

## **1970: Imjärvi, Finland**

January 7, 4:45 am

Source: Kim Hansen, in Evans and Spencer (1987)



*Sketch of the incident and the witnesses on the site*

Aarno Heinonen (36) and Esko Viljo (38) were out skiing, when they encountered a 10-foot wide UFO that approached and hovered near them. A bright light beam was then emitted, and a thin, 3-foot tall humanoid creature appeared, carrying a black box with a pulsating yellow light. Severe and extensive physiological effects were suffered by the witnesses after the encounter. Two years later, Heinonen had a series of contacts with a female extraterrestrial being.

"I was standing completely still. Suddenly, I felt as if somebody had seized my waist from behind and pulled me backwards. I think I took a step backwards, and in the same second, I caught sight of the creature. It was standing in the middle of the light beam with a black box in its hands. Out of a round opening in the box, there came a yellow light which was pulsating..."

The time was 4:45 p.m. on Wednesday, 7 January, 1970. The place was Imjarvi, 15 km NW of Heinola in southern Finland. Woodman Aarno Heinonen, 36, and farmer Esko Viljo, 38, both active competition skiers, were out skiing. They came down from a little hill to a glade where they usually take a pause. It was sunset, and a few stars were visible in the unclouded sky. It was very cold (-17 Celsius) and windless.

They had been standing in the glade for about 5 minutes when they heard a buzzing sound, and caught sight of a very strong light moving through the sky. It approached from the north, made a wide sweep, and came at them from the south, descending as it came. The faint buzzing sound became louder. The light halted, and then they could see that a luminous red-grey mist was swirling round it. Puffs of smoke were thrown up from the top of the cloud.

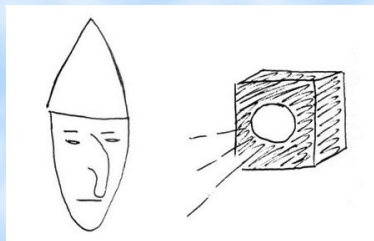
The two men stood quite still staring into the air, saying nothing. The cloud was soon down as low as 15 m, and they could see what was inside it: a round object, flat at the bottom, metallic in appearance and about 3 m in diameter.

Heinonen's account, as reported by GICOFF (the Goteberg UFO information center) runs: "The round craft hovered a while, completely motionless above us while the buzzing sound could still be heard, quite low. Then the huge disc began to descend along with the red-grey fog which became more thin and transparent. It stopped at a height of 3-4 m, so near I could have touched it if I had reached with my ski-stick."

"The craft was completely round. When it came down obliquely towards us, we saw it had a dome on the upper side. Along the lower edge was a kind of raised part on which were three spheres or domes spaced equidistantly. From the center of the bottom projected a tube, approximately 25 cm in diameter, from which suddenly there came an intense beam of light."

"I don't think we said anything to each other at all. We were completely amazed. We saw the light move a couple of times before stopping and intensely illuminating a patch of snow about a meter in diameter, with around it a dark edge, almost coal-black and 1 cm wide."

"I was standing completely still. Suddenly, I felt as if somebody had seized my waist from behind and pulled me backwards. I think I took a step backwards, and in the same second, I caught sight of the creature. It was standing in the middle of the light beam with a black box in its hands. Out of a round opening in the box, there came a yellow light, pulsating. The creature was about 90 cm tall, with very thin arms and legs. Its face was pale like wax. I didn't notice the eyes, but the nose was very strange, it was a hook rather than a nose. The ears were very small and narrowed towards the head. The creature wore some kind of overall in a light green material. On its feet were boots of a darker green color, which stretched above the knees. There were also white gauntlets going up to the elbows, and the fingers were bent like claws around the black box."



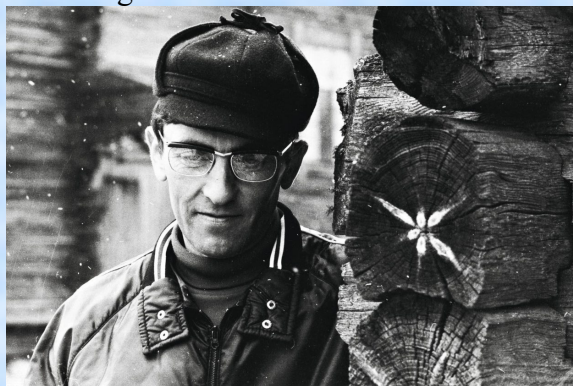
*Sketch of the occupant*

Viljo: "The creature stood in the middle of the bright light and was luminous like phosphorus, but its face was very pale. Its shoulders were very thin and slanting, with thin arms like a child's. I did not think of the clothes, only noticing that they were greenish in color. On its head was a conical helmet shining like metal. The creature was less than 1 m tall."

Suddenly, it turned and directed the opening of the box towards Heinonen: "The pulsating light was very bright, almost blinding. It was very silent in the forest. Suddenly, a red-grey mist came flowing down from the object and large sparks started to fly from the illuminated circle of snow. The sparks were like tapers, about 10 cm long, red, green and violet. They floated out in long curves, rather slowly; many of them hit me, but though I expected them to burn me, I did not feel anything."

Viljo: "The sparks were shining in several colors. It was very beautiful. At the same time, the red mist became thicker and hid the creature. Suddenly, it was so dense that I could not see Aarno even though I knew he was standing only a few meters away from me."

Heinonen: "I could only just see Esko. The mist was very thick and I could no longer see the creature."



*Heinonen in 1972*

Viljo: "I saw the being for perhaps 15-20 seconds, no longer. Suddenly, the beam melted, flew up like a flickering flame, and was sucked into the gap in the craft. After that, it was as if the fog curtain was torn to pieces. The air above us was empty! I don't think you can say we were afraid. We were laughing and talking about this light. But at the same time, we felt a little uneasy."

They stayed there for perhaps three minutes. Gradually, Heinonen became aware of a numbness in his right side. When he stepped forward on his skis, his right leg wouldn't support him and he fell in the snow. "My right leg had been nearest the light. The whole leg was stiff and aching. My foot was as if anesthetized."

Viljo: "It was growing dark. I asked Aarno if we should be on our way. I thought he was joking when he sat down in the snow. But then I saw he couldn't get up though he tried over and over again."

Viljo had to half-carry, half-drag his friend to his home, some 3 km distant. "When they got home," said Heinonen's mother, "it was dark outside. They knocked on the door, which they don't usually do. When I opened the door, Aarno was outside leaning against Esko. I helped them in. Neither seemed frightened, but I could see Esko's face was red and swollen. We got Aarno over to a sofa."

Heinonen: "I felt ill. My back was aching and all my joints were painful. My head ached and after a while, I had to vomit. When I went to pee, the urine was nearly black; it was like pouring black coffee onto the snow. This continued for a couple of months."

Viljo: "I hurried to the nearest neighbor, who lived some 600 m away; he has a telephone. The first two doctors I called couldn't come, but Dr. Kajanoja said he would meet us at Heinola clinic in an hour's time. The neighbor drove us there."



To the doctor, Heinonen complained about his aching joints and his headache. The doctor prescribed sleeping pills, and next day sedatives, telling him the symptoms would be gone in 10 days. But they continued, and Heinonen was unable to work. In May, he reported he was still ill, with pains in head and neck; the least effort tired him. The numbness in his right leg had gone, but he still had trouble with his balance. His memory was so bad that if he left home, he had to say where he was going so that he could be picked up if he didn't return. A visit to the site of the incident made him feel worse. Several people who had visited the site, said Viljo, had felt sick for some days afterwards; he wondered if the place was infected in some way. He, too, suffered after-effects, including headaches and eye troubles. Dr. Pauli Kajanoja reports: "I think the men have suffered a great shock. Viljo was very red in the face and seemed a little swollen. Both seemed absent-minded. They talked quickly and incoherently. I could not find anything clinically wrong with Heinonen. He did not feel well, but that could have been his stomach reacting to the shock. The symptoms he described are like those after being exposed to radioactivity. Unfortunately, I had no instrument to measure that. As to the black urine, it seems inexplicable. Possibly, it could have been blood in it, but this cannot go on for several months. If blood samples had been taken, they might have revealed changes in his blood."

"Both men seemed sincere, and I don't think they had made the thing up. I'm sure they were in a state of shock when they came to me; something must have frightened them."

A strange thing happened in June 1970 when the two witnesses revisited the site together with a Swedish journalist, a photographer and an interpreter; the hands of the three strangers suddenly became red, and Heinonen had to leave the site with a powerful headache.

## CONFIRMATIONS

On the same day and at the same time as the skiers had their experience, two other people saw a bright light in the sky. A farmer's wife, Elna Siitari, in Paistjarvi, about 15 km from Imjarvi, was on her way to the cow-house when she saw a strange light in the direction of Imjarvi. In Paaso, 10 km north of Imjarvi, the son of a household had gone out for firewood when he observed a light phenomenon; it was then 4:45 p.m.

## STATEMENTS FROM EXPERTS

Matti Tuuri, professor in electro-physics at Helsinki University, was very interested in the incident: "We can't exclude the possibility that the injuries could have been caused by electrical radiation. But both state that the light was blinding and white, so it can't have been ultraviolet radiation, which is always bluish. Besides, it does not penetrate clothing. If the radiation penetrated Heinonen's clothing, it must have been a short-wave radiation such as X-rays; an overdose of these would cause symptoms such as those he reported..."

"There is much in electro-physics which has yet to be explored. One has only to mention ball lightning; we know it exists, but the physical laws defining its existence have yet to be established. According to the known laws of physics, ball lightning should blow up immediately - but it doesn't! The incident at Heinola seems likely to be an abnormal electrical phenomenon."

The Institute for High Voltage Research at Uppsala University told GICOFF they did not think the phenomenon was related to any kind of atmospheric electricity.

Soil, vegetation and snow samples from the site were sent to Chalmers Institute of Technology for radiation tests, but revealed no more than normal background radiation.

## SINCE 1970

To complicate a situation which already defies explanation, we have to consider Heinonen's claim that between the time of the incident and August 1972, he had no less than 23 further UFO sightings. As if that were not enough, he has become a contactee; on two occasions, he met an "extremely beautiful" spacewoman, after a loud female voice had directed him to a secluded rendezvous.

At the first encounter, he also saw a man, standing about 60 m behind the woman. She was wearing a yellow trouser suit which rustled when she moved; she was 1.5 m tall, with shoulder-length hair and blue eyes - a description recalling Adamski's Venusian. She didn't walk like a human but "floated" or "hovered". Though she looked about 20, she told him she was 180, as Menger's Venusian did. In her hand, she held a silvery ball with three aerials pointing at Heinonen.

Fortunately, she spoke Finnish, and began her conversation with "Hyvaa paivaa" (= How do you do?); she told him she came from a green and pleasant land. Three different species of humanoids had visited Imjarvi, she said, some smaller than her, some of her height (140 cm) and some about 2 m high. She said that the January incident had lasted 3 minutes, not just a few seconds as the two witnesses thought.

At their second meeting, Heinonen again asked where she came from. She told him to hurry home and he would see the beautiful craft she had come in. And indeed, when he got home, he saw an object some 5-7 m in diameter in the sky.

On each occasion, Heinonen spoke with the spacewoman for five minutes, but can recall surprisingly little of what was said. On another occasion, both he and Viljo saw a being in Viljo's home: a being a little more than 1.5 m, wearing a grey suit with white stripes, suddenly stepped out of the wall and remained standing in the middle of the floor; the two men gaped at it for 30 seconds, after which it vanished.



Swedish ufologist Liljegren has drawn attention to the failure of Heinonen and Viljo to offer anything by way of concrete evidence. On one occasion, Heinonen received a green pen from the space beings, but he lent it to a researcher and never saw it again: he was given a stone but made to throw it away; when he tried to photograph the spacewoman, both she and his camera disappeared! Viljo too tried to take a photograph of a mysterious light, but the camera was knocked out of his hand and the film was burned to ashes. All in all, Liljegren concludes, their accounts are more like sagas and myths than a logical contact attempt by an intergalactic civilization.

Without question, these later accounts undermine the credibility of the witnesses and throw a dubious light on their original story. As in the Dewilde case in France, the Hill case in the United States, and many more, what seems at first to be an interesting and serious incident is made to seem doubtful by subsequent events.

Is it that the real UFO experience causes the witnesses to subsequently have imaginary experiences? Or was the first, like those that followed, the symptom of some psychic state, triggered by some unknown cause to bring about a UFO 'sighting'? (In this connection, it is perhaps significant that, according to Anders Liljegren, this was not Heinonen's first UFO sighting; he had had one six years previously!)

Or is there yet a third explanation?

#### A CURIOUS POSTSCRIPT

In February 1969, a 16-year-old boy, Matti Kontulainen, had a strange experience only 100 m or so from the slope where Heinonen and Viljo had their encounter:

"It was a cloudy winter evening about 11 p.m. I was skiing home through the forest after visiting a friend. It was dark but suddenly, the forest was lit up by an intense light which rushed just above the treetops at so low an altitude that I threw myself

down in the snow. It was like a huge welding flame, and it disappeared in no time. I have never seen such an intense light; it was like staring at the sun! It was coming from the south and heading north. I heard no sound, so I'm sure it wasn't an airplane."

Matti Haapaniemi, 46, is a farmer in Imjarvi and a member of Heinola rural district council; his farm is only 1 km distant from Heinonen's home. He says: "Many people in this neighborhood have laughed at this story. But I don't think it's anything to joke about. I've known both Aarno and Esko since they were little boys. Both are quiet, rational fellows, and moreover they are abstainers. I'm sure their story is true!"

**Reliability evaluation:**

**- low -**

**no evidences; apparently fabricated; nothing clinically  
wrong found by the doctor on Mr. Heinonen;  
no effects on Mr. Viljo who was with him;  
further encounters apparently borrowed from other cases**

