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Pulitzer winner is killed in accident

By Mark Feeney
GLOBE STAFF

John E. Mack, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Harvard Medical School professor whose research on purported extraterrestrial abductions generated widespread publicity and controversy, died Monday in an automobile accident in London. He was 74.

According to Will Bueche, of the John E. Mack Institute in Cambridge, Dr. Mack had been attending a conference in England on T.E. Lawrence. Lawrence is the



JOHN E. MACK
1977 winner

subject of his psychoanalytic account, "A Prince of Our Disorder: The Life of T.E. Lawrence," which won the 1977 Pulitzer Prize for biography. Dr. Mack was struck by a car while crossing the street. London police pronounced him dead on the scene.

"He was a restless, highly creative man who was many-sided," said Robert Mack, Page B4

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ROBERT JAY
LIFTON

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Jay Lifton, the psychiatrist and author, who was a longtime friend of Dr. Mack's. They worked together in the antinuclear movement, a longstanding concern of Dr. Mack's, and in the application of psychological approaches to the study of history.

"He was as sensitive to others' needs as anyone I've known," Lifton said in a telephone interview from his Cape Cod home.

A Cambridge resident, Dr. Mack founded the psychiatric department of Cambridge Hospital. He was certified as a practitioner of both child and adult psychoanalysis. His early research interests in psychology included dreams, nightmares, and teenage suicide.

In 1990, Dr. Mack began his research on people who say they have encountered extraterrestrials. He held that such encounters were real, though probably more spiritual than physical in character. His work drew widespread attention in 1994 with the publication of a best-selling book, "Abduction."

That year, Harvard Medical School appointed a special faculty committee to review Dr. Mack's clinical care and clinical investigation of his subjects. After a 15-

month process, the committee declined to take any action against him.

Dr. Mack eventually interviewed some 200 individuals who said they had encounters with extraterrestrials. Although he was subjected to widespread ridicule because of his work, Dr. Mack saw it as a unique opportunity to study spiritual or transformational experience, a theme that ran through much of his earlier work.

"No one has been able to come up with a counter-formulation that explains what's going on," Dr. Mack said in a 1992 Globe interview in which he discussed his view of alien encounters. "But if people can't be convinced that this is real, that's OK. All I want is for people to be convinced that there's something going on here that is not explainable."

He published another book on the subject, "Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters," in 1999.

John Edward Mack was born on Oct. 4, 1929, in New York. His parents were Edward C. Mack and Ruth (Prince) Mack. He earned his bachelor's degree from Oberlin College in 1951 and his medical degree from Harvard in 1955. He was also a graduate of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.

Dr. Mack interned at Massachusetts General Hospital and did his residency at Massachusetts Mental Health Center. He served in the US Air Force from 1959 through 1961, rising to the rank of captain.

Joining the Harvard Medical School faculty in 1964, Dr. Mack became professor of psychiatry in 1972. In 1983, he founded the Center for Psychology and Social Change, which this year became the Mack Center.

Dr. Mack published about 150 scholarly articles. Among the 11 books he wrote or collaborated on are "Nightmares and Human Conflict" (1970) and, with Holly Hickler, "Vivienne: The Life and Suicide of an Adolescent Girl" (1981).

In a 1994 Globe interview, Dr. Mack said, "I have this innocent confidence that if you do your work in a comprehensive and objective way, it stands on its own."

Dr. Mack and his wife, Sally (Stahl) Mack, divorced in 1995. He leaves a sister, Mary Lee Ingbar of Brookline; three sons, Daniel of Boulder, Colo., Kenneth of Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Tony, of Cambridge; and two grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were incomplete.