

FILE: UF02375

Nightmares or real? Some out-of-this-world stories of alien
 abductions
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She felt paralyzed. She heard clicking noises, like an X-ray machine. Suddenly she was lying on a table. A bright light shone in her eyes. She sensed people moving around, examining her. Then she was sitting up, facing a short creature so hideous she could not look at its face. From a box the strange being removed a shiny needle. At the tip was a silver marble. The creature moved closer toward Lea.

Lea now believes it wasn't just a nightmare. She believes it was real. She is one of the people whose stories you might expect to see in a supermarket tabloid under the heading "Humans Who Believe They've Been Abducted by Aliens."

"I used to think I belonged in a mental institution, to be honest with you," she says. "But I don't think anymore that I'm crazy. I go to school. I work full time. I pay my bills like anybody else. . . . I think other people think I'm crazy."

The subject is also deeply disturbing. These are not pleasant stories of people out raking leaves suddenly beamed into a UFO, subjected to a little cosmos comedy and sent back to their yards chuckling.

These are chilling accounts of people who say they've been kidnapped, confined in spaceship examination rooms, probed, prodded and examined by aliens who seem primarily interested in sexually related activities. Their stories more resemble reports of rape than they do a heartwarming visit by "E.T."

Around these alien abduction stories, an industry has been launched. It soars far beyond the tabloids. There are best-selling books, popular films and prime-time television shows. Mental-health professionals gathered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last summer for a conference on abductions. In Maryland and across the country have blossomed support groups, where people who believe they've been abducted can share their stories -- away from the ears of those who might mock, exploit or be titillated by their anguish. And, of course, there are the scientists -- from the internationally known astronomer Carl Sagan to a Navy physicist from Maryland -- and a plethora of researchers, lining up on either side of the highly charged issue.

What's really happening? No one knows for sure. But one thing is clear: Something has shattered Lea's and others' calm, secure existence on planet Earth. Whether the rest of us accept or reject their stories is irrelevant. We cannot assuage their fear: It is palpable. The torment is real.

Lea's began while she was in the fourth grade. She remembers clearly:

She was outside her apartment in Prince George's County playing with her sister and other children. It was dusk. They heard a hum, or a buzz, like a swarm of bees. They saw a disklike object -- wingless, silver-gray, a row of lights along the edge -- creep at treetop level over the apartment complex. It hovered above a parking lot between buildings, and then drifted away.

Lea and her sister ran inside to tell their parents. The girls even drew pictures.

"My father wanted to call somebody," Lea says. "But my mother said no, we'd made it up. But all of us saw it. We talked about it for days at school."

Shortly after that, Lea says, the recurring nightmare began. She dreamed it on and off for a decade, from when she was 10 until about 20.

Dreams are only part of her story. When she was 12 or 13, she and her sister, who is two years younger, were staying at their grandparents' house in St. Mary's County. They were in separate beds in the same room when a ball of lightning, as Lea describes it, passed through a window and curtain into the room.

About the size of a tennis ball, it glided between the beds, bounced off a door and vanished. A couple of seconds later another lightning ball did the same thing, and then another. Lea says there might have been 20 in all.

She and her sister screamed. Five other people were in the house, but no one heard them. Lea finally escaped into the hallway. Her next memory is of waking up in bed the next morning.

None of this made sense. She says her sister remembers the

balls of light, as well as the UFO over their apartment building years before. But her sister, Lea says, won't talk about it with strangers.

For a long time afterward, Lea feared she was losing her mind. But then, five years ago, she and a friend were at a mall outside a bookstore. Lea spotted a display of books, the covers of which featured a drawing of a grotesque creature with big, black, almond-shaped eyes.

The book was "Communion," the writer Whitley Strieber's account of his abductions by aliens. Lea pointed at the drawing and screamed: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! That's them! That's them!"

They were the creatures in her nightmare.

"That's when it registered," Lea says. "That's when I said: 'Wait a minute. Something's going on here.' "

It was the first she had heard of abductions by space creatures. She read the book, and then a couple of others on the subject. She became convinced that the terrifying events -- the nightmares, the night of the lights, perhaps other unexplained events as well -- had been abductions.

Lea's not alone.

Some researchers estimate that thousands -- if not millions -- of humans have been abducted and studied by aliens. They base that estimate on a 1991 survey of 5,947 Americans by the Roper polling organization. The survey was commissioned by believers in the abduction phenomenon.

The survey asked 11 questions, including: Have you ever woke up paralyzed and sensing a strange presence in the room? Have you ever "lost" an hour or more you can't account for? Have you ever felt as if you were flying? Have you ever seen balls of light in your room? Have you ever found scars on your body you could not explain?

Two percent of the respondents answered yes to at least four of those questions. From these results, the poll sponsors concluded that 2 percent of adult Americans may have been abducted by aliens. David M. Jacobs was a sponsor of the poll. The author of "The UFO Controversy in America," published in 1975, is an associate professor of history at Temple University. In recent years he interviewed 60 people who believe they've been abducted, and last year his book about them, "Secret Life," was published. From his office in Philadelphia, Mr. Jacobs says:

"This subject is as far-out as it gets. It just seems too crazy, too out of the question. The skeptics say: 'This could not be happening; therefore it is not happening.' But you have to go where the evidence takes you, even though kicking and screaming while en route."

Evidence? Budd Hopkins, another of the poll sponsors, says he has interviewed witnesses and has found physical evidence, such as unexplained body scars and mysterious burn marks on lawns where spaceships may have landed. But primarily, he and other researchers rely on the abduction stories -- stories told by people of different races, all ages, both sexes; police officers,

psychiatrists, scientists, lawyers, entertainers, nurses, journalists, farmers, an Army colonel, a golf pro.

Mr. Hopkins, who is a painter and sculptor in New York City, became interested in aliens after seeing a UFO in 1964. Eleven years later, a 72-year-old friend told him of watching a spaceship land in a New York park, and of watching about 10 alien passengers take soil samples. Mr. Hopkins found others willing to tell their stories, and since the mid-1970s he has been at the forefront of abduction research. He has studied more than 400 cases and written two popular books, "Missing Time" and "Intruders," from his interviews with people who claim, sometimes while under hypnosis, to have been abducted.

"The overall patterns in these cases are so remarkably consistent, often down to tiny details, and people reporting these experiences are often so inherently credible that the phenomenon simply cannot be dismissed," he wrote in "Intruders."

Most abductees report being taken first as children, when a small implant, which could be remembered as a marble at the tip of a needle, is placed deep into the ear or nose, the researchers say. The implant's function is unknown, but these researchers say it might serve as a locator so the person can be abducted again later. The aliens described in the stories are small, no more than 4 feet tall, and extremely thin. They are light-colored, often gray. Their heads are oversized, yet their mouths and noses are tiny; they have no ears or hair. Their eyes are large and black.

Nearly all the stories involve spaceships parked on the ground or floating in the air. The victims are examined in a room resembling a hospital operating room. The methodical creatures use a variety of devices to examine humans from head to toe, occasionally leaving scars. But the aliens, it seems, reserve special interest for the human sexual organs.

Here is where the story, if it hasn't already, "will almost certainly strain your credulity to the breaking point," Mr. Hopkins wrote in "Intruders."

Through interviews with people who report abduction stories, Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Jacobs came to believe that these aliens are -- and have been for several decades -- conducting some sort of breeding experiment with human beings.

This involves the taking of sperm and egg samples; the implanting of a genetically altered embryo into women; the extraction of the fetus; and, finally, the external incubation of the fetus. Women have sometimes reported they were presented hybrid babies and expected to nurture, even breast-feed, them.

"It's very hard to think of this as some wonderful, new adventure," Mr. Hopkins says.

Maybe an extraterrestrial species is introducing a desirable human characteristic into its own evolutionary cycle, say the researchers. Maybe it is reducing the difference between its species and ours. Maybe it is seeding another planet, or maybe it has a plan completely beyond the comprehension and imagination of the human brain.

Yeah, right, say the skeptics.

The astronomer Carl Sagan says that he is open-minded to the prospect of intelligent beings living in space, but he doesn't believe they're sneaking into bedrooms and tormenting Earthlings. "Tell me," he says, "which is more plausible: We're victims of a massive invasion of alien sexual abusers, or people are seeing things that just aren't there?"

Although abduction claims began surfacing nearly half a century ago, not one shred of indisputable physical evidence has surfaced, says Mr. Sagan, who recently wrote an article for Parade magazine debunking those claims.

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," he says. "Somebody telling a story is not evidence, even many people telling the same story isn't good enough. They're people, that's the point, and people intrinsically have certain fallibilities." Abduction accounts may say something about how the brain works, or how people can be deluded, or even how religions begin, he says from his office at Cornell University. But they say nothing, he says, about skinny, large-eyed aliens kidnapping humans. "There's a better chance of your getting hit on the head by one of Santa's reindeer than of you being abducted," says Philip J. Klass, a retired senior editor and now contributing editor at Aviation Week & Space Technology magazine. "I will say, slightly tongue-in-cheek, there is better evidence of the existence of mermaids and Irish leprechauns."

Mr. Klass, who lives in Washington, says he has tried to verify UFO cases for nearly 30 years and has not found a credible one. In his 1989 book, "UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game," Mr. Klass contended that people who believe they've been abducted by aliens need treatment by qualified psychotherapists, not UFO "cult gurus."

Robert A. Baker, a retired professor of psychology at the University of Kentucky, has written derisively about abduction stories. He says some are simply fabrications or the recounting of stories gleaned from books or movies, while others are products of psychological disorders.

The stories may be repressed memories of childhood sexual or physical abuse surfacing in disguised form, he says. Or they may be the type of vivid, realistic dreams occurring as a person falls asleep or wakes up -- hypnagogic or hypnopompic hallucinations. And, he says, some people who believe they've been abducted may be fantasy-prone or psychologically disturbed.

"Anyway," Dr. Baker says, "if this phenomena were as common as Hopkins and Jacobs would have us believe, the sky would be filled with spacecraft abducting people back and forth. UFOs would be stacked up like aircraft coming in at O'Hare."

The believers and skeptics counter each other point by point. Both sides publish newsletters buttressing their claims. And both produce mental-health specialists who pronounce judgment on the sanity of the victims.

But in the end, what are we left with? The stories.

Lea started out thinking she was dreaming or hallucinating. After coming to believe she had been abducted, she contacted a representative of the Mutual UFO Network, an international group interested in UFOs. She was referred to Bob Oechsler, a former National Aeronautics and Space Administration mission specialist who lives in Edgewater in Anne Arundel County.

Mr. Oechsler, who became interested in UFOs as a boy, is intrigued with the technology of crafts from outer space: How do they get here from there? For the past two years he has researched UFO sightings full time. On his front door is a brass plaque that reads: UFOs are real!!!

He invited Lea to his home. After a couple of meetings he suggested she undergo hypnosis. Some abductees remember only snippets of their experience, but find they can recall more during hypnosis. A psychologist hypnotized Lea at Mr. Oechsler's home, but Lea says few hidden memories emerged.

Mr. Oechsler is starting a support group for abductees, one of dozens forming across the country, he says. About 30 people, including Lea, have signed up.

Bruce S. Maccabee, a research physicist for the Navy, will also attend. The Frederick County resident has researched UFOs on his own for years, and is a longtime leader in UFO research groups, one of which, the Fund for UFO Research, in Mount Rainier, Md., sponsored the abduction conference at MIT.

At the organizational meeting of Mr. Oechsler's support group, Dr. Maccabee told the participants:

"This subject is so weird, so misunderstood. All we can do is hold your hand and make you realize you're not alone."

That would be a relief to Lea.

Strange things continue to happen to her. Not long ago, she says, while visiting friends in the West Virginia mountains, she was floated out of the house, taken aboard a spaceship and handed a baby.

It was a boy, with leathery skin, a thin neck and an oversized head with patches of red hair. It had huge eyes, she says, but they weren't coal black like those of the adult aliens. They were blue.

"I don't know why, and I know this sounds strange," Lea says in a voice trembling with emotion, "but as soon as I held him in my arms, I knew he was mine. I felt like I was his mother."

She rocked him and talked quietly to him, she says, as several aliens watched. Lea hesitates and says, almost apologetically: "I know this doesn't make any sense."

Even though she has trouble sleeping and often feels as if she's being watched, she says she has "kind of gotten used to the idea" of being abducted.

"I don't like it, but there's nothing I can do about it, as far as I can see," she says. "If they were going to hurt me, I think they would have done it a long time ago."

She knows what the skeptics say. But, she says, they don't give people enough credit for knowing the difference between what's actually happened to them and what they might have imagined. Lea

says she was never abused as a child. She says she has no reason to make up a story so crazy and bizarre.

Why does she think the aliens chose her?

"I have no idea," she says. "I don't know who they are, where they come from, what they're doing, nothing.

"I just want people to understand that this is real, this is happening. It's out there, and you're going to have to accept it sooner or later."

Is she absolutely sure that her torment has been caused by aliens?

"There's no doubt in my mind," she says. "And I know they'll be back."

* THE U.F.O. BBS - <http://www.ufobbs.com/ufo> *

SUBJECT: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE CHILLING KIND

FILE: UFO2377

PART 3

BY OMNI

Psychiatrists and psychologists
with advanced degrees are investigating the
mysterious
realm of kundalini, UFOs and ghosts.

Tell us about it. Terrorized by little gray creatures with large black eyes who whisk you away from your bedroom at night? Plagued by poltergeists rattling the bookshelf and hurling pictures from the wall? Haunted by the ghost of a loved one, say, or precognitive dreams that turn suddenly real? Whatever the nature of your encounter with the unknown, you may have been left physically drained or emotionally scarred. Chances are, you've confided in no one, fearful friends and relatives would consider you insane. So where do you turn?

Actually, you have some options. You might, for instance, place your trust in someone who makes a business out of the unknown. you saw the

movie; you know the tune. Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters! If it's psychic troubles you've had, you call a parapsychologist. And when it comes to possessions and visions and such, there's always the minister, rabbi, or parish priest. On the plus side, you can be fairly confident these people will believe you. On the other hand, if your trouble is even partially psychological, how much help would they be?

That's where mainstream psychologists and psychiatrists come in. If you're hallucinating, they might have a treatment or cure. But don't expect them to believe you. They'll dismiss your story as a raving fantasy, and if you can't shake the episode, you may end up diagnosed with schizophrenia and on antipsychotic drugs.

Not what you had in mind? Then consider your third option: the new breed of mental-health professional now contending that such otherworldly experiences are legitimate and commonplace among the sane. That's not to say they accept the reality of alien abductors or precognition or ghosts - though much to the horror of their colleagues, a few of them have. But what many of these therapists have come to believe over the past five years is that such experiences - regardless of their cause - are common among normal, healthy people, and that those who find themselves traumatized by such episodes are just as deserving of psychological ministrations as those who suffer anxiety, depression, or the trauma that follows a plane crash or a rape.

To signal the birth of this new discipline, some dedicated professionals have even formed a group known as TREAT, for clinicians and physical and behavioral scientists interested in the Treatment and Research of Experienced Anomalous Trauma. TREAT, which holds a conference each spring, deals with everything from reports of UFO abduction and precognition to near-death episodes, satanic possession, and alleged contact with the dead. Another favorite TREAT area is kundalini - often perceived as a burning, vibrating, or electrifying sensation associated with meditation or any other heavy duty spiritual

chore.

By all indicators, TREAT is a movement whose time has come. Indeed, every national poll on the paranormal confirms just how widespread such experiences are. A 1992 survey by the Roper Organization, for instance, suggests that 2 percent of the population, or 1 of every 50 adult Americans, exhibits the symptoms that sometimes mask a UFO abduction experience. A 1987 study conducted by Andrew Greeley and colleagues at the University of Chicago showed that 42 percent of American adults reported contact with the dead, 67 percent claimed ESP experiences, and 31 percent reported clairvoyance. And a 1981 Gallup poll showed that an extraordinary 15 percent of all people revived from the cusp of death reported the spectacle of the near-death experience in which they glimpsed such generic signposts as beckoning loved ones or a tunnel of light.

One must not, of course, mistake these experiences for proof of their reality. "Truth should not be defined by what people believe," warns Harold Goldstein, a psychologist in the division of epidemiology and services research branch of the National Institutes of Mental Health. "Facts are facts. Now it may turn out that there are aliens and such things, but there needs to be evidence for it, and belief is not evidence."

Then again, say the professionals on the frontier of the new psychology, beliefs should not be dismissed. "Paranormal experiences are so common in the general population," psychiatrists Colin Ross of Dallas and Shaun Joshi of Winnipeg, Canada, said in a recent issue of the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, "that no theory of normal psychology or psychopathology which does not take them into account can be comprehensive." Such experiences, they say, could be studied scientifically, "in the same way as anxiety, depression, or any other set of experiences" without making "any decision as to whether some, all, or none of them are objectively real."

That may sound good in theory, but some observers wonder whether it's really possible in practice. Therapists, it turns out, are no more immune to the potent lure of the unknown than any one else. Unwary specialists of the human mind may, in fact, be particularly prone to accepting the reality of their patient's fascinating tales. And enchantment can lead to obsession. The psychoanalyst Robert Lindner admitted as much in 1955 after coming under the spell of a patient who provided detailed accounts of visits into the future reality of another planet. To help the patient, Lindner studied the mass of written records Kirk had prepared, noted the inconsistencies, and confronted him with the errors. That effort forced cracks in the fantasy and led, eventually, to Kirk's recovery. But Lindner, meanwhile, became so absorbed in the story that he had difficulty extricating himself from its grip. In his classic book, *The Fifty-Minute Hour*, he admits to skirting "the edges of the abyss." Now, some 35 years later, the latest mental-health professionals to flirt with UFO abduction, the near-death experience, and psychic phenomena face this danger as well.

One mental-health worker to dive headlong into the dark pit of the unknown in recent years is psychiatrist Rima Laibow. Her sprawling office in the upscale Westchester County town of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, is ringed with the big fluffy pillows she uses in holding therapy, originally designed to repair early attachment deficits in autistic children but now used with other serious childhood and adult problems as well. Dressed in blue slacks and a blouse, her frizzy hair tossed to one side, Laibow recalls her first professional journey through the looking glass. "It was 1988," she explains, "and a patient whom I had known for many years came to me in a state of anxiety and panic because, out of the corner of her eye, she had caught sight of the cover of *Communion*."

The patient, a 43-year-old cardiologist, had never read this 1987

best-seller by horror novelist Whitley Strieber, didn't know that it concerned alleged encounters with UFO entities, and had never been interested in the subject of alien abduction at all. Despite all this, after glimpsing the cover of Communion, she claimed terrifying memory fragments of encounters with creatures like those on the book's cover.

"Such notions had always struck me as psychotic," Laibow explains, "but this patient taught me otherwise." Convinced that her patient showed no sign of major psychopathology, in fact, Laibow came up with a different diagnosis for the sudden breakdown the cardiologist experienced following recall of an alleged alien encounter: posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

According to the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, PTSD is a stress reaction triggered by various external events "outside the range of usual human experience." Triggering events, the American Psychiatric Association's manual goes on to say, include such atrocities as rape, war, and natural disasters like earthquakes or floods, which are "usually experienced with intense fear, terror, and helplessness." In fact, Laibow's patient met all the criteria for PTSD but one. "There had been no known trauma," recalls Laibow, "so I thought, how could she have PTSD when we all know there couldn't possibly be an external event like an alien abduction could there?"

Over the weeks that followed, Laibow worked to quell her patient's anxiety and panic. But the doctor herself remained genuinely puzzled. In search of answers, she read all the literature she could find on reported alien abductions and spoke to the primary investigators in the field: New York artist Budd Hopkins, who had written two books on the topic, and Temple University historian David Jacobs, who, like Hopkins, had become a kind of folk guru and de-facto therapist for UFO abduction victims.

"What I found," Laibow states, "left me both impressed and appalled."

She was impressed, she says, because "there's a substantial body of data suggesting that under some circumstances, at some times, for some reason, there are things in the atmosphere we call UFOs that appear to have external physical reality." But she was appalled because from her "sad and shocking experience, UFOlogy as it exists today is little more than a collection of belief systems vying for dominance. The field is plagued by the notion that just collecting neat stuff is the same as doing research. If I were the National Science Foundation, I wouldn't fund this research, either."

Hoping to change all that, Laibow began by giving UFO abduction and the whole gamut of experience with unexplained phenomena a new, more respectable name. "Experienced anomalous trauma," she called it, so that "professionals, who would otherwise stop listening because you've mentioned UFOs, parapsychology, and other weird things would now stop and process those three words in relation to each other and ask, 'Like what?' "

The strategy worked. In fact, with the name experienced anomalous trauma as a draw, Laibow found dozens of psychiatrists and Ph.D. psychologists intrigued by her ideas. To take advantage of the momentum, she formed an umbrella organization for the Treatment and Research of Experienced Anomalous Trauma, or TREAT, and held the group's first meeting in May 1989.

TREAT quickly attracted some big guns in the mental-health community. One was John Wilson. A professor of psychology at Cleveland State University, Wilson is one of the pioneers in the field of posttraumatic stress disorder. He helped both to coin the term and to formulate a definition of the disorder as far back as 1980. In the past two decades, Wilson has listened patiently to more than 10,000 people traumatized by some major life event and has conducted major studies of PTSD in Vietnam combat veterans and victims of toxic exposure.

Wilson's own curiosity with the unknown dates back to childhood, when

a neighbor of his worked for Project Blue Book, the notorious Air Force effort responsible for investigating UFOs. When the abduction phenomenon emerged, he began to wonder what symptoms the alleged victims would report. "The most obvious answer," he says, "is that they would have PTSD."

According to Wilson, in fact, those who report memories of UFO abduction find themselves in the same sort of psychologically stressful dilemma as those who have been exposed to invisible toxic contaminants such as hydrogen sulfide. "They aren't sure about it," he explains, "not sure anybody is going to believe them, don't know how to stop it, and don't know how long it has gone on. But the big difference is that those claiming a UFO abduction don't even know if it occurred for sure. If you've been exposed to a toxic chemical, you can usually have a toxicologist come and study your house, and they'll say, yeah, it's there, or it's not. But someone who's had a UFO abduction experience can't point to the flying saucer or the little gray guy with the almond-shaped eyes. That puts them in a really psychologically ensnaring position." In fact, Wilson places UFO abductions and exposure to invisible toxic contaminants in the same general category of traumatic experiences as childhood sexual abuse and psychological torture, calling them examples of "hidden events" that may lead to PTSD but which often can't be proven real.

Wilson isn't surprised by his colleagues' slow reception to anomalous trauma. "Fifty years ago, mental-health professionals didn't believe in childhood abuse," Wilson notes. "When kids or adults would report incest experiences, sexual molestation, or rape and went to see a mental-health professional, they were told, 'That's a fantasy; that doesn't happen; it can't be real.'" It wasn't until the Sixties that the American College of Pediatrics even did a study to find out what was going on. And then, voila, it was out of the closet, and today we have hard data on childhood sexual abuse. There is a parallel here to anomalous experience; whether it's UFO abduction or demon possession, our culture says no."

But as far as Wilson is concerned, the cultural disbelief system will change as anomalous trauma becomes a diagnostic subcategory of PTSD. "American culture is on the leading edge of this material," he says, "and my prediction is that within five to ten years, the idea of experienced anomalous trauma will get the serious consideration it deserves."

Indeed, with Wilson's stamp of approval and Laibow's promotional drive, other psychiatrists and psychologists have begun to come around. One already going that route is kundalini expert Bonnie Greenwell, a California-based psychotherapist and author of *Energies of Transformation*. This "energy phenomenon," as Greenwell calls it, has been described by Hindu mystics and practitioners of Yoga as an "awakening" of spiritual energy that supposedly "sleeps" at the base of the spine. But kundalini awakenings, considered the beginning of the process of enlightenment by masters of the technique, can result in serious psychological disturbance as well.

And that's where Greenwell comes in. Even those seeking the kundalini experience can find it painful, she explains, and for those not expecting it, the experience can be a nightmare. Indeed, those undergoing the kundalini experience don't seem to know what hit them because they are unaware that it might be triggered by anything from a physical trauma or emotional shock to a long-term spiritual practice or dose of LSD. What's more, says Greenwell, the experience may be accompanied by visions and trances, the sensation of leaving the body, and alternating periods of ecstasy and despair, symptoms that could lead to pathological diagnoses by conventional shrinks.

But Western medicine is not alone in its ignorance of kundalini, according to Greenwell. Many spiritual teachers don't have a clue what to do with it, either. "Some teachers will tell them it can't be kundalini or it would feel good," she says. "Others tell these people they're having a breakdown. There are even cases in Buddhist retreats where people have been taken to psychiatric hospitals when they had a kundalini opening. Many people who teach yoga or meditation are not

developed to the extent that they have gone through this process themselves. It's very unfortunate, and it's one of the major reasons I started doing what I do."

Greenwell's craft includes helping those troubled by kundalini tap the positive aspects of the phenomenon while discarding the negative as quickly as they can. "Once they understand the process as essentially positive in the long run," Greenwell says, "they are no longer afraid of it and can often work it out quite effectively on their own."

One person Greenwell saw overcome the problems of kundalini was Sarah, born after her father's death in 1918. During childhood, Sarah spent numerous hours communing with her deceased father and as an adult used that same impulse to meditate. Listening to high-frequency sound and visualizing the inside of her body, Sarah began feeling waves of kundalini along with terrifying visions: In one, she was cut up piece by piece, and in another, her body was invaded by swords. In the end, Sarah managed to control her terrors by expressing the creative energy of kundalini in the form of dreams, dance, movement, and art.

Other clients, Greenwell adds, have been far more distressed by kundalini energy than Sarah. In these severe cases, she notes, "the person struggles to get control of a body which involuntarily forces them into motions or freezes them in action, locks pain into the back and shoulders or into the site of any preexisting injury, and flushes them with intense heat and cold. Such subjects occasionally fall into trance or report that they are leaving their body. They may be blinded by lights upon entering a dark room or feel they're being electrocuted in bed."

Depending upon who these people consult, says Greenwell, they may be diagnosed with any number of disturbances from schizophrenia to grand mal epilepsy. That's just what happened to Cathy, who experienced periods of intense, trancelike states, extreme sensations of cold, and

"unusual energy flows" moving upward from her feet to her hands. Given medication for everything from psychosis to seizures, Cathy finally decided to abandon all conventional treatment and accept her symptoms as "spiritual" in nature, coming from energies beyond. It was this acceptance, Greenwell claims, that resulted in an immediate improvement in Cathy's health and enabled her to give up antiseizure drugs and integrate her experiences in a positive way into her life.

Greenwell probably sees more patients with kundalini problems than therapists on the East coast, perhaps because kundalini is largely a California phenomenon. The high percentage of meditators out West, she concedes, means "you have a lot of people primed for the experiences."

Those who suffer from spiritual traumas, kundalini or otherwise, can also access another West Coast resource the Soquel, California-based Spiritual Emergence Network, or SEN, a telephone referral service (408-464-8261) founded by Christina Grof, who with her husband, Stanislav, pioneered research on the altered state. "We get about 150 calls a month" says Deane Brown, a therapist and the Network's program director. "People call us when something is happening that they don't understand. The volunteers who answer the phone come from a variety of backgrounds and many of them have experienced some critical or frightening period of spiritual emergence of their own. So they can truthfully say to the caller, 'I know what you're going through; I've been there.' What we do, essentially, is listen. That's the greatest gift that we can give to a caller. We don't judge the content of what they say. We respond to the feeling rather than the content. We never diagnose."

After talking to the caller for a while, SEN volunteers provide the name and number of one of the 500 people in the SEN database. These people range from psychiatrists and psychologists who are familiar with the SEN philosophy of "spiritual emergence" to shamans, psychics, healers, or clergy in the troubled caller's area.

"The types of calls seem to go in cycles," notes Brown. "We will often get a lot of the same calls at about the same time from all over. For a while we may get a lot of kundalini calls. Then we may get a lot of psychic opening, including out-of-body experiences, telepathy, and uncanny coincidences. Other callers report possession, psychic attack by demons, and the like."

Despite the common goals of workers like Greenwell and Laibow, however, the TREAT movement has run into some trouble of its own. The reason: Laibow's strong resistance to the pioneering group of workers without professional credentials who aided the spiritually traumatized in the first place, years before it became fashionable for those with degrees. The biggest rift was caused by her refusal to accept artist Budd Hopkins, author of the classic volumes *Missing Time* and *Intruders*, and the individual who brought the plight of UFO abductees to the attention of physicians and the general public when everyone else was ignoring them or calling them insane. Laibow's beef: Hopkins and others had been hypnotizing the alleged abductees to elicit their tales, and they had no business doing so "since their formal training amounted to just about nil." Such "wannabe clinicians," she believes, can be very dangerous, indeed.

Says Laibow, "There's a huge difference in being able to induce a hypnotic trance and being a clinician who knows what to do when you've got a trance, who knows how to not contaminate the material, and who knows how to facilitate recovery rather than cause retraumatization because people can be retraumatized by the unconscious repetition of their material. And what do you do if a UFO investigator does you clinical harm by taking on clinical responsibilities? Where is his malpractice liability, and how are you going to be protected? People who are not willing to take the time and the effort to become clinicians should not be stomping around in the unconscious."

Though many professionals agreed with Laibow's argument, others felt it was unjust to throw out those who had brought the phenomenon to their attention in the first place. As Hopkins himself said, "Where have all the mental-health professionals been all these years while these people were clamoring for help." In fact, the dispute has done little to diminish Hopkins' influence, who continues to bring mental-health professionals into the fold.

One of Hopkins' recruits is Harvard Medical School psychiatrist John Mack, author of the 1977 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Lawrence of Arabia. Though he is the most prominent and respected member of the mental-health profession to take an interest in anomalous experiences in recent years, Mack is not a pretentious man. The photo from a Boston Globe profile shows him standing in a field wearing corduroy slacks and a plaid shirt, his soft gray-green eyes staring calmly at the camera. Unlike most therapists who take an interest in these matters, Mack makes no attempt to hide the fact that he is "open to what these people are telling us."

Mack met Budd Hopkins in January 1990, and was impressed both by the man and the case histories of alleged UFO abductions he had collected over the years. "The stories didn't sound at all like dreams or fantasies to me," says Mack, his voice resonant with authority. "It sounded like something real was happening. And I thought, well, if this is real, what is it? Then Budd asked if I wanted to see some of these people, and I realized I was crossing some kind of line, but I said yes."

Since then, Mack has heard abduction stories from people of all walks of life. "Forty years of psychiatry," he says, "has given me no way to explain what I'm encountering in my interviews and hypnosis sessions of these individuals. Something is going on; something is happening to these people. I'm convinced of it."

In fact, Mack has done as much as TREAT to bring anomalous trauma to center stage in the professional domain. He has spoken freely with the media about his interest and has given talks and participated in private conferences on the subject. Colleagues who hear him speak often raise the issue of whether UFO abduction stories might not be covers for episodes of sexual abuse and incest in childhood. But according to Mack, the reverse has been the case. "There is not a single known case of the thousands that have been investigated where exploring or looking into the abduction story revealed behind it an incest or sexual-abuse history," he says, "but therapists looking for incest stories have come up with UFO abduction memories instead."

Mack understands his colleagues' reluctance to delve into the subject. "It's so shocking to the paradigm of psychology and psychiatry, which tend to look for the source of the experience in the psyches of the people who are affected rather than to acknowledge that something mysterious is happening to these people. The phenomenon is not simply a product of their mental condition but has some kind of objective reality. Whether you call it extraterrestrial or other-dimensional, what it really means is that we may live in a rather different universe from the one Western science has told us we live in.

Mack speaks of vast philosophical implications for this phenomenon and human identity in the cosmos. "There's really a great fear of opening up our world beyond what we know," he says. "But we need to get out of the box we're in and see ourselves in relationship to the universe, and I think this phenomenon could be very important in expanding our sense of ourselves."

Mack's daring views are not shared by all therapists involved in the dark side of the unknown. "If aliens are coming and invading us and abusing us in a very literal sense," argues Toronto psychotherapist David Gotlib, "then it's difficult for me to understand how a

significant portion of those who are taken could find it curious or enlightening. If you compare it to the Holocaust or the Vietnam War or any kind of traumatic event, then sure you can learn to grow through it, but only after a lot of pain and soul searching, and not right away. So it discourages me from subscribing to a literal explanation. It also suggests to me that the phenomenon may be dependent on who's experiencing it as well as on what's happening.

Gotlib has thought a lot about UFOs since 1988 when he began treating a woman who had been turned down by other therapists because she claimed her anxiety was due to an alien abduction. He has now seen 40 such patients and publishes the Bulletin of Anomalous Experience so that his 150 subscribers in the mental-health professions can network and exchange ideas on UFO abduction reports and related phenomena. "I don't expect to solve the puzzle or have the puzzle solved in my lifetime," notes Gotlib. "These kinds of things have been going on for hundreds of years. I think if we start trying to solve the question definitively, then we're chasing our tail. What I'm most concerned about is, how can we help these people?"

Gotlib sees his next patient and 50 minutes later calls back to answer his own questions. "Basically, what we have to do is listen to them without judgement. You let them know that there are a lot of other people who have had these kinds of experiences, that they are not crazy, they are not psychotic, they are not mentally ill, they aren't losing their minds, and this has the effect of empowering them. You talk about the different ways that people understand this experience, and you explore it with them. One patient left saying that his fear had been transformed into curiosity. If I can do that, then I think I've met my therapeutic objective."

It's not a surprise, of course, that Mack, Laibow, and other mental-health professionals championing the anomalous have faced a

growing barrage of criticism both from colleagues and outsiders. Are these therapists, critics wonder, clinging to the myth of their own mental impregnability and being drawn into the abyss by the magnetic pull of their patients' experiences?

"One needs to monitor one's own reaction to what it is that goes on," cautions NIMH psychologist Harold Goldstein. "You can be sympathetic, you can be empathic, you can be understanding, but your goal as a therapist is not to leap into the same pit as the patient, but to be there to help pull someone out. I think that when physicians or psychologists endorse these things, or appear to endorse them, we do real damage to issues of rationality and realistic evidence. When we reach a point that what's true is what people believe, then we've sunk to a very dangerous situation. "

Bill Ellis, a researcher in contemporary legends at Pennsylvania State University in Hazleton applauds mental-health professionals for coming to grips with anomalous experiences, but, like Goldstein, thinks a little more objectivity is in order. "I think we forget therapists can communicate through body language what they want from their patients," he says. "It's the clever Hans phenomenon. It's like the horse that could come up with the square root of 360, but what it had really learned to do was keep pawing the ground until its trainer relaxed. The trainer was not doing it deliberately. The trainer was convinced that the horse could add and subtract and do square roots. But eventually, somebody who was smart enough to figure out what was going on stopped watching the horse and started watching the trainer. I think we should have more people watching the therapists."

Doing just that is Robert Baker, a retired professor of psychology who taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Kentucky. And Baker doesn't like what he sees. "I hope we can do something about this nonsense, because it's getting to the point where it's almost a national panic disorder," he says. "We have to do

something about therapists who really don't know what they're doing. The therapists who commit themselves to this nonsense are not aware of major areas of human behavior and just do not understand the way the human nervous system works."

One thing that fools therapists, says Baker, is cryptoamnesia, a series of false memories that form a fantasy with a few minor elements of truth thrown in. "The fact is, we do not remember things exactly," he explains. "We change, arrange, and distort the memories we have stored to better serve our needs and desires. We fill the gaps in memory with events that never happened or with events that did not happen the way we imagine, and the results can be bizarre."

The other major cause of the wild stories people tell, according to Baker, is sleep paralysis, a sleep disorder accompanied by hallucinations that affects about 5 percent of the population. In sleep paralysis, Baker explains, "people wake up in the middle of the night and can't move. They feel like they're wide awake, but they continue dreaming and in the dreams often see such things as demons, aliens, or ghosts. Since they're partly awake, however, they may think the dream really happened when, in fact, it didn't. It's no wonder that people find this terrifying, and that's what's responsible for the posttraumatic stress disorder that therapists are talking about."

But Baker has no explanation for the wild stories told by the therapists themselves, unless, he notes, they're "simply seeking attention." Laibow, for instance, claims to have personally experienced anomalous "healing," an event she says cannot be explained by conventional medical science. As Laibow recalls, it was a muggy day in August 1991 when she "trucked on down to Brooklyn to an unairconditioned high-school auditorium filled with lots of Polish and Russian emigres. "She sat for three hours, she says, watching Kiev-based psychiatrist and self-proclaimed healer Anatoly Kashperovsky dance to New Age Gypsy music and thought, "What's a nice girl like me doing in a place like this?"

Anyway, there was Laibow, watching Kashperovsky's performance, impatient and skeptical and thinking, "This wouldn't work well at the AMA," when suddenly," she says, "this Caesarean scar that I had, which was thick and ropey and very prominent because I'd gotten an infection immediately after the delivery of my son, began to tingle." As soon as she could decorously take a peek, she hiked up her skirt and found to her surprise that the scar was gone.

She immediately made an appointment with her gynecologist, "the head of reproductive medicine at a major university," who, Laibow claims, was shocked when all he could find was a very fine hairline scar. The gynecologist, whom she will not name, was excited by her story. "Imagine if we could do that," Laibow says he exclaimed. Laibow adds that the gynecologist may be interested in collaborating on a future study of healing. One possible subject: a Japanese healer who Laibow says "seems to have some very substantial powers."

As founder of TREAT and raconteur of stories both marvelous and strange, Laibow is controversial to say the least. But are the doctor and her colleagues merely misguided, marrying their fortunes to the winds of culture, much like those who touted fairies and dragons in eras past? Or are they onto something new? Will their quest lead more people to come forward with anomalous experiences and encounters, providing the data necessary for proper scrutiny - perhaps even authentication - by the scientific and medical communities at large? In short, are these mental-health professionals fooling themselves, or are they forging extraordinary paths through the byways of consciousness and the murky outback of the unknown? To answer these questions, of course, is to know the nature of the unknown, and that is something we humans have ceaselessly attempted for thousands of years - so far, with out much success.

SUBJECT: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE CHILLING KIND
FILE: UFO2378

PART 4

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON? by Carl Sagan,
published in PARADE MAGAZINE, 3/7/93

It's still dark out. You're lying in bed, fully awake - but, you discover, you're utterly paralyzed. You sense someone in the room. You try to cry out. But you cannot. Several small gray beings less than 4 feet tall are standing at the foot of your bed. Their heads are pear-shaped and bald, and large for their bodies. Their eyes are enormous, their faces expressionless and identical. They wear tunics and boots. You hope this is only a dream, but as nearly as you can tell it's really happening. They lift you up, and, eerily, they and you slip through the wall of your bedroom and float out into the air, rising high toward a metallic, saucer-shaped aircraft. There, you are escorted into a medical examining room. A larger but similar being - evidently some sort of physician - takes over. What follows is even more terrifying.

Your body is probed with special machines, especially your sexual parts. If you're a man, they may take sperm samples; if you're a woman, they may implant semen or remove ova or fetuses. They may force you to have sex. Afterward, you may be ushered into a different room where hybrid babies, partly human, and partly these creatures, stare back at you. You may be given an admonition about human misbehavior, especially in despoiling the environment; scenes of future devastation are displayed. Finally, these cheerless gray emissaries usher you out of the spacecraft and ooze you back through the walls into your bed. By the time you're able to move and talk, they're gone.

You may not remember the incident right away; you might find some period

of time unaccountably missing. Because all of this seems so bizarre, you're concerned about your sanity; naturally, you're reluctant to talk to anyone about it. At the same time, the experience is so disturbing that it's hard to keep bottled up forever. It all pours out when you hear similar accounts, or when you're under hypnosis with a sympathetic therapist, or even when you see a picture of an "alien" in one of the many popular magazines and books on UFOs.

In a recent Roper poll of nearly 6,000 American adults, specially commissioned by those who accept the alien abduction story at face value, 18% reported sometimes waking up paralyzed, aware of one or more strange beings in the room. Something like 13% reported odd episodes of missing time, and 10% claimed to have flown through the air without mechanical assistance. From these results, the poll's sponsors concluded that 2% of all Americans have been abducted, many repeatedly, by beings from other worlds. If aliens are not partial to Americans, the number for the whole planet would be more than 100 million people. This means an abduction every several seconds. It's surprising that more of the neighbors haven't noticed.

What's going on here? Could all these people be mistaken, or lying, or hallucinating the same or a very similar story? When you talk with them, most seem very sincere, although in the grip of powerful emotions. A few psychiatrists who have examined them find no more evidence of psychopathology than in the rest of us. But could there really be a massive alien invasion, repugnant medical procedures performed on millions of innocent men, women and children, and humans apparently used as breeding stock over many decades - and all this not generally known and dealt with by responsible media and the governments sworn to protect the lives and well-being of their citizens?

Why should beings so advanced in physics and engineering - crossing vast interstellar distances, walking like ghosts through walls - be so backward

when it comes to biology? Why go to all the trouble of repeated sexual encounters between aliens and humans? Why not steal a few egg and sperm cells, read the full genetic code and then manufacture as many genetic variations as you like? Even we humans - who cannot quickly cross interstellar space or slither through walls - are able to clone cells. The preoccupation with reproduction in these accounts raises a warning flag - especially considering the uneasy balance between sexual freedom and repression that has always characterized the human condition, and the fact that we live in a time fraught with numerous ghastly accounts, both true and false, of childhood sexual abuse.

The pollsters never actually asked whether their subjects had been abducted by aliens; they DEDUCED it: Those who've ever awakened sensing strange presences around them, ever unaccountably seemed to fly through the air, and so on, have THEREFORE been abducted by aliens. The conclusion - that millions of American have been abducted - seems extremely doubtful. Still, at least hundreds of people, believing they have been abducted, have sought out sympathetic therapists or joined abductee support groups.

So which is more likely - that we're undergoing a massive but generally overlooked invasion by alien sexual abusers, or that people are experiencing some internal mental state they do not understand? Admittedly, we're very ignorant about both extraterrestrial beings, if any, and about human psychology. But if these really were the only two alternatives, which would you pick?

It's curious that emotions can run so high on a matter in which we know so little. After all, either hypothesis - extraterrestrial invasion or an epidemic of hallucinations - teaches us something we certainly ought to know about. Maybe the reason for such strong feelings is that both alternatives have extremely unpleasant implications.

The first alien abduction story in the modern era began with Betty and Barney Hill, a New Hampshire couple - she a social worker and he a Post

Office employee. During a late night drive in 1961 through the White mountains of New Hampshire, Betty spotted a bright starlike UFO that seemed to follow them. Because Barney feared it might harm them, they left the main highway for narrow mountain roads. They arrived home two hours later than they had expected. The experience prompted Betty to read a book claiming that UFOs were spaceships from other worlds. Soon after, she had a repetitive nightmare in which she and Barney were abducted and taken aboard the UFO. Barney overheard her describing this dream to friends and volunteer UFO investigators.

Several years later, Barney's psychiatrist referred him to a Boston hypnotherapist, Benjamin Simon, M.D. Betty came to be hypnotized as well. Under hypnosis they separately described a memory of their trip home - of seeing a UFO, watching it land on the highway and being taken partly immobilized into the UFO, where little humanoid creatures subjected them to unconventional medical examinations.

I was glad to have an opportunity to spend several hours with Mr. and Mrs. Hill, and with Dr. Simon. There was no mistaking the earnestness and sincerity of Betty and Barney, and their mixed feelings about becoming public figures under such bizarre circumstances. With the Hills' permission, Dr. Simon played for me some of the audiotape of their sessions under hypnosis. By far my most striking impression was the absolute terror in Barney's voice as he described - relived would be a better word - the encounter. Simon rejected the notion that they were lying. So what's left? The Hills, said the psychiatrist, had experienced a species of "dream."

In 1894 THE INTERNATIONAL CENSUS OF WAKING HALLUCINATIONS was published in London. From that time to this, repeated surveys have shown that 10% to 25% of ordinary, functioning people have experienced at least once a vivid hallucination - hearing a voice, usually, or seeing a form when there's no

one there. In some cases there are profound religious experiences.

(Probably a dozen times since their deaths I've heard my mother or father, in an ordinary, conversational tone of voice, calling my name. They had called my name often during my life with them. I still miss them so much that it doesn't seem strange to me that my brain will occasionally retrieve a kind of lucid recollection of their voices.)

Such hallucinations may occur to perfectly normal people. But there are circumstances in which they can be elicited by a campfire at night, or under great stress, or by prolonged fasting or sleeplessness, or sensory deprivation, or through hallucinogens such as LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, hashish or alcohol. These hallucinations have a vivid and palpable reality.

Hallucinations are common. If you have one, it doesn't mean you're crazy. Indeed, they are sought out in many cultures. We would surely be missing something important about our own nature if we refused to face up to the fact that hallucinations are part of being human. But none of this makes hallucinations real.

Most of us remember being frightened at the age of 3 or so by real-seeming but wholly imaginary "monsters." If we're capable of conjuring up monsters in childhood, why shouldn't some of us, at least on occasion, be able to imagine similar things as adults?

There's a common, although insufficiently well known, psychological syndrome very much like alien abduction: Many people have experienced sleep paralysis. On falling asleep or when waking up - just for a few seconds, or maybe for longer periods - you seem to be paralyzed and acutely anxious. You may feel a weight on your chest, your heartbeat is quick, your breathing labored. You may experience auditory or visual hallucinations - of people, demons, ghosts, animals or birds. In the right setting the experience can have "the full force and impact of reality,"

according to Dr. Robert Baker, a psychologist at the University of Kentucky. Sometimes there's a marked sexual component to the hallucination.

Baker has forcefully argued that these common sleep disturbances are behind many if not most of the alien abduction accounts. (He and others suggest that some abduction claims are also made by fantasy-prone individuals or hoaxers seeking fame and fortune.) Even if no known hallucinations were to fit the alien abduction pattern, it's certain that humans commonly hallucinate. There's considerable doubt about whether extraterrestrials exist and frequently visit our planet. We may argue about details, but the one category of explanation seems much better supported than the other. The main reservation you might then have is: Why do so many people report THIS PARTICULAR set of hallucinations? Why little gray beings and flying saucers and sexual molestation?

Demons, the early Church Fathers taught, come down from heaven and have unlawful sexual congress with women. St. Augustine believed witches were the offspring of these forbidden unions. In his famous Bull of 1484, Pope Innocent VIII declared: "It has come to Our ears that members of both sexes do not avoid to have intercourse with evil angels, incubi, and succubi, and that by their sorceries, and by their incantations, charms, and conjurations, they suffocate, extinguish, and cause to perish the births of women," as well as cause sundry other calamities. With this Bull, Innocent initiated the systematic accusation, torture, and execution of countless "witches" all over Europe.

Two inquisitors appointed by Innocent declared: "Devils...busy themselves by interfering with the normal process of normal copulation and conception, by obtaining human semen, and themselves transferring it.

The offspring of these demonic unions are also, when they grow up, visited by devils - although not all witches are created this way. And witches were well known to fly through the air. There is no spaceship, but

most of the essential elements of the alien abduction story are here.

In 1645, a Cornish teenager, Anne Jeffries, was found groggy and crumpled on the floor. much later, she recalled being attacked by little men, carried paralyzed to a castle in the air, seduced and returned home. she called the little men fairies. They returned to torment her. The next year she was arrested for witchcraft. Fairies traditionally have magical powers and can cause paralysis by the merest touch. The ordinary passage of time is slowed in fairyland. Fairies have sex with humans and carry off babies from their cradles. If Anne Jeffries had known about aliens rather than fairies, and UFOs rather than castles in the air, would her story have been distinguishable from the one "abductees" tell?

Is it possible that people in all times and places occasionally experience vivid, realistic hallucinations, often with sexual content - with the details filled in by the prevailing cultural idioms, sucked out of the Zeitgeist? When everyone knows that gods regularly come down to Earth, we hallucinate gods; when everyone knows about demons, it's incubi and succubi; when fairies are widely believed, we see fairies; when the old myths fade and we begin thinking that aliens are plausible, then that's where our hypnogogic imagery tends. Snatches of songs or foreign languages, images and stories we witnessed in our childhood can be accurately recalled decades later without any conscious memory of the source. In our everyday life, we effortlessly incorporate cultural motifs and norms and make them seem our own.

Today, aliens are the subject of innumerable science-fiction stories and novels. UFOs are a regular feature of weekly newspapers dedicated to falsification and mystification. One of the highest-grossing motion pictures of all time is about aliens very much like those described by abductees. Alien abduction stories were comparatively rare until 1987, when a purported firsthand account with a haunting cover painting of an

"alien" became a best-seller. It is striking how similar many of the abduction accounts are now, and how little we hear about incubi and fairies. But it might not be altogether surprising that, in our time and society, short, gray aliens with breeding programs on their minds are what we mainly reach for when we must describe these hallucinations.

No one would be happier than I would if we had real evidence of extraterrestrial life. But the issue comes down to the quality of the evidence. Proponents of alien abductions do not ask us to believe on faith, but rather on the strength of their evidence. Surely it is our duty to examine the purported evidence closely and skeptically. NO anecdotal claim - no matter how sincere, no matter how deeply felt, no matter how exemplary the lives of the attesting citizens - carries much weight on so important a question. As with the older UFO cases, anecdotal accounts are subject to irreducible error. This is not a criticism of those who claim abductions or of those who investigate them. It is merely a statement of human fallibility.

Where is the physical evidence? Some abductees allege that aliens stole fetuses from their wombs. This is something that would surely cause a stir among gynecologists, midwives, obstetrical nurses, especially in an age of heightened feminist awareness. But not a SINGLE MEDICAL RECORD has been produced substantiating such claims.

Some abductees say that tiny metallic implants were inserted into their bodies - high up in their nostrils, for example. But no such implants have been confirmed by physicists or chemists as being of unearthly manufacture. No abductee has filched a page from the captain's logbook or a strange examining instrument, or taken an authentic photograph of the interior of the ship or come back with detailed scientific information not hitherto known on Earth. These failures tell us something.

If indeed the bulk of the alien abduction accounts are really about hallucinations, don't we have before us a matter of supreme importance -

touching on our limitations, the ease with which we may be misled, the fashioning of our beliefs and perhaps even the origins of our religions? There is genuine scientific paydirt in UFOs and alien abductions - but it is, I think, of distinctly terrestrial origin.

Carl Sagan of Cornell University has played a leading role in the search for extraterrestrial life with spacecraft and radio telescopes. He was a member of the U.S. Air Force committee that evaluated the government's investigation of UFOs. In 1966, Dr. Sagan resigned from the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board in protest against the Vietnam War. He is the author (with Ann Druyan) of "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors."

* THE U.F.O. BBS - <http://www.ufobbs.com/ufo> *

SUBJECT: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE CHILLING KIND
FILE: UFO2381

PART 8

Abducted By UFOs!
Sooners Report Close Encounters
01/23/94
THE SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN

Richard Seifried was sound asleep on the lonely Black Mesa in the Panhandle.

Suddenly he awoke to find himself floating out the end of his tent and up into a spaceship, where he was given a physical exam by short, hairless, gray-colored beings with fragile necks, long arms and black eyes the size of grapefruit.

"I went right through the mosquito netting" without tearing it, he said.

Now for the strange part. Seifried's been snatched like this at least five other times.

Sometimes the beings beamed him off a mountain while he worked for the Forest Service. Sometimes they grabbed him from home. Sometimes they scooped skin samples or poked him with tiny needles in a pattern.

Seifried's not alone. As director of investigations for the Oklahoma chapter of the Mutual UFO Network, Seifried has come across many Oklahomans who've had uncomfortably close encounters with strange entities from who knows where.

Well, that's what they say.

Some who believe in UFOs - in the sense that unidentified flying objects are advanced aliens from some unknown part of the cosmos - estimate up to millions of people have been so "abducted."

In Oklahoma, Seifried and his wife, Jean Waller, longtime state director of the network, know of at least 30 or 40 such people who believe they're victims.

UFOs - in the sense of things in the sky that did not make sense to the observer - have been around forever, or at least as long as people have had eyes and a brain big enough to wonder, "What the ...?"

Seifried has written a book, "Native Encounters," about the history of UFO things in Oklahoma, one of several unpublished manuscripts by the retired school teacher.

Interest in UFOs seems to run in cycles, but it's been pretty hot since the early 1950s, when humanoids began building rockets in earnest. Recently,

a congressman succeeded in launching a government investigation into what believers say was the crash of a flying saucer in New Mexico in 1947 that was covered up by the same government.

UFO conventions and meetings have boomed in the past decade.

"I'm interested in anything that's unexplained," James Rea, 18, of El Reno said, explaining why he showed up at a recent network meeting in Norman. "I don't really know if I believe them (UFOs) or not. I believe anything's possible."

Oklahoma has its share of UFO stuff, network people say. Like animal carcasses with eyes or sexual organs removed or like circles on rural land that cows mysteriously avoid, all of which some people attribute to celestial interlopers for lack of other explanations.

Philip Klass blames it on a kind of extra-terrestrial baloney sandwich beamed directly into people's brains by tabloids, talk shows, books and movies. Despite the huge numbers of people who have seen UFOs or their creators, not one lug nut from an interplanetary craft has been recovered.

Klass, publisher of the Skeptics UFO Newsletter, said the National Enquirer offered \$1 million and a British liquor magnate offered about \$2.8 million for any hard evidence. Zilch.

Klass is a former senior avionics editor for Aviation Week & Space Technology magazine and still writes for the magazine. If one alien visit to Earth could be proven, "It would have been the biggest story I had ever written. In 28 years I have yet to find that story."

Aside from the elderly woman who died from exposure while waiting for a spaceship, belief in UFOs had been relatively harmless, he said. He said most UFO investigators are well-intentioned people, albeit many with a tendency to avoid obvious, earthbound explanations.

But this abduction thing, which popped up about 1987, leaves mild curiosity in the dust.

"It's a UFO abduction cult," says Klass. "This is New Age witchcraft."

"Pretty Crazy" Images

Whatever it is, belief in UFO abduction is seriously disturbing or moving to those who think they have been chosen or picked on by aliens.

Like Joel and Carilee Delano. For the Choctaw couple and their two young daughters, it all began on a clear fall night on a South Dakota highway in 1992 on a trip to Montana.

That's where, the parents say, a mysterious craft that had followed them for miles made its close encounter and "interacted" with the family. On their living room wall, framed in oak, hang a half dozen enlarged glossy photos of what they say is the craft, or at least light from it.

What's obvious is only a chunk of roadway, with three dots or squiggles of light in the darkness.

Joel's brother called MUFON about it. MUFON suggested hypnosis.

And, like many others, the Delanos discovered under this altered state that they too had been abducted.

Those abducted often have difficulties with their marriages, as spouses assume they're Lost in Space without a shuttle. It helped lead to Seifried's divorce from a former wife.

"I thought this is how you felt before you went into the nut house," Carilee Delano recalls of her first reaction to her husband's abduction "memory." After accepting it, the Mary Kay cosmetics representative began viewing the incident "like it was a rape."

"This is getting into the Looney Toons area," Joel said, worrying about what all this sounds like.

During four sessions of hypnosis, at \$35 apiece, Joel recalled: "I felt a levitation up. I felt I was in a room, foggy, my legs paralyzed."

The construction worker saw beings with large heads, thin necks and "large black eyes staring at me. Images, images, images," he says, gazing at the wall as he searches for words.

"In my mind it really happened," he said.

Now the Delanos feel the beings were "obviously corresponding with us." Although they had no specific message, Joel says since then he's had a lot of thoughts about evolution and creation. The Delanos are convinced the aliens have been back. Several times.

"I feel we've had visitations here at the house," Joel said.

Strange things like nightmares and flashes in the sky around their rural acreage provide clues, they say. That plus hypnosis that revealed "a being sitting beside my bed," Joel said.

Joel, 43, also figures "I was medically altered" because dizzy spells and a nagging cough he used to have disappeared.

They fear their daughters are involved in this pattern of experiments and visits, since they have bad dreams too. "You're helpless," Carilee, 33, said. "Our children probably are genetically altered."

Chana Sue, 9, lacing up sneakers for a basketball game, said she didn't know what the family saw that night in South Dakota. Her mother shows a crude drawing Chana Sue did of a pear-shaped craft with a row of windows on it.

Carilee said that's the craft she saw in a dream. Joel said he saw that shape while under hypnosis.

Asked how the figure came to her, Chana Sue explained, "That's always been what I thought they (UFOs) looked like."

Joel's sister once saw an alien in her room in Tulsa and his mother in Arkansas saw a UFO too.

Emily (not her real name) is another Oklahoman abducted by aliens. Or who believes she was.

Married with two kids, the 36-year-old maternity nurse recalled being awakened by a strange red light and noises when she was 7. She was living in New Hampshire.

Under hypnosis, she further remembered "floating up in a light with my cousin beside me." She was paralyzed, as beings in the fuzzy

memory "apply pressure to the back of my head" and work with a long instrument with a ball on the end of it.

During another hypnosis session, she remembered at age 11 waking to "a dark hand over my face in the middle of the night." She closed her eyes and prayed, shaking until it was gone. She counts a total of four alien abductions.

"It's pretty crazy," she says.

Memories or Metaphors

Many have stirred these images with the help of Jean E. Byrne, a Norman nurse who works in home health care most of the time. Byrne also is trained in massage and hypnotherapy, studying at the American Institute of Hypnotherapy and at the Association of Research and Enlightenment.

She said the "scariest part" of hypnotherapy on UFO cases is "when we work with children. They're just terrified." Kids who apparently have been abducted by aliens have been known to refer to them as "Big Boy" or "the one who comes ... at night and takes her to the ball in the sky."

Dr. Vernon Enlow, Oklahoma City psychologist who uses hypnosis, said there is a raging controversy over "created memories," ideas subtly planted in subjects' minds by hypnotists.

Byrne said she is aware subjects are very receptive to suggestion. And these days, "there's so much of what we call contamination," that is reading, hearing or seeing films about aliens then thinking it happened to

them. "You don't know how much of that is real memory," she said.

Enlow said stories elicited under hypnosis aren't necessarily true, even though subjects believe them and the therapist doesn't suggest them. They can be "a metaphor" for something else.

"Hypnosis is not a truth serum," he said. "Hypnotism can sometimes release a lot of creativity." Any therapist who encounters numerous people believing UFO abductions would cause him to wonder. Wonder is about all most people do with UFOs.

Tom Renbarger, 42, graphic artist for the state Department of Transportation, said his interest in UFO stuff is more "a social phenomenon."

"I think it sort of fills a need for some people to have something supernatural or something to believe in," he said.

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