

FALL FROM GRACE

A Researcher's Nightmare Revisited

by Roberta Puhalski

Recently there have been a number of personal attacks by certain abductees against professional researchers who deal with abductees and the abduction phenomenon. Many researchers have put their professional credibility, as well as their careers, on the line by becoming advocates for abductees. These researchers have brought the plight of the abductee to the attention of the general public, as well as the academic and professional communities. When these researchers first showed an interest in helping abductees, a sigh of relief was heard in some quarters around the world.

I will be using the terms "abductee" and "abduction" to stand for specific sets of experiences as reported by certain individuals. These experiences include, but are not limited to, missing time, out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, abductions, etc. I have had some of these experiences myself for many years, and am still not sure exactly with what we are dealing! I can only report my observations of those abductees who have confided in me.

When the researchers first came into our lives, they were the only ones who dignified us by responding to our cries for help. Curiously, the established psychiatric community has not been interested in researching abductions, as many within their ranks apparently believe them to be a psychological aberration. Now, some abductees, after finally establishing these researchers as allies, are fueling the very investigations against those who originally believed them!

For three years I facilitated self-help groups for abductees. This experience was a meaningful part of my journey towards understanding myself while helping others. To form support groups, I placed ads in newspapers and posted leaflets in numerous stores. These advertisements solicited individuals who were interested in psychic phenomena, astral projection, obe's and UFOs.

Interestingly enough, the members of these groups were individuals from all walks of life. They represented most social, economic, political and religious groups. Within several weeks of forming these groups, I noticed a kinship between these strangers. While most of these individuals came from different backgrounds there was a common thread that tied them together. Their lives had been radically interrupted by an earth-shattering experience that they could not share with the people around them without being considered crazy! Through these groups, however, they found special comrades, a feeling of normalcy, and the realization that they were not alone. At least eighty percent of the people I interviewed before placing them in a group claimed to have

had or to be having abduction experiences. The remaining twenty percent were just "interested" and continued to attend the meetings. I felt the brotherhood in these groups was akin to the brotherhood that exists between soldiers in combat. As the years passed, this happy story turned ugly and some abductees began to desert these "safe havens." Other abductees even turned against the researchers/facilitators who first brought them together. In order to understand how this could happen, one would have to observe the psychological dynamics at work in these "special relationships."

Once individuals in the support group possessed a sense of security, experiences came rushing out of them like tidal waves. At times, it was difficult to conduct these meetings in an orderly fashion, everyone seemed to be talking at the same time. If there were twenty abductees in the room, there were twenty similar accounts being presented. Soon, I found it difficult to keep handwritten records and had to resort to recording the sessions. Then, later, I could review the tapes and assess the needs of the abductees at my leisure. In an attempt to make the meetings more manageable and quiet, I suggested breaking the groups into smaller units. However, these attempts were thwarted by the abductees themselves, who did not want to be separated from their new-found comrades.

My observations of the abductees led me to one solid conclusion: they were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. We have heard this term thrown about quite a bit lately. Everyone and their uncle, it seems, wants to be included in this new "victim" role. It's almost as though one is not really "in" if one doesn't suffer from some form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder!

PTSD occurs when an individual has an experience that is outside the range of what we would consider a typical human experience. These experiences would distress anyone. Such experiences threaten the safety of these individuals, or that of someone they love. The individual believes their very life to be in danger. For example, the sudden destruction of one's home and community, as witnessed in various natural disasters like earthquakes and floods, is as traumatic as a soldier's experiences in war. Any threat, whether it's an accident or a deliberate act of physical violence to the self or someone else, falls into this category.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is considered a mental disorder. It was first defined in 1980 in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)*, published by the American

Psychiatric Association. Initially, the APA did not consider the trauma-causing event to be significant as the cause of the disorder. PTSD was considered to be the response to a condition that already existed before any trauma occurred. In other words, they blamed the victim. Fortunately, the definition was revised, and now the mental-health community considers the event that produced the trauma to be significant in terms of the damage it can cause to an individual's sense of well-being. While PTSD was initially a category to describe emotional problems resulting from the Vietnam War, it now refers to a whole range of responses affecting individuals who have faced extraordinary circumstances. Everyday, people face events in their lives that may be traumatic to them. However, individuals who suffer PTSD experience events that destroy trust and security, and rob them of their innocence. Such individuals are left in fear long after the event has passed.

I observed the following symptoms among abductees in my groups:

- Recurring memories of the event(s)
- Certain parts of the traumatic incidents blocked from memory
- Abnormal interest in all aspects of the phenomena
- Flashbacks accompanied by physical sensations
- Reactions to certain smells, sounds, locations that can trigger a flashback
- Dreams of the event(s)
- Fear of the night/dark
- Difficulty in falling asleep or staying asleep
- Difficulty in concentration
- A diminished interest in family, friends, hobbies, work, sex, etc.
- Location-specific anxiety
- Changed eating habits: either eating more or less
- Terror experienced with the recollection of childhood involvement with UFOs/ETs
- Anxiety attacks that come on without warning
- Exaggerated startle response
- Feelings of isolation, withdrawal from others
- Exaggerated emotional responses, displaying inexplicable crying, anger or despair
- Feeling helpless to protect those whom they love (children)
- Anger towards ETs for lack of emotional response
- Anger towards those who feel positive towards ETs

How can individuals who have experienced some, or all, of these symptoms become so directed and lethal in their attempts to discredit the researchers who came to help them?

In the April 25, 1994 issue of *Time* an article entitled "The Man from Outer Space," by James Willwerth, was published. The article (p. 74) explores the controversy surrounding Dr. John Mack, a well-respected

Harvard Professor and Psychiatrist. Dr. John Mack's book on Lawrence of Arabia, *A Prince of Our Disorder*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1977. His accuser is Donna Bassett, 37, a Boston-based writer and researcher. Bassett admitted in the article to reading stacks of books and articles on UFO abductions with the intention of fooling Dr. Mack into believing she was an abductee. She participated in three hypnotic-regression sessions with Mack, using method-acting techniques to fake her way through them. She later joined his abductee support-group and eventually worked her way up to being treasurer of the group. Bassett makes many allegations against Dr. Mack's professionalism.

One of those made in the *Time* article was that he failed to help abductees with follow-up therapy, leaving them emotionally distraught. In psychotherapy, individuals who suffer from emotional and adjustive pains are helped. Many American Psychiatric Association members believe that psychological difficulties stem from maladaptive and unresolved conflicts from childhood. These childhood conflicts may be either real or imagined and usually involve one or more significant adults. The child's inability to deal with the conflict or some aspect of it produces anxiety which can be repressed in the unconscious mind. This repressed anxiety is reflected in the individual's behavior as an adult.

Can this model help abductees find peace? It is reported that many abductees have had these experiences from early childhood. However, as children they are told these experiences did not happen, that they just imagined it! It is difficult to heal emotionally from a traumatic event when one is told it just didn't happen. One's self-esteem (I dislike using the term self-esteem as it is usually used in a subjective and judgemental way) is seriously affected when one is told what they thought happened, didn't. A recent trend in thinking informs these individuals that they were not abducted, but sexually abused, as children. This traditional thinking is based in denial, as all difficulties that individuals face in life do not lead back to some aspect of sexuality. This backward thinking does nothing to help abductees "get on with their lives." In my self-help groups the primary objective was to give abductees the emotional and spiritual support they needed, so that they could function in life with some degree of satisfaction and peace. Someday we hope to have the answers concerning the true nature of the abduction experience. Until that happens, we must deal effectively with today.

I believe the abductee support-groups provide one of the best models of therapy within their own parameters. A single therapist just can not provide for an individual what a support group provides. Dr. Mack reminds us in the *Time* article, "there are too many of you, and I'm also doing research." Too many of us. A frightening thought, don't you think?

In traditional therapy it can take months or even years before a trusting relationship develops between the therapist and patient. Until that happens a patient will not open up totally with an honest dialogue. However, in these support groups the "trust stage" is established within a very short period of time. Everyone there is suffering from a similar trauma. As with other PTSD sufferers, many times there are multiple traumatic events. Once the ice is broken by the facilitator, individuals enthusiastically want to share their experiences. During these meetings most are not afraid of being ridiculed or told that they are crazy. The feedback received from the group is very important. In these groups abductees find validation that they are going through a traumatic experience, regardless of what the "true nature" of these experiences might happen to be. Without validation, healing cannot occur. For years many abductees may have been told by the people in their lives that their experiences are pure fantasy. It is no wonder that these people learn to distrust their own perceptions. I believe healing is best done in such a supportive environment. Healing does not take place overnight, often it can be a lifelong process. However, restoring one's self-validation is a critical part in the process. Without this self-validation, abductees share with each other their social isolation from mainstream society. After the hypnosis sessions with Dr. Mack, Donna Bassett admitted to being placed in an abductee support group that he organized and facilitated. In my opinion, Bassett's therapeutic needs were met, had she been a "real" abductee.

Although I have met with Dr. Mack several times in 1991-92, I am not a fan of his. However, I do understand the complexities of the abduction phenomenon and certainly respect the role of *all* researchers in the unraveling of this mystery. It is easy for someone who doesn't understand these complexities to misjudge the effectiveness of the treatment. Over the three years that I facilitated the self-help groups, I did occasionally receive referrals from one of Dr. Mack's assistants for someone in our area or with a special need. It is interesting to note how researchers who investigate and report on uncharted issues are attacked for their efforts, as in the case of "The Alexander UFO Religious Crisis Survey," by Victoria Alexander, that appeared in the September, 1994 issue of the *MUFON UFO Journal*. This was understandably a preliminary survey — no need to sharpen the blade! Maybe it is true that we'll become what people expect of us. Perhaps the lack of information, freely disseminated throughout our society, robbed us of our opportunity to "prove ourselves."

Dr. Mack is charged with misusing the techniques of hypnosis by attempting to "shape" his subjects' memories to suit his vision of an intergalactic future. Knowing little about this subject, I decided to contact a professional in the field of hypnosis. It was suggested by several of the abductees that I have worked with over the years that I contact Fred Max of Cheshire, Connecticut.

Fred Max is a Certified Hypnotherapist and Counselor. Max has a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's in Research and Quantitative Analysis. He is a member of the International Society for Professional Hypnosis and the National Guild of Hypnotists. Over the past fifteen years, Fred has taught hypnosis to area physicians, psychologists, nurses and dentists. He has lectured on hypnosis and behavioral medicine at Boston College Graduate School State University, University of Massachusetts, Westchester Community College, the American Cancer Society, and before many other area universities and organizations.

Max has appeared on television many times. He recently regressed Whitley Streiber, author of *Communion*, for a TV special. He has also regressed Larry Fawcett, Larry Warren, Pat Gagliordo, Betty Andreasson Luca, Bob Luca and many other contactees. In 1991, while attending John White's OMEGA Conference, I had a front row seat as I watched him demonstrate hypnotic regression on Bob Luca for the audience. It was interesting to watch, but I needed more information.

I decided to interview Fred Max at his lovely suburban home where he works. The sight of the bird feeders being gently blown by the breeze, while I could hear the delicate ringing of chimes in his yard, had a relaxing effect on me. After being greeted at the door, I was whisked down the hall to his office. As he offered me a seat, I recognized it to be *the* seat, which I approached with all the apprehension one would have at the dentist's office. I kept reminding myself that I was only here to interview. After surrendering to the chair, I couldn't help noticing all the high-tech gadgetry surrounding his office, wondering where I should direct my gaze.

Fred Max explained that hypnosis is a natural state that we all enter into in varying degrees throughout our lives. Some people have a greater ability to enter into this state than others. We can and do hypnotize ourselves frequently without even knowing it. A hypnotist gets one to relax deeply and experience a broad range of emotions within a selective focus. In such a state we can hear, see, smell, taste or feel certain stimuli, while being unaware of others.

Max told me he would never encourage the subject to read any material referring to abduction before hypnosis, as it could influence the results of the session. However, he does approve of giving subjects hypnotic training tapes to listen to before a session. Hypnotic tapes are a tremendous asset in that the subject can hear the tape while awake with the advantage of mentally preparing them to be hypnotized. This aids them in being able to relax and feel comfortable with the terms that will be used to produce the state during the session.

Hypnotic regression is the ability to relax the subject and have them relive an experience. To prepare for this experience, the subject must be at a medium trance level or greater. Being hypnotized or listening to hypnotic training tapes can help a subject increase their

trance level. Before being regressed Max wants the subject to understand that regression is a natural occurrence, that they can be as close or as far from the feelings as they choose. They can view the experience as though they were reliving it, or imagine it as if they are seeing it on a movie screen. The subject is taught the skills of both relaxation and control. Most subjects can relate to hearing a word or phrase with the results of being placed back into that experience. The hypnotist teaches these skills, as well as trance deepening, as part of the process before the regression.

The hypnotist must be compassionate, clear, logical and trained in the scientific method. The scientific method is essential because the hypnotist asks the subject questions while in the regressed state. These questions must seek information without biasing the answers. Biasing answers is called "leading," which means that the answers the subject emits are unduly influenced by the wording or tone of the hypnotist. Leading questions can contaminate the results and create false memories.

The hypnotist must relax the subject and then take a careful history to help minimize the biases that the subject has come in with. He or she then employs a process called "combing," whereby one attempts to verify certain variables that make up the fabric of the abductee's account. If a "being" is described as tall or short, for example, the hypnotist might ask how the abductee *knows*. Did they see it standing next to a particular object or individual of known height? Another name for the combing process used to check a story for its internal and external validity is "item analysis."

Fred Max video and audio tapes most hypnotic regressions, unless the subject objects. This taping not only gives the subject a record of the session, but it helps Max review his part in the process. One of Max's personal goals is to improve the quality of his part in the process. He tries to keep himself from leading. "I try to always remember that the questions determine the answers," he says. "A skilled hypnotist will get more information in the long term." Max continues his personal education in *hypnosis*.

Max's clients come to him for weight regulation, smoking cessation and sports motivation. He is currently working with a woman who wants to break an olympic record. This type of hypnosis is like a mental dress rehearsal in which individuals imagine the "desired" behaviors and the feelings associated with these behaviors.

After a lengthy discussion with Fred Max, it became clear that his major objective was not only the professionalism that he brings to the field of hypnosis, but his desire that individuals leave his office calm, whole and healed.

I asked Max if abductees were different than other individuals who seek out his services. Max finds that the abductees who come to him for hypnotic regression

seem to be very sophisticated. He sees them as intelligent, peaceful individuals, wanting honest answers. These people are more likely to care for plants and animals in their home. They are seeking the greater meaning in life. While being in agreement with Max, I couldn't help but reflect back to the radical changes I witnessed in my own groups several years ago.

In 1992, I noticed a disturbing shift in the emotional climate within the groups. Some of the abductees would actually ask me to give messages to the "aliens." While I facilitated the group(s), I did not have the "special relationship" that some believed or hoped I had. Another facilitator reported to me that similar requests were being made of him. It dawned on me that some of the abductees believed we could "save" them from these experiences if we spoke on their behalf! While some of us may have been handling these experiences better on an emotional and spiritual level, we did not have the power to stop the experiences. I became concerned that we were slowly becoming demigods to these people. It seems that the abductees expected something other than support to come out of these groups and were frustrated when whatever they were seeking didn't happen. They believed that the professional researchers with their credentials and prestige could influence society to take us seriously. Abductees hoped, at least, to be recognized as sane people who were having something horrible happen to them. I suspect that some abductees were angry that, even with the professionals at their side, they still could not achieve the social acceptance and credibility they so desired. These meetings were taking on an expression that made me uncomfortable. Emotional disturbances and despair became commonplace, while others were busy aligning with their favorite "alien" group and defending their theoretical dogma.

The meetings developed a circus-like atmosphere instead of a therapeutic setting. The three years of facilitating these groups and trying to keep them on-line eventually burned me out. I threw up the white flag, retired from active duty, and decided to concentrate on my long neglected personal life. I embarked on my writing career, initially becoming the author of a column entitled "The Pensacola Beach Lady" that appears monthly in the *S.P.A.C.E. Newsletter*, published by a Manhattan organization that grew out of Manhattan MUFON. The organization S.P.A.C.E. was founded in March, 1992 by Harold Egehn, Jr. who saw the need for abductees to have access to their own organization newsletter, exploration teams, and television program. "S.P.A.C.E.-BRIDGE" is on Manhattan Cable Public Access, Channels 16 and 17. By the end of 1992, I had a 28-chapter book drafted on my five year involvement with these phenomena. I would soon learn that I had made the correct choice for myself concerning the abductee support groups.

By October of 1992, Nancy was seriously worried about Donna Bassett's intentions towards Dr. Mack, her paranoia concerning government agents following her, and other strange assertions. One claim Donna made was that her rings came off her fingers when the couples were together, rings that had not come off in years.

During the Christmas season of 1993, I took my family and spent the holidays in Atlanta, Georgia, with some friends. When I returned, a friend of mine, Bob Newth, a MUFON Field Investigator in Connecticut, told me about a trip he made to Massachusetts during my absence. Bob happened to catch an article that was written about a couple in Massachusetts who have gone public concerning their experience with entities from other worlds. Bob appeared to be very impressed with the couple. He told me they were different from the people we had come into contact within the groups. Over the following months Bob continued to encourage me to get in touch with them. Finally, on May 29th, 1993, we made a visit to their home in Norwood, Massachusetts.

Jack and Nancy Malacaria own two small cleaning businesses which they operate from their home. They have been married for nine years and have four children. The Malacarias give seminars and speak to various groups. They have given dozens of radio and newspaper interviews. They have also appeared on television a number of times.

My first impression of the Malacarias was that of an intelligent, calm and soft-spoken couple. Their home reflected a peaceful serenity, which is quite an achievement while having four children. Initially we compared notes on our experiences and speculated on the purpose behind our timely meeting. However, during our visit, later in the afternoon, our conversation turned to Dr. John Mack and his work on the behalf of abductees. This was the only time during our visit that I noticed any stress in Nancy's voice. Nancy and Jack related a story to me which was, indeed, very disturbing!

They said that on Sunday, June 7, 1992, they met a couple named Donna and Ed Bassett at one of Joe Nyman's MUFON meetings in Massachusetts. At this meeting Donna tearfully explained some of her early "alien" experiences to the group. During that meeting Jack and Nancy spoke to the Bassetts about the nature of their experiences, offered to be of any assistance, and invited the Bassetts to attend any of the monthly meetings held at their home. The couples exchanged phone numbers, which began a six-month relationship that the Malacarias would never forget!

There was no question that Jack and Nancy liked Donna and Ed Bassett. They found the couple to be very friendly and open. The couples immediately started to socialize, and within a very short time Donna was confiding in Nancy regarding her childhood and family problems. Jack and Ed seemed to be enjoying each other's company as much as the women appreciated their growing friendship.

Nancy and Jack visited the Bassetts at Ed's father's house in Milton, where he and Donna lived on the basement floor. Ed told the Malacarias he worked as a freelance journalist. Donna said she was writing a book about flower and herb essences. The couples discussed many UFO issues and initially seemed to be in agreement regarding their opinions. However, shortly after this relationship flourished, Donna adamantly voiced her opposition to the way MUFON and other independent investigators in the field were treating abductees, particularly Dr. John Mack. Donna kept looking for Nancy's agreement in these discussions. However, Nancy told her, she just didn't know enough about any of these issues to make a statement. Unfortunately, many times Nancy would try to make it look to Donna as though she agreed for the friendship's sake. Nancy could not stop Donna from her seemingly "driven" pursuit of justice. It was in September of 1992, that Donna told Nancy that she was going to "fix him," referring to Dr. Mack, because of the way he was treating abductees. The Malacarias were not happy with the bizarre direction this relationship was taking. Jack and Nancy started to withdraw, as expressed by their silence. They knew that the Bassetts noticed this change in their attitude.

By October of 1992, Nancy was seriously worried about Donna's intentions towards Dr. Mack, her paranoia concerning government agents following her, and other strange assertions. One claim Donna made was that her rings came off her fingers when the couples were together, rings that had not come off in years. Was there some strange power at work here? The only power the Malacarias wished they had was for this behavior of Donna's to stop! On Friday, October 23rd, Donna and Ed arrived excited, wanting the Malacarias to listen to some tapes of a woman named Diane DeSimone, who was a Director of Massachusetts MUFON. Theoretically, DeSimone was supposed to be a government agent. Donna said she could prove it because of some financial papers that were stolen from DeSimone's home, showing that she came into a sudden monetary increase. Jack and Nancy wanted no part of all this sneaking, spying and stealing, should any of it be true. It was then that Donna and Ed admitted to Jack and Nancy that they were spies. All of these events were noted in Nancy's daily journal. Most of her notes pertain to her family, however, the Bassetts created enough concern for her to comment on these occurrences.

I was shocked over some of the things the Malacarias were telling me, and shared with them some of the events of my last days as facilitator of the abductee self-help groups. I expressed to them that surely Dr. Mack must be able to recognize Donna's problem, being that he was a psychiatrist! The Malacarias agreed with me that they, too, thought Dr. Mack would recognize her state of mind. Nancy continued to tell me that on Tuesday, October 27, 1992, she had a conversation with Pam Kasey, who is an associate of Dr. Mack's. Nancy related to Pam her concerns about the tactics that Donna and Ed Bassett used. Pam assured Nancy that she would relay their conversation to Dr. Mack. On Monday, November 2, 1992, Jack personally warned Dr. Mack about the Bassetts during a telephone conversation. By early December, the relationship between the couples was just about over. The Malacarias' refusal to go along with Donna's agenda understandably put a damper on the relationship. The Malacarias were relieved it was finally over.

When the *Time* article came out in the summer of 1994, I sent a copy of it to Nancy and Jack. We were all surprised to see that Donna had followed through with her threats. We were relieved, however, to note that she did not go through with one part of her plan, which had Dr. Mack making a "pass" at her on the bed during her regression!

Nancy and Jack Malacaria are still supportive of Dr. John Mack's work. We all agree it is a dirty and dangerous job he has chosen. If John Mack is guilty of anything, it would be of poor judgement of character. Nancy Malacaria believes "It is painfully ironic that Dr. John Mack, with all of his credentials and brave dedication to this essential task of breaking evolutionary ground, which will forever be a benefit to all, has been undermined through the media by such a fallacious obstructor as Donna Bassett. Bassett's intentions were clearly nothing but selfish, cowardly, and immoral. Donna Bassett schemed her way into this field with no prior knowledge or connection, fueled only by her personal obscure torment. She spied on and used the abductees she befriended. Donna Bassett used the needs of the experiencers to justify her self-indulgent quest for chaos, pitting everyone against each other."

History and archeology have shown what happens when a "God" fails to protect his people. The plundered ruins of such societies are all about the earth. I believe that this is how we fell from Grace! Abductees felt they had been led astray, that we did not protect them, nor did we improve their situation. We let them down! Their moods shifted from disappointment to anger directed towards us. Abductees became easily manipulated by dissidents within the abductee population. Embittered abductees took their revenge out on particularly respected researchers in visible positions. After all, it is easier to target these prominent researchers. This ugly

turn of events saddens me. These bitter few have made all abductees look bad!

There is no way of quantifying exactly the number of people suffering worldwide from the abduction phenomenon. If there are abductors, they cover their tracks too well. Some of the findings of researchers, if true, have frightening implications for our society.

To the Donna Bassetts of the world, I have only one response. I can't help but seriously question the integrity of anyone who would intentionally go out of their way to "set someone up" to get the "goods" on them. Particularly concerning abduction, as it is no laughing matter when you believe it is happening to you! I can think of many other pursuits in life that would be positive and of a more productive use of one's time and energy. Shame on you!

ABDUCTION NOTES

John Carpenter

UPDATE ON PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Throughout the country various efforts have arisen to attempt to deal with the coping, support, and issues of alleged abductees. While the common response of most professionals has been to hesitate and wait for acceptance of the abduction phenomenon by the general population, or let someone else lead the way boldly, a scattering of dedicated individuals have developed their own approaches, forming organizations in different corners of the United States. In this column I shall highlight the efforts of Boston's PEER group, San Francisco's OPUS group, and El Paso's blossoming chapter as examples of hard work and tireless vision into our future.

In Boston, Dr. John Mack founded the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) in 1993 to examine accounts of anomalous experiences in order to question and expand existing notions of identity. PEER's aim is to study and understand how subjective experiences of extraordinary events can inform and enlighten twentieth-century science's description of reality. PEER received nearly one thousand calls and letters in its first year. PEER's work addresses the perspectives of three audiences: experiencers, professionals, and the general public. The program has three components: support, research, and public education. PEER has also developed a resourceful "Therapist Consultation and Referral Network" in conjunction with the suggested resources known to other researchers like Budd Hopkins, John Carpenter, Yvonne Smith, and David Jacobs. Directed by Pam Kasey, this network connects experiencers with professionals nationwide who have demonstrated a sincere and open-minded interest in helping. Call Pam Kasey at (617) 497-2667, extension 16. Karen Wesolowski directs the public education efforts, such as

the PEER Forum Series, which bring various professionals and academic types together to share techniques, questions, and issues.

Through psychological research PEER seeks to establish the study of anomalous experiences as a valid and important area of scientific inquiry. Using accepted scientific language and tools, researchers expect to document those aspects of anomalous experiences that remain unexplained by existing diagnoses and concepts of reality. They expect the research will help distinguish the abduction experience from psychopathology and fantasy proneness and help define the scope and describe the characteristics of the phenomenon more fully.

The Organization for Paranormal Understanding and Support (OPUS) was formed in the San Francisco Bay Area, spearheaded by the vision of therapist Kathy Hennessey and Dr. Eugene Lipson, an enthusiastic pediatrician. OPUS was formed to provide referral and research services for unusual personal experiences such as close encounters with non-human intelligences and parapsychological phenomena. The two basic goals of OPUS are to assist persons who are seeking help in dealing with anomalous trauma, and to be a data-gathering body to enhance understanding and knowledge. OPUS sees itself as an adjunct to other groups such as MUFON, CUFOS, the Intruders Foundation, and the American Psychic Research Society. OPUS also offers referral services and support to abductees, acting as a type of "triage" where an experiencer can receive guidance in choosing a professional therapist who is known for their knowledge and experience with these subjects.

Therapists connected with OPUS also benefit in that they have a network of professional peers with whom to consult or exchange information at any time. As with the PEER group in Boston, OPUS offers workshops and public forums as well.

Therapists connected with OPUS will be asked to share data for a database without compromising the identity or confidentiality of any client. This database could suggest innovative research projects or therapeutic directions. OPUS also plans to deploy small interdisciplinary research teams "tailor-made" to investigate paranormal experiences. OPUS is guided by an executive council where each member develops a particular area of the organization. OPUS offers itself as a model to be cloned and spread throughout the nation, creating a larger network that links other innovative groups together.

Down on the Mexican border in the desert splendor of El Paso, Dr. Joe Lewels was determined to develop a group of helping professionals as a few cases of probable UFO abduction began to surface in that region. Beginning with only six MUFON members in June of 1993, they began to awaken the area by drawing in speakers such as Walt Andrus, Robert Dean, and John Carpenter over the next two years. These three speakers attracted a grand total of 1050 interested individuals, in-

cluding up-and-coming psychiatrist, Dr. Roberta Fennig. It was her fearless speaking engagements that attracted other professionals.

The MUFON chapter now boasts 32 members, including several psychiatrists, psychologists, hypnotherapists, psychiatric nurses and social workers, along with two college professors, a physicist, an engineer, and a lawyer. The high percentage of professional involvement is largely due to Joe and Roberta's vision to "start at the top" and get good quality people who would set the standard of excellence that would attract other members for all the right reasons.

On-going speaking engagements, a classy newsletter, and connections with local media and universities have enhanced local interest and respect. The combination of quality leadership, education, and public events has created an admirable success for this charming El Paso group. The abduction cases in that region are forever grateful for the help they are now receiving.

Other tireless individuals like Tucson's Cecilia Dean, Kansas City's Jean Brogan, and North Carolina's Granville Angel have made efforts to develop support networks for experiencers nationwide. Eventually many of these efforts will link and blend together as we move from isolated pockets of effort and creativity toward a truly unified national network of support and services to all experiencers, therapists, researchers, and the education of the general public. Let us salute the pioneers of these innovative and dedicated directions nationwide.

Next Column: "Does Sleep Paralysis Explain Abductions?"



by Dennis Stacy

UF0 and related literature continues to appear at an alarming rate, the alarm here referring to the lack of time to read and thoroughly review each and every one. The only way to catch up and keep current is with thumbnail sketches like those that follow, which don't necessarily preclude a full-length review of individual items at a later date.

In no particular order, then, here are a few titles which have recently crossed our desk. One of the more curious, and certain to be controversial, is Leah A. Haley's *Ceto's New Friends* (Greenleaf Publications, 32 pages, hc, \$18.95), illustrated by Lisa Dusenberry. (Haley is also the author of *Lost Was the Key*.) According to the accompanying press release, "Many preschoolers and young children have been frightened by encounters with 'aliens.' *Ceto's New Friends* (just released) is designed to ease their fears (and to be just plain fun for other children). Beautifully illustrated, it tells the story of an extraterres-