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BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY  
AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

JULY/AUGUST 1993  
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**Alien  
abductions:  
reflections of  
inner  
or outer  
space?**

*Mandico 1/83*



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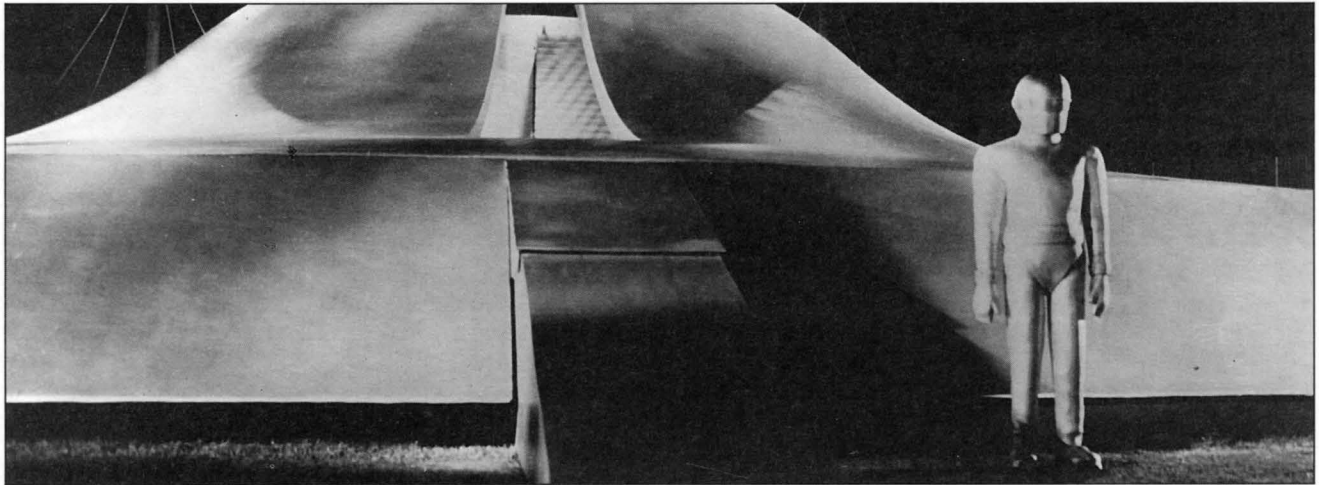


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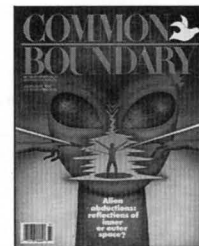
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This month's cover illustration is by Oregon artist Jim Endicott.

# THE OUTER LIMITS OF THE SOUL

INCREASING NUMBERS OF UFO  
ABDUCTEES, AS WELL AS THE EXPERTS WHO TREAT  
THEM, SAY THEIR EXPERIENCES HAVE AS MUCH  
TO DO WITH INNER AS OUTER SPACE.

BY MARK GAUVREAU JUDGE

The first time Catherine was hypnotized, she wept. She remembered the night several weeks before when they had come for her again and had taken her from her car. She remembered their small, hairless bodies and penetrating, almond-shaped eyes. She recalled the inside of their ship, the size of an airplane hangar, and the rows and rows of beds on either side, half of them filled with people. She remembered being undressed, and the taller one who was in charge. The one who stared into her eyes to calm her down. The one who cut into her.

"He took this long needle and put it up inside me," she says. "I could feel it

cutting. It took him a long time to cut, and it was not a pleasant thing. And when he took it out there was a fetus on it. And I was getting this sense, this feeling of pride from him, like 'Oh, this is a good thing; you should be proud.'"

Catherine, a bright 25-year-old college student, smiles nervously. It's been two years since the experience, but she is still hesitant and embarrassed describing it. Still, she claims to be the picture of cool compared to the day she had her first hypnotic regression, when the memories began to emerge. "I could not believe the intensity of what I was feeling. I was sobbing like I haven't since I was a kid, sobbing, sobbing, almost hysterical. Even

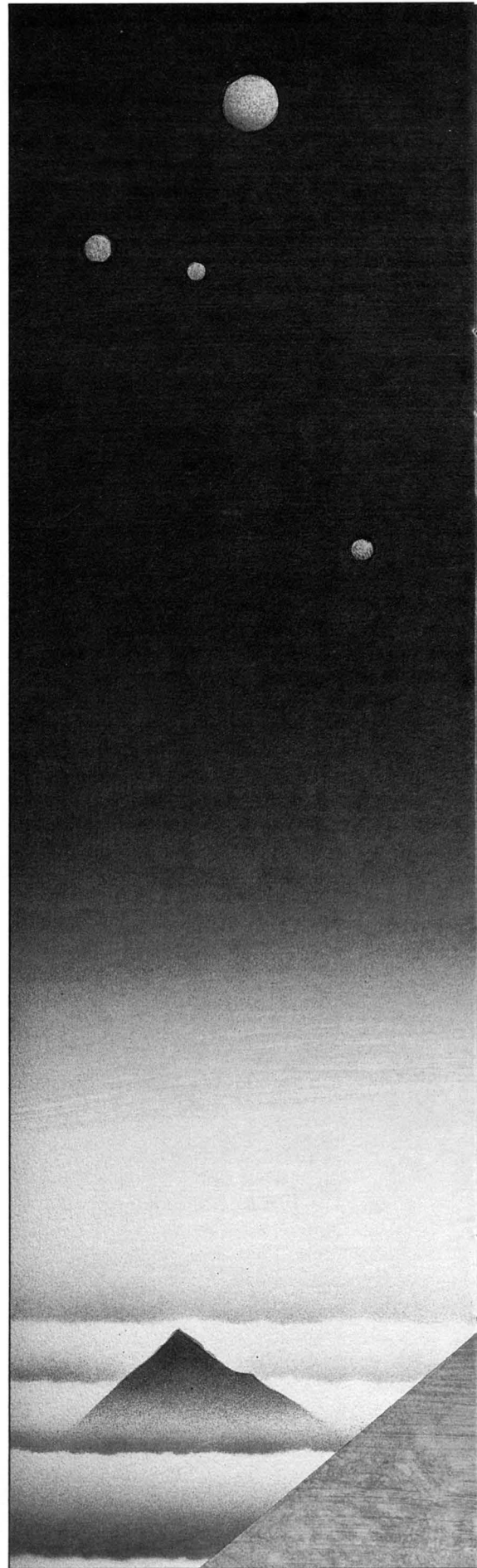
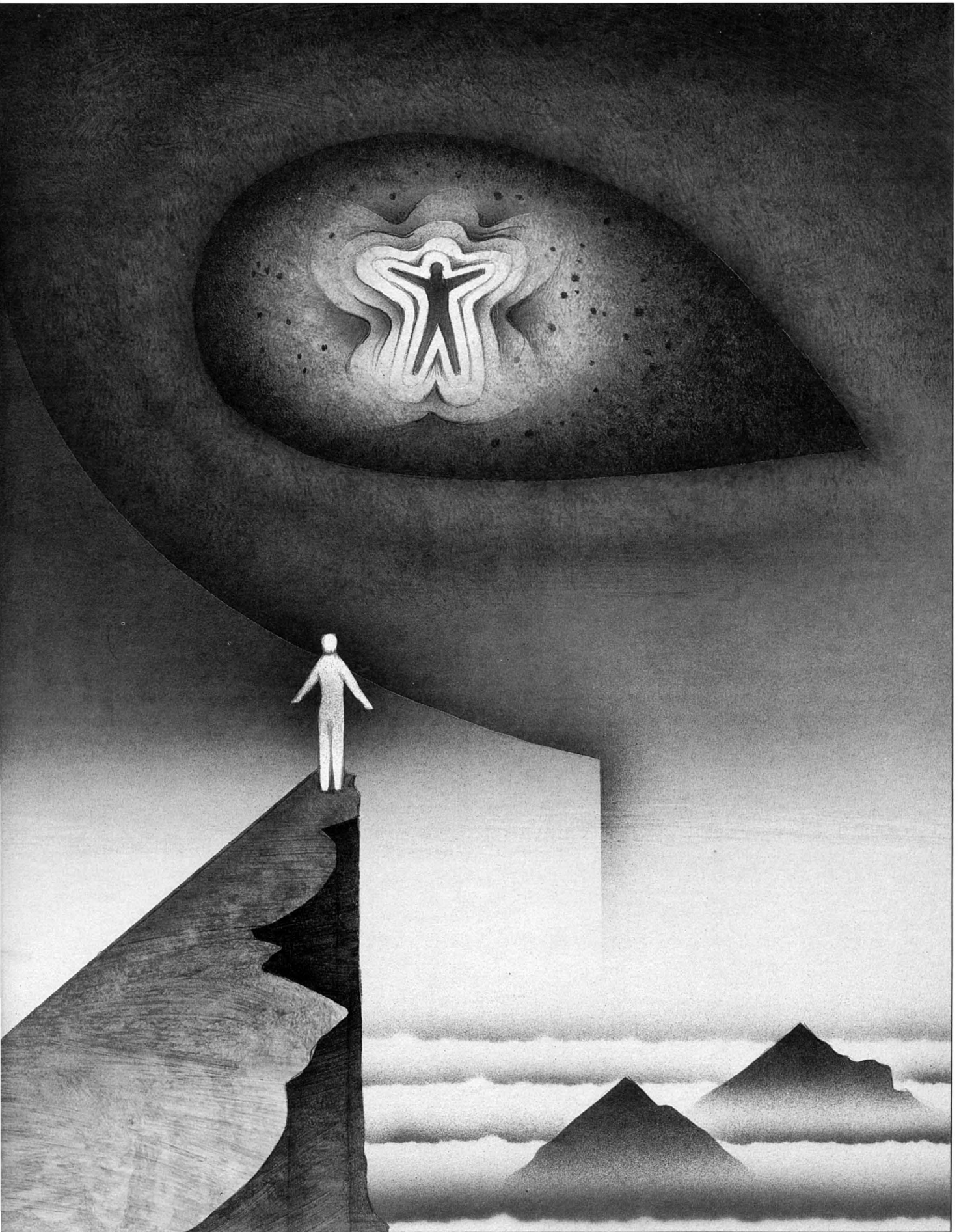


Illustration by Jim Endicott



if I could dismiss everything else as being a fantasy or some kind of delusion or some kind of confabulation, I can't dismiss how intensely I felt, the absolute terror. You have an experience like that, and it shatters your base of reality."

Catherine is an alleged UFO abductee. She believes that alien creatures have kidnapped her countless times since she was a child, taken her aboard a flying saucer, and sexually abused her for breeding purposes. Her story is not unique. Recent estimates have put the number of people who claim to have had an abduction experience from the hundreds of thousands to nearly 3 million. Listening to abductees and the experts who are trying to make sense of their accounts, it becomes clear that the depth and scope of the phenomenon is far more complex than science fiction stereotypes of little green space invaders. UFO abductions, once largely considered the province of cranks and comic books, have become a mystery that touches on, among other things, sex, psychology, religion, and the presumptions of the Western mind.

"The only theory that makes any sense is that what's happening is exactly what the people say is happening to them," says John Mack, the psychiatrist who treats Catherine. "Namely, some kind of entity, some intelligence, is coming into our world, taking people, and doing things [to them]."

A rising star in the abduction field, Mack comes with the kind of credentials skeptics have always claimed were sorely absent in ufology, the study of UFOs. Tenured professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, Mack is a respected psychiatrist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. He has conducted hypnotic regressions on over 100 abductees and holds a monthly support group for between 15 and 20 people like Catherine. He insists that the abduction experience is too complicated to be pigeonholed, but he is convinced that the experience is, at the very least, based in objective reality—and tells chilling anecdotes to prove it.

"A woman comes into one of my support group meetings after waking up in the morning with dried blood on her socks. This is a very conscientious, reliable person. Under hypnosis, she goes into detail about an abduction experience: She's on the table, a fetus is re-

moved, she bleeds, and blood goes on the floor of the UFO where she is. She's returned to her room, and the next day notices dried blood on her feet. I've got hundreds of this kind of correlated physical findings."

Mack's involvement with abductees began in 1989, when Czech psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, whom he had met two

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years earlier at the Esalen Institute, gave him a paper on UFOs by writer Keith Thompson. Mack hadn't thought about UFOs since the 1960s, when he had asked his friend Carl Sagan about them. According to Mack, Sagan "gave it the back of his hand," and Mack had abruptly dropped it. But Thompson's piece rekindled his interest. A colleague then offered to introduce Mack to Budd Hopkins, a New York City artist who works with abductees and is the author of two books on the subject, *Missing Time* and *Intruders*. Mack was impressed with Hopkins's sincerity and knowledge, and also by the consistency of the detail in stories Hopkins was hearing from people who had never met each other.

Mack began seeing abductees—or "experiencers," a term many of his patients prefer—in his therapy practice the next year. While fear of ridicule keeps many abductees away from family doctors and mainstream health professionals, the shock and anxiety that arise when memories surface forces them to seek help, and Mack's growing reputation as a sympathetic ear leads many abductees to his door. Initially, Mack screens them for psychiatric disturbances, such as depression and psychosis, then uses a session to explore the sources of the patients' fear and their reasons for seeking treatment.

If he suspects they are abductees, Mack uses hypnosis and the Grof breathwork technique to help access the repressed memories. Because the unorthodox nature of an abduction often prevents experiencers from receiving support from family and friends, who often have trouble understanding the experience, Mack encourages experiencers to join his support group and a self-help group comprised of other abductees.

Most of the abduction stories Mack hears from his patients are similar to Catherine's. In a typical scenario, the victim is taken from his or her environment—in most cases, from bed while asleep or shortly after spotting a UFO—by small, humanoid creatures who are able to pass through walls and windows. The person is then taken aboard a spaceship—usually a saucer with bright lights—where he or she is disrobed and subjected to medical procedures, including sperm removal from males and pregnancy testing on females. Often the abductee is shown images of global destruction; many describe an enormous room containing rows of incubators that hold fetuses that resemble hybrids of humans and aliens. After the abduction the victim is returned to the site of the abduction with virtually no recall of the incident and sometimes bearing small scars. The aliens—or visitors, as some abductees call them—often force them to forget the abduction episode or plant bogus "screen memories" to replace the traumatic events. Later hypnosis or another incident—seeing aliens portrayed on television, for example—may trigger memories.

Sarah, a 36-year-old mother of two who has seen Mack for almost three years and is a member of his support group, explains that memories of her own abductions were released by an episode of "Unsolved Mysteries" that claimed that as many as 95 percent of people who see UFOs have abduction episodes.

"That's when it just hit me," she says. "I sat on the couch and I cried for about a half an hour. All of a sudden, all those weird things that had been happening in my life . . . just came together. Everything from ghosts in the house—we've had more haunted houses than any family I know—to strange dreams to UFO dreams that were very detailed. Everything just came together in that moment."

Like several of Mack's other abductees, Sarah has been given psycho-

logical tests for anxiety and depression, including a general symptom inventory and a Rorschach. The tester concluded that she is "a high functioning woman" with "no evidence whatsoever of thought disorder" but noted that "her test responses are consistent with those of a relatively healthy individual in the denial phase of posttraumatic recovery."

Sarah is well aware of the strangeness of her experience. In fact, most experiencers who are referred to Mack through friends or UFO groups are otherwise normal people who are confused, terrified, and bewildered at what's been happening to them. Many even hope Mack will confirm their suspicions that they're crazy. The alternative—that the creatures who have been snatching them from their beds, cars, and backyards are real—is almost too much to bear.

The first impulse most people have about abductees is to think they are in some way disturbed, even humorously so. The stereotype of someone boasting that they've ridden in a flying saucer is mired in the science fiction imagery of the 1950s, when hoaxers claiming contact with Martians were common and their stories of trips to the moon more comical than harrowing. Even Mack, who says he had an upbringing as a "supreme rationalist," dismissed abductees as "delusional" when stories began to emerge more than 20 years ago. But after researching abduction accounts and having face-to-face interactions with abductees, Mack was struck by the low incidence of mental illness among experiencers, impressed by the physical effects left after an abduction, and fascinated by the detailed abduction reports, many by children as young as two years old.

Indeed, after talking to just a few experiencers for any length of time, believing that they may be seeing and experiencing *something* becomes the easy part. After that, the mind struggles with possible explanations, many of them convoluted and confusing. As journalist Erik Davis put it in a recent essay on UFOs in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement*: "You start with the innocent act of just believing that folks aren't lying or hallucinating. . . . But where do you go from

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**Stories of diminutive creatures like faeries whisking away unsuspecting humans are common in folklore around the world.**



"Faerie Rings" © Alan Lee, from *Foeries* by Brian Froud and Alan Lee, a Peacock Press/Bantam Book.

from there? Step in any direction, and the landscape starts to melt.”

One who has wandered onto the landscape is Kenneth Ring, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of Connecticut. Ring is the author of *The Omega Project: UFOs, Near-Death Experiences, and Mind at Large*, a book based on his research comparing over 200 people who have had near-death experiences (NDEs) and UFO encounters. Ring has several theories on UFOs and abductions; one of the most controversial is based on the high incidence of child abuse Ring claims is reported by people who experience both NDEs and UFO encounters.

“The persons who are disproportionately likely to report abduction experiences and other kinds of unusual encounters are those persons who have experienced some degree of trauma in their life,” Ring says. “People with this kind of background are more likely to learn as children to dissociate. Therefore, when they experience trauma in later life . . . they’re more likely to go into a dissociative state, which in turn would make them more susceptible to what I call alternative realities.”

Ring emphasizes that his data doesn’t refute the reality of the state of consciousness abductees enter. Rather, he views the alternate reality where the alien encounter takes place as real as the world we normally inhabit. He compares experiencers to televisions capable of picking up certain signals others tune out.

“I think that childhood abuse hones one’s ability to move between altered states,” concurs June Steiner, a California hypnotherapist who treats abductees and is familiar with Ring’s work. “This skill of being able to move between states helps them to see the phenomenon. I don’t know if there are words to scientifically describe it, but I believe a lot of these things can be seen only when we see through our conditioning that says that something does or doesn’t exist.”

To Philip Klass, a chief UFO skeptic, the stories Steiner, Ring, Mack, and their patients tell are pure bunk—and dangerous bunk at that. Klass has been investigating UFOs for over 25 years, and is the author of *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game*. His position can be summed up in that book’s preface: “The public has been hoodwinked and brainwashed.” Klass feels that when UFO researchers

and therapists like Mack pronounce alien abductions as the cause of an experiencer’s anguish without exhausting other possible explanations, it causes abductees to become paranoid. Because an abduction can take place at any time, says Klass, having a person in a position of authority unconditionally back a claim makes “fear become part of [an abductee’s] life.”

Klass attributes the climbing number of abduction accounts to one of two



John Mack

things. “It could either mean that we have alien visitors—which I personally doubt, but if we do, they love publicity and are abducting a lot more people as a result of it—or it could mean that a small percentage of the population is suggestible and, having read about these things, having found how easy it is to tell a story, more people are doing it.”

Klass, however, believes that UFOs may represent something that’s been around for centuries. He cites the work of British ufologist Hilary Evans, who has written of the abduction phenomenon’s roots in folklore and mythology. “In Europe a couple of centuries ago,” Klass says, “a number of women claimed that they were abducted by the devil from their bedrooms and they went dancing with him. If they had had television in those days, I’m sure many more would [have reported these experiences]. Is it possible that those abductions were not with the devil, but with extraterrestrials? Or does each century, each generation,

have its own version of essentially the same basic myth?”

Klass’s theory of UFOs and abductions as symbols that may reflect the myths of every age ironically echoes the ideas of Swiss psychiatrist C.G. Jung, who expressed an interest in UFOs as early as 1946, when bright objects that looked like fireballs (nicknamed “foofighters” after the French word *feu*, for “fire”) were seen by World War II pilots. In his 1958 book *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, Jung drew no conclusions about the phenomenon, but he noted parallels between UFO sightings and mythic and religious events. He called UFOs “an Elijah who calls down fire from heaven,” and felt the round shape of the saucers indicated a *mandala*, an archetypal symbol of wholeness and unity found in many mythologies.

Some ufologists have expanded on Jung’s theories. In *The Omega Project*, Ring describes the stages of an abduction as “an almost archetypal journey of initiation with its familiar invariant triadic sequence: separation, ordeal, return.” The individual, writes Ring, “is suddenly taken away against his will . . . He is, then, spirited away—an old-fashioned but oddly apposite phrase—to an utterly unfamiliar world where he is subjected to a kind of ritual inspection and testing that has obvious, if sometimes rather distant, kinship to the dismemberment motifs in traditional shamanic initiations.” Ring also quotes Holger Kalweit’s description of the shaman’s journey to heaven, where the Saajitani “torment him in a horrible fashion, poking around his belly with knives, cutting whole chunks of flesh off him, and throwing them about . . . The initiate acquires his inner knowledge during this procedure and becomes conversant with the rules of shamanic wisdom.”

Like Ring, writer Keith Thompson—whose paper helped turn Mack around three years ago—finds correlations between UFOs and myth, mystical experiences, shamanic rituals, angelic visitations, folklore, and near-death experiences. In his 1991 book *Angels and Aliens: UFOs and the Mythic Imagination*, Thompson writes that it might not be the nature of UFOs that changes, but rather the culture of those seeing them: “Ezekiel saw a burning wheel. In the Middle Ages, angels and fiery crosses and shields

appeared in the sky, and a legendary celestial region called Magonia was said to be inhabited by extraordinary beings who traveled in aerial 'cloud ships,' sometimes descending and abducting humans. In nineteenth-century America, people saw airships resembling zeppelins. Since 1947, we have seen flying saucers."

Thompson feels that such episodes are central not only to myth but also to folklore. His book notes the work of Thomas Bullard, a folklorist at Indiana University who has written extensively on UFOs and who sees a connection between UFO abductions and fairy visitors in folktales.

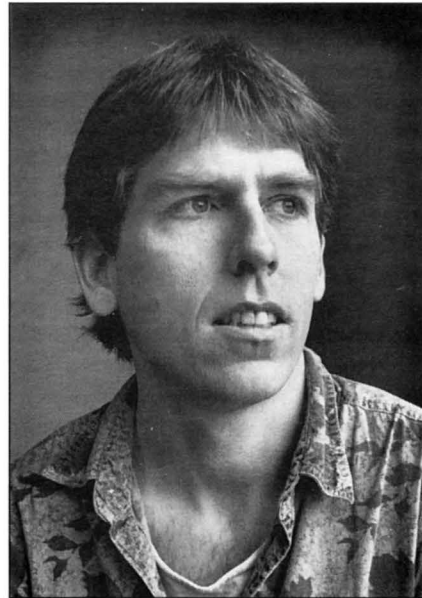
"People were taken out of their home," Bullard says, "or out of their bed by a troupe of fairies who would come down and take them to a subterranean kingdom." Because the fairy tradition is very widespread, says Bullard, "you could probably find worldwide examples of diminutive supernatural beings that kidnap people." Like Ring and Thompson, Bullard also says shamanic initiations and journeys to the "otherworld" offer "a continuum of similarities" with abduction accounts. But he points out that viewing an abduction episode exclusively as a mythological or metaphorical journey tends to ignore the more physical aspects of the phenomenon—tree branches broken by UFOs, saucers caught on videotape, and scars left on experiencers' bodies, to name a few. "The people who focus on similarities can make a convincing case," he says, "but they're really ignoring a lot."

"I think the majority of the people are seeing real things and experiencing real things," says June Steiner, "[But] even if this is not a real phenomenon, it has to be worked with to help the person move through whatever it is that created it."

Steiner is a refreshing rarity in the treatment of abductees—a mental health professional who hasn't become stuck on proving the aliens are real-life entities. While mainstream psychiatry tends to shun abductees—"the American Psychiatric Association doesn't have a position on UFO abductions," was an APA spokesperson's only comment, "and I doubt we ever will"—Steiner feels the myopic quest for the ultimate piece of alien proof or misfiring brain circuit that might be causing a hallucination is an

obsession that detracts from the effective treatment of abductees, who, on the simplest level, are people in pain. What causes the crisis, Steiner says, is irrelevant. The point is that the abduction victims are suffering, and the visitations may be a way for them to work through their trauma, whatever its cause.

"If you don't work through it," she says, "you've got a person who is very often stuck in negative behavior and fear. If nothing else, you have to work with it



**Joe Noonan, a patient of Dr. Mack's and one of the few abductees to go public.**

as an internal experience that has happened and that needs to express something that has gone on."

Because of a shortage of therapists like Steiner, abductees tend to steer clear of mental health professionals altogether, "lest their case be forced into the procrustean bed of the practitioners' diagnostic preconceptions," as Mack wrote last year in the *International UFO Reporter*. In fact, Mack holds that denying experiencers' stories can add to their trauma. "[By denying the reality of abductions] you are contributing to their affliction in the same way that you're contributing to the holocaust survivor's afflictions [by saying] the holocaust never existed."

Mainstream mental health's rejection of abduction claims is why most abductees come to people like Mack or Steiner, often through word of mouth or a referral from a UFO group. Alternative therapists are often willing to work through the problem without question-

ing the validity of the patients' claims, although health professionals and skeptics are still hung up on their methods. Recently hypnosis, the most common and effective tool for delving into the memories of abductees, has become a favorite whipping boy for debunkers.

"When you go under hypnosis, you're in a suggestible state," says Phil Klass. "It's almost a master-slave relationship. The subject wants to please the hypnotist. If the hypnotist believes in UFO abductions, then I can guarantee you that you would also at least half believe that you had been abducted." Hypnosis, according to Klass, can be used as a form of brainwashing to plant stories in a victim's heads and cover the real reasons for their trauma.

Many UFO researchers contradict Klass's claims. "Whether the abduction is recalled as a dream, or through hypnosis, or spontaneously," Ken Ring writes in *The Omega Project*, "the nature of the episode is identical [emphasis in the original] . . . ; though UFO investigators often use hypnotic techniques to elicit and explore close encounters . . . these procedures cannot be said to create these encounters in the first place. In short, there are plenty of cases where persons spontaneously relate UFO abductions in the same manner as those who have been hypnotized."

But Klass remains unmoved. "The UFO abduction thing is a very, very serious matter," he says. "I would predict that the time will come when there will be litigation and lawsuits filed against psychotherapists like Dr. Mack." Klass believes that those claiming alien interference in their lives are in need of good psychotherapy; instead of helping their patients, therapists like Dr. Mack "embrace this UFO abduction theory," thus cementing it in the experiencer's mind.

For his part, Mack insists that what scientists should be questioning is not hypnosis but Western presumptions about the nature of the universe. He believes the abductions are based in physical reality but that our language and worldview are inadequate to explain them. "You all know the [story of the] Vermont farmer who gave up trying to give directions to the city slicker by saying 'You just can't get there from here,'" he told an audience last year at a conference on abductees held at—but not

sponsored by—MIT. “We can’t go where we want to go without a shift in the way we see this phenomenon.”

The shift Mack envisions is decidedly spiritual. It’s an outlook that is controversial even in UFO circles.

Theories that UFOs are here in response to a spiritual experience or crisis date back to the origins of the modern UFO era in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While at the time popular culture was ambivalent about space invaders, with films depicting aliens as either malevolent invaders in *War of the Worlds* or modern-day Jeremiahs warning us about the A-bomb in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, many contactees claimed aliens were saviors capable of curing disease, and harbingers of world peace.

The idea of UFOs as a form of deliverance wasn’t restricted to UFO groups and Hollywood, however. Carl Jung viewed them as a unifying symbol for a world literally divided by cold war fears. “A psychic phenomenon of this kind would . . . have a compensatory significance,” Jung wrote in a 1958 letter, “since it would be a spontaneous answer of the unconscious to the present situation, i.e., to fears created by an apparently insoluble political situation which might at any moment lead to universal catastrophe.”

Nearly 30 years after Jung’s book was published, an abductee appeared who also interpreted the phenomenon as a spiritual experience. On Christmas Night, 1986, novelist Whitley Strieber had an abduction experience in his cabin in New York state. Later under hypnosis he recalled abductions dating back to his childhood. In 1987, he wrote the book *Communion* about his encounters with “the visitors,” and it became a national best seller.

In *Communion*, Strieber wrote that the visitations could be a form of transformation (*Transformation* was the name of Strieber’s sequel to *Communion*) to a higher form of being: “Ancient astronomers of India believed that the Siddhas (human beings who have attained perfection) revolved between the clouds and the moon, having been transformed into a lighter, less material state.” According to Strieber, aliens could be agents that have appeared to help humankind evolve to a higher state of consciousness.

Strieber, however, had trouble with the UFO community from the start. The first person he went to with his story was abduction researcher Budd Hopkins, who insisted Strieber see a psychotherapist. Many people in the UFO community doubted both Strieber’s story and his mental health and were turned off by Strieber mystical interpretations of what many ufologists considered literal invasions from extraterrestrials. Strieber resented the UFO community’s rejection and felt that the abduction phenomenon was not being addressed properly by ufologists, who avoided what he saw

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as the phenomenon’s spiritual and mystical aspects.

Strieber published an abductee-oriented newsletter before dropping out of the UFO business two years ago. “The so-called UFO-ologists,” he wrote in his last issue, ironically sounding like Phil Klass, “are probably the cruelest, nastiest and craziest people I have ever encountered. Their interpretation of the visitor experience is rubbish from beginning to end. The ‘abduction reports’ that they generate are not real. They are the artifacts of hypnosis and cultural conditioning.”

Strieber also indicated in “an oblique manner” that the phenomenon might have more to do with the human soul and its modern detachment from nature than with science fiction: “There is a very simple reason that we have made so little progress understanding UFOs and the visitors. We are a world in the process of going blind: We are blind to the existence of the soul, and thus to the ancient and immensely conscious world from which

it emerges.” Strieber pointed out that the first UFOs to be seen on a massive scale were sighted in 1947, just after World War II, when “we began to live in daily terror of the atomic bomb” and had taken another giant step, through our attempts to conquer nature, of “going soul-blind.”

The implications of Strieber’s argument are that alien visitations could be considered the soul’s way of reasserting itself because greed and the devastations wreaked by our technology have driven us from our spiritual selves. The visitors, Strieber wrote, might be as integral to us as our hearts or minds—“at once separate from us, yet a part of us,” our better natures calling for help during a time of spiritual decrepitude.

Ken Ring has also described the alien encounters as a cry of pain from the human soul, which is still living under the shadow of fear spawned by the cold war. “The alien experience may be the collective experience of seeing your own future image in the mirror,” Ring said in 1991 at a Parapsychological Services Institute conference; “like the aliens, we are becoming grey and sickly as a species. The message is that we are not supposed to be living as we are.”

Strieber’s and Ring’s idea that the visitors reflect ourselves is also a frequent theme heard from abductees. Joe Noonan, a patient of Mack’s—and the only abductee who used his real name and agreed to be photographed—unconsciously touches on Strieber’s theory of them-as-us when he describes his first experience with the aliens. “[The alien] said, ‘This doesn’t need to hurt. Just look into my eyes.’ And that was the most incredible thing in the world because it was like looking into my own soul. It was just vast.”

As a result of turning inward and seeing themselves in the dark eyes of the visitors, abductees often report profound spiritual changes. “[Abductees] talked about having experienced a great degree of spiritual growth,” says Ken Ring. “Growth in compassion for others, greater self-understanding. They also reported a number of unusual physical or physiological changes, changes in metabolism, changes in neurological functioning, changes in psychic sensitivities, all of which seemed to constellate into a pattern that suggested that they were functioning at a higher level of conscious-

ness and with a greater degree of spiritual awareness than had been the case before.”

But many abductees who feel that they’ve grown spiritually still find words lacking to describe the experience. Like Strieber, they can only approach the topic in an oblique way.

“It’s true, there’s a spiritual component to this,” says Chris, one of Mack’s patients. “And everybody drops words around, which is good—I mean, you have to communicate *something*. But when you say spirituality, a lot of people immediately think you’ve got angel wings on. To me, it’s more like an awareness, like a realness.” He halts, flustered at the elusiveness of the feelings he’s grappling with, then apologizes for being “inarticulate.” In fact, Chris is lucid on every other topic; what he’s trying to describe is, to many abductees, ineffable.

“About a year ago, I started getting a lot messages to go to church,” says Sarah, whose newfound spirituality has taken a more traditional form. “I actually heard thoughts in quiet moments that I knew weren’t mine. I ended up going. That first Sunday, I was sitting there thinking, ‘Why am I here?’ All of a sudden I heard in my right ear ‘This is right.’ I mean, I don’t consider myself really religious. I don’t buy into any one religion. But I now have an appreciation for a spiritual place. I think that [the aliens] are part of a greater spirit world. I think we’re probably part of it too, but we’re on a much lesser plane.”

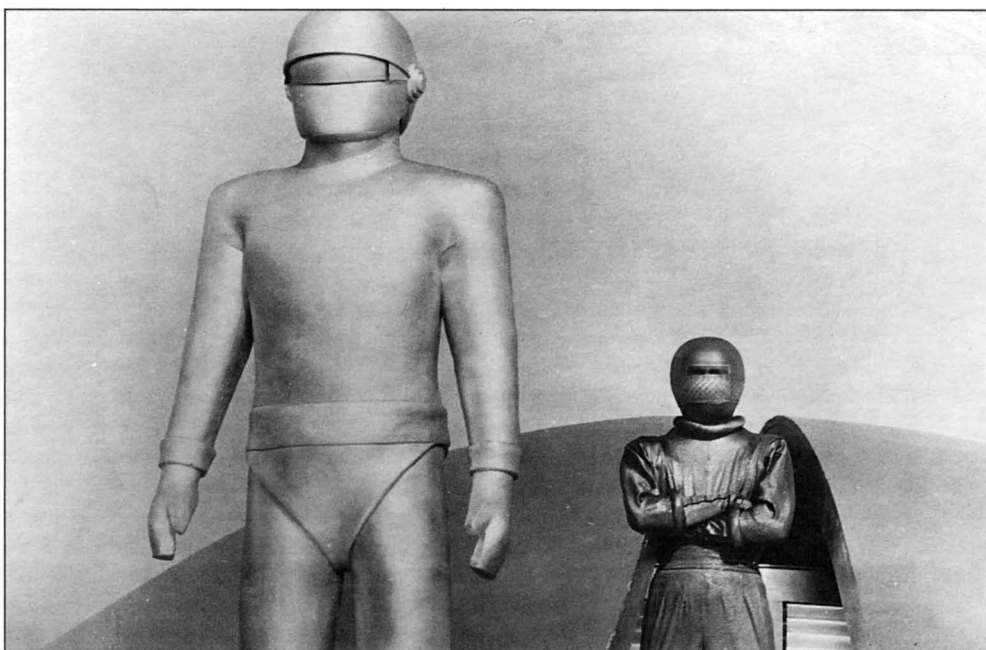
“I think that they’re helping us evolve,” offers Joe Noonan. “I think they see we’ve reached the edges of the petri dish in our growth—not that we’re their experiment, but they have enough objectivity to see what we’re kidding ourselves about. We’ve run out of time, and they’re stepping up their involvement.”

The belief that alien visitors represent the next step of human evolution—that the aliens are, as Whitley Strieber once put it, like butterflies returning to prevent the caterpillars from denuding the trees—is popular among some abductees, and is closely tied in with their feelings of spirituality. Ken Ring examines the connection in *The Omega Project*, calling the alien presence a possible Mind at Large “that is conscious, purposive, intelligent [and] may intervene in

earthly affairs in an effort to help bring about certain effects”—effects that to many of Mack’s patients are strongly environmental.

Ring speculates that abductions may also be a warning about what’s in store for us. “On the cover of a recent cover of *Life* magazine there was a picture of an extremely emaciated black child in Somalia with huge, penetrating black eyes,” he says. “If you made an overlay of that picture on top of one of the standard depictions of UFO entities, the match would be unmistakable. There is something symbolic in these images, that perhaps if

in any way, shape, or form,” insists David Jacobs, a history professor at Temple University. Jacobs, the author of *Secret Life: Firsthand Accounts of UFO Abductions*, has hypnotized over 75 abductees. He sees an abduction as a “heavily traumatic situation” that “calls for serious thought.” The visitors, he concludes, are not here to help us in any way. “We don’t see benevolence, we don’t see malevolence,” he says. “What we see is a dispassionate clinical program fulfilling an agenda of their own that has very little to do with us except to use our bodies for their own purposes.”



The 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* depicted aliens as modern-day prophets who descended to caution us about fallout from the atomic bomb.

we do not take care of our planet and one another and learn to live in harmony, that perhaps this is the kind of person we are going to be producing.”

To Mack, the ecological concerns of abductees are themselves a form of spirituality. He notes that a spiritual awakening is often painful—as an example he cites Zen masters who use a paddle to wake up students—which is why abductees are shown visions of worldwide destruction. “The earth is the highest creation of the Divinity,” Mack says, “and the destruction of it is the highest crime that can be committed. The creation of a harmonious relationship is a spiritual task.”

But to the nuts and bolts ufologists, talk of the visitors as ecological saviors is nonsense. “[Abductions] are not benign

Jacobs claims that the visions of nuclear and ecological disaster are the aliens way of testing our emotions, like scientists manipulating lab rats. He notes that the small percentage of abductees who put a spiritual spin on the experience are all patients of Mack’s, implying that Mack—and not the aliens—is responsible for the spiritual interpretations and ecological awareness of his patients.

Mack admits that may be partially true. “There is a kind of relationship between a therapist and patient where you’re cocreating,” he says. “But I’ve never pointed them in any one direction.” To him, abductions serve as “a kind of cosmic correction” that will work to push us up another rung on the evolutionary ladder.

"The UFO is an enigmatic rent in the fabric of the 20th century," Erik Davis concluded in his *Voice* essay, "and all our explanations are signals shot into the heavens—they either fade into the stellar maw or bounce back, echoes of our own descriptions." But while the aliens remain an enigma, skeptics and believers may be inching toward a new science, or at least toward a consensus regarding the terms of the debate.

In an issue of *Parade* magazine published in March, astronomer and UFO skeptic Carl Sagan—who rejected the phenomenon when Mack asked him about it in the 1960s—wrote an article about abductions. The piece was remarkable because it was the first time a hard-line skeptic acknowledged the reality of the terror that abductees feel and admitted there might be more to the phenomenon than lies and fantasy-prone personalities, even if the answer turns out to be all too human. "If indeed the bulk of alien abduction accounts are really about hallucinations," Sagan wrote, "don't we have before us a matter of supreme importance—touching on . . . the fashioning of our beliefs and perhaps even the origins of our religions? There is genuine scientific paydirt in UFO and alien abductions," he concluded.

While Sagan relegates the phenomenon to "distinctly terrestrial origins," his theories are ironically similar to those expressed by Whitley Strieber in the final issue of his *Communion* newsletter, published in the spring of 1991. "When a person who yearns inwardly for change reaches the psychological breaking point," Strieber wrote, "the visitors may come in through the cracks in that person's wall of belief. There are things at large in the night of the soul; the visitors live there. . . [they are] the reflection of my own soul."

After reading Strieber's essay, I called Joe Noonan and asked him about Strieber's ideas of the aliens as a reflection—a mirror, Ken Ring might say, of us, the future child.

"Boy, I can really identify with that," Noonan said. "When I came face to face with one of them for the first time, it was like me meeting me."

Mark Gauvreau Judge is Common Boundary's editorial assistant.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MODERN UFO ERA

Although there were over 300 reported sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) prior to the 20th century (according to ufologist Jacques Vallee's *UFOs in Space: Anatomy of a Phenomenon*), most agree that the modern UFO era began on June 24, 1947. On that afternoon, pilot Kenneth Arnold was flying near Mount Rainier in Washington state when he witnessed nine bright objects that moved "like a saucer skipping over

account for on psychology, "societal stress," and hoaxes.

In the summer of 1952, one of the largest booms in UFO sightings in history took place in the United States. Some of the most spectacular sightings were over Washington, D.C.. Two occurred one week apart, on the nights of July 19 and July 26, when a group of UFOs appeared on two radarscopes at the Air Route Traffic Control Center at Washington National Airport. In

**The Weather**  
 Today—Mostly sunny and hot; high 86.  
 Tuesday—Scattered thunderstorms,  
 cooler in afternoon or night; Temper-  
 ature—High, 84 at 5 p. m.; low, 75 at  
 5:40 a. m. (Details on Page 12)

The Washington Post

Seventy-fifth Year in the Nation's Capital

NO. 27,801 Phone NA 4200 MONDAY, JULY 28, 1952 WTOP (AM 1500) FM (96.3) TV (CH 9)

# 'Saucer' Outran Jet, Pilot Rev

**U. S. Protests Soviet 'Hate' In Aviation Day Posters**

**Air Chase Pictures Held Admission of 3 Attacks; Envoy Shun Big Red Show**

By the Associated Press  
 The United States has protested to Russia against Soviet posters picturing Russian planes chasing American aircraft. The posters displayed in Moscow show a Russian jet swooping down on an American plane. The posters are part of a campaign to stir up anti-American sentiment in the Soviet Union.

**Conquest by Terror: Russians Rule Satellites By Torture and Murder**

By Leland Stowe  
 The Washington Post today presents the first of 12 articles that give the most complete factual story yet written about Red tyranny in eastern Europe. The author is a Pulitzer Prize winner. He is one of only two newspapermen to win all three of the top prizes for foreign reporting. These chapters are from his book, "Conquest by Terror," just published by Random House.

You might be interested to learn that the Soviet Union is now in the belief that the so-called "Iron West" is a threat to its security. The National Committee for Free Europe played an important role in the West's cooperation with the Soviet Union. Since January 1951 this self-assignment has occupied virtually all my time. The overall picture was much more serious than I had anticipated. The situation is a thousand times worse than the average Ameri-

**Stevenson and Eisenhower, And Truman Nixon Plan Head 'Big 4' Campaign**

**Barkley, Sparkman Also Will Enter Stumping Campaign For Party Victory**

CHICAGO July 27 (AP)—  
 The Democratic high command decided today to throw a "big four" speaking team into the fall campaign. It will be headed by President Truman and Gov. Adlai Stevenson, the presidential nominee. Democratic National Chairman Frank E. McCloskey told reporters that President Truman advised him last night: "I am a

**Will Invade South; Spirit of GOP, Growing in GOP, Senator Declares**

FRASER, Colo., July 27 (AP)—  
 Dwight D. Eisenhower and Sen. Richard M. Nixon agreed today on a strategy "fighting campaign" to win the November election as Republican candidates for President and Vice President. Nixon said he and Eisenhower agreed that this small but just



Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republican presidential nominee

water." Arnold, a respected businessman and deputy sheriff from Boise, Idaho, claimed that he clocked the objects—which the press immediately dubbed flying saucers—at 12,000 miles per hour before they disappeared.

Arnold's sighting caused a sensation and initiated the first rash of sightings—called "flaps" by UFO buffs. In response to the increase in UFO reports, the U.S. Air Force in 1948 created Project Grudge, later renamed Project Blue Book, to investigate sightings, and hired J. Allen Hynek, a professor of astronomy at Ohio State University, as a consultant. In 1949, the Air Force issued a report identifying most UFO sightings as "the result of the misinterpretation of conventional objects." The report blamed the 23 percent it couldn't

**In the summer of 1952, UFOs knocked the Democratic National Convention off the front page of the Washington Post.**

both cases the Air Defense Command sent F-94 jets up to try to intercept the objects, but the UFOs disappeared as the planes approached. The sightings caused such a stir that they knocked the Democratic National Convention off the front page of the *Washington Post*, and *Post* cartoonist Herbert Block depicted the sightings in a strip. A total of 1501 sightings were reported in that year alone.

By this time UFOs and aliens had become part of the American culture; films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and books like *Childhood's End* reflected an ambivalence about aliens—Were the invaders here to save or crush us?—that was often rooted in

**INAL**  
 FIVE CENT  
**reveals**  
**Investigation**  
**On in Seere**  
**After Chase**  
**Over Capita**  
 Radar Spots Blip  
 Like Aircraft for  
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 Only 1700 Feet U  
 By Paul Samson  
 Paul Samson  
 Military secrecy kills an  
 investigation of the mysterious  
 glowing aerial objects  
 showed up on radar screen  
 in the Washington area  
 Sunday night for nine sec  
 onduces

cold war fears and desires: "We picture [aliens] as benign, helpful, even messianic," reads an essay on UFO genre films from the 1950s in the book *The UFO Phenomenon*, "[but] what if they are not so friendly? Instead of promising a beginning, they might bode an end."

In the 1950s, citizens who were increasingly discouraged over the Air Force's treatment of the phenomenon began forming their own groups to study UFOs. The two major groups were the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) and the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO). Along with these organizations grew the number of "contactees," people claiming contact with aliens who allegedly took them for rides on their spaceships. UFO organizations often resented the contactees, who they thought detracted from the serious study of a legitimate scientific puzzle.

In 1957 another wave of sightings erupted across the country. While the Air Force continued to steer clear of ufology, its consultant, J. Allen Hynek, began to have doubts about the military's conventional explanations for flying saucers. By the mid 1960s, after almost 29 years investigating cases, Hynek had changed his opinion and publicly stated that he felt UFOs were probably extraterrestrial.

In the late 1960s the Air Force, in an effort to rid itself of the UFO problem, contracted the University of Colorado to study the phenomenon. Physicist Edward Condon led the committee which in 1968 announced that—although 30 percent of the cases the committee investigated remained unidentified—UFOs did not "pose a defense problem" and that "further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced." Following the recommendations of the report, Project Blue Book closed its operations in 1969.

While all this was going on, the first serious reports of people being abducted by aliens surfaced. In 1966

*Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours Aboard a Flying Saucer* was published about husband and wife Betty and Barney Hill, who claimed that they were abducted by aliens and taken aboard a UFO. The Hills were respected members of their community—Barney was a member of the NAACP, and Betty was a social worker. They described the aliens performing unpleasant procedures, including injecting a needle into Betty's abdomen to test for pregnancy.

In the years after the Hill story broke, other abduction cases began to surface. In 1973 two men in Pascagoula, Mississippi said that they were abducted while fishing. In 1975 Travis Walton, an Arizona forest worker, claimed that he was beamed aboard a UFO and examined by aliens. (The Travis Walton case was the subject of the recently released motion picture *Fire in the Sky*.) In 1976 three woman were abducted from their car while driving in Kentucky; after the experience they retained unexplained red marks on their faces and necks. In 1977, a woman named Betty Andreasson claimed that she and her family were put in a state of "suspended animation" by aliens who walked through the walls of her house. The stories continued to grow in number.

Another wave of sightings occurred in 1973. In reaction to increased public awareness of UFOs and the government's washing its hands of the matter, Hynek, having gone from skeptic to believer, opened the Center for UFO Studies. Another organization, the Midwest (now Mutual) UFO Network (MUFON) also opened its doors. By this time both NICAP and APRO were defunct; the three organizations handling UFO sightings and abduction reports were The Hynek Center, MUFON, and the Fund for UFO Research, which opened in 1979. All three are still in operation.

In 1981 Budd Hopkins, a New York artist, published *Missing Time*, a serious investigation of UFO abduc-

tion claims. It was followed in 1987 by *Communion*, a book by novelist Whitley Strieber. Strieber, best-selling author of *The Wolfen* and other books, detailed his own abduction episodes, the first such accounts to achieve massive nationwide recognition. Abductions, once ridiculed by the public and even in UFO circles, had reached the mainstream.

In the last five years, the number of abduction claims has risen dramatically while, ironically, the number of sightings has dropped. Don Berliner, an executive committee member of



**Betty and Barney Hill, whose alleged abduction in 1961 became the book *Interrupted Journey*.**

the Fund for UFO Research, attributes this to increased awareness of abductions and more sophisticated methods of documentation. "These days there are easier ways of finding someone who will listen to an account," Berliner says. "The human part has changed, not necessarily the cause."

—MGJ

For information on UFO sightings or abductions, contact the Fund for UFO Research, P.O. Box 277, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712; the Intruders Foundation, P.O. Box 30233, New York, NY 10011; or the Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659.

Photo courtesy: UPI/Bettman

## Letter from the Editor

# We Shall Not Cease Our Explorations

I'VE ALWAYS ENJOYED BOOKS BY Lillustrator and author Maurice Sendak. What particularly endeared me to him was the way he made the supernatural part and parcel of everyday life. Children could be abducted by gremlins as easily as they could fly off and visit city sights at midnight.

My mother had similar proclivities: She would have precognitive dreams related to deaths in the family. Once she dreamt of a woman wearing a black dress and veil over her face. When the woman lifted the veil, my mother recognized her as a cousin. "Florence," she asked, "why are you wearing that dress?" The figure looked at her as if to say "It's obvious, isn't it?" My mother awoke agitated, for she recognized the outfit as a mourning dress. The next morning she received a call: Her brother had died. Later in the day, near dusk, my mother went to take out the garbage. She looked into the woods across the street from our house, and there she saw Death standing near one of the trees.

I recalled this family story as I contemplated how to present this issue's cover story on UFO abductees. The topic is fraught with intellectual pitfalls the size of crop circles. Indeed, my own initial response to tales of alien encounters was to roll my eyes and wonder how any sane person could accept such incredible and bizarre reports.

Yet inexplicable events occur daily. Because we can't readily furnish rational explanations doesn't mean they don't exist. Take my mother, for example. She was a conventional housewife confronted with a traumatic loss. Did shadings in a dark wood stimulate her imagination so that she conjured up a frightening vision, a projection of her grief and fear? Or was Death, in fact, close to her that day?

In a similar vein, the abduction issue is intriguing, if only because such large numbers of people are claiming to have undergone terrifying and invasive experiences. What is going on? And where is it occurring—externally in the "real" world or internally in the imaginal realm?

Editorial assistant Mark Judge bravely enters this tempest, trying to make sense

of the jumble of theories, personal accounts, and interpretations that swirl around the topic. He interviewed alleged abductees, therapists who treat them, skeptics, and authors who spin various theories about the nature of the experience. Not just another abduction report, his article wrestles with psychological and spiritual interpretations of the phenomenon and, in the end, concludes that only one thing is certain: There are neither clear-cut nor easy answers to this cosmic puzzle.

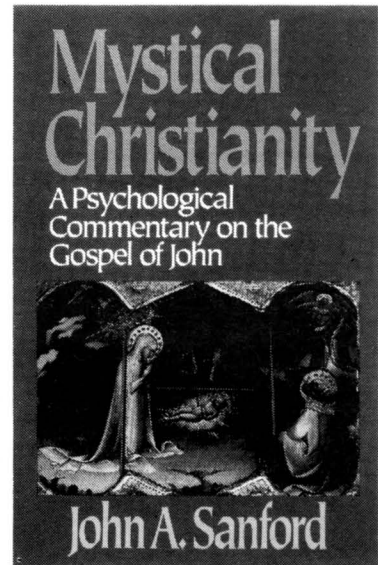
My interview with meditation teacher and psychologist Jack Kornfield falls firmly on the other end of the spectrum. Kornfield's principal focus and message is on integrating spiritual practice into everyday life. His five-year stint in Asia studying Buddhist principles and meditating opened him to numerous insights as well as extraordinary experiences, but the challenge he sees is in perceiving and honoring the sacred in ordinary family and community life. Thus, while Kornfield acknowledges that unusual powers can be byproducts of spiritual practice, he does not focus his attention there. His attitude is best summed up in a story from a book he co-edited with Christina Feldman called *Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart*: A meditation practitioner excitedly told the Buddha that after 20 years of practice, he could finally cross the river by walking on water. The Buddha reportedly replied, "But the ferry only costs a penny."

It's a delicate balancing act: to open to the mysteries of life, while keeping one's feet firmly on the ground. But what precious rewards there are to examining and contemplating the complexities and peculiarities of being human. T.S. Eliot brilliantly captured the beauty of this journey when he wrote:

*We shall not cease our explorations  
And at the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

*Anne Simpkinson*

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