

THE CONTINUING STORY OF THE IMJÄRVI SKIERS — Part 1

Anders Liljegren

The author, who has made several contributions to the pages of *Flying Saucer Review* and *Case Histories Supplements*, is editor of *AFUs Nyhetsblad* of Södertälje, Sweden, from number 18 (January-March 1980) of which this article has been taken.

IN 1970 the attention of the world was drawn to the news of the strange UFO affair at Imjärvi, Finland, by a series of articles published in *Flying Saucer Review*. Aarno Heinonen and Esko Viljo claimed to have encountered a small humanoid while they were out skiing, and their subsequent physiological problems — suggestive of radiation poisoning — were the subject of the articles^{1,2,3,4} by Sven-Olof Fredrickson of the Göteborg (Gothenburg) team GICOFF. The group had correspondence with the witnesses via a Finnish-speaking member, and maintained close contact with the journalist Bo Ahlqvist, who visited the witnesses and sighting location in Finland, and wrote up his account for a popular weekly magazine.⁵

The story, by now one of ufology's classic cases, had many interesting sidelights. One aspect was the percipients' slowly returning memories of what happened that day. At first there was no mention of a humanoid. Then, in the next version, Heinonen mistook Viljo for a "... very small ... unrecognisable" man. Finally, all the details of the man's encounter with a 90 cm midget figure came to light. The pattern of "slowly returning memories" has become a well-known part of our theme, particularly of UFO-abduction lore.

What may not be known so well by researchers outside

the "language barriers" that surround the Scandinavian countries, is the *continued* story at Imjärvi. For there was a chain of events centering on the witnesses of the January 7, 1970, incident. From what is now known, the 1970 encounter was not even the first sighting by Mr. Heinonen; he later claimed his first UFO sighting took place in 1964!

Details of the continuing experiences of the "Finnish skiers" in this article come from two main sources: first, a series of articles in the Finnish UFO magazine *Ufoaika* (1972/73), and secondly, personal correspondence between Aarno Heinonen and a research colleague of mine, Mr. Jorma Heinonen who, in spite of carrying the same surname, is in no way related to the percipient, Aarno. Jorma also provided translations of the *Ufoaika* articles since I am unable to read Finnish. Jorma's correspondence with Aarno ended in 1973, and since then we have no knowledge of what happened to him, or of any possible further experiences of his.

Admittedly details of what happened are somewhat sketchy and indistinct, but having searched the international UFO literature — in vain — for details of the sequel to Imjärvi, I now submit, for what it is worth, what I am told happened. I do so in the hope that someone



Imjärvi 7 January 1970: Left, the 'little man' in the light beam, the end of which floats above the snow, radiating sparks. On the right, the creature has gone and the beam fades upwards into the saucer like a snaky flame. Based on sketches made in 1970 by Bjorn Högman.

more knowledgeable than I will be able to "fill me in."

In their issue No. 10 of 1972, *Ufoaika* reported that up to August 15, 1972, Aarno Heinonen had no less than 23 UFO sightings. He also became a contactee. In a letter to Jorma dated November 8, 1972, Heinonen claimed having seen some 30 light phenomena (on four occasions disc-shaped), and that he had seen humanoids at five separate times, including the January 1970 incident. On three occasions he had met a "humanoid woman" with whom he had conversations . . . in Finnish!

First meeting with the humanoid woman

This is what Aarno Heinonen told *Ufoaika*:—

"On May 5, 1972, I heard three 'sound signals' and then an unknown woman's voice asking me to come to a meeting at a place behind a red barn near the crossroads to Jaala and Voikoski. I was to come on my own, and I was not allowed to bring my camera or my tape recorder. The woman's voice sounded high-pitched and 'strained.'

"I went to this place on my motor-scooter. It was 10.15 in the evening. As I arrived behind the barn I saw a woman, clad in a bright yellow trouser-suit and wearing long hair down to her shoulders. Her hair was yellow and the ends bent upwards. Her dress was close-fitting and glittered when she moved. On her feet she wore silvery shoes with red rosettes. In her left hand she held something that looked like a ball, silver in colour and connected to a rod which she held in her hand. On the ball were three antennae, each about 30 cm long, and each of which pointed towards me.

"I was not afraid, but went quickly towards her. She came towards me, put out her hand, and said 'hyvää päivää' ('How do you do?' in Finnish). I took her hand. It felt soft and cool. Then she took two steps back, and at that moment I noticed another figure, a man, standing immovable some 70 metres away. He too was wearing yellow clothing, somewhat lighter in colour, and had some sort of hat on his head. It was so dark I was unable to see him clearly.

"I asked the woman where she had come from (I called her 'Miss' since I couldn't see a ring on her finger). She responded: 'We come from the other side of the galaxy, from a pleasant green land.' Then she told me that three different species of 'humanoids' had visited Imjärvi. First of all small beings, then people like her (height about 140 cm), and finally a taller race almost 2 metres in height. She told me that the small humanoid's visit at Imjärvi in 1970 had lasted for three minutes, while we had thought it had been only a few seconds. The woman also said her age was 180, although she had the looks of a 20-year-old girl."

That ends Aarno's story of his first meeting with the woman. Many details compare with those in similar cases. For instance, there were the sound signals, and the voice calling for Aarno (we are not told whether they were "telepathic" or whether they were "exterior"). Then there is the young-looking (but old) "fairy-like" woman in tights. She holds a ball in her hand, directed towards Aarno Heinonen (could this be a "language machine" like the "language box" micro computers just released on the world market? And, in fact, conversation goes on in the native tongue of Aarno).

Now for the second episode.

Second meeting; Aarno sees their vehicle

"On June 18, 1972, at the same time of day as before, I was again instructed by this very same woman's voice. This time I was to go to the crossroads at Antinhaara. From there a path leads some 100 metres up a hill. It was there I met the woman, this time alone.

"We discussed the same things as on the first occasion. When I asked her how she had got there she said: 'Go home and you will see the beautiful vehicle we came in.' I did so, and, some 150 metres from my home I caught sight of this craft. It was low, maybe at an altitude of 100 metres. It wobbled and stopped moving, and hovered above me. I drew up on my scooter, and watched it from below. There were no lights from the silvery disc-shaped object, and neither windows nor portholes. Its diameter was some five to seven metres. After a while it rose swiftly into the sky.

"On both occasions I had had discussions for about five minutes with the woman. She spoke very quickly, and her voice sounded 'tensed'; her words, however, came from her mouth. I could see her teeth which were twice as wide as those of ordinary human beings. Her face and hands were very fair-skinned and she was extremely beautiful. Her nose somewhat pointed. She was some 140 cm tall, and wore a two-piece dress with a high polo-neck type of collar. Her shoes were not connected to her trousers. She had large eyes which were perfectly blue.

"During both meetings she held the same silvery ball-like object in her hand. No sound came from it. Her method of departure was very odd: she seemed to 'float' away and disappear. Her gait was stiff, and her knees did not bend."

It will be seen that several other elements of UFO-lore are introduced into Aarno's contact saga: the disc-shaped object, the fast, tense speech ('computerised' talk? — A.L.), the woman's 'floating' disappearance. Also, her beauty is further underlined.

The 'Man' in Viljo's house

Aarno Heinonen and Esko Viljo saw a humanoid figure in the kitchen of Viljo's house on June 25, 1972. The time was 7.40 p.m. when a 140 cm figure suddenly appeared from behind the oven. The creature (if that's what it was) took two steps from the brick wall and remained standing in the middle of the floor. It wore a grey suit with white stripes. It was impossible to see its face.

For about half a minute the figure remained standing where it was, then took two steps back into the darkness behind the oven. A short while later two thuds were heard, and the whole house was lit up by a bright light which seemed to move in a wave-like pattern through the room. Heinonen and Viljo searched the house but found nothing.

With this spook-like episode Aarno and Esko seemed to be moving into the territory of traditional psi phenomena . . . but more is to follow . . .

The green pen

Aarno told my colleague Jorma Heinonen, in a letter, that on March 21, 1972, he had met a humanoid in

Heinola. The male humanoid was more than two metres tall. He handed Aarno a green pen. Aarno started to ask questions but the figure just 'floated away' and disappeared. The pen was said to have been left in the care of a Finnish researcher for further investigations but, wrote Aarno, he regretted he had done this.

The next part of this article will contain details of the things the humanoids are stated to have told Aarno, and there are details of further encounters . . . including a possible abduction.

References

1. *World round-up* feature: "Strange events in the snow" attributed to S-O. Fredrikson, in FSR 3/1970, pp 23-24
2. S-O. Fredrikson: "Finnish encounter in the snow" in FSR 4/70, pp 31-32.
3. S-O. Fredrikson: "A humanoid was seen at Imjärvi" in FSR 5/70, pp 14-18.
4. S-O. Fredrikson: "More on the Imjärvi case" in FSR 6/70, p 22.
5. Bo Ahlqvist: "Här mötte vi varelsen fran rymden," *Fib-Aktuellt* 26/1970, pp 12-15.

FSR BOOKSHELF — 5

New UFO books reviewed by . . .

Janet & Colin Bord

FROM the number of books that have been published on the "ancient astronauts" theme over the last few years, one might think the subject would by now have been exhausted, but not yet, it seems. Despite the severe and apparently unanswerable criticisms made of *Chariots of the Gods?* and his later books, **Erich von Däniken** has come bouncing back with volume 7, **Signs of the Gods?** (Souvenir Press hardback, £5.95). This time he tackles the Ark of the Covenant; test-tube babies, genetics and cloning; Malta's stone "cart ruts" and prehistoric remains; standing stones in Brittany; solar and laser technology; the geometry of Greek temples; signs on mountain sides; the ruins of Zimbabwe; ancient kings; and other mysteries.

In the final chapter he speaks out against some of his critics. Intelligent speculation is necessary in a free world, but it should be based on established fact, a point too often ignored by writers on "ancient astronauts." If the devotees of von Däniken would also read books by his critics, they would be better equipped to make a balanced judgement of his claims.

Another recent publication in this field is **Maurice Chatelain's** book **Our Ancestors Came From Outer Space** (Arthur Barker hardback, £5.95; Pan paperback, £1.25). The author was an aerospace electronics engineer, and his technical leaning is evident in his book, which contains speculation backed up by figures. Chatelain believes that our early ancestors "possessed amazingly precise scientific knowledge" which was "given to mankind by extraterrestrial astronauts" (p.213). Although his evidence comes in numerical form, the book is written for the non-specialist. As with all "ancient astronaut" books, which are invariably wide-ranging, we cannot attempt a subject-by-subject assessment of its validity; but we always look to see what is said about leys, a subject we have studied. Chatelain makes three statements for which we would like to know his sources of information: "These ley lines, when photographed from high altitude, show up quite clearly as they can be detected by lush vegetation and electro-magnetic radiations interfering with radio waves. Also exposures on

photographic film over these ley lines tend to get fogged by some radiation. . . And flying saucers frequently follow these lines in their flights." (p.90) The facts here are clearly overstated, if not actually false, and this evidence of this author's unreliability suggests that the rest of the book should be read with caution.

"Ancient astronauts" writers often include the famous Nasca lines in the Peruvian Andes as evidence for early visits by extra-terrestrials, and von Däniken likened the lines to airport runways. (As Clifford Wilson asked in his *UFOs and Their Mission Impossible*: "Why 37-mile long landing strips? What was the braking system?") The huge designs drawn out on the desert floor have provided "South America's most amazing archaeological mystery," and **Tony Morrison** determined to explore the mystery. His resulting book, **Pathways to the Gods** (Paladin paperback, £2.95), makes compulsive reading. It is scholarly but readable, head and shoulders above even the best "ancient astronauts" literature, and incorporates Dr Gerald Hawkins' astronomical study of the site. This recommended book is also heavily and relevantly illustrated, while Chatelain's book has less than 10 photographs plus diagrams, and von Däniken's has about 50 photographs, some of poor quality.

Ronald Story's *The Space-Gods Revealed* (1977) was a critical investigation of some of von Däniken's claims, and Story evidently felt that more could be said, since he has now written a second volume, **Guardians of the Universe?** (New English Library hardback, £5.95, illustrated). The main subjects demystified are biblical stories like Sodom and Gomorrah, Ezekiel's wheels, the Ark of the Covenant; Mexican and South American mysteries like the Palenque 'astronaut' and the Nasca 'spaceport'; the pyramids; and Easter Island. Story also makes the important point that a number of writers preceded von Däniken in the ancient astronauts field; and he convincingly breaks down Robert K. G. Temple's seemingly cast-iron case presented in *The Sirius Mystery* (1976).