

'Someone *must* be watching us'

Author says case studies show alien contact is no hoax

By M.A.J. McKENNA

Joe remembers being repeatedly abducted by space aliens throughout his life — starting when he was two days old.

Jerry is terrified of sex with her husband because the act evokes memories of being artificially inseminated aboard a spaceship.

Scott believes he is a human-alien "translator," a double agent sent to warn humanity of impending ecological catastrophe.

John Mack, Ph.D., Harvard psychiatrist and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, thinks they are telling the truth.

"Something is going on that cannot simply be explained away psychologically," he said in an interview Monday. "There are too many dimensions of this that require understanding and explanation. It's an authentic mystery."

Joe, Jerry and Scott — some names are real and some are pseudonyms —

are three of 13 therapy subjects profiled in Mack's book, "Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens," which is being released tomorrow by Scribners.

The subjects of the book vary in age, class and geographic location. One thing links them: They all claim to have had prolonged contact throughout their lives with extraterrestrials — small, grey-skinned, frail-appearing beings with huge, goggle-like dark eyes. In strikingly similar language, they



JOHN MACK
The investigator

describe being temporarily paralyzed, removed from houses or cars on a beam of light, taken to something resembling a flying saucer and used for raw material in a sort of trans-galactic breeding program. They report terror, frustration and profound anger at what they believe to be deep personal violation — and they think they have been chosen to spread a message of environmental emergency and cultural change.

Similar stories have surfaced for years in the peculiar field of "Ufology," together with tales of people returned to earth miles from home or with pieces of their sleepwear reversed. What makes these versions unusual is the linking presence of Mack, a well-respected clinician, administrator and advocate for environmental causes. His imprimatur on these formerly derided tales has ignited huge controversy.

Pointed stories in "Psychology Today" and the New York Times have suggested that Mack is at best credulous

Investigator says he believes tales of close encounters

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and at worst deluded. Yesterday, Time magazine published the account of a supposed "debunker," who claims to have faked her abduction accounts and accuses Mack of misusing hypnosis to obtain the answers he wants. And academic reaction has veered between dismay at his forthrightness and relief that he got tenure so long ago.

None of which ruffles the lanky psychotherapist at all. Sitting in his Cambridge Hospital of-

fice he described his own journey from intense skepticism to conviction.

"Freud said, 'Theory doesn't prevent the facts from showing up,'" Mack said. "Something went on here. Something occurred to these people that affected them powerfully and is in some sense experientially real."

Mack has considered — and rejected — critics' suggestions that his patients are mentally ill in any quantifiable sense.

"You hear the same story in

detail from all over the country, from people who don't know each other, who have come forward reluctantly, with nothing to gain," he said. "It doesn't fit into any psychiatric category. It isn't fantasy, it isn't delusion, it doesn't match the symptoms of mental illness or post-traumatic stress disorder."

Similarly, he disavows any attempt to direct the abductees' stories, as Time magazine charged. Some of the victims came to him having already re-

membered; others were helped with hypnosis and a technique called holotropic breathwork.

"It's certainly not a question of leading," he said. "These people themselves are deeply self-questioning. They don't believe it; they don't want to believe it. They will take back what they say."

Which leaves the question: Exactly what is going on? After several years' work with this group of patients, Mack has a theory; he uses it to close his book.

"My overall impression is that

the abduction process is not evil, and that the intelligences at work do not wish us ill," he writes. "Rather, I have the sense — might I say faith — that the abduction phenomenon is, at its core, about the preservation of life on Earth at a time when the planet's life is profoundly threatened.

"The abduction phenomenon, it seems clear, is about what is yet to come. It presents, quite literally, visions of alternative futures, but it leaves the choice to us."