

Bearing the scars of a belief in people from another world

By LIBBY MOFFET

SOME people believe fairies live at the bottom of their garden, but Whitley Strieber says aliens live in the woods outside his house. And he's got scars that seem to prove it.

Almost three years ago the American author experienced his first encounter with what he calls "non-human beings". That incident formed the basis of his book *Communion — A True Story*, a novel which has hit a nerve with thousands of people around the world who say they've also made contact with aliens.

At 43, Whitley Strieber looks and talks like an ordinary sane man. But the stories he tells are far from normal.

Whitley says he has had three physical encounters with aliens. The first was one night late in December, 1985, when he was awoken by beings in his New York State log cabin. In that encounter the aliens pierced his skull twice with needles — an experience he believes is responsible for two scars on his brain, visible in a recent brain scan.

The second time the aliens visited, Whitley walked with them inside his home. The third time he went into the woods outside towards the aliens and their craft but refused to go any closer than 16 metres.

Sceptical? You are not alone, according to Whitley.

Whitley says many people refuse to believe his story because they are scared

believe his story because they are scared of the unknown and have been influenced by a CIA conspiracy to belittle UFOs. But obviously many people are intrigued by his tale. *Communion*, issued in paperback in Australia this month, has been a best seller in the United States and a film of the novel, starring Christopher Walken, will be seen internationally next year.

Whitley, who has written two bestsellers *The Wolfen* and *The Hunger*, says he did not write the book for the fame.

"I didn't write it for the money and I certainly didn't do it for the ridicule I've received," he said. "I think it's very im-



portant — I see no reason to pretend it didn't happen or to hide it."

Whitley believes an increasing number of aliens are making contact with humans although he can offer no explanation for why they choose certain individuals over others.

"We may not be very good at dealing

"We may not be very good at dealing with this, whatever it is, but we're going to have to learn to get better at it because otherwise it's our own misfortune.

"Becoming involved with them (the aliens) is a very powerful experience. The first encounter was absolutely terrifying, I didn't know what to make of it. The second encounter was much less that way. The third time they called me out and I went out into the woods, almost down to where they were, but I didn't go all the way because I wasn't ready.

"I'm ready now. I'm not afraid of them at all. Despite the violence of the first encounter there's never been any sense of evil, there's certainly never been any sense of them trying to control my mind. Initially it had a very bad effect on me but once I recovered from the shock, it began to have a very strong effect on me, a strengthening effect on me."

Whitley says he's had thousands of letters from people around the world who have had encounters with aliens, some

more powerful than his own. Descriptions of the non-human beings differ, but one common factor is the big, black eyes. "Every one sees those — you can't miss them, they're so arresting."

Whitley doesn't confess to know why the aliens are visiting and he's prepared to concede that maybe they don't exist, that perhaps their occurrence is something happening in the mass conscience.

As a result of *Communion* hundreds of people who have had alien experiences now meet in secret society gatherings in the United States to discuss their encounters. This contact, and Whitley's personal encounters, prompted him to write a sec-

encounters, prompted him to write a second book, *Transformation*, about his relationship with the aliens and the conquering of his fear.

Whitley says he's definitely not going to write anymore about the aliens. Definitely? "There's no necessity," he says.

But then he pauses, revealing a desire that his experience become publicly accepted.

"If people become generally aware that the aliens are real, there's another book that I'd write . . . about a number of issues concerning how to live with them . . . if they come to us."

— AAP

THE INCREASE in Asian immigration since 1971 does not point to an "Asianisation" of Australia but rather to a normalisation of our place, as an independent nation, in the Asia-Pacific region.

Eighty per cent of Australians were born in Australia. The majority are descendants of British stock. In the 1986 census, 55 per cent indicated either an English, Australian, or Australian-English ancestry. Another 10 per cent said their ancestry was either Irish, Scottish, British, English-Irish, English-Scottish, or Irish-Scottish.

Only 1.1 per cent of Australians indicated an Asian (Chinese) ancestry. Figures for other eastern Asian and south-east Asian ancestries are less than 0.5 per cent.

Historically, racism and fear of economic competition underpinned the opposition to Asian immigrants in Australia. When the first Chinese were recruited in the 1840s as farm labourers, the local free workers object-

farm labourers, the local free workers objected because they benefited from a labour market in which workers were in scarce supply. The different physical appearance, language, and habits of the Chinese made them an easy target for racial vilification.

Hostility to the Asians was also a feature of life in the 1850s and 60s, when local gold-diggers felt threatened by the thousands of Chinese miners flocking to the goldfields. From all accounts, the Chinese were patient and diligent. They were not after the big finds but meticulously worked, and reworked, existing and abandoned mines. Resentment at their slow but steady success was sometimes expressed violently, as in the case of the 1861 riots at Lambing Flat.

Nurturing, and nurtured by, this anti-Asian sentiment was a prevailing view of Australia as a British outpost in Asia, manned by rugged white Australian Britons. When the Australian Colonies federated in 1901, one of the first Bills of the Australian Parliament was an Immigration (Restriction) Act, designed implicitly to keep the nation "white".

The White Australia Policy lasted 65 years, until it was revised out of existence by Prime Minister Harold Holt in March, 1966. Seven years later, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, with Al Grassby as Minister for Immigration, did away with all racial criterion in immigration policy.

A bipartisan approach to immigration policy characterised Australian politics up until May 1984 when, at the height of the so-called "Blainey Debate", the then Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Peacock, accused the Government of having a radically unbalanced program. While not calling for a reduc-