



Stephanie Berger/"Nova"

A man who identified himself only as John and said he was abducted by aliens for sexual experiments made this sketch of his captors.

TELEVISION REVIEW

Abductions by Aliens: What People Recall

By WALTER GOODMAN

Sightings of unidentified flying objects come and go with the appearance of books, movies and television programs about extraterrestrial exploits. In recent years, there's been a flurry of tales of abduction by creatures from out there, some spiced with sexual encounters of an odd kind. You can hear tonight from a few self-described abductees telling with considerable emotion of the dazzling lights, the strange craft and the little folk with big eyes who have worked their wills upon them. One woman remembers giving birth to an alien baby.

The main subject of "Kidnapped by U.F.O.'s?" is the means by which such memories are extracted, particularly by two of the extractors, Budd Hopkins, who has written best sellers about abduction by aliens, and John E. Mack, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist, who says he has been convinced by the consistency, sincerity and strong feelings of the abductees. Both use hypnosis to help them in developing the memories.

Skeptics from the sciences and social sciences maintain there is no reliable evidence that any such adventures have taken place outside the professed victims' imaginations or hallucinations, which, some suspect, have been formed largely under the influence of people like Mr. Budd. He can be seen tonight bringing out such memories from the two children, a 4-year-old boy and his younger sister, of that purported alien-fetus breeder, whose own tale of abduction was stimulated by one of his books.

A woman tells of faking her way through a session with Dr. Mack, who, she asserts, encouraged her "most far-fetched" tales. (In a long defense of his work and indictment of the program, Dr. Mack wrote to

NOVA

Kidnapped by U.F.O.'s?

PBS, tonight

(Channel 13, New York, at 9)

Produced for "Nova" by Denise Dilanni; Paula S. Apsell, executive producer and director of the WGBH Science Unit.

"Nova" that her statements were "totally false." In the letter, which was faxed to The Times, he added, "It seems to me that she is a person who has been traumatized." He summed up the program as "irresponsible scientific journalism.")

This offering from "Nova" makes a companion piece to the memorable "Frontline" reports of how so-called repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse have been elicited or produced under pressure. Elizabeth Loftus, a psychologist who won attention with her debunking of that business, also weighs in against the Budd-Mack line of work. She tells of experiments that show how easy it is to implant false memories by the force of suggestion. Watching a videotape of Mr. Budd urging on the 4-year-old boy, she says she can see "the creation of a false memory of being abducted"; and you can, too.

(I received a letter from Mr. Budd that charges, among other things, that this scene was "edited" to make it appear he was leading the boy. He writes that the program "systematically and outrageously distorted" his activities and omitted physical evidence of U.F.O. experiences.)

The hour ends with a cautionary note from the astronomer Carl Sagan, who is placed by Mr. Budd's rebuttal letter among "hostile authority figures with little or no acquaintance with the data." What worries him most, Mr. Sagan comments, is "the absence of skeptical thinking" by both the so-called abductees and their intermediaries.