

A calm view of abduction by aliens

Honored psychiatrist finds credibility in patient stories

By **LESLIE MORIARTY**
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Earthlings — abducted by space aliens!

This time, that's not just another headline from a super-market tabloid.

It's what Dr. John E. Mack set out to document when he began a project more than three years ago that led him to interview more than 100 people who say they've been abducted by aliens.

And Mack isn't just another UFO nut.

A professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School's Cambridge Hospital, Mack won a Pulitzer Prize for his 1977 book "A Prince of Our Disorder," a biography of T.E. Lawrence.

In Seattle at the recent conference of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims of the Paranormal, Mack participated in a panel that addressed beliefs that we aren't alone in the universe.

In his new book, "Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens" (Charles Scribner's Sons; \$22), Mack writes about people he interviewed who claim to have been taken by aliens and some who say they've had sexual or reproductive experiences with extraterrestrials.

"I don't refer to myself as a 'believer,'" Mack says. "But I am convinced that abductions occur in a dimension outside of limited human consciousness."

"I have come to see that the abduction phenomenon has important philosophical, spiritual, and social implications.

"Above all, more than any other research I have undertaken, this work has led me to challenge the prevailing world view or consensus reality which I had grown up believing and had always applied in my clinical/scientific endeavors."

Although many who attended the conference consider the paranormal to be "all the rage in America today," Paul Kurtz, the group's chairman, considers such things as alien abductions to be psychological distortion.

"So many people accept these claims without adequate evidence," Kurtz says.

But the fact that Mack, a medical doctor and Harvard professor, doesn't discount the recurring experiences of several of his

patients lends some credibility to alien abduction stories.

To nonbelievers, Mack says: "This (alien abductions) runs in the face of things that are important in our culture. We want to believe that we are the dominant intelligent culture. The fact that others are out there suggests that we may not be in control. That is threatening to some."

Nonbelievers are trying to keep the world rational, he says.

Although skeptical at first, Mack says he came to believe through his research that his subjects had valid, unexplained events.

Many of the patients came to him and to other doctors and mental health experts hoping they would be diagnosed with some psychiatric disorder, he says, adding that they hoped to escape possible memories of alien abductions through medication or therapy.

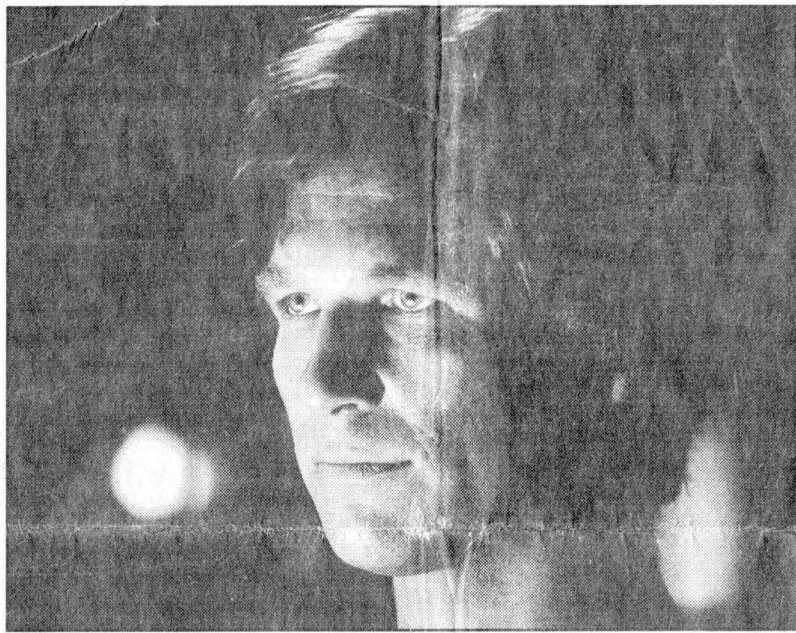
He says his subjects had conscious recall, or recall through hypnosis, of being taken by alien beings into a strange craft. They reported their experiences with appropriate emotions and had no apparent mental condition that could account for their story, he adds.

"Many people try to dismiss their encounters as nightmares," he says. "Others are misdiagnosed and treated for a range of physical or psychiatric disorders."

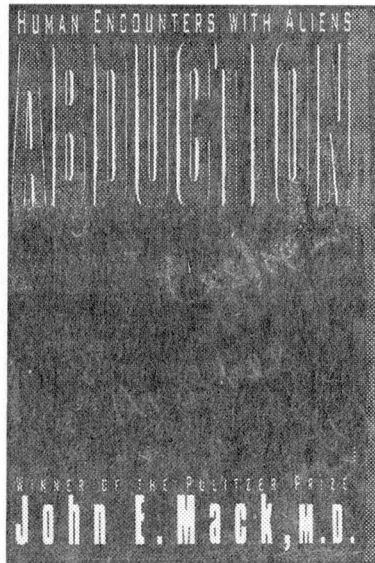
Conventional medicine, he says, hasn't recognized these happenings as valid and has no procedures for effectively treating abductees.

By listening to their stories, Mack says he is allowing them to understand what has happened to them and continues to happen to them.

In the book, Mack details events of "experiencers" who come from all walks of life. They



ABOVE: Jeff Bridges as a benevolent alien in "Starman." LEFT: The cover of John E. Mack's new book. BELOW LEFT: The lovable E.T.



hybrid children and has explored the possibility of his own dual identity; and a man who had marital difficulties due to his continued relationship with a female alien.

There seems to be no "personality" who is more likely to be abducted, Mack says. "It seems to be quite random."

Mack has used regression therapy, during which the patient relives the events. People who believe they were abducted report consistently similar descriptions of beings, details of spaceships, medical operations, sexual encounters, methods of communication and loss of time.

Mack says his work has made him realize the "powerful dimension of personal growth that accompanies traumatic experiences."

As evidence of the truthfulness of abductions, he says that children have these experiences when they've never talked to anyone who would have "helped" them create such stories.

And he claims that in some cases there have been physical findings such as markings on people's bodies that go along with the psychological evidence.

Mack hasn't had any interference in his work from the U.S. government, although he says it has been "curious and interested."

He believes the subject warrants more study and that the future holds the key to understanding alien abductions.

In addition to his work with patients who say they have experienced abductions, he is studying how other cultures treat the issue.

"The abduction theory confronts us with an authentic and disturbing mystery," he says. "There is no way that we can make sense of this matter within the framework of our existing views of what is real or possible."

Mack, the founding director of the Center for Psychology and Social Change at Harvard's Cambridge Hospital, knows that some will try to discredit him.

But, he says, "My approach to this has always been with dignity and integrity. I have sought the truth. While there are those who say this can't be true, in the long run I know I will be vindicated."



experience loss of time, visitations from beings that speak telepathically, various operations including some of a sexual nature, and high energy levels in their bodies when they return to Earth, he says.

Case studies chronicled in the book include: a female former Israeli soldier whose childhood encounters were dismissed as nightmares; a college student whose first indication of an abduction was lost time while driving; a man who fears he has fathered