

## A Harvard Doctor Offers Trauma Relief For UFO 'Abductees'

\* \* \*  
Extraterrestrials Play Rough,  
But John E. Mack Heals;  
New 'War of the Worlds?'

By DAVID J. JEFFERSON  
Staff Reporter

An unusual, invitation-only conference next month in Massachusetts will bring together a Pulitzer Prize-winning psychiatrist, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology physics professor, and about 150 other assorted academics and professionals.

The topic of their inquiry: abductions by creatures from outer space.

And they're absolutely serious.

"It's not mass hysteria," insists Dr. John E. Mack, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist who has studied some 50 self-proclaimed abductees and conducts monthly support-group meetings for them. "These are people who have no reason to lie, and they've come forth with great reluctance."

### 'Great Ideas'

Strange as it may sound, Dr. Mack and fellow conference leader Dr. David E. Pritchard of MIT, are only two of the many academics studying accounts of kidnappings by aliens these days.

"Many great ideas sound offbeat at the beginning," says Malkah Notman, acting head of Harvard's psychiatry department at Cambridge Hospital in Massachusetts.

Just how many people may have been abducted by extraterrestrials? One of every 50 American adults—some 3.7 million people—may have had an abduction experience with an unidentified flying object, according to Roper Organization polls sponsored by the Intruders Foundation and the Fund for UFO Research.

In Philadelphia, Temple University history professor David M. Jacobs is making the talk-show rounds with self-described abductees to plug his new book, "Secret Life." It puts abduction cases into a "theoretical framework" by finding such common threads as "physical probing, alien bonding and the breeding program."

Of course, most academics scoff at the notion of abductions by extraterrestrials. "There's no evidence that even a grand jury in a D.A.'s pocket would take seriously that UFOs have visited the Earth, much less abducted somebody," says Timothy Ferris, a science writer and professor at University of California at Berkeley.

### Tolerant Universities

Yet universities have been quite tolerant of the abduction researchers' efforts.

"There is some concern," says Harvard's Dr. Notman, "but by and large I think the [psychiatry] department feels it's useful to encourage creative work, as long as it doesn't get in anybody's way or do any harm."

Temple University even lets Dr. Jacobs teach a course called "UFOs in American Society." "Temple believes in academic freedom," says Dr. Jacobs. "Besides, I also have tenure, so there's not much they can do about it."

This Sunday night, in a close encounter of the Hollywood kind, a new U.S. television miniseries called "Intruders" promises to heighten awareness of the subject. The CBS program is about a fictional psychiatrist who helps people overcome the trauma of abductions by extraterrestrials. The familiar-sounding character is based on Dr. Mack. And the abductees are based on people who claim they were abducted, such as Randy Nickerson, a 24-year-old mechanic in Massachusetts, who warns in commercials for the show: "You've got no place to hide."

### Traumatic Television

Indeed, Dr. Mack says the show could set off a "War of the Worlds" type of hysteria, as unsuspecting viewers suddenly start remembering past abduction episodes.

"I'm quite concerned about the miniseries," says Dr. Mack. "I told CBS I'd be willing to be listed on the show" to help

Please Turn to Page 12, Column 4

## A Harvard Doctor Offers Trauma Relief For UFO 'Abductees'

Continued From First Page  
viewers through any trauma. The network declined the offer.

"I think it's a disaster in the making," adds Dr. Pritchard, as he sits peeling an orange with a razor blade.

The career of Dr. Mack, a 35-year veteran of Harvard's psychiatry department, has been peppered with projects that aren't in the mainstream, including studies of the psychology of nuclear war and a 1977 Pulitzer Prize-winning psychoanalytic biography of T.E. Lawrence. But none has been so out-of-this-world as his work with people claiming to have been kidnapped by little gray humanoids.

It all started when a psychologist friend in New York suggested that Dr. Mack meet Budd Hopkins, a Manhattan artist. When Mr. Hopkins isn't busy creating large geometric paintings he calls "guardians," he hypnotizes people to recapture their past experiences with UFOs.

"I said to myself that if he believes this is real, there's got to be something wrong with him," recalls Dr. Mack. But after meeting dozens of self-proclaimed abductees through Mr. Hopkins, Dr. Mack was intrigued. "What struck me as a psychiatrist was that the stories from these people, who did not know each other, were so similar in detail," he says.

Linda Nap, a client of Mr. Hopkins, tells this story: She was awakened by "a presence" in her bedroom one fall night in 1989 and floated in a bluish light out the window of her 12th-floor apartment to a hovering spacecraft. Once inside, the 44-year-old housewife—who is using a shortened version of her last name for fear neighbors will call her crazy—was subjected to a physical exam where a humanoid poked at her vertebrae "with something that looked like a turkey baster."

It was just a bad dream, Ms. Nap thought. Then one day, she stumbled upon one of the books by Mr. Hopkins on abduction and found its descriptions of encounters frighteningly similar to her own.

Helen Wheels, 42, who sports a black leather jacket and Harley-Davidson sweat-shirt, says she had unexplained nose-bleeds after a childhood encounter in which she was strapped to a floating table and "had an implant put up the right side of my nose" by alien medical technicians. She says the implant later fell out.

Most professed abductees have little, if any, recollection of their experiences, just vague notions that they have experienced something traumatic. Only through hypnosis do they reveal detailed accounts of close encounters. One of Dr. Mack's patients had an odd memory about a large kangaroo that visited her as a child; during hypnosis, that episode turned into an alien abduction.

"Sometimes, the beings are represented as animals or birds. You have to get into the shamanic interpretation," Dr. Mack explains.

Many mental-health professionals are skeptical about such regression hypnosis, claiming it is too easy for a hypnotist to lead the subject on with suggestive questions. But UFO researchers say it is the only way to unlock memories the aliens have forced their victims to repress.

During a meeting of an abductee support group at Mr. Hopkins's Manhattan studio, Mr. Nickerson is undergoing hypnosis. Mr. Nickerson, one of Dr. Mack's subjects, returns to an incident when he was nine years old.

"Bike trip to Aunt Hazel," he mumbles. "I tell my uncle there's a flying saucer. Two people come down the hill. Dark. Little. They take me in."

"What's it like inside?" asks Mr. Hopkins.

"Not supposed to tell. I'm scared," says Mr. Nickerson, thrashing about.

"Do you like these people?" Mr. Hopkins asks.

"Uh uh," Mr. Nickerson responds. "They take me away and do things." He is being strapped to an examining table, Mr. Nickerson recounts. His captors are scraping skin samples and sticking tubes into his right nostril and left ear.

Mr. Hopkins draws him out of the hypnotic state. Mr. Nickerson awakens with tears in his eyes. "Those bastards," he says.

"Nobody has a right to do any of this," Mr. Hopkins assures him.