

'Communion' with other worlds

Author angry that officials don't believe tales of alien encounters

By Peter Turnbill

Scottpa Howard News Service

Whitely Strieber is angry. He believes that he has been abducted and subjected to terrifying, ongoing biological experiments by non-human "visitors" from another planet or dimension, and that the situation has been officially ignored and ridiculed.

Whitley Strieber also is getting rich.

He wrote a book, *Communion*, about his experiences and his attempts to understand what he thinks happened, and is happening still, and he's well on the way to becoming wealthy because of it.

William Morrow & Co. gave him a million-dollar advance for rights to the hard-cover edition of the book. Sales figures aren't available, more than 260,000 copies are in print.

Then Avon came out with the paperback edition, and the skies really opened: No. 1 on the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Publishers Weekly* best-seller lists; 1.72 million copies in print—and the official paperback publication date was only Feb. 1.

Strieber, who lives in New York, also is collaborating on a movie based on the book; produc-

tion is due to start this spring. He has a sequel to his book coming out in the fall.

The evident popularity of *Communion* notwithstanding, Strieber is perturbed at the lack of any official effort to understand what he maintains is a widespread phenomena.

"I'm very, very tired of the laughter and contempt," he says.

To read his description of his abductions is unpleasant and unsettling, if only because of the wealth of detail he gives about the variety of "E.T."-variety beings that have stalked him, the intense fear and helplessness he felt in their clutches, the numerous physical examinations and probes to which he was subjected and the efforts he made to comprehend his dilemma.

Since the publication of *Communion* last year, he says, he has received more than 4,000 letters from people all over the world describing abductions similar to his, all of them frightened and confused by what he called "the agonizing, difficult and painful experience" they've undergone. "How do these people live with this?"

And what has he done with these letters? "Nothing," he says. "What can I do?"

What he can do, although he doesn't say so, is offer empa-

thy—and a lot of righteous indignation. "They're not crazy," he says of his fellow sufferers, despite the fact that in their terror and confusion "there is absolutely no social institution to which they can turn."

What does he suggest be done? "I think it would be very interesting, for example, if the established scientific community were able to accept the fact that anomalous experiences do happen to people... and would spend some time and money, beginning in the mental health community, in helping these people."

Instead, he says, those "visited" are "kept in a state of embarrassment" by the government, which refuses to acknowledge that what they say happened may have happened, because there is no proof—which Strieber readily admits—and by the scientific community, none of whom "would dare to propose such a study."

Strieber suspects that the government may have more than an inkling of what's going on. In fact, officials may already have had contact with the "visitors," he says, but have covered it up.

Consequently, he says, "The effect of this is to deliver ordinary citizens, naked and alone in the middle of the night, into the

hands of these experimenters, and that is an absolute outrage."

His last experience with the "visitors" took place on Dec. 23, 1986, he says. Although he still has no proof, he is surer than ever that there is a purpose to these visits. "They're not here on some kind of scientific expedition," he says. "They do seem to be making a great deal of effort to keep us from knowing where they came from."

Instead, he thinks they are seeking contact for other reasons, perhaps spiritual or cosmic in nature.

Therefore, he has decided that he is neither crazy nor ill and he has tried to exert an element of control during the visits. "I've tried to overcome my fear," he says. "These guys are fierce and intense."

His next book, *Transformation*, is "about how I learned to cope with my fear," he says.

Despite the notoriety he has gotten from his revelations, Strieber, who has written several other books of fiction and non-fiction, isn't worried about how his future work will be received. "I will write what I want to write," he says.

Still, the disparagement *Communion* received troubles him. "But I'm not going to give up," he says. "It's worth it."