

Into the Woods
Moody Blues, Vince Gill, Indigo Girls and Steely Dan are among acts playing Great Woods this season. Page 62.

Living Arts

THE BOSTON GLOBE • THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1994

DIANE WHITE

Dee Dee does Roseanne

SPOUSE BATTERING. Sexual abuse. Multiple personality disorder. Unwed motherhood. Part-time prostitution. Substance abuse. Anorexia. Bulimia. Compulsive eating. Fat discrimination.

How much can one woman endure? Dee Dee, that is. How much more can she stand? Our all-purpose advice columnist is wondering how many of Roseanne's tortured revelations can she bear to hear.

Dee Dee thinks Roseanne must have some weird compulsion to live out, personally, each and every "Oprah" show ever aired, from satanic-dentistry-and-baby-snatching cults to sex secrets of born-again Unitarians to how watching "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" turned American women into a lot of man-bashing, feminist talk-show hosts.

Now Dee Dee's heroine and role model has filed for divorce from the man she was describing only a few short months ago as her "soul mate." She claims that Tom Arnold has repeatedly hit her, threatened her life and abused her verbally. Maybe they really are soul mates.

Actually, divorcing that hyperactive blowhard looks like the sanest thing Roseanne has done in years. It gives Dee Dee hope that one of these days Roseanne will turn all her attention back to the business of being funny, which she does so well, and forget about day-to-day life, for which she has no talent at all, obviously.

Much is being made of the fact that Roseanne's divorce bombshell detonated just before a ratings period. Are Roseanne's confessions true? Or are they hype designed to attract publicity? It's not an either/or situation, as Dee Dee sees it anyway.

Of course Roseanne's stories are true. That is, they're true to the extent that Roseanne thinks they're true. Because what's real, really, and what isn't? One person's reality is another person's fantasy, or low-budget, low-life soap opera, as the case may be. So who is in a position to question Roseanne's reality? Dee Dee sure wouldn't want anybody poking his or her nose into her own personal *Weltanschauung*. Just thinking about it gives her hives.

And yes, of course Roseanne confesses all this stuff in public to get attention. Dee Dee understands this because she, too, devotes every waking moment to trying to get as much attention as possible. It may be why Dee Dee feels such an intense personal bond with Roseanne. That and the fact that so many of their life experiences are uncannily similar. The tattoos. The Malibu mud wrestling. The three-way marriage. The multiple personalities.

Which brings Dee Dee to the point, at last. Lately she's been wondering if Roseanne could be in danger of running out of headline-grabbing confessions. Roseanne didn't ask for advice. But Dee Dee's business is giving people advice whether they want it or not, so naturally she's been racking her brain trying to think of things Roseanne could say to capture the gnatlike attention span of the American public.

She could announce plans to undergo a sex change operation so she can become the man she always wanted to marry.

She could write a series of sequels to "My Lives" titled "My Past Lives," in which she explores the past lives of her multiple personalities.

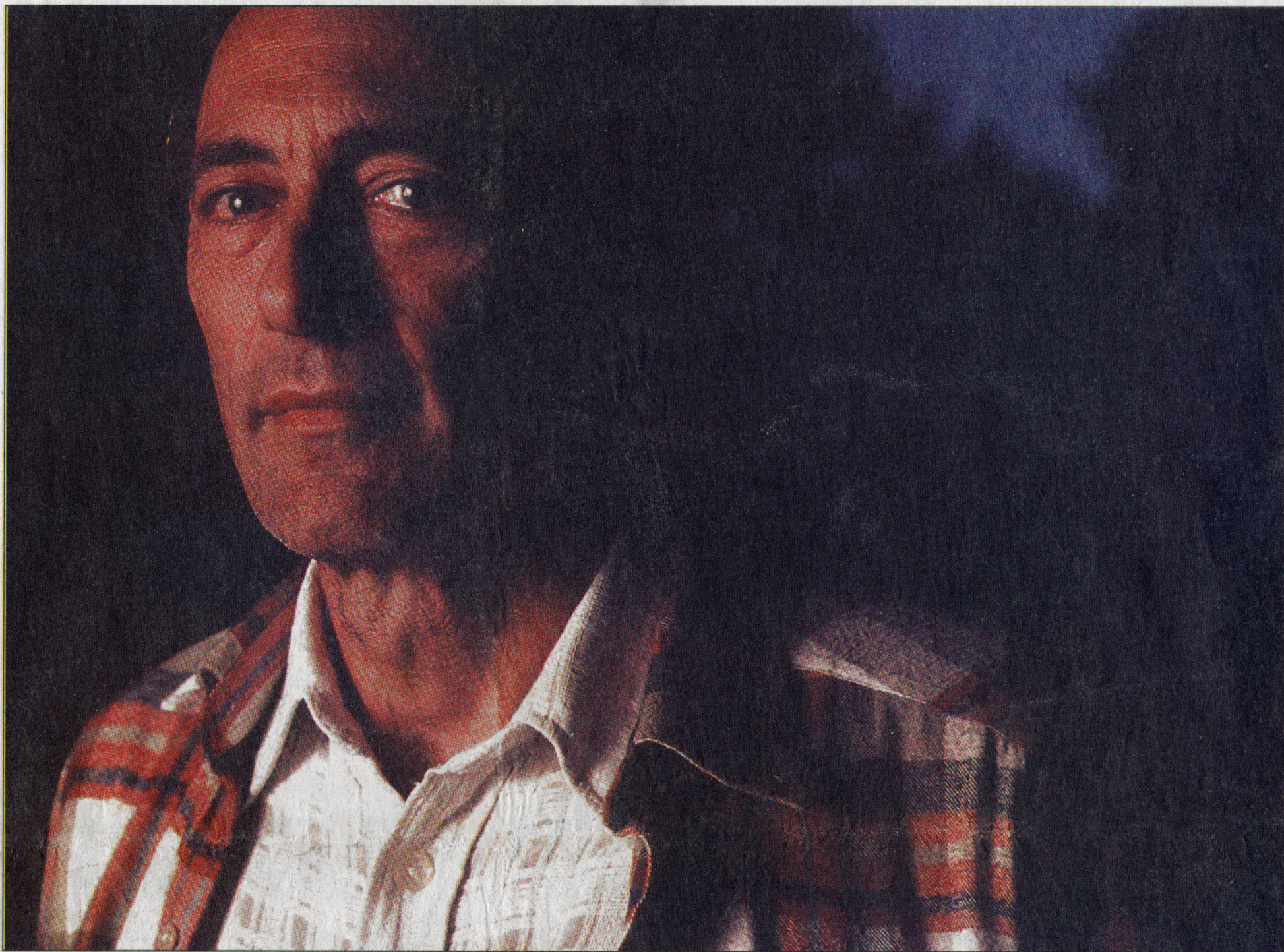
She could speak out on behalf of yet another group of victims of which she is one — people who undergo cosmetic surgery but nobody notices because they look more or less the same afterward.

She could quit her TV show to become a catcher for the Birmingham Barons in the AA Southern League. She could become the official spokesperson for The Roseanne Fund, dedicated to finding a cure for the grosser symptoms of menopause within our lifetime.

She could round up all her multiple personalities, enter a convent and take multiple vows of silence.

E.T., phone Harvard

Dr. John Mack could use the help as critics rip his research on alien abductions



"It's conceivable somebody could dupe me, of course," says Harvard psychiatrist John Mack of the research subject who claims she invented stories of alien abduction.

By Joseph P. Kahn
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — The big Mack attack has just begun. And no one has heard from the little people yet.

The aliens, that is.

"Abduction," the much-publicized book by Harvard psychiatrist John Mack about extraterrestrial visitations, had barely touched down in bookstores this week before it came under heavy ground-

fire from critics of both Mack's methodology and his UFO-friendly mindset.

Time magazine fired the loudest shot in a report that one "experiencer" on whom Mack practiced hypnotic regression therapy, Donna Bassett, says she faked tales of her encounters with space aliens — and that Mack not only believed the stories but also failed to obtain consent forms from his research subjects. Mack has seen or treated more than 100 abductees since 1991, most of whom say they are victims of sexual or genetic experimentation by their captors. "Ab-

duction" contains detailed case studies on 13 of those patients.

Bassett also charges Mack with billing insurance companies improperly for therapy sessions that were actually research. Furthermore, the Time story, written by veteran investigative reporter James Willwerth, suggests that Mack's work is riddled with scientific improprieties, including supplying patients with accounts of other abduction experiences before hypnotizing them.

MACK, Page 66



Randy Barksdale now lives in rural New Hampshire after years in foster care.

A boy writes of a life wronged

By Patti Doten
GLOBE STAFF

"Hi! This is Randy Lee Armstrong Barksdale. I live in New Hampshire now. I was born in Connecticut.

"The reason I moved is because my mom and dad couldn't take care of me. My mom took a drug called heroin, and that is why I couldn't live with her.

"I understand now that it wasn't my fault that my brother and I had to move.

"My mother wouldn't listen to the rules

that were given to her in the shelter we were in after our house caught on fire. She got put in jail because she wouldn't listen."

EPSOM, N.H. — So begins Randy's short autobiographical essay that won a national prize. But the fact that his essay was a winner is not what's so incredible, it's the fact that he's writing at all.

Taken by the state from his heroin-addicted mother at age 1, placed in an abusive foster home for almost five years and then abandoned, at age 6 Randy was labeled re-

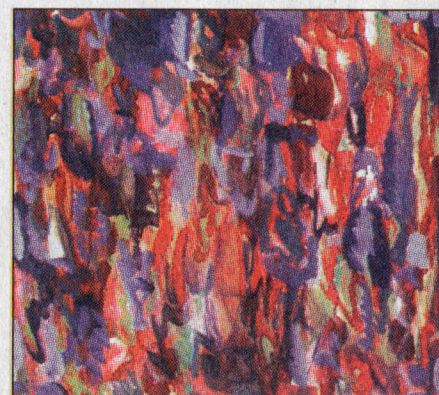
RANDY, Page 64

Galleries

The vast canvas of abstraction

By Nancy Stapen
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

Contemporary abstraction draws on a vast spectrum of influences, ranging from classical, Eastern and "primitive" art to modernism. It is often also a symbolic form of cultural commentary or a means to convey subjective experience. This scope is evident in shows by two very different abstract painters at the Genovese Galleries and the Miller/Block Gallery.



Melissa Meyer's "Blame It on My Youth."

Genovese has taken the unprecedented step of showing works by a single artist, Boston painter Robert Hooper, at both its South Street and South End locations.

GALLERIES, Page 65

After 34 years, a final word from Camus

By John Follain
REUTERS

PARIS — On a wet Monday afternoon in January 1960, a sports car carrying writer Albert Camus skidded off a country road south of Paris and smashed into a tree.

Police struggled for two hours to pull Camus' body free of the twisted metal on the road between Sens and Paris. Near the wreckage, someone found his mud-splattered briefcase — containing the beginnings of his last novel.

CAMUS, Page 66

A professor's research on alien abduction draws fire

■ MACK

Continued from Page 61

For Mack, a tenured Harvard professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, these attacks on his credibility have hit a raw nerve. Mack is in the launch phase of an all-out publicity blitzkrieg ("Oprah" "48 Hours," People, Larry King) that includes network TV interviews with several of his research subjects. These people are clearly emotionally and psychologically vulnerable, whatever the underlying cause might be. And so, to a degree, is Mack, whose credentials far outweigh those of any previous investigator publicly aligned with the abduction-recovery movement.

Yes, Mack says, he anticipated the mainstream media would have difficulty swallowing his conclusion that these abduction reports are reality-based. Skeptical criticism of his work is to be expected, he says, even welcomed.

Moreover, Mack harbors few illusions that anyone hung up on Western scientific rationalism will cede much ground to him in this debate. Mack himself calls abductions a "great mystery" that defy proof, one way or another. Or logic. Only reluctantly did he come to believe in them himself, Mack says.

But this latest flurry hits below the professional belt, the clinician contends.

"Why do they pick the most destructive part of the story and focus on that?" Mack asks. "One or two disaffected persons come forward. Why don't they look into *her* background? It surprises me they [Time] would go so far to discredit me when they claim to be seriously interested in the phenomenon."

Mack insists he is bound by doctor-patient confidentiality not to discuss in any detail his work with Bassett, a researcher now living in North Carolina. He will say, however, that he dealt with Bassett "in good faith" and that if he gave her any UFO-related articles to read, it was only to satisfy her own curiosity about the abduction experience.

"People can be angry for all sorts of reasons," he maintains. "I doubt the writer checked out her background."

Mack also says that while he did bill third-party insurers for some therapy sessions, he kept none of the money for himself. The total amount, he says, which he estimates to be between \$2,000 and \$3,000, went to a now-defunct support group known as Group for Research and Aid to Abductees (GRAA).

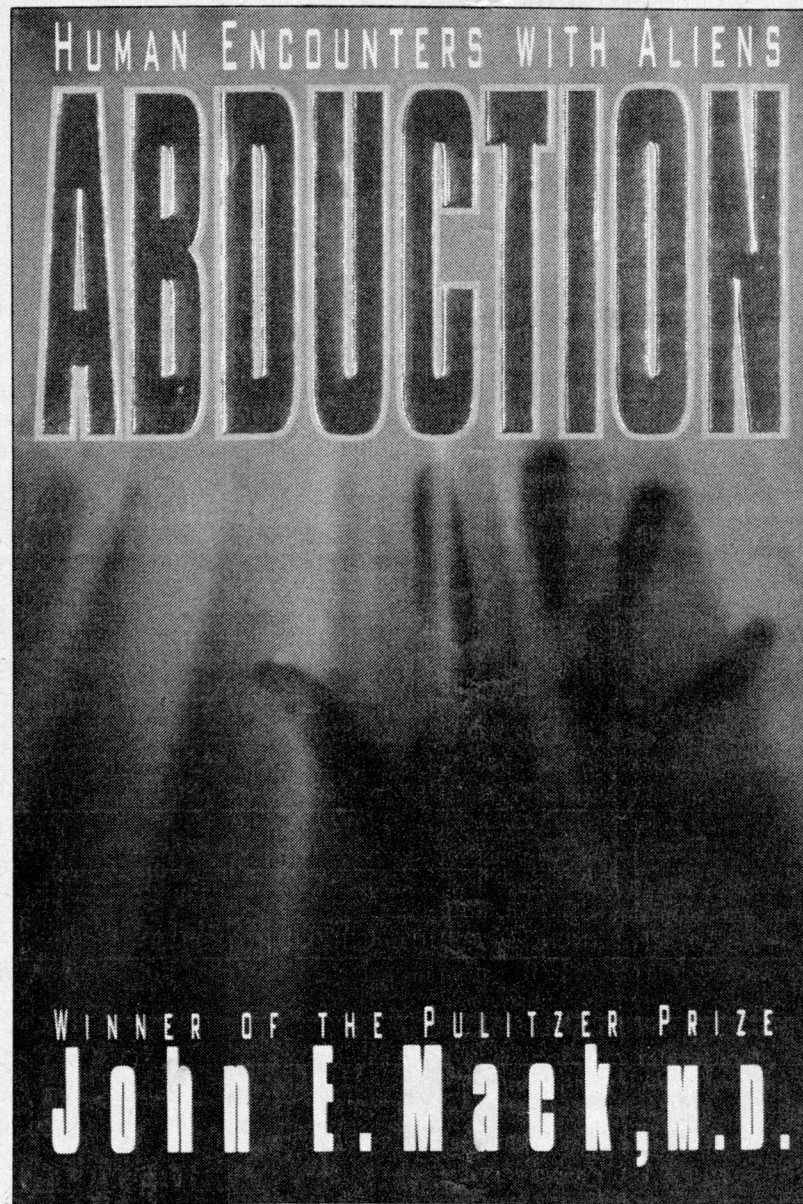
Missing consent forms

Last year, Mack founded The Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) to oversee his abduction research. PEER in turn is overseen by, and funded through, the Center for Psychology and Social Change, a nonprofit organization co-founded by Mack in 1983 to facilitate scholarly research into topics such as human psychology and the nuclear arms race.

According to Karen Wesolowski of PEER, billing and consent procedures changed once Mack stopped treating incoming abductees as private psychiatric patients. At that point, she says, PEER mailed out consent forms to all of Mack's abductee patients, current and former. Most, though not all, signed the forms, she maintains. Meanwhile, Mack stopped billing insurers in order to be "absolutely scrupulous" about the clinical division between research and therapy.

As for his methodology, Mack calls it "very legitimate" to raise questions about how he has gone about recovering memories of alien encounters. In "Helping Abductees," a 1992 article in the International UFO Reporter, Mack noted that he "had little training in hypnosis as a psychiatric resident and had virtually to teach myself." He credits pioneering investigator Budd Hopkins with helping him refine his techniques. Hopkins, a visual artist, has written two popular books on the abduction phenomenon, "Missing Time" and "Intruders."

On numerous occasions, Mack continues, sitting in his cramped office located behind Cambridge Hospital, other therapists and researchers have been present to observe — and validate — the relived trauma that subjects experience under hyp-



In "Abduction," psychiatrist John Mack studies 13 patients who claim to have been kidnapped and studied by aliens.

nosis. Tapes of these sessions leave little doubt that their emotional suffering is real, not invented.

Duped or double-crossed?

"It's conceivable somebody could luge me, of course," Mack says, referring to Bassett, "but I've had a lot of clinical experience. And this [Time] article says I'm damaging people. Where is the evidence for that?"

Furthermore, he asks, "How could I possibly keep everybody hap-

py? There are bound to be one or two disaffected people. That's what I object to, the focus on them. It ignores the dozens and dozens of people I've helped."

Mary (who asks that her last name not be used) is one of those people. A data management specialist in Rhode Island — and an experimenter who claims her first abduction took place when she was 7, and her last encounter just 10 days ago — she met Mack in 1992 after reading about his abductee work in the Boston Globe. She says she is "furious"

Time reporter Willwerth is more skeptical. He dismisses Mack's complaints about lack of background checking as nonsense. A specialist in health-research abuse, Willwerth says he thoroughly reviewed both Bassett's charges and the supporting evidence.

and "saddened" at the way Time and Bassett have gone after Mack.

"The piece tries to slant opinion that John is leading people on in hypnotic regression," Mary says. "That's a sad misrepresentation of his research. I've had quite a few conscious experiences that I've had no trouble remembering."

To attack Mack, she says, is to make it more difficult and more painful for other abductees to come forward. No one has been coerced into doing so, she says. And no one she knows was predisposed to believe in the alien explanation.

Has Mack lived up to his therapeutic duties? "Definitely," Mary says. "But it's unfair to think Dr. Mack can be all things to all people. In my opinion it is [Bassett's] ethics that should be questioned, not his."

Time reporter Willwerth is more skeptical. He dismisses Mack's complaints about lack of background checking as nonsense. A specialist in health-research abuse, Willwerth says he thoroughly reviewed both Bassett's charges and the supporting evidence, while Time's lawyers in

turn thoroughly vetted his piece. "The bottom line is, there was no informed consent going on," says the writer. "We checked this out 13 ways from Sunday."

UFOs and politics

Bassett first met Mack in September 1992 and underwent three "regression" sessions with him over the next four months. She says reading other articles by Mack about abductions "told me exactly what he was looking for" when she pretended to be hypnotized. She also maintains that real harm may have been done to at least some of his research subjects, who have been stripped of other psychological support systems.

"This isn't about UFOs," Bassett insists, speaking by phone from her home in North Carolina. "This is a way to hide human experimentation that's been undertaken for a personal political agenda."

That agenda, contends Bassett, is reflected in the message Mack claims to have distilled from patients' encounters with aliens: that the planet is threatened by ecological destruction, that earthlings must wake up before the destruction goes too far and that human-alien crossbreeding may be the only way to save a doomed race. Mack would hardly quibble with that assessment of the message, only with how the messenger — himself — is being treated by opponents like Bassett.

"Contrary to what some critics say," says Mack, "I was surprised by the message of earth's destruction."

Mack does admit, though, that colleagues warned him long ago that he would open himself up to professional criticism — if not outright ridicule — by pursuing abduction research. Still, he insists, he has no regrets.

"I have this innocent confidence that if you do your work in a comprehensive and objective way," he says, "it stands on its own."

"I'm not worried the attacks will silence me. What I worry about is giving support to the wonderful abductees and others who are helping this process. I don't want to disappoint them."