



# Oberlin

FALL 2002

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

The background of the entire page is a reproduction of the Mona Lisa painting. The woman's face and upper body are the central focus, with her enigmatic smile and the dark, hazy landscape behind her.

CONSERVATION  
**WARS** As masterpieces  
show their age  
should we intervene?



# Messengers

FROM THE

# UNSEEN

If someone out there is trying to warn us,  
shouldn't we make an attempt to listen?

by John E. Mack '51

If it ever had been possible to head off trouble, it was now too late. The dean of the Harvard Medical School wanted to investigate "concerns that had been raised in the press and elsewhere" about my work on the phenomenon of alien abductions.

It was June 1, 1994, shortly after the publication of my book, *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*, when I arranged a meeting with James Adelstein, executive dean for academic programs of the Harvard Medical School faculty. Because of the controversial nature of the subject and my high profile in the media (articles about the book and me had appeared in national newspapers and magazines, and my publishers had scheduled

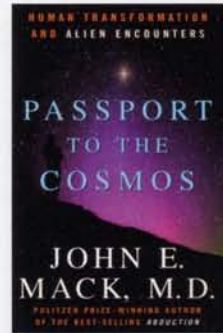
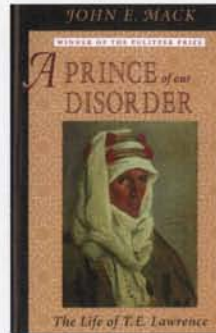
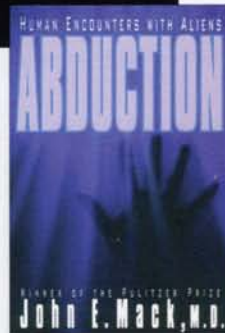


Photo courtesy of the Center for Psychology and Social Change



John Mack '51 was surprised by the storm of criticism that came with the 1994 publication of *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens*. He has since come to understand his own naivete at the time as well as the "misty territory" his research and writing explores. He credits Oberlin for emphasizing open-mindedness and encouraging exploration in his education.

television appearances on shows like "Larry King Live," "Dateline," and "Oprah"), I thought I should discuss the situation with colleagues in the medical school's administration.

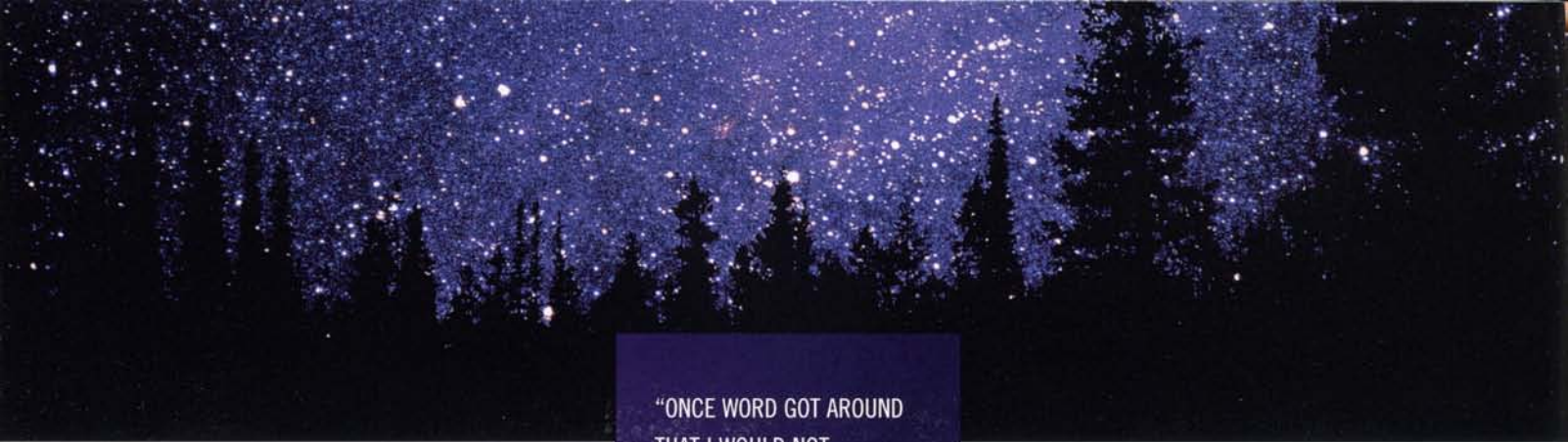


But Adelstein had instead appointed a committee to look into the matter, and thus began a 15-month ordeal involving lawyers, appearances before the group by myself and my patients, faculty witnesses, the submission of massive briefs, reports from the committee and my response, documents concerned with stan-

urged me not to "violate the high standards of clinical practice and clinical investigation" of the medical school. He left it up to me to determine what these were.

So what exactly was the controversy that had led leaders of the medical school to take an unprecedented action of investigating

dards and ethics, letters of support, and sworn affidavits by 30 patients with whom I had worked. A year later, I received a letter from the dean; he had reviewed the committee's report and



“ONCE WORD GOT AROUND THAT I WOULD NOT IMMEDIATELY TREAT EXPERIENCERS AS THOUGH THEY WERE MENTALLY ILL, PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUSES WHO THOUGHT THEY MIGHT HAVE HAD ALIEN ENCOUNTERS SOUGHT ME OUT.”

one of its own faculty members in this manner?

Adelstein, in the beginning, had offered a clue as to what was at stake. I would not have gotten into trouble, he said, if I had not said in my book that my findings required us to look at reality differently. Instead, I should have written that I had come upon a new psychiatric syndrome of unknown etiology.

I have since concluded that it was the challenge to our society's dominant worldview contained in my work that created such alarm.

The idea that people are being visited by some sort of unknown life forms was (and remains) so far outside mainstream Western boundaries of reality that an exceptional response was required. The lawyer of Harvard's president remarked to one of my lawyers, "Well, what do you think it's like for the dean of the Harvard Medical School to see one of his professors on the "Oprah Winfrey" show saying that little green men are taking women and children into spaceships?"

True, I had appeared on "Oprah," but I doubt that the dean had watched the show, and I had said nothing about little green men. But the nature of the administration's anxiety was apparent.

### Breaking with Tradition

MY DEVOUTLY SECULAR UPBRINGING in an intellectually skeptical New York, German-Jewish family had hardly prepared me for my future career course, although curiosity and exploration were encouraged. My parents were academicians. My father, a professor of English literature at New York's City College, read the Bible to my sister and me not as the word of God, but as a document of great literary importance for our culture and personal education.

I became a physician in order to be a psychiatrist, and my orthodox Freudian psychoanalytic training in Boston contained no critique of the culture of mechanism and scientific materialism that prevails in the American medical community. In this worldview, in the words of intellectual historian Richard Tarnas, "the soul of the world was voided from the entire universe and was appropriated essentially by the human being." Furthermore, realities that cannot be proven by established methods of science were considered of lesser significance.

In my Oberlin education, however, was something that encouraged openness and a willingness to consider distinctly unorthodox possibilities. The history and culture of the College is filled with challenges to the social, political, and intellectual status quo. It is

more than mere coincidence that the true pioneer in exploring the alien abduction phenomenon is Budd Hopkins '53, who first introduced me to the abductee population.

The traditional worldview of my upbringing began to erode when I undertook three years of training in the Grof holotropic breathwork method, a therapeutic form that brings about a non-ordinary state of consciousness through deep breathing and powerful, evocative music. In this altered state, an expanded reality may

open up for the breather. Universes of possibility open up, and the breather can identify with virtually any time, being, or place in the cosmos. He or she has access to the experience of intrauterine and birth-related events, and consciousness seems to separate from the physical body. The pantheons of mythic beings become possible objects of such identification.

This work softened me up for what was to follow. Without it I would have rejected the idea that many people of sound mind (more than one million in the U.S. alone, according to various polls, have conscious recollection of alien visitations) were encountering entities, although their characteristics may seem bizarre and the technologies involved poorly understood. Nevertheless, it was a huge stretch for me to take seriously the possibility that what the "abductees," or "experiencers" as I prefer to call them, were reporting was in some way real, not simply a product of their minds or imaginations.

By the time *Abduction* was published, I had been working closely for several years with more than 50 of these individuals in my psychiatry practice. I was convinced that there was no psychiatric explanation for what my patients were encountering. This I based on several factors: their fundamental soundness of mind, including appropriate skepticism; the close similarity of experiences among individuals who had not had contact with each other; the association with UFOs in the vicinity; physical elements; the absence of anything to gain by reporting these experiences (on the contrary, the experiencers must be very careful to whom they tell their stories lest they face doubt, ridicule, and isolation); and, finally, reports of experiences by children as young as 2 years old.

Once word got around that I would not immediately treat experiencers as though they were mentally ill, people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses who thought they might have had alien encounters sought me out. Before writing anything

# UNSEEN

“THE METHODS OF SCIENCE—  
HYPOTHESIS, TESTING, RIGOR,  
EXPERIMENTATION, CONTROL  
— ARE VALUABLE AND  
ESSENTIAL FOR STUDYING  
PHENOMENA THAT RESIDE  
PRIMARILY IN THE MATERIAL  
WORLD. BUT THEY MAY BE  
INADEQUATE FOR EXPLORING  
MATTERS THAT STRADDLE  
THE VISIBLE AND THE  
UNSEEN REALMS.”

publicly on this subject, I had spent hundreds of hours listening with wonderment to tales that were sometimes so similar to one another as to be virtually interchangeable. Sometimes the experiencers were astounded (I call this response “ontological shock”) to discover that other people had had similar experiences, as they had hoped I could “cure” them of the problem or make it disappear with a pill or a trenchant psychiatric interpretation.

By now the basic outline of the abduction phenomenon is familiar to most people who read magazines or watch television, but this was not the case when I began this work in 1990. Even now the authentic details are rarely depicted accurately in the mass media. Essentially a person may be “visited” at night or during the day by humanoid beings of varying description, but most commonly they are portrayed as three-and-a-half to four feet tall with large heads and eyes and rather slight bodies. Reptilian, insect-like, light/luminous, or even actual humans have been described in conjunction with abduction experiences. Sometimes the individual describes being moved through space into a craft where various procedures occur. Often these involve a human/alien reproductive process, which leads in the creation of one or more hybrid beings with whom the experiencer is likely to feel a powerful emotional connection.

In addition to these physical elements, the experiencers receive information telepathically from the beings, either through their large black eyes or from images shown on television-like monitors. Most significantly this is concerned with the destruction of Earth’s living systems, and, vistas of destruction, often of apocalyptic proportions, are forced upon the experiencers. One abductee has called this ecological education “alien boot camp.”

Frequently, the experiencers, who may have had little awareness of the perilous state of the earth’s environment, become passionately committed to the preservation of our planet. These experiences can be highly traumatic because they are so shattering of the person’s reality. But if the experiencers are enabled to work through their terror, powerful spiritual awakenings and growth may occur.

## The Quest for Proof

DURING THE EARLY YEARS of my work, I tried to establish that “abductions” really were taking place in a literal, physical sense. Sometimes there were reports of missing people, or of physical lesions or marks

left on experiencers’ bodies after an encounter, or evidence that a type of “implant” was left under the skin, presumably so the beings can monitor their whereabouts.

This physical literalness was certainly what most interested the Harvard Medical School committee. But over the years my own emphasis has shifted. I have become convinced that something mysterious and real, not merely the product of the experiencer’s mind or psychosocial influences, has been occurring. But larger questions arise as

to how we define reality, which is intimately tied to the methodology or way of knowing that is being pursued.

In the case of the abduction phenomenon, the physical findings, when present, are quite subtle. They are insufficiently robust to stand on their own or to measure up to mainstream science. The larger question for me has become how we are to consider reports of powerful experiences for which the physical evidence is meager and runs counter to the consensus view of what is possible. Forcing these accounts into a psychiatric box, or dismissing them out of hand, may lead to the loss of information that is immensely important for understanding ourselves and our universe.

Ordinarily, a psychiatrist is not primarily concerned with whether what patients are telling him about their lives is factual or true. Useful work can be done by exploring the meaning of what is reported without knowing how much of it should be taken literally. Methodology is a matter of concern within the mental health professions and is sometimes synonymous with good technique or being helpful to a patient or client. There is little at stake theoretically or philosophically.

But in the case of the alien abduction phenomenon, which challenges the fundamental ontological paradigm of our society, the stakes are much higher. If these experiences are true, then even my severest critics will acknowledge that we exist in a different cosmos than the one in which most of us, including myself, thought we were living. The consequences are not only scientific, but also affect every institution of our culture.

I have come to disagree with the medical school’s investigation committee about the methods used to establish or refute the reality of the abduction phenomenon. The committee members emphasized the need for more psychological tests to see what might be wrong with these individuals. They suggested that patients consult with mainstream psychiatrists unfamiliar with the

“WHAT KIND OF REALITY IS THIS? WHERE DO THE BEINGS COME FROM? WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE DIVINE OR THE DEMONIC? ARE THERE ENTITIES OR ENERGY FORMS THAT MANIFEST IN OUR WORLD BUT EMANATE FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION OR UNIVERSE?”

phenomenon and that we explore other explanations, like sleep paralysis (experiencers are often unable to move during encounters, but are usually not asleep). Finally, the committee wanted a further quest for physical proof. Nevertheless, when the implications are so great, how we assess the reality of what a person reports in the absence of compelling physical evidence becomes a matter of immense importance.

When evaluating experiencers, I begin with the same clinical assessment I would undertake with any other patient. In particular, I assess if there is anything in the person's background or mental condition that could shed light on what has been reported. Hypnotic relaxation enables memories to come forth or helps the experiencer get in touch with emotions, but is not of much value in establishing what is factually true. I try and determine if a person has anything to gain by inventing such a story, or if he or she has been influenced by other individuals or the media.

Finally, I ask, are these patients persons of integrity who are not given generally to fantasy or distortion of reality? Talking with close friends and relatives is helpful in this regard. Is the feeling expressed by the experiencer appropriate to what is being reported? The sheer intensity of terror or other emotion that comes forth when encounter experiences are recalled can help determine if something momentous has in fact occurred.

### Redefining Reality

SO ONCE IT IS established that an experiencer is of sound mind, has been functioning appropriately, and has coped with something so powerful, what then? We are now in misty territory. Standard psychological testing has shown little more than that the person has undergone some sort of disturbing experience. As a culture we have not progressed far in establishing what might be called a science of human experience. If we concede that experiencers have taken part in a real event, one that enters our three dimensional reality without becoming entirely part of it, questions arise such as: What kind of reality is this? Where do the beings come from? What is their relationship to the divine or the demonic? Are there entities or energy forms that manifest in our world but emanate from another dimension or universe?

If scientific and philosophical questions are put aside, atten-

tion then shifts from the messenger to the message, from the experiencers' mental status to what they can teach us about ourselves and the world. The experiencers then become special witnesses, journeyers into mysterious realms, much like mythic heroes who venture into new lands and return to report what they have seen. And I become a witness to the witnesses, seeking when appropriate to give legitimacy to their accounts, much as religious officials do when they assess the truthfulness of those who report

the occurrence of miracles.

Behind the nervous efforts to discredit the encounter reality lies a deeper concern. This phenomenon does not stand alone, but is one anomaly among many. Others include near-death experiences, spirit manifestations, shamanic journeys, crop circles, unexplained animal mutilations, and apparitions of the Virgin Mary seen by tens of thousands of people. All of these challenge the limits of our understanding of reality and suggest the presence in the universe of other intelligences that may reach into our world under particular conditions.

Furthermore, there are a host of research findings from carefully conducted studies that further stretch our understanding of reality. These include evidence for clairvoyance, telepathic communication, remote viewing, psychokinesis, non-locality, the demonstrated efficacy of prayer and other examples of healing at a distance, and the participatory and cocreative nature of knowledge itself.

Taken together, these phenomena tell us many things about ourselves and the universe that challenge the dominant materialist paradigm. They reveal that our understanding of reality is extremely limited, the cosmos is more mysterious than we have imagined, there are other intelligences all about (some of which seem to be able to reach us), consciousness itself may be the primary creative force in the universe, and our knowledge of the properties of the physical world is far from complete. The emerging picture is a cosmos that is an interconnected harmonic web, vibrating with creativity and intelligence, in which separateness is an illusion.

The inadequacy of scientific materialism in guiding our understanding and lives has prompted Kyriacos Markides, a distinguished professor of sociology at the University of Maine, to state bluntly that “the secular assumptions about reality, dominant

John Mack



A Pulitzer Prize-winning author and professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, John E. Mack, M.D., '51, has spent the past 40 years exploring the question of how our perception of ourselves shapes our perception of the world around us.

during my university training [and, I suspect, of most of us], were in fact a grand illusion, a materialist superstition that had kept Western thought stranded and imprisoned for the last 300 years."

And how do the keepers of the dying, yet more traditional paradigm respond to these phenomena? Many raise the cry of "pseudoscience."

"The odds are stacked against science," laments Lawrence Kraus, an internationally known theoretical physicist at Case Western Reserve University, who seems to attribute all interest in the above phenomena to the susceptibility of Americans to be "regaled by stories about the limitless possibilities open to those with...a spirit of enterprise."

This is not just silly, but reflects a fundamental epistemological misunderstanding. The methods of science—hypothesis, testing, rigor, experimentation, control—are valuable and essential for studying phenomena that reside primarily in the material world. But they may be inadequate for exploring matters that straddle the visible and the unseen realms. They surely are insufficient for learning about realities beyond the manifest. Here we must rely more upon experience, intuition, non-ordinary states of consciousness, and holistic or heart knowing, thoughtfully and rigorously applied.

The failure of the human species, especially in the West and in other parts of the world influenced by Western science and technology, to appreciate the delicate, interconnected nature of all being, is at the root of the havoc we are wreaking upon ourselves and most of the earth's life forms. As Oberlin Board of Trustees Chair Thomas Klutznick wrote in *OAM* last year, we are witnessing "the first mass dying that is being driven by human activity." It should not be surprising that alien beings and the Blessed Virgin have taken on the role of messengers from the unseen.

It is apparent that what we are doing to the earth is a crime of cosmic proportions. No one or nothing intervenes or stops us directly, for that does not seem to be spirit's way. But perhaps we are being helped to wake up and to remember what some native and traditional peoples have never forgotten: that life is fragile and sacred and that we must learn to live in harmony with all the other species of the earth.

So, for me, a journey that began with the investigation of a strange anomaly has led to a greater appreciation of the gift of being and a deeper commitment to helping to preserve the life of the planet and its infinite possibilities. ●

The author or co-author of 10 books and over 150 scholarly articles, Mack's 1977 biography of T.E. Lawrence, *A Prince of Our Disorder*, won him the Pulitzer. His unconventional ideas about the existence and purpose of visitations from unknown life forms, brought him criticism and notoriety upon publication in 1994 of *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* — a title which has since gone out of print. His most recent book, *Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters*, was published in 1999.

Earlier in his career, in 1969 Mack founded the Department of Psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital and in 1983 he co-founded the Center for Psychology and Social Change with Robert Jay Lifton, M.D., and colleagues. In 1992, Mack was co-chair of the Abduction Study Conference, a landmark gathering of scientists at MIT to discuss alien encounters and in 1993, he founded the Program for Extraordinary Experience Research (PEER) to explore varieties of anomalous experience.

Mack is a graduate of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and is board certified in child and adult psychoanalysis with over 40 years of clinical psychiatric education and experience. He continues to teach.

*John Mack '51 spoke at Oberlin College in 2001 on the event of his 50th class reunion. This article expands upon his presentation. (Photo courtesy of the Center for Psychology and Social Change.)*

*Oberlin Alumni Magazine welcomes mail from readers. Please address your comments to Oberlin Alumni Magazine, 145 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074-1089, e-mail: alum.mag@oberlin.edu, P: 440.775.8182, F: 440.775.6575. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity and space. Additional letters may be printed on OAM's web site at www.oberlin.edu/~alummag/alum\_mag.html.*

## • ANYBODY OUT THERE?

In the spirit of free speech, I applaud OAM for running "Messengers from the Unseen" by John Mack '51 (Fall 2002). If aliens are abducting people, this is the most significant event in human history, and it has enormous (and ominous) ramifications for the human future. This is not the type of story that the alumni magazine should censor.

However, Dr. Mack's views on alien abductions are shared by only a miniscule fraction of the scientific community. As Carl Sagan wrote: "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." The mainstream scientific community is quite correct in taking an extremely skeptical viewpoint toward the claim that humans are being abducted by aliens. And it is not because the community is close-minded, as Dr. Mack indirectly implies.

I have spent the last 10 years writing about astronomy and other sciences in magazines such as *Discover*, *Astronomy*, and now *Mercury*. I can report that scientists are probably the most open-minded people in society. Experiments and observations have forced them to accept bizarre phenomena that would otherwise be inconceivable to the human mind, such as black holes, warped space-time, and virtual particles that spontaneously pop into and then out of existence. But scientists are also well aware that they don't want their minds to be so open that their brains fall out.

Science is not so much a set of facts but a process that leads humans to an increasingly deeper understanding of the natural world. Science depends on physical evidence and repeatable experiments to eliminate false ideas. But Dr. Mack cites no physical evidence to support his claims that aliens are abducting human beings. For example, he mentions that some people have received implants under their skin during abductions. An MRI scan could easily locate such an implant, and then a skilled surgeon could remove it. Just *one* example of an alien implant found inside a human body would immediately change scientific opinion from nearly universal skepticism to nearly universal acceptance.

## “ Dr. Mack's views on alien abductions

are shared by only a miniscule fraction of the scientific community. ”

Instead, Dr. Mack offers as evidence testimony of people in altered states of consciousness. Here we must rely more upon experience, intuition, non-ordinary states of consciousness, and holistic knowing, thoughtfully and rigorously applied, he writes. It's hard for me to conceive of a less reliable path to truth and knowledge than Dr. Mack's methodology. As many Oberlinians would know (myself included!), being in an altered state of consciousness makes one *more* fantasy prone and much *less* able to distinguish truth and reality from utter nonsense.

I'm deeply troubled that only a handful of psychiatrists, such as Dr. Mack and Budd Hopkins (another Oberlin graduate), have ever reported alien abductions. My good friend William Sheehan, a clinical psychiatrist and author of a dozen books about astronomy, has examined thousands of patients, but none have ever told stories of being abducted by aliens. The fact that so few researchers report alien abductions strongly suggests that the way Dr. Mack and Budd Hopkins interrogate their patients leads people into believing they were abducted. The possibility that false memories of terrifying abduction experiences are being implanted into people's minds raises serious ethical issues.

In summary, while I applaud OAM for publishing Dr. Mack's article, readers should adopt an attitude of extreme skepticism toward his extraordinary claims until he supports them with substantive evidence. Moreover, humanity doesn't need extraterrestrial beings subjecting people to abduction experiences to inform us that we are doing great harm to planet Earth. Most Oberlinians, non-abductees included,

are well aware of that fact by the end of the first semester of their freshman year.

Robert Naeye '85  
Editor, *Mercury* magazine  
San Francisco, California

## • RELIGION'S GOLDEN YEAR

I was pleased to read about the 50-year history of the Department of Religion from the perspectives of Paula Richman '74 and James Dobbins (Fall 2002). It is especially exciting to learn about the increasing diversity of the courses and faculty during this period and the number of students who currently major in religion. The courses taught by Clyde Holbrook and Edward Long were excellent foundations for my graduate studies at Yale University and Hartford Seminary. There were only two of us majoring in religion in our graduating class, and the choices of courses and faculty were very limited. I valued an undergraduate education in which science and

religion could be recognized as independent fields of study that needed to be in dialogue with each other. My lifelong personal and professional commitment to ecumenical and interreligious activities was nurtured by studying with J. Robert Nelson, Walter Marshall Horton, and George Michaelides, all internationally known scholars and leaders in ecumenical relations. I agree with the concluding statements of both authors about the study of religion at Oberlin. Paula Richman wrote, "Only by continually expanding and rethinking approaches can a discipline remain alive." James Dobbins concluded: "As a field, religious studies is still a work in progress."

Rev. Robert Loesch '63  
Springfield, Massachusetts



*Oberlin Alumni Magazine welcomes mail from readers. Please address your comments to Oberlin Alumni Magazine, 145 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074-1089, e-mail: alum.mag@oberlin.edu, P: 440.775.8182, F: 440.775.6575. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity and space. Additional letters are printed on OAM's web site at [www.oberlin.edu/~alummag/alum\\_mag.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/~alummag/alum_mag.html).*

## ● CHEMICAL REACTION

"A New Day for Science" (Winter 2002-03) made me feel like a man stranded in the desert trying to reach an oasis. The collections of people and equipment in the new Science Center are tantalizing. I worked in the old First Church and in Severance labs when Harry Holmes was chairman of the chemistry department, and I thought [zoology professor] Hope Hibbard was the cat's pajamas. It breaks my heart to be unable to actually see and create chemicals. Organic chemistry was my true love. I can't believe anyone dreaming the impossible about life and science would do less than pound the doors to get into Oberlin's current programs.

Dr. Bruce R. Heinzen '42  
Plandome, N.Y.

## ● DISSECTING DIVERSITY

Oberlin's admission of women and blacks in the 1830s was indeed progressive, but its embrace of affirmative action was regressive. President Nancy Dye ("Inside Oberlin," Winter 2002-03) defends the practice with two arguments. The first is that affirmative action assures diversity, which "in and of itself can enrich the education of every student." While it is true that affirmative action assures diversity, it is also true that we would have a diverse student body without it. Any college with an excellent reputation that welcomes diversity, such as Oberlin, will attract a diverse body of students. But if the mix of students that apply is not politically correct, must we have affirmative action to enforce the "right kind" of diversity? Does diversity enhance the quality of education? Perhaps, but does that mean that schools with less diverse student populations, such as southern black universities, schools that admit only women, or schools with predominantly Jewish students have less to offer? I think not.

President Dye's second argument is that affirmative action helps "redress the still prevalent social and economic inequalities in American life that are rooted in race." Inequality does not imply injustice. The injustice of denying black students admission to college is a thing of the past. Nonetheless, social and economic inequality remains. This

## “ I can't believe anyone dreaming the impossible

would do less than pound the doors to get into Oberlin's current programs. ”

will not be corrected by higher education's utopian efforts to be inclusive; it must begin early on in a child's development and will require generations of cultural change within families and communities. When an academically rigorous institution lowers its standards for admission, but raises them again in performance, students are destined to fail. There is the real injustice.

David J. Marwil '70  
Lexington, Ky.

## ● ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

Robert Naeye's letter (Winter 2002-03) about my article on the alien-encounter phenomenon contains several distortions and inaccuracies. According to Naeye, I "claim" that "aliens are abducting human beings," and I have not provided the physical evidence to prove this. But my expressed concern is not primarily with whether abductions have been taking place in a literal, physical sense. Rather, my article focuses on the larger question of how we are to consider reports of powerful experiences for which the physical evidence is meager and runs counter to the consensus view of what is possible. I do claim that "how we assess the reality of what a person reports in the absence of compelling physical evidence" is important. Naeye rejects intuition and experience as paths to truth and knowledge, leaving us with the impression he believes all human reports must be accompanied by physical evidence to be worthy of scientific consideration.

Naeye suggests that the encounter phenomenon is related to false memories, fantasy proneness, or ideas implanted by people like myself or Budd Hopkins '53. But there is no evidence for any of that. The

experiences are "mysterious and real," and tens of thousands of hours of careful clinical work by many investigators have failed to discover a conventional explanation. Naeye relies on the authority of the majority to bolster his argument. But surely he knows how often in history established authority has been wrong when faced with anomalies that do not fit into an established paradigm. Finally, Naeye offers as evidence the fact that his psychiatrist friend has seen "thousands of patients," and none has ever told him an abduction story. But surely he knows that patients will only share matters to which they feel a therapist is open, especially when these profoundly challenge consensus reality.

John Mack '51  
Cambridge, Mass.

## ● DELIGHTED DAD

I salute you for a consistently well-done publication. From Nancy Dye's remarks to thought-provoking articles that address a range of issues to interesting letters to the editor, it's all

first-class. Our daughter, Anala, who will graduate this May, was "introduced" to Oberlin by Professor Longworth when his family hosted us during Orientation Weekend in 1999. Thus I enjoyed the recent article about him as well as the letter to the editor from Lauren Jacobs '00. Having watched the Ohio State-Miami football game, I also thoroughly enjoyed the letter from Talbot Harding '33, who is perhaps "the last person alive who watched Oberlin beat Ohio State in 1921." How timely a letter! OAM always addresses at least one or two topics in every issue that move me in some way—even the recent alien abduction article by Dr. Mack and Robert Naeye's response to it!

John Miller, parent  
Honesdale, Pa.

