

Extraordinary look at UFO experiences

By Melissa Moy 12/4/99
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Dr. John E. Mack is not interested in proving or disproving alien abductions. Instead, he says he believes in his research and the patients he's worked with.

His patients who talked about alien encounters "sounded like not-disturbed people telling the truth," said the Harvard medical professor, who founded the Cambridge Hospital psychiatric department.

Mack spoke to about 50 people Friday at a luncheon sponsored by The Friday Lunch, an informal group.

In 1994, Mack shook the scientific community when he concluded that tales of alien abduction were factual. He wrote "Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens," which details the results of his research with clients who reported having encountered aliens.

Mack, a founding director of PEER, the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research, said he survived at Harvard because of his clinical approach.

What the patients were saying, "it seems to be true," Mack said. "They talked about what happened to them. It may not have been physical, but that it is real (to them) in some profound way."

Mack's new book, "Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters," draws on his additional research and asserts that the phenomenon of alien encounters is part of a new era in human consciousness.

There are three ways to approach extraordinary experiences, Mack said.

■ Clinical studies can be done to study the behavior and physical condition of "people who are suffering and need help."

■ Scientists could "try to prove the physical reality of abductions" through documentation and tests.

■ People could make attempts to understand the "philosophical implications" of these experiences.



Mack

WEB SITE

To learn more about the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research, visit www.peer-mack.org. Contact the Friday Lunch at megan@sergiolub.com.

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— Sergio Lub,
Martinez businessman

Mack said it was crucial to rely on human experience, to legitimize witnesses with extraordinary experiences and to educate the public about such experiences.

Mack's message was well-received. Those who attended were counselors and therapists; environmental activists; scientists and researchers. Others were interested in holistic studies and healing. Some were just plain UFO fans.

A few shared their own experiences.

"It takes a lot of courage to leave the box of common reality," said Sergio Lub, the Martinez businessman who hosted the meeting. He praised Mack for his determination and research.

David Goldberg said he was impressed by Mack's courage to publish his research. "He made no attempts to justify or defend the material (in his first book)," said Goldberg, a former dean at John F. Kennedy University in Orinda. "The material itself is far out and very challenging."

Goldberg said he was looking forward to the new book.

"Anytime people can get together to discuss these issues is great," said Abigail Lewis of the San Francisco-based International Space Sciences Organization.

Mack's first book "caused a spiritual awakening in my life, that there's a larger reality," Lewis said.