

THE "LITTLE MAN" OF NORTH CAROLINA

John A. Keel

Photographs of alleged UFOs demand close scrutiny, and there is no reason why photographs of alleged "occupants" should not fall into the same category. This photograph, the first of its kind, is offered for the record, with no attempt to pass judgment.

SOON after the Dell publishing Company in New York decided to discontinue its magazine, *Flying Saucers-UFO Reports*, Miss Carmena Freeman, the editor, received an intriguing colour photograph in the mail. It was a contact print of a small figure holding a funnel-shaped object and standing in front of a white sphere. The covering letter was written by a 14-year-old boy and was notably lacking in details. He simply stated that a spherical object had landed behind his home in North Carolina and that he had photographed a small humanoid who had emerged from it. Miss Freeman turned the letter and photo over to me and I began a long correspondence with the young photographer.

The young man was agonisingly slow in answering his mail. We continued to exchange letters throughout most of 1968 and I sent him a long questionnaire to fill out, asking a number of tricky questions designed to double-check his story. I also obtained notarised affidavits from his parents, his school teachers, and the adult leader of his local 4-H Club, all testifying that they had seen the photograph and that they believe his story is true.

His family made one discouraging request: they were wary of publicity and asked that their address be withheld from print. Since they live in a very small town in North Carolina, we cannot even reveal its name without violating that request. (The address, however, has been filed with this publication and is available to responsible researchers.) We can say that the town is on the edge of a very large swamp in North Carolina, in Pamlico Country.

The photographer, Ronnie Hill, is a rather exceptional young man.

At the time of our initial correspondence he was 14 years old and was the president of his 8th grade class, president of the local 4-H Club, and assistant Patrol Leader in the Boy Scouts. He enjoys a good reputation as an honest, sensible, hard-working boy.

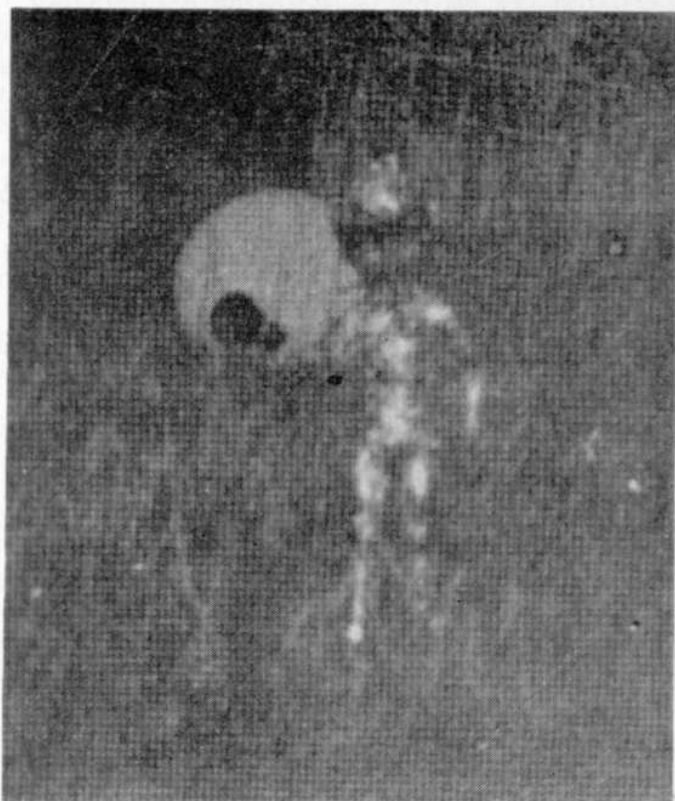
The original colour print is quite clear and I have shown it to several professional photographers in New York City. We blew it up to wall size, measured it and studied it minutely. On close inspection, the figure appears to be exactly as Ronnie describes it and does not seem to be a doll or other hoax. The measurements verify Ronnie's estimates of size and distance. The editors and art directors of SAGA magazine have also examined the print carefully and confirmed our findings.

Unfortunately, we felt it prudent not to ask Ronnie to send the original negative to use through the mails. We have not seen the negative but we have spoken to those adults who have.

We should note that Ronnie specifically mentions a "strange odour" in the air prior to the appearance of the "little man". This "gas" factor is a little-known aspect of such cases and was largely ignored until I published an article on UFO-related "gases" in SAGA, July 1968. Ronnie wrote his account of this incident long before that article was published.

Ronnie's Story

On the afternoon of Friday, July 21, 1967, young Hill was working in the garden behind his family's home when the incident



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allegedly took place. Here is how he tells it in his own words:

"I noticed a strange odour in the air which smelt like gas. Which caused my eyes to water. Also I noticed a sound . . . a sound of silence. Usually there are birds chattering and dogs barking. But that day I heard no such sound.

"After about 15 minutes I heard a buzzing sound and the increasing smell of gas. So when I turned my head I saw a strange thing in the sky. It looked like a black hat . . . Then my eyes caught a glimpse of something moving. It was a white ball about 9 feet in diameter. It started to fly by itself . . . I fell to the ground . . . all sorts of things dashing through my mind . . . I knew no-one would believe me of what I saw and I would have to have some proof, so I ran to the house to get my camera (a Kodak "Sabie 620"—J.A.K.). When I came into the house I told no-one of what I saw, there wasn't enough time. "When I returned to the scene I saw the object (the white ball—J.A.K.) on the ground. About 5 seconds later I heard a loud noise which hurt my ears. I was breathless, because a little man about 3½ to 4ft. tall came from behind the ball-shaped object, carrying with him a funnel-shaped black object in his right hand. Then quickly he put it near the ground. Then pulled it back up to his hip. Then he turned and went behind the ball. The loud noise rang again. Then a bright blue flare

burst from beneath the 'ship', then it took off into the air slowly. Then the big ship reappeared . . . the round ship connected itself to a rod and it pulled the round ship into a hole. Then the big one took off at tremendous speed and disappeared over the tree tops."

While all this was happening, Ronnie claims he heard a faint hissing sound and he doesn't know if it came from the object or from the creature. Such "hissing sounds" have been reported in other landing cases, and even in that of the redoubtable Captain Hooton in 1897. Ronnie says the little man moved "slowly and wobbly" and seemed to have trouble controlling his legs when he turned, swinging them stiffly.

The distance between the young photographer and the creature was about 15 feet. The photo, the only one that came out, is bluish and marred by fogging on both edges. This is actually in Ronnie's favour since this same kind of fogging has turned up in other apparently authentic UFO photos and it has been suggested that it is caused by radiation or actinic rays of some kind coming from the object. In the original print, the creature appears to have puffed or fleshy cheeks with high cheekbones, and it sports a helmet that is almost Germanic. The funnel-shaped object is visible in his hand. Ronnie says the little man's skin-tight suit was silvery and metallic, and its head seemed to be a bluish-

green. The eyes were "tilting or slanting". It wore a silver helmet and there was a dark blue belt around the waist. "Blue belts" have been described by several witnesses in South America.

The "loud noise" reported by Ronnie has been an oft-recurring feature in landing reports from all over the world. I feel that these corroborative details add to the credibility of the boy's story. It should be noted that he can't even obtain TRUE or SAGA magazines in his area. He did see one issue of the Dell magazine but it is unlikely he would have been aware of all these details unless he had read specialised publications such as FSR's *The Humanoids*.

The photograph reproduced here is an enlargement of a black and white negative made from the original print and much of the original detail has been lost.

You will recall that Mr. Ralph Ditter's photograph of an alleged UFO, taken in Zanesville, Ohio in 1966, was widely published in newspapers and magazines throughout the world. It has even appeared on the covers of major periodicals. But Mr. Ditter has never received a penny for it. To avoid a repetition of this, this photograph has been copyrighted in Ronnie's name and all moneys from the sale of it will go directly to him. We are now trying to set up an arrangement so that interested ufologists may obtain original colour prints for a nominal fee.

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