

JUNE 25-27, 1993



ABDUCTED BY ALIENS?

Thousands of Americans — including Skye Ambrose —
say it has happened to them. What's up? BY FRANK KUZNIK

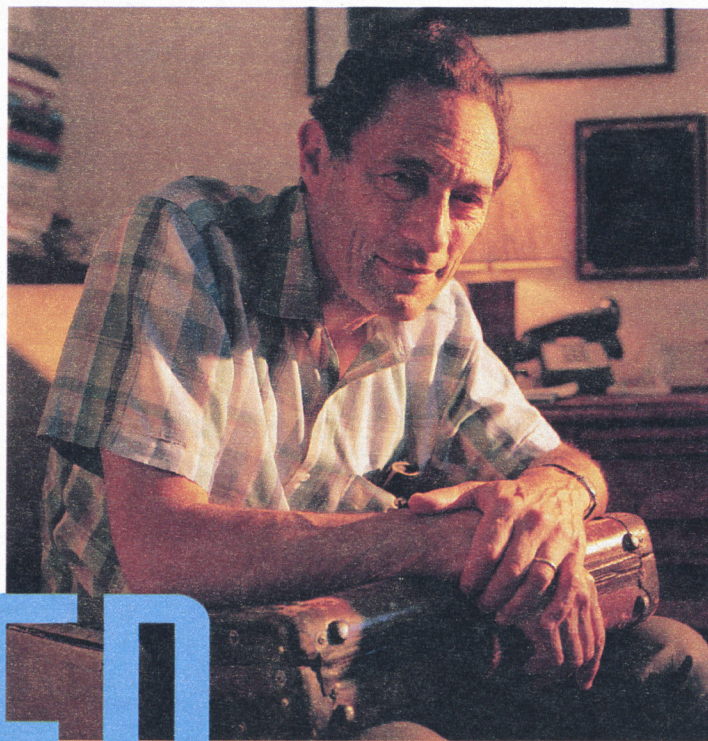


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Tens of thousands of seemingly ordinary people have a very strange tale to tell involving spaceships and odd-looking creatures. Are they getting ...



'I was working with a guy who told me, "I'd hoped you were going to tell me I was crazy." People would rather believe they're crazy than have these unexplained experiences befall them.'

— John Mack, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist

CARRIED AWAY?



Skye Ambrose of St. Charles, Mo., says the space aliens who abducted her are here to bring about an evolutionary change — and make sure we humans don't destroy the planet in the meantime.'

By Frank Kuznik

SKYE Ambrose — yes, that was her name before all this started — says it happened 3½ years ago on a remote, moonlit stretch of Colorado highway. Enticed by circular flashing lights in the sky, she and a friend pulled off Interstate 70, cut the headlights, and then watched in disbelief as ethereal black waves began to envelop the car. “Oh, my God. What are those?” Skye said to her friend, who had noticed something else.

“Look! A falling star.” The words were barely out of her mouth before the star turned into a glowing ball of white light. It stopped above a field, hovering no more than 100 feet from the car. As the women watched in speechless amazement, two beams of light, brilliant with pinks, purples and blues, dropped from the ball to form a shimmering “V.”

“You know those people who say they’ve been kidnapped by a UFO?” Ambrose said weakly to her friend. “Well, that’s not going to happen to us. We’re not getting out of this car!”

Suddenly, the lights vanished. All at once, the women felt exhausted and irritable, their nerves frayed. A short drive brought them to Goodland, Kan., where they found a motel and, inside, unpleasant surprises in the bathroom mirror.

Ambrose’s friend stared in shock at the deep flush taint-

ing her normally pale complexion. And Ambrose was equally affected — colorless and drawn, with her ordinarily curly hair plastered flat against her head.

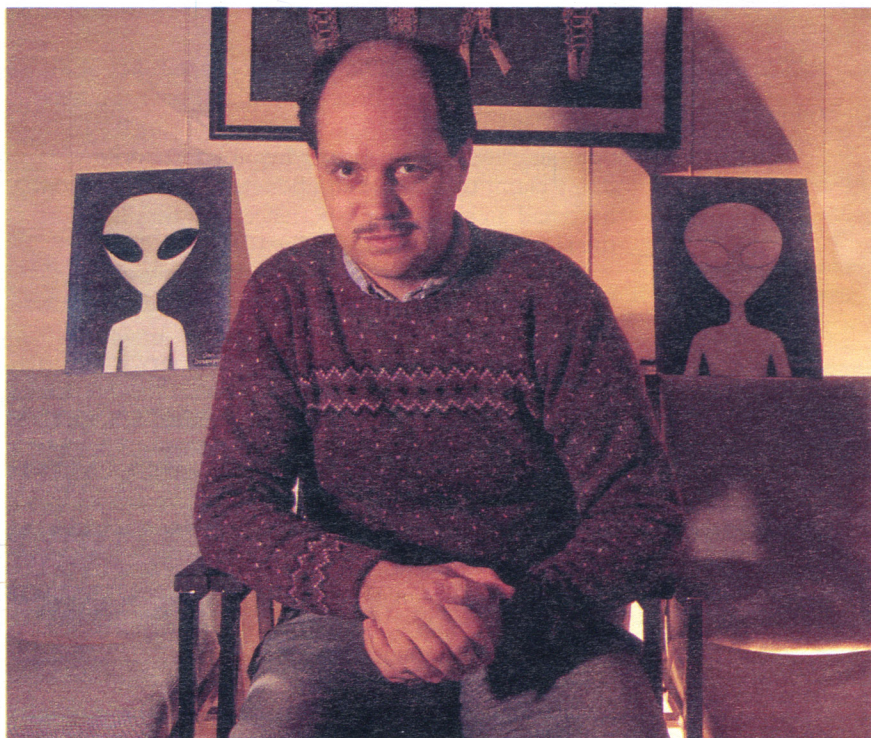
But the worst shock came in the morning, when Ambrose looked at a map and realized that it had taken three hours to drive the 72-mile leg of the trip on which they had seen the UFO. Even with the stop for the encounter, that left nearly two hours unaccounted for. Where had they gone?

BY any rational measure, the idea is absurd: aliens kidnapping people to take them aboard flying saucers for bizarre experiments. Space creatures used to be the stuff of tabloid headlines, and still are: A recent *Weekly World News* ran the story “Hillary Clinton adopts alien baby” — with a photo. But these days you can spot aliens, or at least serious discussions of them, everywhere from the office of a Harvard psychiatrist to high-rated network miniseries. They are the subject of talk shows, best-selling books and scholarly debate at symposiums — and sometimes they’re as close as the neighbor down the street, people like 45-year-old Skye Ambrose. She is to speak July 17-18 at the Seattle UFO Research Conference. Sample topics: “Multiple Participant Abductions” and “Analysis: NASA UFOs on Videos.”

The few mental-health professionals who take the subject seriously have found themselves overwhelmed by patients like Ambrose, ordinary people who claim no initial interest or belief in UFOs but who suddenly seem beset by symptoms that closely resemble post-traumatic stress disorder.

Even skeptics acknowledge that a growing number of people around the globe are convinced that they have had a close encounter of the fourth kind (abduction). Indeed, a recent survey by the Roper Organization — commissioned by UFO believers — suggests that one in 50 adult Americans, a total of 3.7 million people, has had a series of “unusual personal experiences” that could point to an abduction.

“That number’s in the ballpark,” insists John Mack, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist currently treating some 60 professed abductees. “I was shocked when I saw it. But the



'I'm working with bankers, schoolteachers, professors — successful people living good lives who don't have any reason to bring up stories like this.'

— John Carpenter, a psychiatric social worker in Springfield, Mo. (shown with sketches made from Skye Ambrose's description of aliens)

more I get into this, the less I can account for it with any conventional psychiatric explanation."

Most abductees, say sympathetic psychiatrists like Mack, show no signs of mental illness. What typically brings them to a therapist is an anxiety they're desperate to identify and overcome. Usually with the aid of hypnosis, they're led back through a missing-time experience or what they had thought was a dream to discover memories of a scenario in which they're taken aboard an alien craft and poked and prodded by inscrutable, bug-eyed creatures.

THAT is how Skye Ambrose's tale emerged — under hypnosis by John Carpenter, a psychiatric social worker in Springfield, Mo. "After my first hypnotic regression," she says, "I could still say to myself that I was crazy. But after my friend had her session and came up with the same story, separate from me, with so many matching details, I couldn't dismiss it as a hallucination."

Under hypnosis, Ambrose says, she learned that the beams from the ball of light contained two beings, perhaps 5½ feet tall, thin, white and virtually featureless except for two huge, dark eyes. They floated the women to an enormous craft in the sky, then took them to a small, circular room in which Ambrose's friend underwent surgery. What resembled a small computer chip with tiny hooks or feelers was implanted deep within her nose. Alarmed at first, Ambrose found herself being calmed, she says, by two aliens who rubbed and stroked her head, and a third with glittering eyes that held her entranced. Both women then were taken before the tallest of the beings, who telepathically assured them that the aliens meant no harm.

"He communicated that they're the guardians of Earth and have been for millions of years," says Ambrose. "They're working with people who have

chosen to do this work with them." Then, the women say, they were returned to their car, with no memory of their abduction. The friend says she later suffered nosebleeds as a result of the implant but has never had a medical examination to detect it.

OTHER than an alien invasion, what might account for the abduction phenomenon? Skeptics note that these stories are contemporary variations on age-old themes and scenarios. "Abduction delusions [abound] in folklore," says Robert Baker, a University of Kentucky professor emeritus. "Since the Middle Ages, people have been abducted by dragons, ogres, leprechauns, fairies and so on. They're not crazy; they're victims of what are commonly known as 'waking dreams,' delusions you have when you're in a hypnopompic [waking up] or hypnogogic [falling asleep] state."

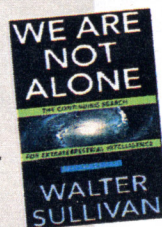
Most abduction stories begin in bed, with the victim being awakened by beings who magically slip into the bedroom, transport their paralyzed victim through solid walls and seldom leave any signs of their visit. This bears a striking resemblance to the phenomenon of sleep paralysis, a well-documented but poorly understood state in which one is awake but still paralyzed by the neurological mechanism that inhibits muscle tone during sleep. "Almost 90 percent of the time, sleep paralysis is accompanied by a certainty that there is something threatening in the room with you," says David Hufford, the author of the book *The Terror That Comes in the Night*.

And there are other caveats. Some researchers say that scenarios of being held against one's will and physically violated suggest masked memories of childhood abuse. Nor does the fact that two people report similar experiences stand as corroboration, according to critics. "It's very easy for two people to

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ABDUCTED? AUTHOR SAYS NO

Former *New York Times* science editor Walter Sullivan outlines signs of extraterrestrial life in a revised edition of his *We Are Not Alone: The Continuing Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence* (Dutton, \$23), in stores this week. A Q&A with USA WEEKEND's Richard Vega:



Q: Do you believe in life on other planets?
Of course, of course.

Q: Have extraterrestrial beings ever visited Earth?
There is a possibility, but not in recent times.

Q: Will we ever have contact with alien creatures?
Oh, absolutely. That's the whole justification for the SETI [Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence] program. That's a big program — something like \$10 million a year is being put into that by the [U.S.] government, the theory being that the distances are so great that travel may be impractical. But radio, of course, is far cheaper.

Q: Have people ever been taken aboard UFOs?
I think it's imaginary. People hallucinate and believe this sort of thing. It may be commercial in some cases; they want a good story to sell. But with most of them, I don't think that's true. They sincerely imagined this thing.

Q: As long as you believe in extraterrestrial life, why not also believe in the UFO abduction phenomenon?
Suppose you were from another civilization, and you could do what we cannot do, which is travel at the speed of light. Your civilization is probably 100 light-years away. That means it would take you 100 years to come here. You are not going to suddenly carry off some girl and give her an experience and bring her back. You are going to manifest yourself in a more convincing way.

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have the same kind of hallucinatory experience at the same time, then reinforce each other," says the University of Kentucky's Baker. What's more, "it's been demonstrated that you can hypnotize people who don't claim to have been abducted, tell them they have had an abduction experience, and they'll report the same thing that so-called real abductees report."

Yet even doubters are fascinated. "I, myself, don't believe" in abductions by aliens, says Laurence Goldstein, author of *The Flying Machine and Modern Literature*. "But to say something is imaginary is not to say it's unreal: The imagination is a real faculty that can penetrate to truth. Flying saucers are ... authentic manifestations of anxieties. Therefore, we don't want to just dismiss the whole controversy as ridiculous. We want to ask why these things are going on."

The first rash of UFO sightings in this country happened nearly a century ago, and some observers see a similar case of millennial fever in today's outbreak of abduction reports, "that sense of some apocalyptic cycle in history impending and the fear of being taken over by some powerful alien force," Goldstein says. "Back then, it culminated in H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. We have abductions, and films like *Aliens*."

Goldstein sees the "alien invasion" as a reflection of everything from an us-vs.-them fear of illegal immigrants (aliens) to the loss of privacy in the 1990s (the



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invasion of personal space). But the biggest theme, he says, is the end of one era — the Cold War — coinciding with the start of a millennium. "That sense of some new cycle about to begin is symbolized by a terror of the alien taking over. ... Americans are ambivalent about the future, and that shows up in UFOs."

Skye Ambrose, for one, insists that her experience is no metaphor. In contrast to the many abductees who feel trapped and frightened by their encounters, she embraced and explored hers. The results have been dramatic, she says. "It's like going through reincarnation, and within that I'm not quite 4 years old."

Ambrose left her career in real estate sales and marketing and is now a massage therapist. She says she has replaced the fear, insecurity and tension in her life with spiritual growth. She's writing a book about her abduction experiences, and learning more about the aliens' grand designs for evolutionary midwifery. "I know now that I chose to go through this. I'm cooperating with a universal purpose." **WV**