

THE BURBANK LANDING AND OCCUPANT REPORT

Ann Druffel

OCTOBER 16, 1973 began as just another normal day for G.N. — normal, that is, for a law enforcement officer who works the night shift and sleeps during the day. Normal — until 11.30 a.m., when his wife suddenly awakened him from a deep sleep and excitedly informed him that "something was happening in the back yard."

Seeing the anxious look on her face and hearing frantic barking from the family's usually quiet dog, he rushed out of the back door. In the yard, his younger child, a boy two years old, who does not yet talk, was pointing up towards the sky with wonder and amazement on his face. The large, white dog was standing near an open spot on the lawn, looking intently at the ground and barking furiously.

G.N.'s older son, age four, whom we shall call Eddie for the sake of the family's anonymity, was the only witness who could verbalize what had happened. He told his father excitedly that "something big" had landed in the yard. The boy was talkative and vitally interested in what had occurred, but did not seem frightened. When asked by his father how large the "thing" was that had "landed," the boy stretched out both arms, then pointed towards telephone wires overhead.

Officer N. asked his son to draw what he had seen. Eddie drew an object which was oval in shape, with a pointed dome on top. At the bottom, the boy drew "rays" coming downward, and then indicated smoke or haze below the rays. He told his father the thing made a "buzzing" sound.

N., who is interested in the subject of UFOs, having read a few books on the subject some time ago, and being aware of the Pascagoula, Mississippi abduction case of October 11, 1973, casually asked Eddie if "anything was in the thing." Eddie nodded yes, and drew a series of lines which resembled two capital "Ms" placed side by side, connecting each point at the bottom with a curved line. The effect was like four featureless faces with pointed heads or caps.

Eddie referred to the creatures as "monsters" — his word for anything that is not human. He said "the monsters got out of the object" and let him "look in." He "saw a chair and got scared and ran into the house to tell mother there was magic in the back yard." Eddie, according to Officer N., refers to occurrences which he does not understand as "magic."

Meanwhile, the family dog kept staring at the spot on the grass where Eddie claimed the object had landed, and near where his young brother had stared with awe into the sky. The dog kept barking furiously for two or three minutes. Officer N. considered this equally as strange as his son's story, for the dog never barked when running loose in the

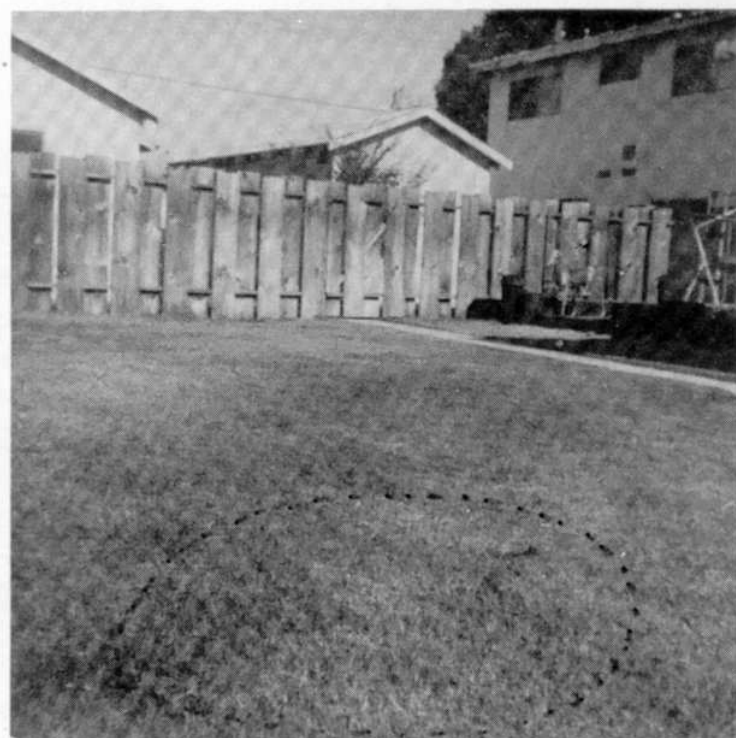
fenced yard, even when strangers approached him. N. examined the "landing spot," but could detect no charring, discoloration, or other markings.

Officer N.'s problem now was how to handle the matter. He knew that Eddie was normally truthful and not given at all to making up stories. The violent reaction of his dog, the awe displayed by the younger son, and the spontaneity and emotion connected with Eddie's account convinced him that the incident should be reported to some knowledgeable source.

He considered reporting it at the agency¹ where he worked, but he was aware that the attitude of most law enforcement officials, at least in Burbank, California where he lived, was to laugh off reports of unidentified flying objects. He had never agreed with this attitude. He mentioned his son's experience to a fellow officer that evening at work. This officer happened to have the telephone number of the California UFO Research Institute, based in Lawndale, California.

Officer N. contacted CUFORI and was referred by Peter Gutilla of that organization to the Midwest UFO Network (MUFON), which had investigators in the Burbank area.

On behalf of MUFON, I contacted Officer N. There was a delay caused by the N. family's vacation-



The alleged landing spot (approximate area marked in black pen). The photograph looks towards the north-east over most likely line of approach (overhead excepted) of a landing object

ing out of the city over a national holiday weekend, but on October 24th I had an initial telephone conversation with N. I was impressed by his evident truthfulness and his desire to report the incident as a civic duty, in spite of deep reluctance to involve his family in ridicule. At his request, he was assured of anonymity.²

His discussion of the matter was straightforward. He readily agreed to a home visit, although Mrs. N. was adamant that she didn't want anyone to talk to the children about their experience because it might frighten them. Officer N. took my reassurance that skillful interviewing could bring out the facts from Eddie without dredging up undue fear. He agreed to talk to Mrs. N. and gain her co-operation.

On October 25th, the date of the home interview, Mrs. N. and the two boys were not home. She had taken them out for the day, still fearful for the children's sake. Officer N. was most co-operative, however, and my impression of an honest and reliable individual was doubly reinforced. In spite of being caught in the midst of difficult circumstances, he strived to report the incident as fully and as accurately as possible.

In the backyard, there were no signs that anything unusual or heavy had "landed" — no burned or stained spots, imprints, etc. The alleged landing place was photographed (See Figure 1).

There was full confirmation regarding the dog's good nature. He is an immense 10-month-old "puppy," part Samoyed and part husky or sheepdog. Although he whined and barked when I first approached the house, he did not bark at all while I was in the house and the back yard. Quite the contrary, he greeted me as a long-lost friend, con-

tinually jumping up in silent but playful greeting, in spite of his master's attempts to dissuade him. I tried photographing the animal, but he wouldn't stay still long enough to pose.

I passed a compass over the ground at the alleged landing spot, but found no deviation from north. Comparisons at other parts of the yard yielded the same negative results. The dog no longer showed any fear, curiosity, or any reaction whatsoever at the alleged landing place.

The open area of the yard is about twenty feet wide and forty-five feet long, covered with a coarse, short-cropped grass lawn (see Figure 2). To the east is a garage, to the west a telephone pole and a single tree, still bearing green leaves. The tree had no sign of singeing, broken branches, etc. A large scar in the trunk is old and evidently had no relation to the reported incident.

Telephone wires about twenty feet high pass over the yard and near the tree. The house is surrounded by high fences, and is right in the middle of a thickly-settled residential area. However, a wide concrete flood-control channel cuts obliquely through the residential area, running generally north-south and passing by two houses west of the N. home.

The most likely path of approach for any object coming down from the sky would be from straight overhead or low in from the north-northeast over a one-storey neighbouring house.

As to the possibility of other witnesses, N. indicated he had inquired of the neighbours on each side. The neighbour to the immediate east was not home on the date of the sighting, and the neighbour to the west "stays inside all the time and didn't see anything." I checked at an adjacent

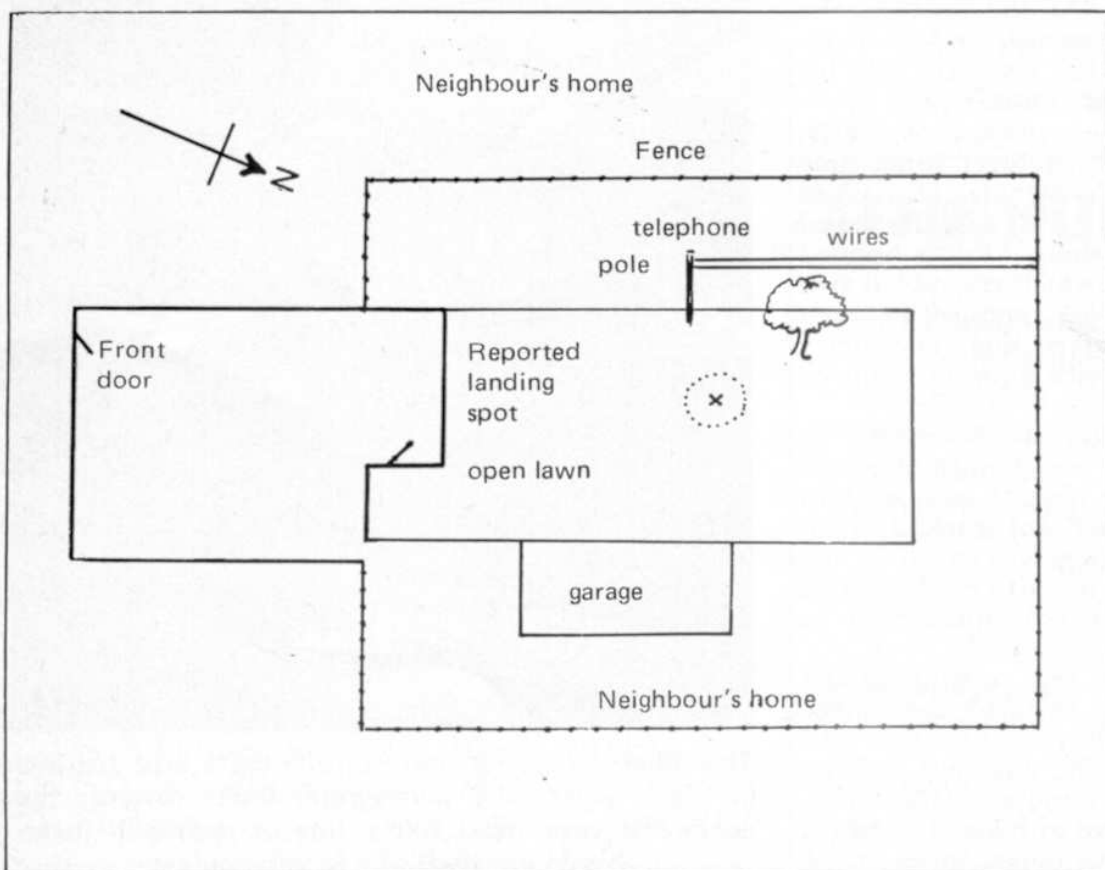


Figure 2

Plan of the house and backyard showing the spot where the young witness alleged an object had landed.

building to the northwest of the N. home, where one of the apartments overlooks the N. yard from about fifty feet away. The young woman occupant stated she had not seen or heard anything unusual the day of the sighting.

As far as is known, Mrs. N. heard no sound or otherwise had any inkling that something out of the ordinary was happening to the children until Eddie came running in the house crying that "there was magic in the back yard."

I did not push the idea of interviewing Mrs. N. and the children, respecting Mrs. N's fear and N's reluctance to pursue the issue with her. There was evidence that Mrs. N. herself was frightened by the experience, since the boys' reaction had seemed so real at the time. It is possible that, being aware of the October U.S. flap and probably of the Pascagoula abduction case, that she considered that her children themselves had had a narrow escape. Even before October 16th, Mrs. N. would not allow her husband to discuss the matter of UFOs or to read items from the paper aloud concerning UFOs in the presence of the children.

Under these circumstances, I feel I have learned about all that can be gleaned of the four-year-old Eddie's verbal account by interviewing his father in depth. As a law enforcement officer, he is skilled in interviewing. He stated he did not try to lead the boy or gather minute details because of the boy's age and the possibility that the youngster would tend to embellish if urged too hard. It is N's sincere opinion, however, that his son's account of the landing, the occupants, and the fact that the boy was invited to look into the craft are all truthful, by reason of its spontaneity.

He stated that Eddie is bright mentally, having begun to talk and draw at one year. Eddie's drawing ability is considered above average for his age.

When I asked to see the sketches Eddie had drawn, N. explained that Mrs. N. had thrown them out, because they were reminders of an incident she wished to forget and which she wished her sons to forget. After my initial telephone call, N. asked Eddie to make another sketch of the object. He did so, but this time he drew the object as more elongated, with a smaller, rounded dome and rays and "haze" coming from the back rather than from the bottom. Could this be due to the boy's drawing the object as he had seen it from another angle, for instance, taking off?

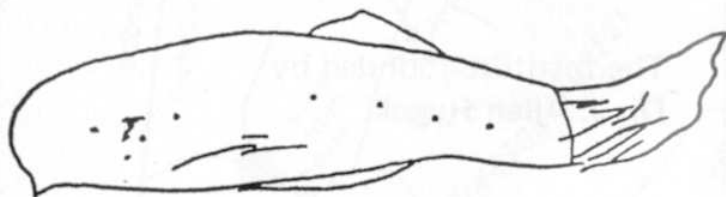


Figure 3

Sketch made by four-year-old Eddie N. on October 23, depicting the "big thing" which he claims landed in his back yard.

Officer N. found this second sketch of Eddie's and gave it to me. At the same time, he redrew from memory Eddie's rendition of the occupants (See Figures 3 and 4).

On the evening of October 26th, Mr. Walt Greenawald, another MUFON investigator, went with me to the N. home upon the invitation of Mr. N. The N.s were having company, but Mr. N. led us into the backyard and was, as before, courteous and co-operative.

Mr. Greenawald, an aerospace engineer, using a geiger counter borrowed from his company's instrument lab., took radiation readings at different places in the back yard as well as at the reputed landing spot. No readings other than background radiation were obtained. Ten days had passed since the event, and a light rain had fallen on Burbank on October 23rd.

I took flash bulb photos of the yard, the tree, the telephone wires and of the family dog, who was on a leash (see Figure 5). I obtained permission from Officer N. to publish full facts of the case (aside from identifying information) in UFO research journals.

From October 27 till August 15, 1974 this case was discussed verbally and by correspondence with several American researchers, including Dr. Berthold E. Schwarz and Mrs. Idabel Epperson, who is presently MUFON's State Director for Southern California. Without exception, all the experienced researchers with whom the case was discussed were in agreement that, regardless of the tender age of the witnesses, the case seemed to have considerable merit, and possibly provided clues as to the motives and methods employed by UFOs during the October 1973 flap.

As is generally known, the fall of 1973 was a time of enormous numbers of American sightings. Its main interest to ufologists, however, lies in the fact that the UFOs seemed to be entering into a new "phase of action." An unprecedented number of close approaches, landings, and occupant sightings were reported throughout every section of the United States.

The Occupant flap in the States

The Los Angeles-Burbank area, itself, experienced a localized flap in October. On October 4th in Simi, California, a rather isolated town thirty miles northwest of Burbank, an occupant and near-landing

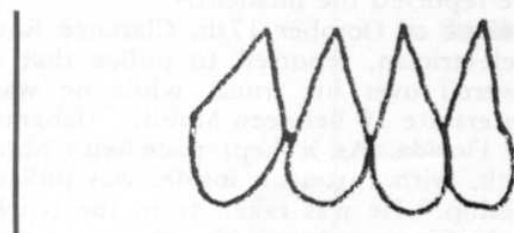


Figure 4

Officer N's rendering of a drawing made earlier by his son, depicting "monsters" or occupants in the object



Figure 5

The N's family dog. Photo was taken at night by flashbulb

figured in an important and fully documented case.³ A bizarre aerial object was viewed a few days later by a group of Burbank Lockheed aerospace employees, and on October 24th, a close approach at treetop level badly frightened two witnesses in nearby Griffith Park.⁴ Therefore, the Burbank "landing" of October 16th occurred in its own milieu of UFO activity, and the witnesses were two tiny children who had not read, talked about, or even heard anything about the other reports emanating from their area. The reliability of the father, the reaction of the family dog, and the mother's fear all add credence to the report.

It is a striking fact, also, that the date of the event, October 16th, was just one day before the peak number of occupant reports in the United States. Ted Bloecher, MUFON State-Section Director in New York, who is specializing in occupant reports, kindly provided me with newspaper clippings from his splendid file and added information as to the possible value of each individual case. Bloecher had collected no less than six occupant cases occurring in the United States on October 17, 1973. Of the six, two were considered doubtful.

The other four cases are considered by U.S. researchers as "possible." For example, two miles north of Danielsville, Georgia, salesman Paul Brown, a non-drinking, hard-working man of good reputation reported skidding to a halt when a blindingly bright craft some fifteen feet in diameter landed in the path of his car. It let out a pair of four-foot-high white-haired, red-skinned creatures in silver suits. The only evidence of the landing was twenty-five feet of skid marks laid down by the startled Brown's auto. Police confirmed that Brown seemed shaken when he reported the incident.⁵

That same night of October 17th, Clarence Ray Patterson, an electrician, reported to police that a huge UFO hovered over his truck, while he was travelling on Interstate 10 between Mobile, Alabama and Pensacola, Florida. As it kept pace with him, his pickup truck, with Patterson inside, was pulled into the "spaceship." He was taken from the truck by six "strange looking creatures", description vague, but short in stature and somewhat resembling the Pascagoula "robots" of October 11th fame. Police seemed convinced that Patterson's terrified state

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GLOWING UFO NEAR STELLING MINNIS, CANTERBURY

Sqdn. Ldr. Alastair Prevost

FOUR students of physical education at Nonington College saw an unusual object during the night of January 23-24, 1975 (approximately between the hours of 23.57 and 00.20).

The witnesses were Miss Phyllis Lewington, Miss Yvonne Wilson, Miss Marcia Williams and Miss Jill Wood, all aged 20 at the time. I conducted a telephone interview on January 29, after seeing a brief report of the incident in a local newspaper.

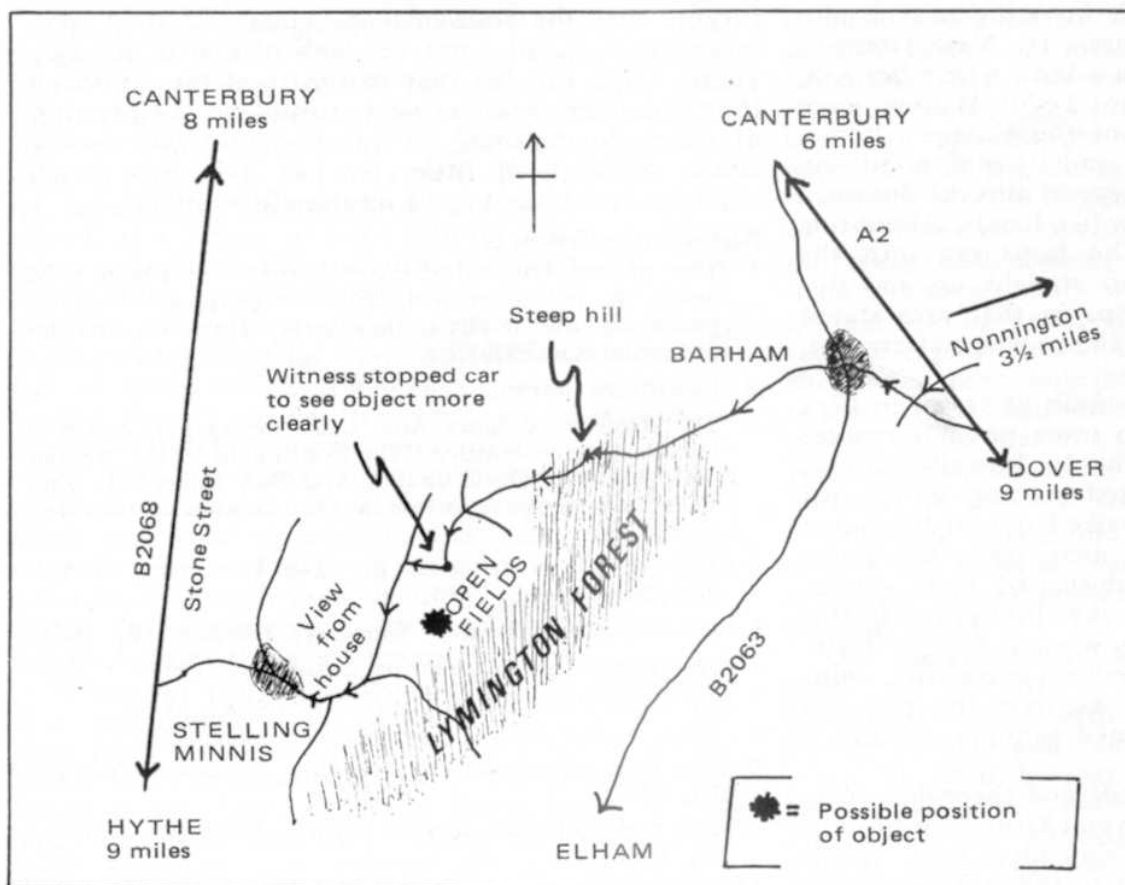
Miss Lewington and Miss Wilson were returning by car to Stelling Minnis after a visit to friends. It was just before midnight on January 23. About one-and-a-half miles from Barham, on the wooded road to Stelling Minnis, they both noticed a glow in the sky over to their left which Miss Wilson suggested might be the lights from Elham. However, on reaching a steep hill a little further along the road, they were able to see across the trees to open fields ahead and to their left. They could then see that the glow came from a perfectly round ball of light, bright orange and hovering about 100 ft. above the ground. The time was three minutes to midnight.

Miss Lewington, who was driving, takes up the story:

"I was now clear of the trees and coming on to

level ground. I began to slow down to figure out what it was and then stopped by a right-angled bend in the road. We could both see the object more clearly. It was hovering at the opposite end of a very large field, glowing in the sky and lighting up the whole area. After about 5 seconds the object began to move towards us without a sound. I started to panic and got the car moving again. Yvonne was able to watch the object through the rear window. There was no change to the intensity of light or the shape, but Yvonne thought that the object was hovering again. As we were approaching Stelling Minnis, Yvonne could see it hovering over the Forest at about the same height, but slightly smaller in size.

"Our house is in the middle of Stelling Minnis and end-on to the Forest and therefore the hovering object. We parked the car quickly in the driveway and ran upstairs to Yvonne's bedroom, opened the window and looked out in the direction we had come from. We could just see the forest trees and the light was still in the sky and still glowing orange. However, now it was moving rapidly up and down and undulating from side to side, sometimes just above the trees and then below the tree line.



Sketch map of the sighting area showing the witnesses' route from Nonington to Stelling Minnis

"We then decided to wake up the others. Marcia came and looked out of the window. She saw the object which was hovering once more, but she became frightened and went back to bed. Jill then came in and once again all three of us saw the light moving up and down and from side to side. We had been looking out of the window for about five minutes and it must have been about 12.15 when the object finally moved off to the right". [towards the South].

Miss Wilson confirmed that the sky was clear and the stars visible. She said that although they were all interested in the subject of flying saucers and had held discussions about this phenomenon on several occasions, they had not read any books on the subject.

When the object had departed, Miss Wilson phoned the police. Two officers arrived in a van about

10 minutes later. She could not remember whether they were from Canterbury or Folkestone. One of them thought that the object might have been a firework on a parachute, as he knew of a woman in the area who often had firework parties. But it was confirmed that her house was nowhere near the area of the sighting. They also checked with Army Camps in the district to confirm that it was not a flare. Air Traffic Control at Manston (Flt/Lt. Turnball) also confirmed that there had been no aircraft or weather balloons in the area at that time.

Postscript

Miss Lewington remembered a similar sighting in the same area which she made at 4 o'clock in the morning of November 23, 1973, but this time from the students' hostel at Nonington. Several girls were with her, but as they had been to a party, they dismissed it from their minds at that time.

(continued from page 6)

was real and that he was not under influence of drugs or alcohol.⁶

That same incredible night was the date of Jeff Greenhaw's encounter in Falkville, Alabama with a human-shaped occupant dressed in material "like mirrors".⁷ This case, under study by MUFON investigators, was aptly reported by Eileen Buckle in a recent issue of FSR.⁸

The most startling October 17th case, in that it offers corroboration with the Burbank boys' experience, occurred in Watauga, Tennessee. Mrs. Linda Green and a neighbour, Ruth O'Quinn, watched a copper-coloured circular craft hovering near a hill-side adjacent to their homes. To Mrs. Greene's horror, the vehicle landed on a lawn where her son, Junior, and a neighbour's boy, Teddy Malone, were playing across the street from the Greene's home. A door opened on the craft and "a man about six feet tall with blinking eyes stepped into the doorway and reached out with two claw-like hands, attempting to snatch the children." The boys ran into the house, and the vehicle soared straight up and disappeared. At least five persons in that area stated they had seen similar objects the previous afternoon, October 16th.⁹

Adding to this amazing bundle of October 17th occupant-landing reports, two more possible reports turned up on October 18th. In Russell County, Kentucky, a farmwife reported coming across two three-foot-high men as she walked out of her home to feed her dogs. The little men, upon being disturbed, hurried to a washtub-shaped craft settled nearby and took off into the sky. Interesting in this report is the fact that the woman reported the "men" as being "red" in color, correlating with Paul Brown's observation in Georgia the previous day. The witness' fright seemed genuine, according to the investigating sheriff.¹⁰

To round off this unprecedented three-day cycle of landing-occupant reports, several Effingham County Georgia residents reported a "tiny silver man" standing along the road. According to the witnesses, who

asked not to be identified, a line of traffic slowed to gape at the little creature, but no one dared leave their car, probably "too scared of what they might find."¹¹

We discover, therefore, that the landing-occupant report of October 17th in Burbank, California was but one of many equally incredible encounters during the three-day period from October 16th through October 18th. If it is possible to learn anything from the encounter of Eddie N. and his brother it might be this: a hint of motive or method being tried by UFO occupants at the present time. I suggest that the four little occupants, if they were indeed real, could sense the lack of fear of the two young boys and for that reason used the approach they did. One wonders what would be the reaction of other "occupants" to human adult witnesses if adults showed as little fear as did these small children. Is this the key to meaningful contact?

Notes and references

- 1 The precise law enforcement agency for which G.N. works is not identified, for the purpose of better preserving the family's anonymity. However, the information is in FSR files.
- 2 Identifying information in FSR files.
- 3 *The Register*, a Santa Ana, Calif. newspaper, carries a weekly column entitled "The Continuing UFO," written by researchers David Branch and Bob Klinn. The Simi Valley case was reported in that column on October 31, 1973.
- 4 This case was reported in "The Continuing UFO," *ibid.*, November 8, 1973.
- 5 *Athens Banner-Herald*, Thursday, October 18, 1973.
- 6 *The News*, Pensacola, Florida, October 18, 1973
- 7 *The Birmingham News*, Friday, October 19, 1973
- 8 *Flying Saucer Review*, November-December 1973
- 9 *The Press Chronicle*, Johnson City, Tennessee, October 18, 1973.
- 10 *The Times-Journal*, Russell Springs, Kentucky, October 25, 1973.
- 11 *The News*, Savannah, Georgia, October 20, 1973.