

Professor Mack, Phone Home

WHOS TO say what is crazy? Can we safely dismiss Dr. John Mack, esteemed professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Pulitzer Prize winner, who came to the realization on January 10, 1990 ("one of

those dates . . . when everything in your life changes"), that space aliens exist?

That day, Mack came across accounts of sane, rational people who claimed they had been abducted by aliens. Mack didn't find the research at all crazy: "I saw a kind of trauma that didn't fit anything I had come across



spacecraft; Ed, a virgin, has his first sexual experience with an alien and even remembers fondling her breasts; Peter feels guilty

in forty years of psychiatry."

Since then, Mack has devoted his life to working with abductees, thirteen of whose case studies are in *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*, out next month from Scribners. Although Mack has not been abducted himself, he believes that a few million Americans may have been. Some retain vague memories of their abductions, but most of Mack's data comes from lengthy hypnotic regressions during which abductees recall their experiences in vivid, sometimes terrifying, detail. (Political correctness has reached ufology, and *experiencer* has replaced *abductee* as the term of choice. Aliens are still called aliens.)

To buy into Mack's hypothesis requires believing in the validity of traumatic-memory recovery, the voguish and controversial psychiatric theory that has been used to prosecute in child-abuse cases (see "The Lost Daughter," page 76). "People under hypnosis simply do not fabricate entire stories. Details, yes, but not entire stories," Mack insists.

As for the abduction stories, they are, as Johnny Carson might say, *wild stuff*. One experiencer recalls seeing a fifteen-foot kangaroo that turned out to be a small

about cheating on his wife and kids on earth because he has an alien family as well (or is it the other way around?).

Mack's premise requires an enormous epistemological leap of faith. "People always think that aliens are either real or psychological, and I ask them to consider the possibility that they are somehow both," he says. "But that means our entire definition of *reality* has to change." While humans live wholly within the dimensions of space and time, Mack believes that aliens probably dwell in complex, alternative dimensions we can't perceive, which is one of the reasons it has been so difficult to make the case for their existence—their very "reality" may transcend our powers of perception.

"I have always had the sense that there was something beyond what we knew," a beyond that Mack has explored through est and holotropic breathing techniques. He uses the latter to attain a trancelike state. During one session, he had a past-life experience in which he was a sixteenth-century Russian who had to watch while a band of Mongols decapitated his four-year-old son. "It was awful."

—ROBERT S. BOYNTON

What to Expect If You Go: A Mack Primer

The abduction: Most begin at home or in cars. You are floated to the ship on a beam of blue light, passing through walls and other solid objects. Husbands and wives are commonly "switched off" while spouses are taken.

The experiencer: Usually sensitive, spiritual individuals who chafe against social constraints and are flexible in accepting diverse or unusual experiences. Abduction runs in families; you are more likely to be taken if your parents or siblings have been.

The alien: Typically small, hairless gray figures, three to four feet tall, with slit mouths and huge, hypnotic black eyes. They have no ears or external genitalia, although the abductee can intuit their sex. All communication is conducted telepathically. Any similarity to creatures featured in the *Weekly World News* is strictly coincidental.

How to dress: Easy, since you don't have any choice. When

it comes to abduction, aliens call all the shots: time, place, duration. One more reason to wear clean underwear.

Once you're there: They will probe your reproductive system, take sperm samples or remove eggs, even fetuses. You may be "tagged" for later retrieval.

Getting back: Wear sturdy shoes. Even aliens make mistakes, and you might be returned to earth at some distance from your home. It's not uncommon to wake up in bed with your head facing the wrong direction and your pajamas backward or inside out.

What you get: Implants, for tracking. Sometimes you see them, sometimes you don't.

After your experience: You'll be tired, and you may find odd cuts or unexplained bleeding from the nose, ear, or rectum. Other symptoms are sinus pain, uro-gyn complaints, and persistent gastrointestinal problems. All this, and no lousy T-shirt.