

JOHN MACK, ALIEN ABDUCTION RESEARCHER, DIES

BOSTON – Dr. John E. Mack, the Harvard Medical School professor of psychiatry who won a Pulitzer Prize for his biography of Lawrence of Arabia and also conducted research on people who claimed to be abducted by aliens, has died. Mack was struck and killed by an alleged drunken driver in London on Monday while attending the T.E. Lawrence Society Symposium in Oxford, England, according to a release on the John E. Mack Institute Web site. He was 74. Harvard Medical School spokesman Don Gibbons confirmed the death. Mack, who won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1977 for "A Prince of Our Disorder" on the life of World War I British officer T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, was one of several speakers at the symposium. Mack made two presentations at the symposium on Monday, and was struck in a crosswalk while walking to the home at which he was staying, according to police. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Mack's extensive research of about 200 people from around the world who claimed to have had encounters with space aliens found that they had a heightened sense of spirituality and environmentalism. He wrote about his subjects' experiences in two books, 1994's "Abduction" and 1999's "Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters." His work was also the subject of the 2003 documentary film "Touched."

His efforts, which found that people claiming to be abducted came from all walks of life and generally had no evidence of mental illness, met with skepticism and criticism from some elements of the academic community. In 1994, Harvard Medical School established a committee of peers to review his clinical care and clinical investigation of the people he interviewed in the course of his alien abduction research and initiated proceedings to determine whether he should retain tenure. After the 14-month investigation, the school "reaffirmed Dr. Mack's academic freedom to study what he wishes and to state his opinions without impediment." "I am just so devastated by this news," said Roderick MacLeish, the attorney who represented Mack during the Harvard investigation. "This is a great loss. John was one of the kindest, most compassionate mental health clinicians I have ever met, and I have represented many psychiatrists." Mack's early work focused on clinical explorations of dreams, nightmares and teen suicide and how world perception affects relationships. He advocated a move away from materialism in Western culture, blaming it for the Cold War and global ecological problems. "He was so caring to his patients, and I hope that is what he is remembered for, and not for being the guy who believed in people's stories of alien abductions," MacLeish said. Mack was born in New York City. He earned an undergraduate degree from Oberlin College in 1951 and his medical degree from Harvard Medical School in 1955. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1959-61. No funeral or burial information was immediately available. [AP] 28 Sept 2004. Steve Scanlon [Z-176]