

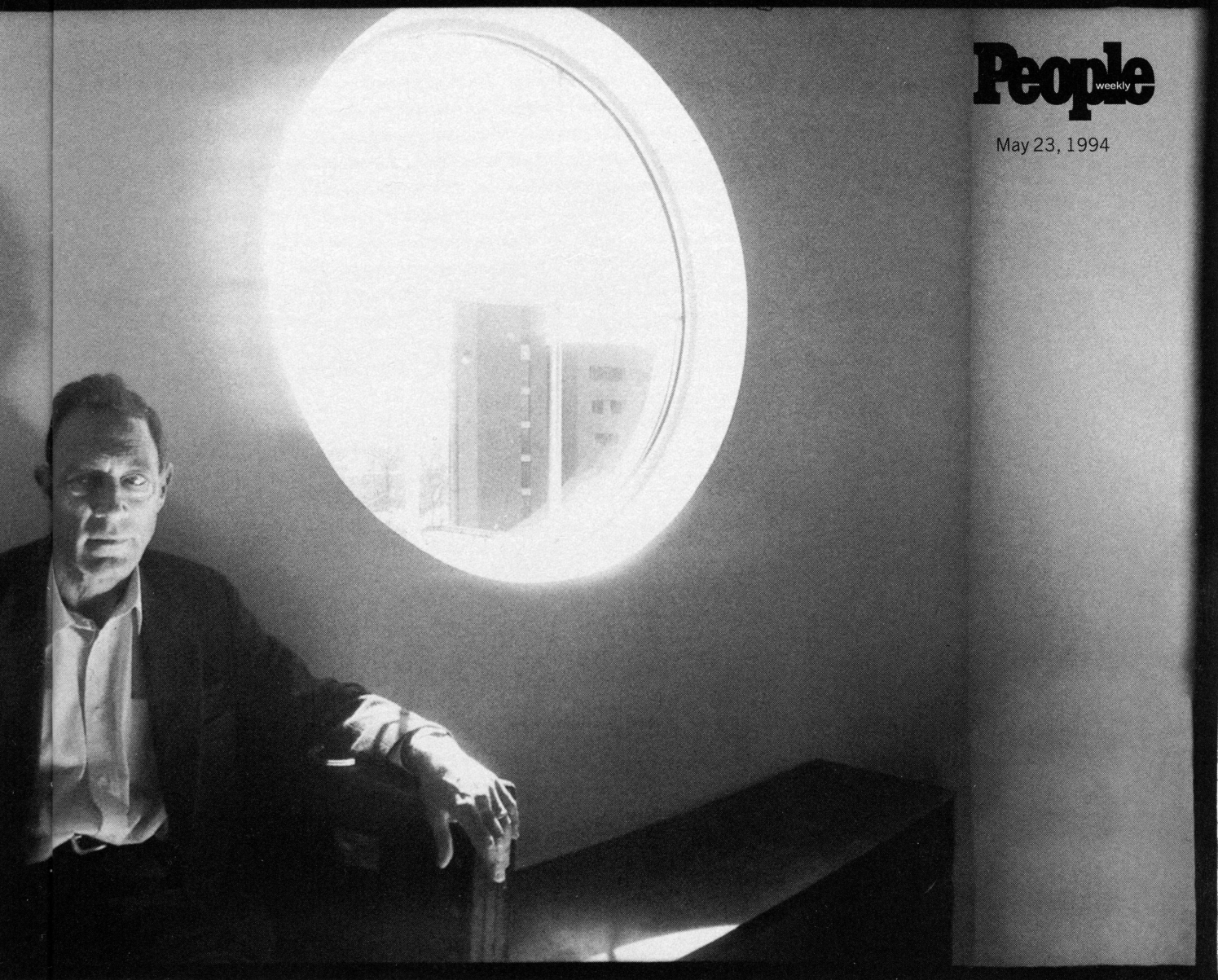
"It's pretty scary," says John Mack of his research. "If this is real, what does it tell us about our world?"

# OUT OF THIS

**F**OR YEARS—EONS?—I-WAS-ABDUCTED-BY-ALIENS stories have been a staple of the supermarket tabloids and best-seller lists, yet they've never attracted serious interest from scientists. That may change with the publication of *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* (Scribner's). The book's accounts of nocturnal visits from little gray creatures and reproductive experiments conducted on spaceships are sure to stretch the bounds of credibility. But the author, John Mack, is a Harvard professor, psychiatrist and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer of T.E. Lawrence. Now, to the discomfort of his Ivy League colleagues, he is also a believer in close en-

counters of the most lurid kind. "It does seem bizarre," concedes Mack, 64, "but this is not the product of mental illness. These people speak genuinely about something powerful that has happened to them, and the feelings they bring—the terrors, sweats and body shakes—are real."

Persuading skeptics that nonhuman life not only exists but has invaded our earthly terrain has become the most daunting challenge of Mack's controversial career. Toward that end, he has documented 13 of his most vivid case studies in *Abduction*. Over the past four years, Mack—former chief of psychiatry at Cambridge (Mass.) Hospital and professor of psychiatry at Harvard since 1972—has worked



# WORLD

## A Harvard psychiatrist believes that alien abductions are real

with nearly 100 people whom he calls experiencers. He stresses that they recounted their close encounters with great reluctance. "Many of them don't want to believe it," says Mack. But after a two-hour initial interview and then sessions that include hypnotic regression, the abductees began to feel more comfortable discussing their memories. "I spent hundreds of hours with them before I said, 'Look, something *really* is going on here.'"

Not surprisingly, Mack's work has stirred a tempest among his colleagues. "Show me some physical evidence," says Paul McHugh, director of the department of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University. "I worry about John. He's a

brilliant man who is easily persuaded of things, and this time he has lost it." McHugh also contends that the so-called abductees "are troubled people who use the idea of abduction as a mask to avoid the real issues in their psychotherapy." Mack's boss at the Harvard-affiliated Cambridge Hospital, Dr. Malkah Notman, concedes that many at Harvard "are feeling uncomfortable with the attention he's bringing to the university" with his space-alien tales.

At least one of Mack's experiencers also has doubts. David Duclos, 44, currently unemployed, pulled out of therapy with Mack after four years because he felt the doctor was focusing on only the positive side of the abductee experience.



▲ "I felt relieved to learn there were other people having these experiences," says Jerry (concealed outside her kitchen window).

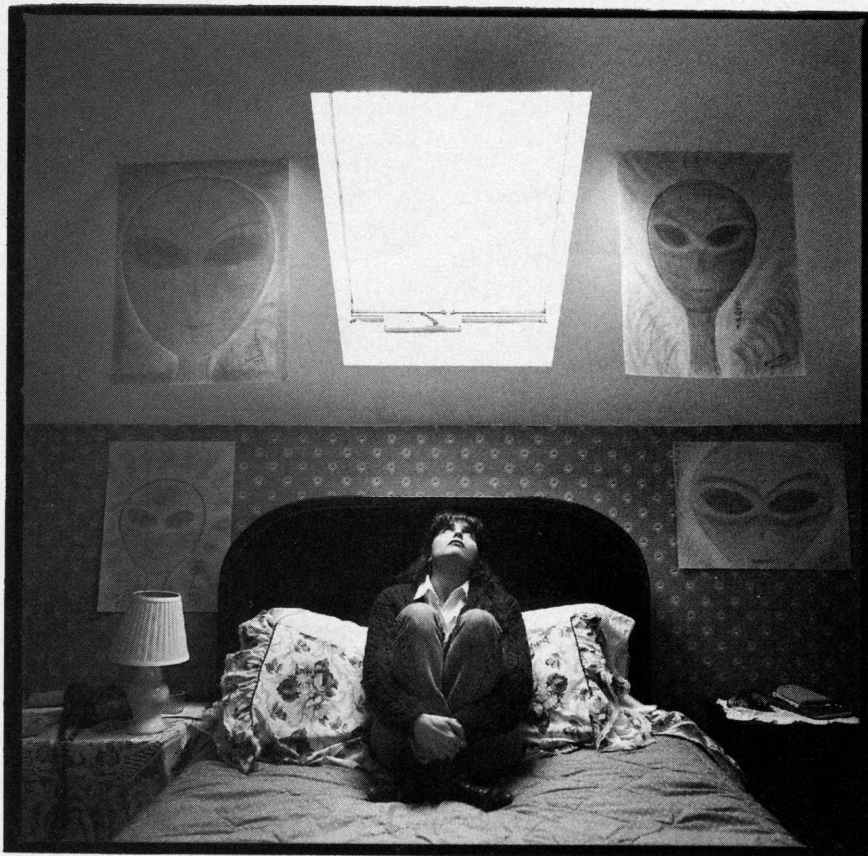
"I would feel better," says Duclos angrily, "about John's research if he included people like me who question if they have been helped or harmed by this. Do aliens have the right to do these things to us? If they were human beings, they would go to jail."

Mack maintains that a number of colleagues privately support his work. He excuses the misgivings of those who

do not by pointing out that people—even scientists—are reluctant to step outside the bounds of conventional thinking. "I am as careful as I know how to be in my diagnostic discriminations," he says. "I have exhausted all the possibilities that are purely psychological, even psychosocial, that could account for this."

Since childhood, Mack has been

propelled, he says, by a need "to understand people." Born in Manhattan, the son of Edward Mack, an English professor, and his wife, Ruth, an economist, Mack graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1955, served his residency at Massachusetts Mental Health Center and followed that with teaching and research fellowships at Harvard.



▲ "I don't care what other people think," says Mary (surrounded by her unearthly drawings).

There, in 1959, he met his future wife, Sally, at a party. They had three sons—Daniel, 34, Kenneth, 32, and David, 30. In 1969, Mack took over the department of psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital and transformed it from a mediocre municipal institution into a leading center for community health care. Some of his views have put him on the fringe in his field: embracing est, studying shamanism and experimenting with breathing techniques that simulate an LSD state.

But it was a chance 1990 meeting with Budd Hopkins, a believer in UFOs who wrote the 1981 *Missing Time: A Documented Study of UFO Abductions*, that changed the direction of Mack's work. "Like everyone else, I kept thinking, 'This is not possible,'" he says. "Then I began to ask, 'Why is it so difficult for this culture to accept the notion that there could be another intelligence, however strange, that has found a way to enter our world?'"

Mack soon became obsessed with tales of alien visitations, devoting his mornings to teaching and writing, and afternoons to working with the abductees without charge. His aim is to help

them come to terms with their experiences and feel whole again. Some of his preoccupation with the abduction work may have contributed to his 15-month separation from his wife, Mack says, but they remain "on warm terms."

Clearly, Mack is too deeply committed to abandon his studies now. "To be caught up in something of this intensity at my age is a strain," he admits. "Yet the idea that we might actually be in a relationship with some other form of intelligence is as momentous as anything could be. So, while I still enjoy friendships, a good meal and a glass of wine, I have become rather passionate about pursuing the implications of that."

*Following are some of the more graphic—and incredible—incidents described by Mack's patients.*

### A housewife fears she has become an alien earth mother

For Jerry, a 32-year-old clerical worker and mother of three in Plymouth, Mass., the terror comes in the middle of the night when she feels a ringing in her ears and "a crackling energy where my hair almost stands up." She knows then that the unwanted visitors are back—short, bald figures with huge al-

mond eyes and slits for mouths. "I'm awakened by a tap," she says softly. "I feel paralyzed but awake. They invade you entirely. Then they float you out and up to the ship."

Such encounters prompted Jerry (who prefers not to use her real name to protect her privacy) to contact Dr. Mack in 1992. "I was hoping he would say I was crazy," she says. "Then I would know it wasn't real and I could be helped." Instead, Mack told her that she was not alone.

Jerry estimates that she has been abducted at least 50 times since she was a toddler. "At first I thought they were cute little people," she says, though they didn't frighten her until she was 13. That's when she claims they started conducting painful gynecological experiments, such as inserting embryos and extracting fetuses. A disturbing incident, she says, took place when she was 27 and "a hybrid—half-human, half-alien—showed me two little girls, very angelic, with pale skin, wispy hair and huge blue eyes. They said to me, 'You are my mother.'" After embracing them, "I felt all the usual motherly instincts."

Jerry begins to tremble when she describes a more recent abduction, during which she says a needle was put into the base of her skull. "It was the worst pain I'd ever experienced. I screamed at them to stop. The next thing I was back in my bed. I tried to wake my husband but couldn't." (She claims he was in an unnatural sleep state induced by the aliens.) "Then I ran and called my mother." Says Jerry's husband: "I'm not sure what I believe. I don't give her a hard time about it. I let her do what she needs to, but it's very hard."

Jerry, whose three children have each had nightmares involving odd creatures, is part of Mack's monthly abductee support group. "I'm not crazy; this is real," she says. "Who would want to make up a story like this?"

### Tired of ridicule, an 'abductee' makes a plea for tolerance

Mary Oscarson, 33, has had it with disbelievers. As a senior at the University of Connecticut in 1981, she quickly stopped mentioning the small gray creatures that appeared at her bedside after her first few friends looked at her "like I had two heads.

"If it hadn't happened to me, I

wouldn't have believed it either," says Oscarson, a Rhode Island data management specialist who remembers many encounters over 13 years.

At times, terrified at being alone, Oscarson says she has invited various friends to stay overnight on separate occasions. Four of them, she claims, heard loud noises, saw bright lights and experienced paralysis before waking with scratches on their bodies. "I felt like I'd been beaten," says one friend.

Oscarson has also recorded bizarre sounds she has heard during the night. "When there was no one around, I've gotten voices that are not human," she says. "In one case, you can clearly hear three words: 'Don't wake up.'" Then there is the cystlike bump on her arm that tingles just before she has an encounter and the puncture marks that she sometimes finds on her body when she wakes up. "You can't cause those kinds of marks by bumping into things in your sleep," says Mary, who turned to Mack in November 1992 after reading about his work. "I contacted him out of desperation," she says. "I was having so many experiences. I just wanted someone to listen to me."

Through therapy, Oscarson has found an emotional outlet in drawing pictures of the aliens; her bedroom walls are covered with pastels depicting large-eyed, brightly colored beings. "It's my way of acknowledging what has happened to me," she says, "instead of running away from it."

After finally getting over her trauma, Oscarson concludes, "This is not about

aliens coming down and taking over the world. It's about a very evolved species interacting with us for benevolent purposes. Whatever they are doing is, I believe, for our best interests." Friends have cautioned her not to go public, but Oscarson is determined to persuade people "to accept me for who I am and stop ridiculing me because of something they don't understand."

### **A nature lover finds himself unwillingly outward bound**

A native of Maine's backwoods, Joe, 37, has always had a healthy respect for the outdoors. The seventh of eight children, he spent his youth fishing, hunting and trapping. When he was 20, he lived alone in a log cabin along the Canadian border and later created his own outdoor adventure business. But, from childhood, there were times in the forest when he began to get the eerie feeling that "somebody not human was coming to grab me."

For Joe, the epiphany came two years ago when he suddenly remembered being abducted during physical therapy for a sore neck. "I was no longer on the massage table, but on a cold table surrounded by extraterrestrials who were putting a needle in my neck. I had this incredible fear and this excruciating pain. Then, wham! I was back on the massage table." The therapist told Joe that she had felt a sudden release of the cramped muscles. From that moment, other memories of abductions began to surface.

Now a psychotherapist living in New England with his wife and son, Joe be-

gan seeing Mack two years ago.

Through hypnosis, he says, he was able to recall floating out the window of his bedroom when he was 2 years old and then, years later, lying in bed unable to open his eyes but feeling something moving around him. Joe now believes he has lived before, most likely in an alien form—a belief Mack says is shared by some of his other abductees.

But unlike so many others, Joe has found peace with what he calls his E.T. experiences. "I've gone through the terror and found incredible liberation on the other side," he says. "We need to treat this with an open mind. We can't keep saying we're the only intelligent species in the universe. We have to wake up."

### **An independent woman fights to overcome her fear of the night**

Until a year and a half ago, Susan, 28, was a fit, energetic achiever—a well-paid electronics buyer, real estate investor and cofounder of a concrete business. Then the nightmares began. "I'd wake up screaming with sheer terror and fighting with my fists," says Susan, who lives in central Massachusetts. "I'd always had trouble sleeping, but I couldn't understand why things were getting worse."

So much worse that she was forced to take an extended leave of absence from her job and consult a psychiatrist in July 1992. When Susan revealed a lifelong terror of UFOs and aliens, the psychiatrist referred her to Mack.

"As a little girl," says Susan, "I was so afraid of them coming down to get me

▼ "I could feel myself lifting right up through the roof," says Joe (doing a backyard balancing act) of a recent encounter.





▲ "I'd go to sleep and see the alien," says Susan. "Then came the anger, the night sweats, the sheer terror."

that my mother had to sleep in my room until I fell asleep." That ended when she was 15. At 18, she says, she married as a way of relieving her fears of being alone at night. The marriage was annulled seven years later, and she became engaged again in 1992.

During her first session with Mack, Susan was able to remember, under hypnosis, an encounter in which she cried out, "Please help my mother. They have taken seven of her babies." Later, says Susan, "I learned that my mother had had seven miscarriages, something I'd never known." She also had memories of driving by a church

and seeing what appeared to be an enormous cloud covered with lights. "The next thing I remember, I was lying on a table while an alien inserted a tube inside my vagina," says Susan, who had to end the regression at that point because, she explains, "I was becoming too scared. I felt I was going to die." (Like many in Mack's care, Susan believes that aliens are trying to mate with humans in order to create a hybrid race that combines their advanced intelligence and earthlings' emotional capacity.)

As more "memories" surfaced, Susan confided in her fiancé, who

broke off the relationship after a year and a half. "His response was, 'Oh, my god. I'm engaged to a crazy woman,'" she says. "I felt so isolated." Still, Susan, who continues to see Mack in monthly support meetings, has found that she is less troubled by her memories now that she has been able to talk about them. She is engaged again to someone else and sleeping less fitfully. "I have no doubt that I will come through this," she says. "I just want to be a fully functioning, complete person again."

■ MARJORIE ROSEN, J.D. PODOLSKY

■ S. AVERY BROWN in Boston