

Accent

Newsy WWJ and country WYCD make radio waves

Jim Kiska
NEWS RADIO WRITER

Good news was good news for WJLB-FM last winter. Detroit's all-news station jumped from seventh to 14th place during the January-March ratings period, the Arbitron Co. reported Wednesday. And the station thinks all the good news — from the Tonya Harding-Nancy Kerrigan drama to the Los Angeles quake to the Clinton tax debate — kept listeners tuned in.

Meanwhile, WYCD-FM continued its dramatic comeback to vault into fourth in Detroit radio. Since switching from a talk format to country music on Memorial Day last year and challenging the country music monopoly previously held by WJLB-FM (106.7), WYCD-FM jumped from 21st place in the market, to 14th, to 10th, to 7th over the winter.

"That's an amazing success," says Dick Kern, vice president of the Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts. "It's a phenomenon because the station is picking up listeners who previously listened to album-oriented rock music."

At the top of the radio business table in January-March: WJLB-FM (760) took the No. 1 spot for the 83rd time in the 15 rating periods. WJLB-FM (97.9) was in second place, same order since last summer. As usual, J.P. McCarthy's show on WJR led the morning.

McCarthy also made gains among the 25-54 age group key advertisers, and is poised just behind WKQI-FM's (95.5) Dick Clark with that crowd. WJLB-FM moved into third place in a succession of eighth- and ninth-place finishes. "I think it's a combination of things," WJLB-FM General Manager Robert Nadel said Wednesday. "We had a particularly tough winter, and we had a number of enormous news stories. . . . It seems that people were relying on news and information more than ever."

With WYCD-FM taking fourth place, WWWW-FM moved to eighth. Before WYCD-FM's switch, WWWW-FM earned a 7 share of the Detroit radio audience. The combined rating of WWWW-FM, WYCD-FM, and WYCD-FM, which earned a 4.5 share this year, and WYCD-FM, which earned a 5.2, means the country radio audience has jumped by a third.

There's an awful lot of the "cut up," says Barry Marditich, WYCD-FM's director of programming operations. "When we were in first place a while ago, I made headlines, made noise, and pretty much in others to come in. But . . . the rest of the top 10 stations, in order, are WXYT-AM (97.1), WHYT-FM (96.3), WJLB-FM, WMXD-FM (92.3), and WCSX-FM (94.7).

John Mack
defends those who claim abduction by aliens, but admits he can't explain their experiences.



Are aliens kidnapping some of us for experiments? In a new book, Dr. John Mack tells why he thinks that may be true.

By FANNIE WEINSTEIN

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — John Mack is used to being ridiculed.

It comes with the territory when you're an eminent Harvard psychiatrist and you write a book arguing that people who say they've been abducted by aliens may be telling the truth.

But when critics start attacking the abductees themselves, Mack the mild-mannered academic becomes Mack the Knife, cutting down not only their arguments but their motives as well.

"What they're doing, in their desperation, is attacking people who are a vulnerable minority," says Mack, 64, whose recently published *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* (Charles Scribner's Sons, \$22, 432 pages) has proved to be the hot book-of-the-month for the likes of Oprah, *48 Hours*, *Dateline*, *Newsweek*, *Time* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

"It's a cruel tactic. They think if they can intimidate the experiencers themselves, then they won't want to come forward and that will attack this in a more basic way."

Abduction is based on Mack's work over the past 3½ years with more than 100 "experiencers" — UFO parlance for abductees — whose recollections are a combination of conscious recall and memories achieved through hypnosis. In it, he argues that "the abduction phenomenon . . . forces us, if we permit our-

Please see Mack, 6C

THE BODY SNATCHERS

'If it can happen to me, it can happen to you'

By Fannie Weinstein
THE DETROIT NEWS

Following are the stories of three "abductees" who have worked with John Mack.

All three say that before they met Mack, they had been afraid to tell anyone but their closest confidants about their encounters because of the stigma surrounding the abduction controversy. They're coming forward now, they say, so other abductees will know they're not alone.

Mary Oscarson

NEWPORT, R.I. — Early in the morning, 11 days ago, Mary Oscarson had an encounter with the beings she

"People like me are a threat to others in that we challenge their view of reality."

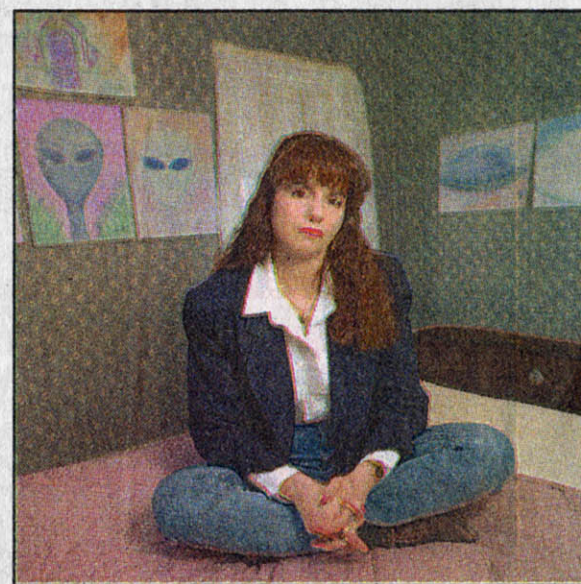
—MARY OSCARSON

says have visited her bedroom for years.

"I was standing there with them and there were some other humans there, too," says Oscarson, a 33-year-old data management specialist. "We were looking at one of my paintings and the beings were telling us something. I don't know what it was, but I could feel this anguish in my heart, almost like when someone dies. I was crying and crying. The next thing I remember was being in my bed. I was still crying."

Oscarson says that for "the bulk of my life," she tried to convince herself that there was some rational explanation for what was happening to her. "I sincerely hoped somebody would tell me that I had some kind of undiagnosed

Please see Abductees, 2C



Mary Oscarson, of Newport, R.I., says her bedroom has been visited by aliens for years.

S W E E P S M O N T H

Networks woo viewers with sin and sensation

By Jim McFarlin
NEWS TELEVISION CRITIC

Lyle and Erik. Tonya and Nancy. Breast cancer and AIDS.

What have we here: A review of major stories last month in

crypts of *Twilight Zone* explorer Rod Serling and brainy adventurer MacGyver, rare TV visits by Sissy Spacek and Farrah Fawcett, 3-D glasses and scratch-and-sniff cards from Fox (who else?) and Bob Hope

work race is officially over (CBS won, again) and the July sweeps are generally disregarded due to lower summer viewing levels, May represents the last real chance to establish big-money ad rates and bragging rights until



Abacadabra:
It's big Macs and disappearing



Abductees: Alien 'encounters' may even begin in childhood

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mental illness so they could give me a pill or lock me up for a few months and it would all go away."

Oscarson's encounters over the years range from an incident at age 7 in which she says a tiny metallic pellet was implanted in her arm — a doctor told her mother it was probably a cyst — to an experience in South Carolina seven years ago in which, for no apparent reason, gray beings handed her a half-human, half-alien baby: "I thought its neck was going to break because its head was so big, so out of proportion to the rest of its body."

Says Oscarson, her voice tinged with regret, "I have not held an infant since."

Oscarson says she's well aware that talking about the abductions makes a lot of people uncomfortable. "People like me are a threat to others in that we challenge their view of reality," she says.

But whether or not one believes her, Oscarson says there's only one bottom line: "If it can happen to me," she warns, "it can happen to you."

Dianne Gandiosi

NATICK, Mass. — Dianne Gandiosi saw her first UFO at age 14. Sixteen years later, she says, aliens began abducting her from her bedroom at night.

But when she saw a flier advertising a UFO abductee seminar led by Mack in the spring of 1993, it took all the strength she could muster to force herself to go.

"I didn't want anything to do with this weird UFO community," says Gandiosi, 35, who finally bit the bullet. "But I had to become a part of it. I wanted to reach out and get some help and some support."

Sitting in a booth at a Chili's, not far from the Framingham, Mass., office where she works as a software test engineer, Gandiosi speaks tentatively about her first actual encounter with the beings in the fall of 1989.

"I woke up facing the middle of the bed," she remembers. "There was an intense buzzing in my head and the feeling of a presence standing between the bed and the wall. I had a feeling of paralysis from my neck down. I dove my head into the pillow and pulled the covers up over my head. The next thing I know, I was lying there and it was over."

When she tried to talk to her husband about the experience, she says, he brushed her off. "He was totally unreceptive," says Gandiosi, who divorced two years ago. "He didn't want to discuss it."

After several similar experiences, Gandiosi was ready to confront the beings in 1992.

During that encounter, she turned to the wall "fully expecting to see nothing." Instead, she found herself looking at a being that seemed female.

"It had pretty eyes," she says. "Big black eyes. She was dressed in a little paper outfit, like a pantsuit."

"She came rushing at me across the bed. I backed off and she got really mad. I blacked out. When I came to again, I was lying on my bed and she was performing some type of procedure on me."

The fall of 1993 came and went

with no encounters. Then one December night, Gandiosi woke up and found herself surrounded by three beings. One of them, a gray one, she says, "had the ugliest face I've ever seen. It had a light bulb-shaped head and big black eyes and a grimacing expression."

After blacking out, Gandiosi came to on a platform, where one of the gray beings was holding her hand.

"He said, 'Don't you know how lucky you are? You should see what they do to the rest.'"

She says after another encounter the following month, the beings left behind physical evidence: three unexplainable puncture marks on her lower right abdomen. Then, following a February encounter, Gandiosi found two puncture marks.

Gandiosi, who has no idea why the aliens sought her out, shakes her head when asked about charges that abductees are simply crying out for attention. "I'd like to be able to just pick up a book and read about them and then go on with my life," she says. "I don't want to be living this."

Lorraine Patti

WAKEFIELD, Mass. — Lorraine Patti never knows when it's going to happen.

But whenever it occurs, it's always the same.

"My head jams and I feel like my brains are going to bust," says Patti, a 55-year-old grandmother who recently left her job as an answering-service supervisor. "I just know I have to walk outside, look up at the sky, and then it stops. I've done that for years."

Patti says she's experienced unexplained phenomena throughout her life. At age 7 or 8, for example, she remembers a strange occurrence in the bedroom she shared with her sister.

"I looked up against the door and I thought it was my mother," Patti recalls as she sips from a cup of coffee in her homey kitchen. "But it was something else, and it was wearing, like, a shimmery dress. I got up and went over to the door and my hand went right through the thing."

Then early in 1962, three months into a pregnancy, Patti suffered a miscarriage under mysterious circumstances.

"I went in for my monthly check-up and I'm supposed to be 4½ months pregnant but there was nothing there," she recalls. Her doctor at the time offered no explanation, she says.

Patti's first encounter with aliens occurred in 1975. She awakened in the middle of the night and found herself face-to-face with two male beings.

One of the beings seemed to know a great deal about Patti. "He knew I was claustrophobic and he tried to calm me down," she explains. "I was horrified, but he made me feel safe at the same time."

Patti remembers flying through the air, being taken to a ship, and then being told that she needed to be "scanned."

"The little man to my right said, 'Lorraine, we're not going to hurt

Aliens: Mysterious meetings

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you. But we have to confine your arms and your feet because we're going to bring this light down and go over your whole body."

After the procedure, the beings showed Patti two groups of human children. They told her they had to experiment on the first group, who had died of leukemia, in order to save the second. "What are you going to do with these children?" Patti asked one of the beings. "He said they were going to put them back, in different hospitals all over the country."

Among those who think Patti is telling the truth is Charlene Gordon, her 21-year-old daughter.

"I believe her," says Gordon, who's never had an encounter herself. "She's my mother. That's the only way I can explain it."

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Mack: Have some of us encountered aliens?

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selves to take it seriously, to re-examine our perception of human identity — to look at who we are from a cosmic perspective.”

Does this mean Mack actually believes his subjects have been abducted by aliens? Not exactly.

“The word ‘believe’ in American English means suckered in, that somebody sold you a bill of goods,” he explains. “So I have to qualify that.”

“What I say is that these are people who as best as I can tell have no reason to be distorting this phenomenon, who have nothing to gain personally, who have come forward reluctantly, who do not remotely demonstrate a form of mental disturbance that could account for what they’re saying and who, with or without hypnosis and with intense feeling, describe what (sounds like) real experience.

“So I say these people are speaking authentically, genuinely and that it’s a mystery I can’t explain.”

The opposition

One thing Mack’s critics can’t dispute are his credentials.

Mack received his M.D. from Harvard in 1955 and has been a professor of psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, since 1972. He has written numerous critically acclaimed books and is perhaps best known for his 1977 Pulitzer Prize-winning psychoanalytic biography of T.E. Lawrence.

But it’s these very credentials, some critics say, that are creating a smoke screen when it comes to analyses of Mack’s work.

“Mack is a rather charismatic personality, and the fact that he comes from Harvard seems to give his views more authority,” argues Philip Klass, publisher of the *Skeptics UFO Newsletter*. “It’s as if Gen. Schwarzkopf were to make some crazy pronouncement dealing with defense matters. People would say, ‘Gee, he’s a military man. He must know what he’s talking about.’”

Especially disturbing to Klass, a journalist who’s written about space technology for more than 40 years, is the lack of what he calls “scientifically credible evidence” for extra-terrestrial life.

“After spending more than a quarter-century investigating UFO reports, I have yet to find a single such case.”

Klass is as dismissive of the so-called “abductees” as he is of Mack.

“They live humdrum lives,” he says. “Nobody would ask them to appear on a talk show on the basis of their normal lives. But all they have to do is read a book or two about abductions, concoct a somewhat similar story and they’re a local celebrity. And who knows? Maybe they can write a book and become a millionaire.”

It’s not just laymen, though, who are troubled by Mack’s latest direction. Even some of his colleagues question its validity.

“People respect his other achievements,” says Dr. Malkah Notman, acting chairwoman of Cambridge Hospital’s psychiatry department. “But the perception is that this is not a productive area.”

You’ll never convince Mack of that. A tall, handsome man with

dark hair and graying temples, he talks about the abduction phenomenon with the kind of enthusiasm usually limited to eager young professionals.

Outfitted in a blue tweed sports coat, a pale blue button-down shirt and gray corduroy slacks — looking ever the part of the slightly disheveled professor — Mack spent much of a recent interview rocking back and forth in a worn, leather desk chair that takes up a sizable chunk of his tiny Cambridge Hospital office.

For the most part, he is philosophical about the stir his book is making.

“My work seems to have stimulated a kind of polarization in the media,” says Mack, who speaks as much with his hands as with his mouth. “On the one hand, you have people who are somewhat open. They may be nervous, but they’ve allowed themselves to walk through my process and they see that something’s going on here that’s mysterious.”

“The other end of the pole is people who simply say this is not possible. They completely dismiss the association with UFOs, they completely dismiss the fact that the phenomenon occurs in children as young as 2 or 3 years old, they completely dismiss the fact that the experiences are consistent among thousands of people all over the country and they dismiss the fact that I say there isn’t mental illness here. Then they become snide, nasty and personally attack me.”

Intellectual challenges

Mack became interested in the

abduction phenomenon after a colleague introduced him to Budd Hopkins, a New York artist who is considered the father of the abduction-awareness movement.

At first, Mack says he was as skeptical as the next guy.

“The idea that there could be some kind of alien beings taking people from their homes and doing things to them was totally preposterous,” he recalls thinking at the time.

The pair met in January, 1990, and Hopkins told Mack about people from all over the country who had come forth to tell him about their experiences. A month later, Mack met with four abductees and became intrigued by the philosophical, spiritual and social implications of what they had to say.

Most significantly, Mack writes in the book’s introduction, the phenomenon calls into question the basic Western belief that reality is grounded only in the material world or in what can be perceived by the physical senses.

It’s this intellectual dilemma, Mack believes, that explains why people are so disturbed by the phenomenon.

“We like to believe we are in control of our world,” he says, “that we can bulldoze it, blow up the enemy.”

“That illusion of control is deeply built into the Western psyche. This phenomenon strikes at the core of that and says not only are we not in control, that some kind of intelligence can break through and do threatening things to people for which there’s no defense, it also shatters another belief — that we are the preeminent intelligence, if not the only intelligence, in the cosmos. It makes a mockery of our arrogance.”

‘Experiencers’

The most notable characterization of the abductees, says Mack, is that they can’t be categorized. His own sample includes students, housewives, secretaries, writers, business people, computer industry professionals and psychologists.

Some of the abductees come from broken homes, others come from intact, well-functioning families.

Experiencers say their abduction encounters begin most commonly in homes and at night. Usually the experiencer is accompanied by one or two or more humanoid beings who guide them to a ship. The experiencer often discovers that he or she is unable to move at will.

Inside the ships the experiencers remember witnessing more alien beings. The entities most commonly observed are small, gray humanoid beings 3 to 4 feet tall. They usually have large, pear-shaped heads that protrude in the back, long arms with three or four long fingers, a thin torso and spindly legs.

Abductees say they are often subjected to procedures in which instruments are used to penetrate virtually every part of their bodies, including the nose, sinuses, eyes, ears and other parts of the head, arms, legs, feet, abdomen, genitalia and more rarely, the chest.

Sometimes instruments are used to take sperm samples from men and to remove or fertilize eggs from females. Abductees report being impregnated by aliens and later having an alien-human or human-human pregnancy terminated. Also, some report the presence of homing objects, or implants, that have been inserted in their bodies so that the aliens can track and

monitor them.

Afterwards, many abductees suffer long-term physical symptoms such as headaches, nasal sinus pain, limb pains and gastrointestinal and urological-gynecological symptoms.

Because they often suffer some sort of psychological trauma as well, Mack tries to ensure that the abductees have access to mental health professionals if he can’t see them himself.

“I try to make sure they have someone they can talk to who at least understands the phenomenon,” he says. “One of the things that is really troubling is that there aren’t enough people who are qualified to do this work. But that’s changing. I now have two psychiatrists in the area who are open to it and who will see these people.”

The chances of Mack and his critics ever seeing eye-to-eye is slim. Take Klass, for example, who confesses facetiously that he keeps a video camera by his bedside.

“I figure if I am abducted and if I can get video on board a flying saucer, I could really do very well,” he cracks.

For his part, Mack is less concerned with battling his critics than he is with opening a public dialogue about the abduction phenomenon.

“I want people to ask themselves, is it possible that something they don’t understand is going on here?” he says. “My role, my responsibility, is to open a serious conversation in this culture that maybe there are dimensions and realities and something going on here that we don’t understand, and that it might be more useful for us to acknowledge this than to shoot the messengers.”

■ Fannie Weinstein is a Detroit News staff writer.