

Encounters 'too real to be a dream'

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TAMPA — They confess they haven't talked about it much. They haven't wanted to.

Even now, there is an uneasy, self-conscious rhythm to their speech, like that of a child forced to the front of the class for show-and-tell.

They are two people whose lives were changed without decision or will, and who will forever look at the sky through different eyes.

"I'm a writer. I have a wonderful imagination. So you can see my predicament," says Karen in a telephone interview from her Naples home. The 43-year-old writer and mother of three uses Karen as a pseudonym, explaining in hushed tones, "I didn't even tell my husband until six months ago."

In the fall of 1986, near Little Rock, Ark., and then again in Douglas, Wyo., something happened to Karen she can't describe — and only with the gentlest inquiry does she reveal her "odd experience."

Karen refuses to call it an alien abduction. Yet she is "so totally convinced that it was real, I know it was not one of those yoga, meditative things," Karen says.

It began in small, strange ways during the summer of 1986, Karen says. Electrical appliances in her home began to malfunction for no apparent reason — the television burned out, the washer and dryer started and stopped — and it seemed to be related to Karen.

"My children started making jokes about me staying away from the TV," she says.

One day, while seated near her computer terminal, Karen says the keys moved inde-



Tribune illustration by JIM BREDECK
Aliens have been described as "humanoid and very intelligent."

pendently of her touch. Their message: Karen "needed" to travel west.

Completely unnerved by the strange sequence of events, Karen says she decided to heed the advice. Because she often travels to destinations described in her books, Karen says her family thought nothing of her sudden compulsion to visit the Rockies.

They noticed, however, that the electrical disturbances stopped when she left.

For Karen, new disturbances began.

'Boomerang-shaped craft'

"The things that I remember are highly questionable from a scientific basis," she says. "I have nothing in my hands to prove, I mean, I can't verify anything when I say that I was zapped and tagged like a little animal. But there was a boomerang-shaped craft..."

Karen stops, but her silence is noisy with frustration. It's as if she knows her story sounds unbelievable — even to herself.

But when she speaks again, there is wonder in her voice. Her tone is protective and childlike, and at one point Karen weeps softly.

"I don't know what their purpose was. It wasn't just biological. It had something to do with teaching physics and higher concepts — I kept seeing all these mathematical formulas. I was told that I would remember when I would need to remember.

"They looked humanoid and very intelligent. And when they touched me," Karen says, her voice breaking. "I have never felt such love and compassion, not from any human being on earth.

"They are *people* and we don't have the right to call them other names that we've tagged on."

Karen sounds angry now, and her next few statements are direct exclamations.

"There is something, honest to God, that lives beyond the intelligence we have manifested thus far. It makes you question all your philosophies and psychologies.

"But it should have happened to somebody who could have been more intellectual, so they could have picked up the immense knowledge and technology aboard these starships.

Psychologists baffled by stories of 'contactees'