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**"There's an
Alien on the
Playground!"**



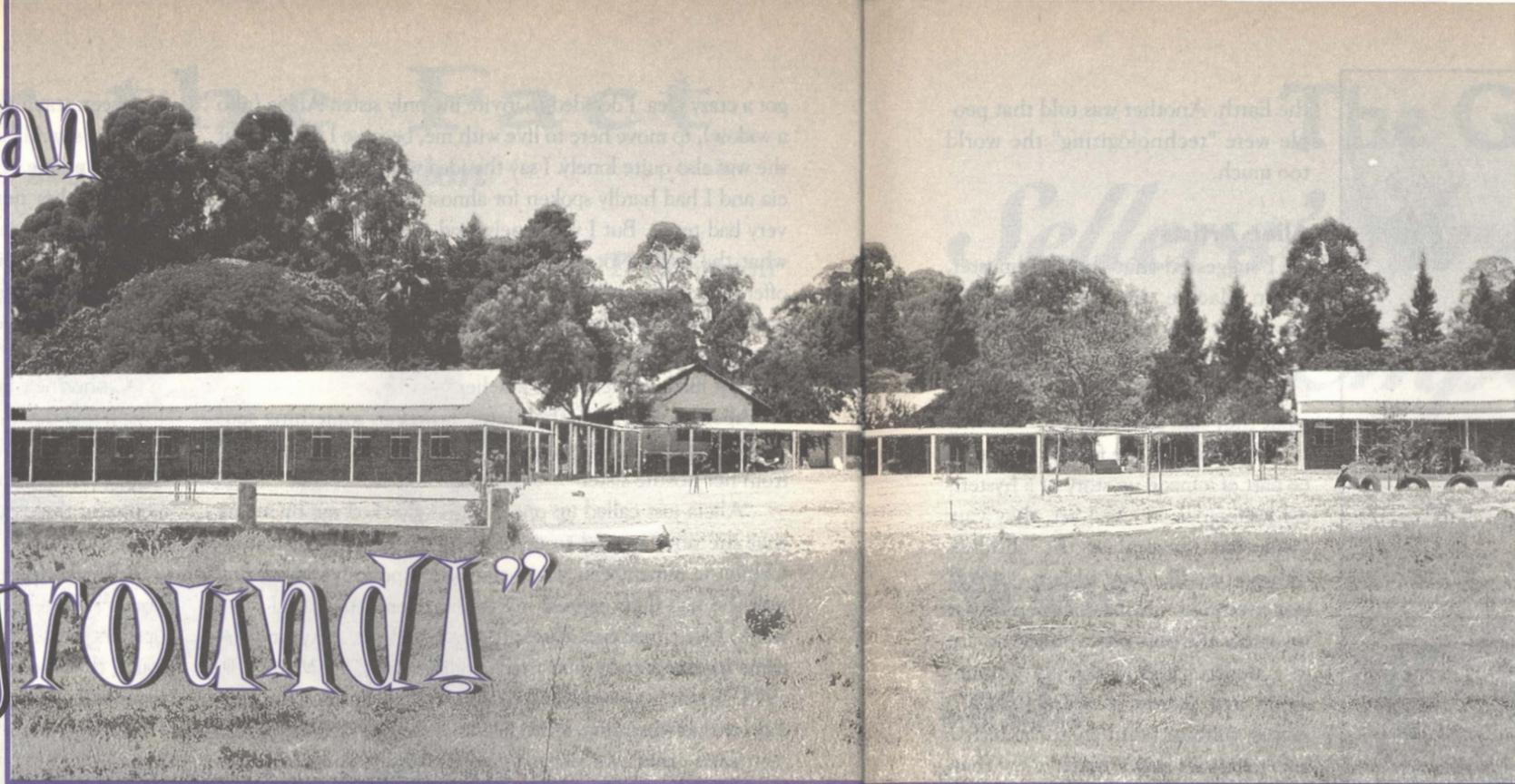
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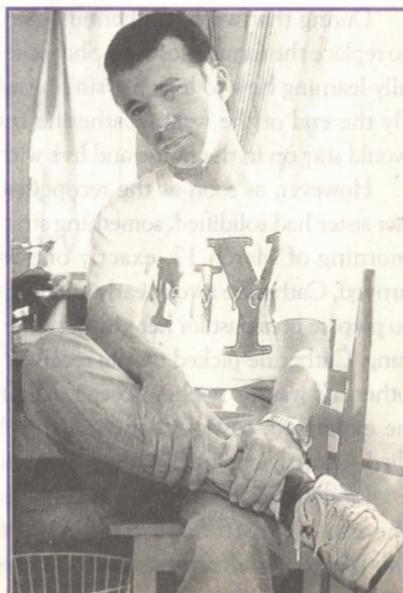


South African children say a spacecraft landed at their school.

Article and photos by Cynthia Hind

When more than 200 children headed for the playground on a sunny morning in 1994, they found they weren't alone: A small party of aliens, they say, landed a spacecraft nearby and then approached the frightened youngsters with a dire message of warning.

September 16 started like any other day. At 10 A.M., the children were excused from their classrooms for their mid-morning recess. The teachers stayed inside for a staff meeting. The only adult near the children was Alyson Kirkman,



one of the mothers who voluntarily took turns running the school store.

Suddenly, something flashed across the sky. Sixty-two of the children say they watched in awe as an object, followed by three or four smaller objects, flew near the electrical power lines, and then landed about 200 meters from the playground.

The main object seemed to hover for a minute or two, and then, through a doorway in the side of the craft, two small men (about one meter high) emerged. They were dressed entirely in shiny black suits that fit closely to their skinny bodies. They had black hair and pale faces, as well as two arms and legs. But what frightened the children most were the creatures' eyes.



Clockwise from top: Ariel School, Ruwa, Zimbabwe, where schoolchildren encountered the confused creatures and their craft; technician Gunter Hofer takes soil samples; Ariel headmaster Colin Mackie with Dr. John Mack; Hofer surveys the playground where the encounter took place; Hofer, at home, said that he and some of the children spotted an unusual light near the school; BBC correspondent Tim Leach filmed the light, which remains unexplained.

"There's an Alien on the Playground!"

They were low on the face and "they looked like rugby balls," one child said. There were two little holes for nostrils and a small, thin line for a mouth.

Reflections and Missing Insects

Tim Leach, a BBC correspondent, phoned me shortly after the event and invited me to accompany him to the site.

Ariel School is a private elementary school in Ruwa, about 25 kilometers from Harare, Zimbabwe. Students there are representative of the many ethnic groups in Zimbabwe: white, black, and Asian.

The playground was mostly gravel. A persistent drought had stunted all growth, so that only the hardiest grasses remained. Beyond the playground was a large area of several acres of fairly thick indigenous scrub, bushes, and trees. The



children were not allowed to go there alone, because they could easily lose sight of the school and get lost, or they could encounter snakes, scorpions, spiders, or other dangerous animals.

Tim Leach and I examined the area with Gunter Hofer, a clever young technician who had built his own Geiger counter, metal detector, and electronometer. Hofer's Geiger readings did not reflect anything unusual. However, he and some of the children present did observe a bright light near the top of the hill, within the heavy bush. They speculated that it could be the sun's reflection off glass windows, but when they reached the area there were no buildings of any kind there. Leach had filmed the scene for the BBC. When he reviewed the tape, the bright light was visible. He filmed the same scene on the next day, and no light appeared.

Some of the children also pointed out a number of ant holes in the area, although no ants were visible. The chil-

dren told me that normally, they were bitten by ants there. They also had seen a lot of dead ants which they could not explain. Headmaster Colin Mackie, however, said that the ants had merely gone deep underground because of the drought.

Greetings, Small Earthlings

At first, the children told me, one of the creatures remained on top of the craft, as though guarding it, while the other moved toward the children. He was soon joined by the "guard," and both seemed to move "in slow motion," one child reported. One young boy, Farayi, said, "They seemed confused, as though they didn't quite know what was happening."

Their confusion was confirmed by Camilla. "I saw the one poke his head up through the bushes and look at me. Me and Candice, we were really scared. We nearly screamed."

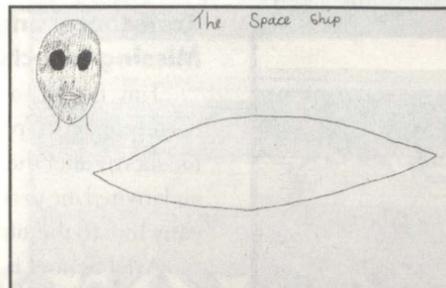
Candice said that when the object landed, the children could hear a "sort of flute noise."

Another girl said, "They seemed astonished to see us, as though they didn't know what we were."

Alyson Kirkman, the mother who worked at the school store, said a boy named Luke came running to her at the time. "There's an alien," he said, "dressed all in black with long black hair, running around outside. Come quickly and see."

Kirkman said she refused to go because the store was full of sweets, buns, cold drinks, and her money, and she thought they were simply tricking her to get her out of the shop.

Dr. John Mack of Harvard University Medical School flew into Zimbabwe and interviewed the children. He was told that several of them had received some form of message from the entities when they looked into their eyes. One little girl thought the eyes were horrible, and she felt that they were telling her the world was going to end. Another said that they had sent messages to stop polluting



Above: Similarities in their drawings of the creatures and spacecraft lent credibility to the children's testimony. Below: Lisel, age 10, drew the picture at the top of the page. Bottom: Fungai (in the cap) and Guy, both age 11, encountered the beings. Guy said that some of his classmates were afraid that the creatures would eat them.



the Earth. Another was told that people were "technologizing" the world too much.

Alien Artists

I suggested that the headmaster, Colin Mackie, ask the children to draw what they had seen. From the 40 or more drawings that resulted, there is no doubt in my mind that they saw what they said they saw.

The drawings are far too similar to be part of a made-up story or a hysterical hallucination. And yet, they vary somewhat. Several of the children showed tine-like legs. Others didn't. I was mystified, until I discovered that several of the boys often played on top of a stack of logs in the playground. They had viewed the craft from a higher vantage point than the others and therefore had a better view than those standing on the level playground.

Most of the children at Ariel School seemed willing to discuss their adventure. Most also said they had been afraid.

One youngster named Guy said, "I saw two little boys crying. I went to them and asked why they were crying. They said they were frightened that the little men would come and eat them."

The remark was typical, because children in the area are sometimes told, "Don't be naughty, or the Tokol-she will come and eat you!"

Guy later told me that when he reported the event to his mother, she didn't believe him. He then told his father, who also found it difficult to accept—although both parents admit that Guy does not lie to them. Guy responded by saying, "I won't forget what I saw, but I am going to keep it deep inside of me and not talk about it anymore."

Cynthia Hind lives in South Africa. Her latest book, *UFOs Affecting Africa*, is published by Horus House.

The Ghost of Sellers' Arts and Crafts Emporium

Article by
David R. Oester

No one could explain the noises in the warehouse—until the ghostbusters arrived.

The night Doug Sellers felt something brush across his cheek was the night he became a believer in the spirit world.

He owns Sellers' Arts and Crafts in Scappoose, Oregon, a bedroom community 20 minutes north of Portland. *Scappoose* is an old Indian word that means "wide plains." Early settlers grazed their animals in the area. In 1915 and 1930, two fires nearly destroyed the town. Today, however, some original buildings still stand along the main highway through town. Sellers' business occupies two of them.

Sellers' warehouse and his apartment are on the second floor. Decades ago, a fire broke out there, trapping a man who was unable to escape the flames. He perished as firefighters watched helplessly.

For a time, the warehouse was used as a ballroom where area residents would dance the night away. In the 1950s, it also housed dental offices. According to an elderly lady who frequently shops at the craft store, she heard at the time that the dental office was haunted.

Sellers never used to believe in ghosts or hauntings. His long days working under contract as an actor in Fox's *Nowhere Man* left him too tired to worry about the supernatural. He spent most evenings relaxing in his apartment, reading in his easy chair and listening to music, as his cat, Skimbles, lay nearby.

And while Sellers often heard the floorboards creak as if someone were walking across the room, he simply attributed the creaking to the age of the building. But soon he noticed that Skimbles would hiss and growl at something that Sellers couldn't see.