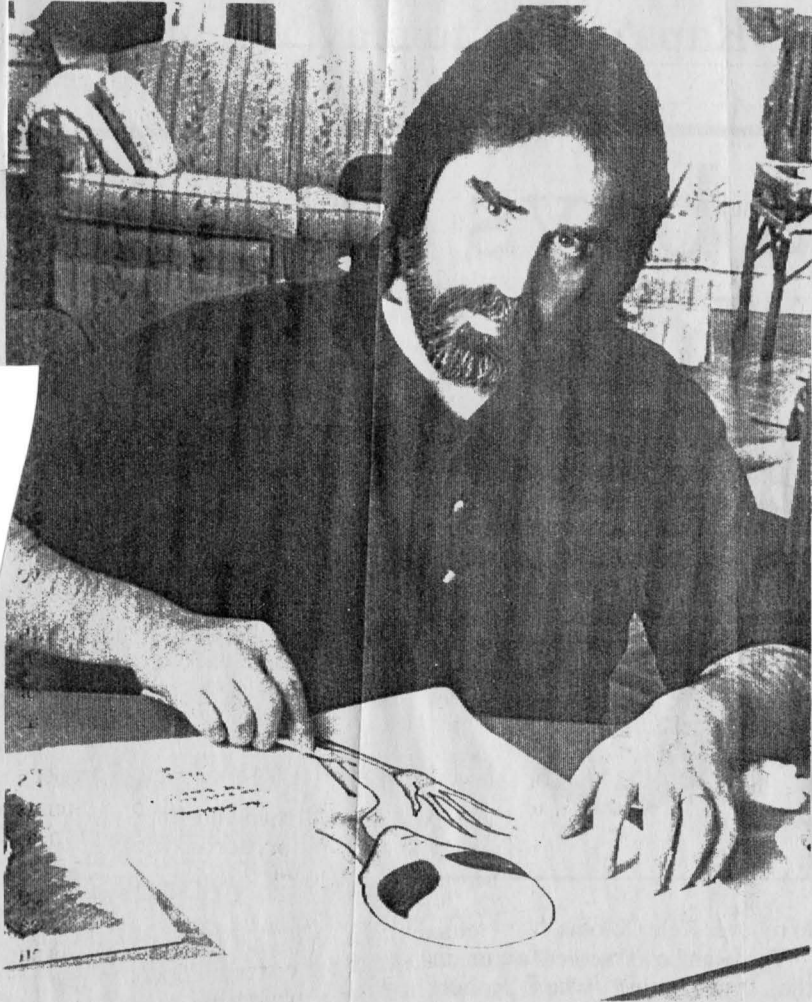


## On Television



JOHN, one of the thousands of Americans who report being victims of alien abductions, sketches the alien kidnappers he says took him aboard a spaceship for experiments.

# Nova looks at claims of abductions in presentation of 'Kidnapped by UFOs?'

In recent years, thousands of Americans have come forward with reports of late-night abductions by big-headed creatures from outer space performing sexual experiments. Claims of alien abductions are supported by some mental health professionals who are convinced that such allegations are not bad dreams or psychotic episodes, but real experiences. "Nova" searches for the truth behind one of the most bizarre, alarming and riveting issues of our time in "Kidnapped by UFOs?", airing Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 8 p.m. on Hawaii Public Television.

John, a middle-aged graphic artist, recalls being taken to an underwater facility where, "they removed my eye completely." In addition, his abductors extracted semen from his genitals. Aided by hypnosis, he made sketches of his otherworldly assailants.

A young woman reports being probed in virtually every orifice of her body. Finally she felt something moving inside her: "It was an alien baby."

Although credible physical evidence is lacking, proponents contend that these stories must be true. Why else, they argue, would the accounts have so many similar details—from the appearance of the aliens to their obsession with the creation of a human/alien race? And why would the abductees recount their experiences

with such deeply felt emotions?

Not everyone is convinced, however. "There is something interesting going on here," allows Pulitzer Prize-winning astronomer Carl Sagan, "but whether it is going on in inner space or in outer space, that is the question." Sagan wonders if the human capacity for hallucination does not better explain the extraordinary reports.

But others, such as Harvard University psychiatrist John Mack, believe that the kidnappings are real. "In case after case, I've been impressed with the consistency of the story, the sincerity with which people tell their stories, the power of feelings connected with this," Mack tells "Nova."

Many abductees initially describe their experiences as vague or dreamlike. Under hypnosis, a fuller, more horrifying story emerges. "Nova" records several such sessions conducted by Budd Hopkins, an artist widely known for research and best-selling books on alien abductions. "Nova" accompanies Hopkins on a new case study involving a suburban couple and their two preschool-age children. Through probing questions, the couple's memories, dreams and even their children's seemingly innocent responses, coalesce into a stark tale of alien encounters. When Hopkins

interviews a next-door neighbor, it turns out that she, too, has been having abduction experiences.

As sincere and riveting as such accounts are, memory expert Elizabeth Loftus argues that they do not necessarily represent the truth. "Once a memory has been implanted through suggestion, it can seem very real," she points out.

According to abduction skeptics, well-meaning therapists are not the only sources of "planted" memories: modern culture is saturated with images of aliens in movies, television shows, tabloids and elsewhere.

Mack counters that, as a psychiatrist with decades of experience, he was also initially skeptical, considering abduction reports to be "some sort of contemporary psychosis." Hopkins, too, concedes that it "sounds crazy." But the flood of testimony has turned both men—and many other thoughtful people like them—into committed believers in what, if true, is a living nightmare happening in our very midst.

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