

Sat., Mar. 14, 1987

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Abducted By Aliens? You're Not Alone

By Michael Capuzzo

©1987, Knight-Ridder Newspapers

A WHOOSHING noise woke Whitley Strieber in his upstate New York cabin on the night after Christmas 1985. He sat up in bed. The burglar alarm glowed armed and undisturbed. His wife, Annie, slept peacefully beside him. His dog, beneath the bed, didn't stir.

Then, slowly, the bedroom door began to open.

The next morning, Strieber, 41, remembered nothing unusual.

But in the next few days, he was plagued by disturbing images: images of floating out of the room and above the treetops, naked and paralyzed; of being examined by 3-foot-tall gray creatures with huge dark eyes who inserted a hairlike probe into his brain. Images that led the best-selling author to question his sanity.

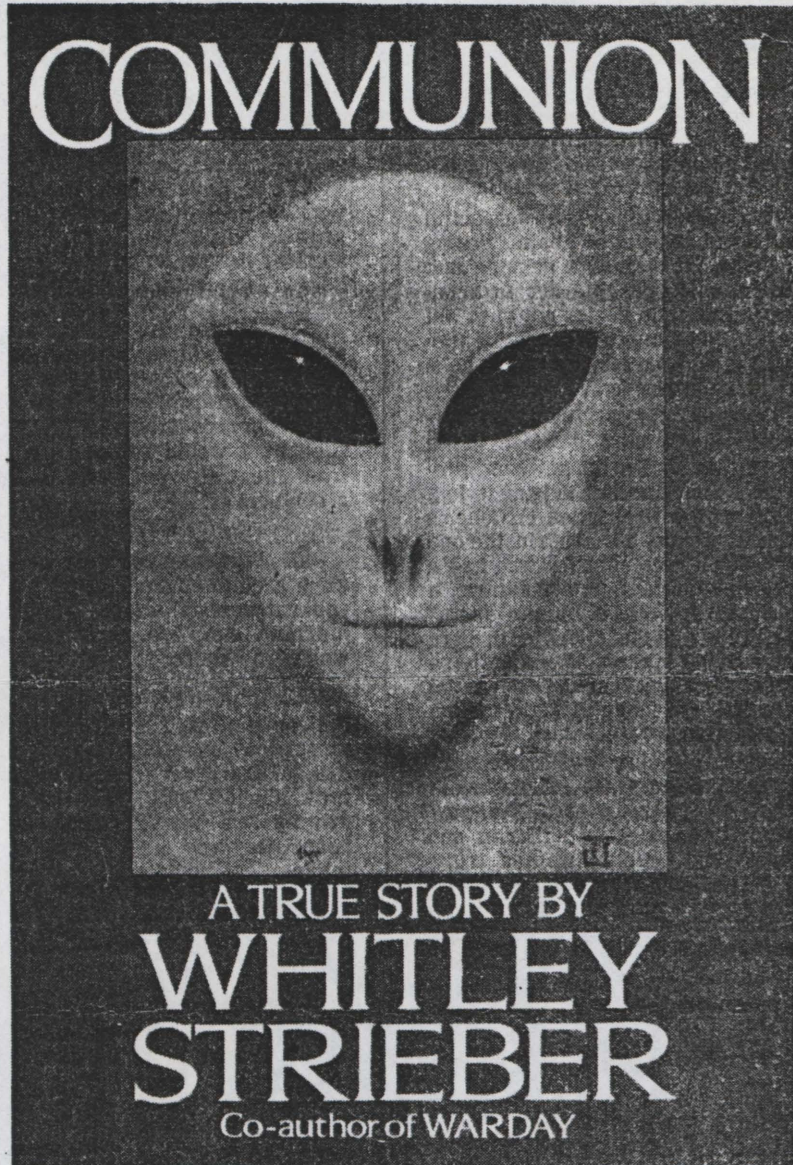
Strieber's search for answers led him to a New York City support group of about 50 people who reported similar abductions and examinations by small gray creatures with bulbous heads and luminous black eyes. The group, which included policemen and lawyers, doctors and truckers, a stockbroker and a composer, shared bizarre stories at an emotional "abductee party" last year in Manhattan.

Strieber's story, chronicled in his recently published book "Communion," seems the stuff of supermarket tabloids and science-fiction movies. But alien-abduction reports, and books on the subject, are increasing and are being taken seriously by some scholars, including David M. Jacobs, a history professor at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Jacobs, who wrote a book on the history of UFOs, teaches what is believed to be the country's only accredited undergraduate course on the UFO phenomenon. Last year, he began interviewing area residents who had reported similar encounters. He is convinced, he says, because of the real anxiety reported by a growing number of "sane people," that something is happening.

Mere sightings of UFOs, such as that in November of a Japanese pilot who said a UFO followed him over Alaska while he was flying from Europe to Japan, are "throwbacks to the '50s" that pale in significance to abduction reports, Jacobs said.

"The amazing thing about this is that it's absolutely impossible to explain what is happening to these people," Jacobs said. "There is no explanation in science. No explanation in psychology. These are disparate individuals who are



telling stories in great detail without any knowledge of the subject, without any knowledge of anyone (making similar claims). They all sort of started at once, they have no ax to grind, and none of them ever exhibited anything like psychosis or mental disease or trauma."

There is no evidence of a mass hoax or hallucination, Jacobs said.

"We just have scores and scores of cases, and they are coming out of the woodwork. And they are all telling the same story, down to the minutest details."

Strieber, author of several horror novels, including "The Hunger" and "Wolfen," acknowledges that some critics will dismiss "Communion" as the work of a master storyteller. So he passed a polygraph examination by Ned Laurendi, vice president of the Empire State Polygraph Society, "to reassure readers that I honestly think that I perceived the things reported in this book."

Strieber also was examined by Dr.

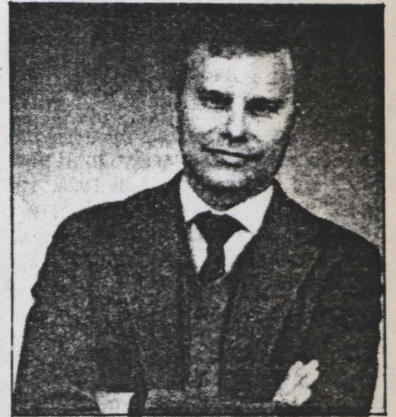
Donald F. Klein, director of research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and professor of psychiatry at Columbia University.

"I have examined Whitley Strieber and found that he is not suffering from a psychosis," Klein wrote in "Communion."

"He is not hallucinating in a manner characteristic of psychosis. I also see no evidence of an anxiety state, mood disorder or personality disorder. He has approached the dilemma of what is happening to him in a careful and forthright way."

In the '80s, while reports of UFO sightings have leveled off to about 350 a year, abduction reports are rising at an "explosive" rate, Jacobs said.

Only 10 years ago, there were perhaps a dozen reported UFO-abduction cases. Now the number is about 300, according to Walter H. Andrus Jr., international director of the Texas-based Mutual UFO



In his book "Communion," Whitley Strieber tells of his own and others' alleged abductions by aliens.

Network, a group of volunteers that records UFO reports.

In his 1981 book "Missing Time," Budd Hopkins, 55, was the first to report the similar patterns of UFO abductions, according to Jacobs. His newest book, "Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods," to be published this month, is based on interviews with more than 100 "abductees."

Assisted by psychologists, psychiatrists and physicians, he has investigated most of the reported UFO abduction cases in the country and holds "abductee" support-group meetings at his New York apartment.

"Abductees" are most often kidnapped in the middle of the night and feel strangely powerless and immobilized. The "abductors" seem to mean no harm and seem puzzled by the fright and anger that abductees feel at being taken against their will, according to Hopkins. Abductees commonly report receiving seemingly telepathic messages, such as "Do not be afraid. We will not hurt you."

The beings they report are neither malicious nor friendly but clinical, neutral, like "indifferent veterinarians," Strieber says.

Hopkins has photographs of small, scooplike scars on the backs, arms or legs of more than a dozen subjects who believe they have been abducted. He speculates that the aliens are taking cell samples — and somehow tagging their captives, much as a scientist tags animals in nature studies.

Hopkins acknowledges his 350 hours of tapes of abduction stories are "intrinsically unbelievable."

"Again and again they say, 'I feel like I'm making this up,'" he said. "Nobody can believe this, even the people to whom it happened. They want to believe they're just dreaming, but it seems so much like a real experience."