

# UFO POTPOURRI

no. 379

## DREAMS OR REAL?

The UFO abduction debate, as with many subjects, has been polarized into two specific camps. On the one hand a number of long-time UFO researchers have done indepth research into the abduction issue. They worked with the victims, assisted them in their trauma, and eventually almost all of these researchers reached the conclusion that the abductions are real. On the other hand, several researchers who generally don't work with the victims have concluded, based on their professional knowledge, that the abductions are not real, rather they are simply a manifestation of dreams or sleep paralysis. Neither have proved their case.

Graham Conway sent me an article by Sanjida O'Connell of the Vancouver SUN (15 October 1993) that discusses how to tell if your are dreaming or having a real experience. A portion of the text of her article is as follows:

"We are awake while sleeping," wrote Michel de Montaigne. It is a paradoxical notion. Nevertheless, the sixteenth-century French essayist may have been on to something. When we are asleep we still need to be vigilant. This was important particularly to our ancestors, who vulnerable to attack by predators while sleeping. But even today it could still be vital if, for example, our house were burning down or is our children needed us urgently.

Our dreams are designed not to interfere with this process, says Prof. Donald Symons of the University of California, Santa Barbara. He believes that when we dream we experience only the sensations of vision and movement because all of our other senses are continuously monitoring the environment for danger. In other words, dreams are like a TV in the mind with the sound turned down.

During the phase of sleep accompanied by rapid eye movements (REM), which is associated with dreaming, our muscles are temporarily paralysed and we keep our eyes closed. We are, effectively, blind and immobile -- the only accurate information about movement coming from the position of our joints and muscles. What is left out of dreams is any sensation of temperature, taste, smell, touch, pain or sound other than speech. These are senses that we use to monitor the environment while we sleep.

In this way, you can dream of touching because that sensation is conjured in the brain, but you rarely dream of being touched. Symons argues that if we were to dream of a caress, we might not wake if we really were touched. In the same way, we do not experience dreams of pain. Remember the old adage: If you are not sure that you are dreaming, pinch yourself. If it hurts, you are awake.

As Symons wryly points out: "Any sleeping mammal that regularly hallucinated pain would either have its sleep needlessly interrupted ir it awakened each time it experienced pain, or risk sleeping through its transformation into a predator's midnight snack.

BY JOHN F. SCHUESSLER  
P. O. BOX 58485  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77258-8485

Hallucinating sound would also compromise vigilance, which explains why dreams of gunbattles and football matches seem strangely silent. Most of the sound we "hear" is speech, but it is produced inside our heads rather than heard.

But why dream at all? This has constantly puzzled mankind. Religious explanations were common until Freud, Jung and others who claimed dreams were wish-fulfillment, or messages from our collective unconscious minds.

Today, science tends to have a more prosaic interpretation. As Prof. Jim Horne, director of Loughborough University's sleep research laboratories, puts it: **"Far too much has been attributed to dreaming."**

Since the 1950s, research has concentrated more on the physiological rather than the Freudian aspects of dreams. At first, this suggested that dreaming aided memory, but patients prescribed anti-depressant drugs that suppress REM do not suffer from memory loss. Instead, Horne argues: "The brain needs to be stimulated and dreams are a substitute for this. Dreaming is just a cinema of the mind that switches on periodically.

About fifteen years ago I worked with the Houston-based VISIT group to examine a number of abduction cases for evidence of technology. Quickly, we found that two distinct categories existed in the literature. One category included a lot of evidence of technology, but the other lacked information on odor, noises, and other sensory data. It was as if one group was actually experiencing the event while the other was viewing the event from afar (like dreaming). This is not unlike the situation described above by Ms. O'Connell. We then proceeded to put together a detailed set of questions for use in future cases that would clearly define whether or not a person was experiencing the event or just dreaming about it. Hopefully, researchers on both sides of the issue will adopt a similar approach. Only in that way will there ever be a consistent set of data resulting from the research.

#### VERY SMALL TRANSMITTER

The debate about implants goes on. Use of implants and other neat devices are commonly used in animal research today. Just when I thought I had heard it all, G. Conway sent me an article from the Vancouver PROVINCE (30 October 1993), describing a very small transmitter. It said that a tracking transmitter that can be attached to a locust with a drop of wax has been developed by scientists at Konstanz University in Germany. The device, which weighs 0.4 gram, can record every beat of the insect's wings. Until now, the movements of locusts have been observed only in wind tunnels. I guess that the old adage, "You can run, but you cannot hide," is about to come true.