

# Alien abduction: Fact or fantasy?

Interest in unidentified flying objects was heightened last week when the official Soviet news agency Tass reported that an unearthly craft had touched down 300 miles southeast of Moscow. For years, researchers of the paranormal have investigated UFOs and reports of alien abductions throughout the United States including southwestern Pennsylvania. In this, the second article of a two-part series, Tribune-Review reporter Sharon Santus tells of three area people who claim to have been victims of alien abduction.

By Sharon Santus  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Marion Richards (not her real name), a 39-year-old homemaker from Ligonier, said she believes she was first abducted as a 3-year-old in Mamont, and at various times since then.

In the first incident, Richards said she was playing with her brother and sister near Beaver Run Dam when she experienced a time lapse of several hours.

"One minute, I was playing with my brother and sister, and the next thing I remember is my father getting down off his tractor, looking very worried and running toward me," Richards said. "Apparently, I had been missing for several hours. Most of Mamont was looking for me. They thought I had drowned. When I was found, there was a chunk of my ear missing, like someone had scooped out a portion. It's quite noticeable."

Since then, Richards said she has regularly been visited by "the three little people."

"I've always seen them," she said. "When I was small, I thought everyone saw them. I see them frequently for a while, then I won't see them. But I've never gone a year between visits."

Richards describes the beings as 3½ to 4 feet tall wearing capes.

"They are so fast, it's hard to get a clear look at them," she said. "They have real big eyes, I can't remember a nose, and a little slit for a mouth."

Richards said the visits usually occur between 3 and 5 a.m.

"My husband is sleeping beside me," she said. "They approach me, very close to my face. They put a finger or a wand on my forehead and that puts me out. It's the last thing I remember."

Richards said she is convinced that each time she sees the little people, they tranquilize her, take her aboard their craft, examine her and then bring her back. Her ear wound as a child, she speculates, resulted from the alien examination.

She said the only piece of evidence of the visitations was a black metal rod-shaped instrument left behind in 1985. She said she put it on the windowsill during the visit, but by morning it was gone.

## HUSBAND HASN'T SEEN

Richards said her husband has never seen her visitors.

"He doesn't disbelieve me," she said. "He's just never experienced it." However, Richards said, her husband and son shared in a similar experience in 1985.

She said she, her husband and son were returning from Loyalhanna Dam when they came upon a bizarre scene.

"It was between 10 and 10:30 at night and I was driving," Richards said. "I came up over the hill and there was something along the edge of the road. It was a clear cylinder about 9 to 12 feet tall, and there were sticks and twigs swirling around inside of it. It was a vacuum and it was picking up things. I nearly hit it. There was a creature in the tree and he was operating the cylinder. My son only saw the arm. It was huge, 8 to 10 feet tall and it was very muscular and well defined."

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— Alien abduction victim

## NO LONGER FEARFUL

Richards said she is no longer fearful of the strange occurrences that, by her accounts, have been with her since childhood.

"I used to be really afraid, but not anymore," she said. "It doesn't consume my daily thoughts. If it did, I would go crazy."

John Biondi, a school psychologist with the Hempfield Area School District and member of the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained, has conducted hours of interviews and hypnosis with people like Richards who claim to have been abducted by aliens.

"I believe they are being truthful," Biondi said. "They seem sincere. These people do not want the publicity. They don't want to be identified, so there can be no monetary gain for them."

Biondi said people who suspect alien abduction often step forward reluctantly.

"Sometimes they think they're going crazy," he said. "We try to reassure them there are other people saying they've seen the same things. Have they been abducted? That's difficult to say. I think it's possible."

## JUST FANTASIES

For some researchers, the possibility of alien abduction is clearly impossible.

Paul Kurtz, chairman of the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, said those making such claims are "fantasy prone."

"These people can be normal in all other aspects of their lives, but they have this fantasy about being abducted by aliens," Kurtz said. "Then they start acting it out."

Kurtz said people might read a book or see a movie about abductions and, under hypnosis, they repeat what they read and see.

"Not only what is real comes out under hypnosis," Kurtz said. "The imagination is at work, too."

Robert Basil, editor of *Not Necessarily The New Age*, a book that explores alien abduction, said hypnotists often suggest answers they want to hear.

## PLEASE THE HYPNOTIST

"Some people will concoct an incredible, far-fetched tale as a way of pleasing the hypnotist," Basil said. "The hypnotists, instead of helping subjects to remember, are actually planting fantastic tales into their heads."

David Jacobs, paranormal researcher and professor of history at Temple University, agreed that an untrained or unscrupulous hypnotist can "uncover" events that never occurred.

"But we are very careful not to suggest abduction scenarios," Jacobs said. "Hypnosis is an irreplaceable tool for accessing the memory. It's the best we have."

Jacobs said he is aware of abduction scoffers, but said his years of research have brought him to an unmistakable conclusion.

"To say these people were abducted best explains all the data that we've gathered," Jacobs said. "Even if you dismiss all the physical data, there's still the issue of the missing time. There is no better alternative explanation."

STAN GORDON via COUD—I PASU