

KIRKUS REVIEWS

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KIRKUS REVIEWS
Date of Issue: March 1, 1994

◆ **Jeffries, John C., Jr.**
JUSTICE LEWIS F.
POWELL, JR., AND THE
ERA OF JUDICIAL
BALANCE
Scribners (670 pp.)
\$30.00
May 1994
ISBN: 0-684-19450-3

An exhaustive and informative biography of a previously neglected Supreme Court justice, written by one his former clerks.

Jeffries (Law/Univ. of Virginia) offers a voluminous review of the life and career of Justice Powell, once called the most powerful man in America because of his position as a moderate swing vote on the high court during a turbulent period in its history. Born early in the century to one of Virginia's first families, Powell was reared in relative comfort and attended the best schools, although his father was disappointed by his choice of the local Washington and Lee over Harvard and insisted he get a post-graduate degree at the Ivy League school. His Baptist upbringing deeply affected his youth and stayed with him throughout his life. He went on to become a very successful attorney with a prestigious Virginia law firm; not until he was 64, an age when most are considering retirement, was Powell persuaded to accept nomination to the Supreme Court. During his tenure, he was intimately involved in cases dealing with such important issues as racial segregation (called by the author a "hard-line moderate," he remained a staunch opponent of court-ordered busing), abortion (he was a strong proponent of *Roe v. Wade* and the right of privacy), and the White House Watergate tapes, a decision in which he found with the majority against the man who appointed him to the bench but whose scope and application he successfully argued should be limited. He retired in 1987.

A fascinating glimpse inside the sometimes arcane and always political workings of the US Supreme Court and one of its influential members.

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Mack, John E., M.D.
ABDUCTION: *Human
Encounters with Aliens*
Scribners (426 pp.)
\$20.00
Apr. 20, 1994
ISBN: 0-684-19539-9

Mack (Psychiatry/Harvard Med.) won a Pulitzer Prize for his life of T.E. Lawrence (*A Prince of Our Disorder*, 1976); more recently he teamed with Rita S. Rogers for the superb *The Alchemy of Survival* (1988). Here he tackles a subject that pushes the very boundaries of rational discourse: the case histories of patients who claim to have been abducted by aliens.

Mack has been working with abduction "experiencers" since early in 1990 and has interviewed over 100 people of various ages and backgrounds, most of whom show no obvious signs of mental illness. The bulk of the book consists of the narratives of 13 subjects told in almost stupefying detail. Their stories have many features in common: the physical descriptions of the aliens (most frequently, short, gray beings with pear-shaped heads and large, dark eyes); intrusive quasi-medical procedures aboard alien ships; and the "message" that the aliens are deeply concerned about the future of the Earth. These people are, quite understandably, deeply unsettled by their abductions and often come to Mack for assurance that there is some rational explanation for what has happened to them. Unfortunately, Mack cannot offer them anything beyond assurance that their situation is not unique. He recognizes that, if taken at face value, these accounts call into question basic premises of Western science. Yet as a psychiatrist, he has little choice but to accept that their stories reflect some kind of psychological reality, arguing that strict rationalism needs to make room for his patients' experiences.

Abduction leaves the reader with very little solid ground to stand on. In the end, despite Mack's impressive credentials and his sophisticated interpretation of the abduction phenomenon, he leaves a reader still reluctant to discard several centuries of accumulated knowledge in order to accommodate a persuasive psychological – if not an objective – truth. (8 pages of photos – not seen)

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