greenbank Farm are all that are really visible. But some 10,000 residents are tucked away in four waterfront communities, many of them summer or weekend visitors only.

Coupe's Greenbank Store ties them

all together with such staples as gossip and the opportunity to sign petitions, the same role versions of this store have played since 1904.

"It's what this country was founded

PLEASE SEE **Greenbank** ON L 2



Tom Coupe, owner of Coupe's Greenbank Store, holds a portrait of his great-grandfather, Capt. Thomas Coupe, who built the second frame house on Whidbey Island.



John Thomas Coupe didn't hesitate to give up a better-paying job to help when his folks recovered the store. "I'm a Greenbank lifer, now," he says.



