

# FLF: Whitten's ages

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 13 Dec 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3671>

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Roy C. Lackey — 13 Dec 2002, 08:14

mantis wrote:

My timeline fragment shows that the 53-year-old deserter did =not= go straight back to 1803, he went back to 1807. Maybe he did this to acclimitize himself to 19th century life before going on the 1803 expedition.

I suspect that HC interview Whitten is the one who is about to go to 1803, after having lived 7 years of experience in 1807-1818 (with vacations in 1979-1982).

I could agree with that but for Whitten's ages--real and apparent--at two critical stages. The first is his self-stated age (60-70) at the time of the HC interview. But he looks so much like the 82-year-old the four lived with for a few days in 1983 that they all recognize him immediately, but hadn't recognized him shortly before then as the 53-year-old general. The HC Free has undergone at least ten years of hard living somewhere, somewhen. And he claims not to know from his own personal experience that any version of himself has gone to the Lewis & Clark expedition. Unless he's lying, for no reason I can see, then this 60-something-year-old man will have to start using a gizmo to go back in time in order to merge with younger versions of himself, to make himself both look and feel younger. Which leads to the second critical stage. Because the first item in Wolfe's timeline states that the Ben Free who joined up with L. & C. \*looked\* younger than 60, whereas Free-in-the-cockpit looked older than 60. But Wolfe also states that he was in fact age 60 at the time he joined L. & C. That's the problem; either Free was wrong about his current age at the time of the HC interview, or Wolfe made a mistake somewhere, either in the text or the timeline. (I know of two mistakes in the timeline, but they are minor and don't really affect the chronology.)

That is, the three Whittens of 1983 are:

1) Buck Whitten (age 53) duffle coat/prior to desertion.

2)Free Whitten (age 60-something) High Country interview/years after desertion but still prior to Lewis & Clark.

3) Ben Free (age 80-something?) after Lewis & Clark, with cataracts and shot dead in 1983.

The main problem I have had in trying to make a timeline for Free from his sequential perspective is, I think, the same problem we are having trying to fit Wolfe's timeline to the text. It centers, I think, on the last item in his timeline, the date of Whitten's desertion. Wolfe makes mistakes, yes, but not one that big. I think the problem is that we have assumed that January 24, 1983 was literally, sequentially only two days after the HC interview. In a time-travel story, that ain't necessarily so, and probably isn't. It's just a date on the calendar. But, it is a \*safe\* date. That is, it is safely three days \*after\* Ben Free was killed. He wasn't likely to show up and make Whitten disappear again. But it is also safely close enough to the date of the house's partial demolition that it was probably still standing. The wall containing the gizmo would still be there, the gizmo Whitten used to desert to a known safe time, while taking his portable gizmo

with him through it, so he could get back when/if he wanted to.

To be clear: I think that Whitten, after an unknown period of time (years?) while he continued to work for the OSS and look for Ben Free, when he decided to desert, used the portable gizmo to travel to January 24, 1983, from whatever time period he was then in. He had deduced where Free's "ticket" was, just as the text says, and used it.

I'm still working on when/where he went after he deserted, but if the above is right it means that Whitten was probably older than 53 when he deserted. I think it very likely that he was more than 53, and the text seems to support that idea. I don't think the General Whitten the four spoke to Friday night was anywhere near resolved to deserting three days later.

But Roy, if I understand it correctly, Whitten is the one (and likely the  
=only= one) who detected some shadowy time-travel going on:

[snip]

And the organization isn't looking for a renegade, as far as I can tell.

It depends on what is meant by the organization. Whitten's group was certainly looking for him. Kip even had the FBI involved. Her daddy's disappearance is what set her off and caused her to throw "caution to the winds" in her search for the renegade, Free. From the cockpit interview:

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"And when he came back I disappeared, as far as Kip and the rest were concerned. Kip thought Free had done it, and she must have been frantic. We had people monitoring the papers and the television news fulltime . . ."

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-Roy