

MUSEUM MILE



BUZZ

Close Encounter on Fifth Avenue

THE SETTING There were no U.F.O. sightings at a forum last Tuesday evening on alien abductions, but universes were definitely colliding.

The marble hall at the New York Academy of Medicine at Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street, usually a place for medical seminars and scientific lectures, drew the usual pensive academics and dignified doctors.

But they were joined by wild-eyed sky watchers wearing flying saucer pendants, and eager to meet their guru, Dr. John E. Mack, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Mack treats people who say they have been abducted by aliens, and he tends to believe their claims.

THE BUZZ As it happened, Dr. Mack's own spotlight was abducted by an alien of sorts: Dan Ackroyd, who played one of the Coneheads, the space alien family on "Saturday Night Live" during the 1980's.

Mr. Ackroyd, an unannounced guest, was sitting inconspicuously in the second row wearing sneakers, jeans, a blue vest and a baseball cap. When Dr. Mack finished speaking, the actor shot out of his seat and asked the crowd if they would welcome or resist an alien visit. (Mr. Ackroyd admitted later that his own decision "would probably depend on the amount of pain involved.")

Dr. Mack, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1977 for his biography of Lawrence of Arabia, has written several books supporting patients' abduction theories. In 1995, Harvard warned Dr. Mack not to let his alien studies detract from his other work.

Last week, he signed copies of his new book about abductions, "Passport to the Cosmos" (Crown, \$24).

As he began to speak, the auditorium lights kept dimming. "This always happens when you deal with this subject," he said.

He called abductions "an outreach program from the cosmos to the consciously impaired" and assured abductees that cosmic kidnappings lead to spiritual growth.

Several "experiencers" testified about their abductions. One speaker was Francine Schlanger, a writer from Manhattan, whose electric blue shirt matched her Louis Vuit-



Miles Ladin for The New York Times

A former Conehead, right, came to hear Dr. John E. Mack's talk on aliens.

ton handbag. She said aliens had told her to attend the forum and to urge everyone to work to "bury all hatred on the planet with the ashes of all its wars."

Alan R. White, a composer from the West Side, said he was recently floated by aliens from his bed through his closed bedroom window and into a spaceship. After taking a sample of his sperm, the aliens returned him to his apartment. He also said that his rent has been \$99.94 a month since 1968, when his landlord was possessed by aliens to sign a agreement with him.

After the event, Mr. Ackroyd, an avid student of alien encounter theory, said he had never recalled seeing any saucers, not while making "Ghostbusters," not even with John Belushi.

"We drove cross-country many times together, but we never saw anything," he said. "And we were looking."

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