

Close encounters

She's a qualified nurse, midwife and counsellor, but Mary Rodwell has another title to her name – Alien Lady. MELENIE AMBROSE meets a Perth woman who specialises in ET encounters.



NO doubt about it. Mary Rodwell spins a great yarn. First she pulls you in with her prim-and-proper Julie Andrews voice. Then she shocks you with her proclamation that there is a close link between extraterrestrials and sex. "Funnily enough, after sex, UFOs and aliens are the second highest resourced network on the internet," says the 56-year-old mother-of-three and doting grandmother. "People are fascinated by them for some reason."

And people are certainly fascinated with Mary Rodwell. For the past nine years, the registered nurse, certified midwife and professional counsellor says she has been contacted by nearly 1000 people as far afield as Russia, the US and Japan who claim to have been kidnapped by aliens.

Whichever side of the mother ship you stand on, the fact is Rodwell's in demand. In WA more than 600 people have sought help from her Australian Close Encounters Research Network (ACERN). It's the only organisation of its type in Australia and one of a handful worldwide that offers a support network with qualified GPs, psychologists, counsellors and therapists on hand.

"I find a lot of people are living in a secret world of terrifying paranormal experiences," Rodwell says.

"They feel they may be crazy and are too scared to go for conventional help because they're afraid they'll be locked up.

"The misconception is that 'experiencers' are fanatics who believe in anything. Nothing could be further from the truth. They're nurses, lawyers, farmers, school teachers, mums and dads, even children. The last thing they're interested in is UFOs and aliens."

Rodwell offers Perth mum Elizabeth Robinson as a good example. In 1996, the 32-year-old social worker was dumbfounded to discover huge insects had taken up residence in her Mt Lawley home.

"She was thinking she was going crazy until one day, the door bell rang and an old friend walked in," Rodwell says. "The friend said 'Liz, can you see these beings I'm seeing in your lounge room?'"

Robinson wrote of her experience in 1998 in *Secrets, Truth and Destiny*: "What I saw were huge insects, possibly seven feet tall standing right in front of me, in my kitchen. They looked like praying mantis but were standing upright on their back legs. I could not believe what I was confronted with."

Every two months ACERN members with similarly bizarre stories gather at Rodwell's Hills property for a "therapeutic session". They openly share details of their close encounters. Some members are referrals from Rodwell's old stomping ground, Murdoch University, where for five years she was a committee member of the Australasian Society for Psychical Research. She still lectures there occasionally.

"I come from a medical and scientific background, so I question everything," Rodwell says.

"People in the UFO field are often seen as gullible.

Mary Rodwell, who offers professional counselling to people who believe they have had an alien encounter. Picture: Richard Hatherly

Rochelle D'Elia, far right, who is a member of ACERN.

Encounter-inspired artwork by D'Elia, from left: *Organism, Universal and Sense.*

Pictures: Richard Hatherly



I say I'm open-minded but that doesn't equate to being gullible."

One of ACERN's members is 28-year-old Rochelle D'Elia. The daughter of a Methodist minister, she grew up in a conservative household on a small hobby farm in Byford. In her teens, she dismissed UFOs as "stupid, dumb and boring". That all changed in the late '90s after some odd events in her West Perth home.

"I found myself waking around 3am every morning with pain, like electric shocks, all over my body," she says. "I would go into convulsions and in the morning find strange small markings, cuts and bright red marks on my hands, face and body."

D'Elia, who says she does not take drugs and rarely drinks alcohol, vividly remembers the night's visitors.

"It was mainly the 'greys', small ones with withered bodies and large foreheads that tapered down into a small chin. They have almond-shaped eyes, very black, that almost go on forever. They've got long fin-

He had giant red fingermarks around his wrists and arms

gers with pads on the end like frogs. There were other ones that were taller and had a cloak-type uniform."

The artist, now living in a beachside suburb, also remembers visiting a craft: "The craft was luminous, a sort of whitish silver. No hard edges, everything smooth, everything merging into the walls. And inside, there were people upright in glass cylinders."

If your "what the" meter is now firmly locked on extreme, D'Elia has this to say: "People might say it's an attention-seeking thing but it makes my life more difficult in heaps of ways. I could choose something a lot easier than an ET to get attention or to fit in."

"I would just say to people you're never going to explain everything and why would you want to?"

For Rodwell, D'Elia's story is classic ET-profile material. She's received hundreds of similar reports from people in City Beach, Wanneroo, Tuart Hill, Fremantle, Mandurah, Toodyay, the Hills and beyond.

"People wake up and they're aware something or someone is in the room," Rodwell says. "They often hear a loud buzzing; there may be a strange light they can't explain. They are paralysed, literally, terrified."

She has drawings of at least 40 different beings from experiencers ranging from D'Elia's 1.2m "greys" to Robinson's praying mantis creatures that can be 2m to 5m tall. Others are reptilian, some lion-like or robotic and then there's the dapper "Men in Black".

Rodwell says she's been told of different types of craft too. There's the classic flying saucer shape, cylindrical and box-shaped, even triangular ships.

"The one image of a craft that always blows me away is in a medieval painting called *The Baptism of Christ* by Flemish artist Aert de Gelder," Rodwell says. "Hovering above is a saucer-shaped craft and I use the painting in my presentations to show how ETs have been coming here throughout history."

There's a French medal dated 1680 that commemorates the sighting of a "wheel-like object". Another painting from Kosovo from 1350 shows Jetsons-like skycars with alien drivers. There's even a painting of a UFO sighting over Windsor Castle in 1783.

Add to that, supposed photographic evidence of wayward craft; mass eyewitness sightings around the globe and the mother of all ET encounters at Roswell in the US – a crashed craft, alien bodies, presidential intervention and a massive military cover-up.

"They are keeping an eye on us," muses Rodwell. "They are assisting us right now with our evolution."

"People who've had experiences are more open-minded. They'll often change their diet, become very environmentally aware and interested in healing professions. They say they're taught on the craft that human beings have to wake up. They have to understand how they're destroying the planet."

However, Rodwell says she's never had her own "experience" where she's locked eyes with a 5m praying mantis or withered "grey". Nevertheless, she says she's got her galaxy passport at the ready if they come knocking. It's a fascination with the mysterious that's haunted Rodwell much of her adventurous life.

She was born Mary Sherry in 1949 in Staffordshire, England, and her father was a chief technician with the Royal Air Force. Her mother, Iris, was an actress before giving it away to have seven children.

"Mum was the best storyteller," Rodwell says. "I was exposed to all sorts of weird and wonderful things like spirits, astrology and science fiction. Mum believed anything was possible and she gave me that message."

But it wasn't until 1991, after migrating to Perth from Norfolk, UK, that Rodwell began delving into the paranormal in earnest. Up until then, she had focused on nursing and midwifery, gaining double qualifications in both professions by the age of 23.

"I'd just gone into private practice in City Beach and was doing an advanced counselling course," says Rodwell. Then one day a painter came to see her.

"He told how he'd woken up with marks on his body that he couldn't explain. He had giant red fingermarks around his wrists and arms, a large drawing of a lion-like being on his left side and a shaved area on his leg."

Being familiar with Harvard psychologist Dr John E. Mack's book *Abduction – Human Encounters With Aliens* – in which Mack says 5 per cent of the US population have experienced Alien Abduction Syndrome – gave Rodwell an insight into the painter's experience.

But, with no ACERN yet in existence, she could find no leads for helping those dealing with paranormal or extraordinary encounters.

Since that first encounter story, Rodwell's life has changed vastly. She's written a book (*Awakening – How Extraterrestrial Contact Can Transform Your Life*) and countless papers and produced two award-winning videos cataloguing ET experiences. Her specialisation in ET languages and symbols is a big drawcard at UFO conferences.

Her next project is Star Children phenomena – investigating super-gifted, seemingly psychic, children, now gaining notoriety in Mexico, China and Europe. Video shows them using telekinesis (mind powers) to open flower buds and move objects.

"These are highly intelligent kids with creative, healing and clairvoyant abilities," Rodwell says. "They can articulate knowledge and awareness of deep spiritual concepts, historical, anthropological and scientific data, beyond anything they've learnt at school."

Like all good paranormal investigations, the game's not over until the evidence is found.

"It's like joining the dots of the universe to see what picture it's going to make," Rodwell says. "Before I die, I would like to have at least some of the answers to some of our greatest mysteries." *

■ Contact ACERN on 9454 3702 or hit www.acern.com.au.
Mary Rodwell can be reached at www.maryrodwell.com.