



Jason Colavito

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Note: This article is an expanded version of a post that first appeared on my blog in July 2014.

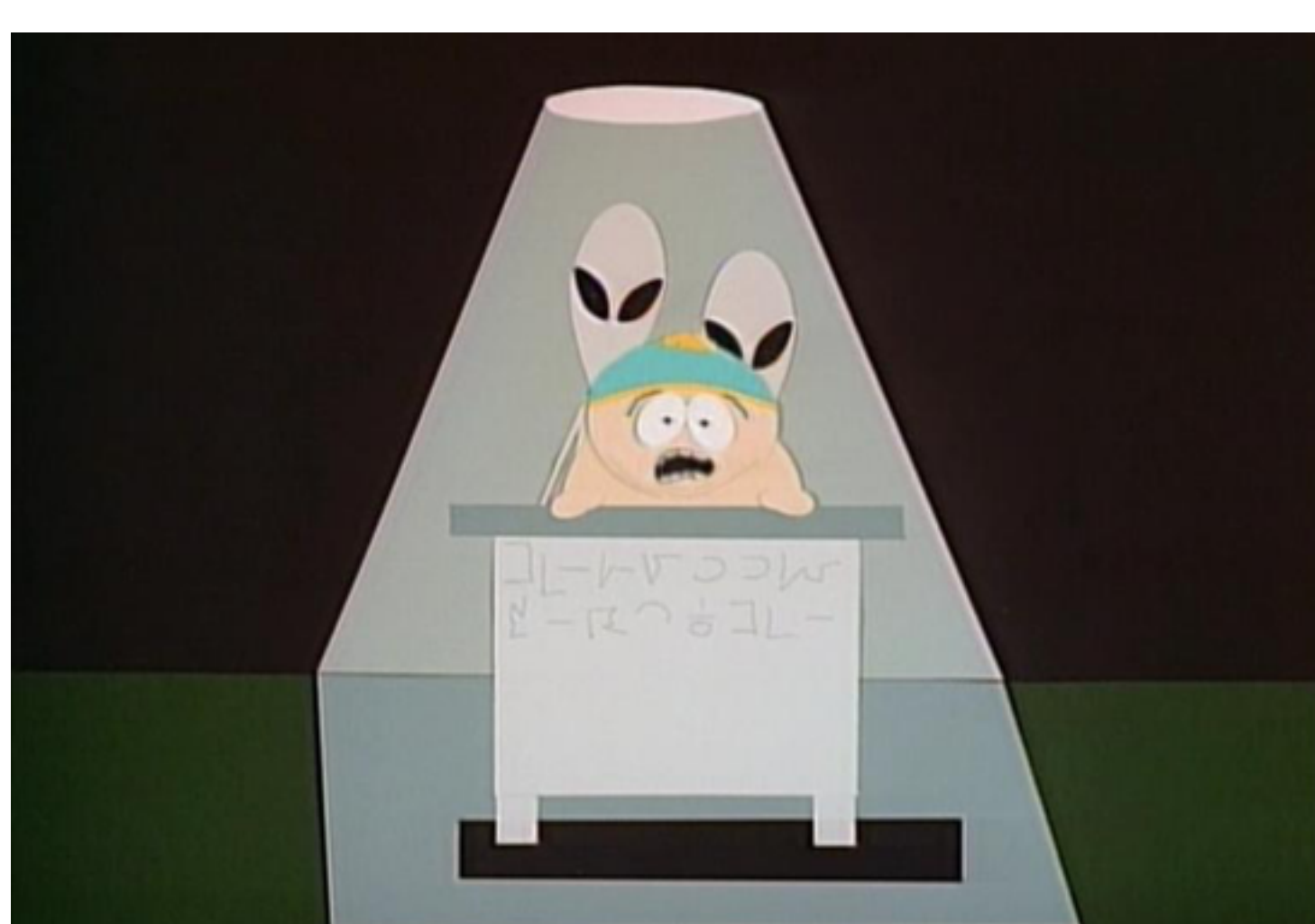
The alien anal probe has become such a cliché that it now stands as synecdoche for the entirety of the alien abduction experience. From the pilot episode of *South Park* to a second season episode of *Supernatural*, anal probing has also been the—ahem—butt of many jokes. Even the musical parodist Weird Al Yankovic sang in his 2014 song “Foil” about the need for tinfoil hats “in case an alien’s inclined / to probe your butt or read your mind.”

Why it is that aliens want to probe our butts; or, more specifically, when exactly did people start claiming that aliens gave them anal probes? This may seem to be a silly question, but silly questions often end up revealing hidden layers and secrets. In this case, asking the uncomfortable question of why aliens are so interested in anal orifices reveals a fascinating story about the dark side of the alien abduction media industry and its effects on those who participate in it.

Anal probes are now such an established part of the UFO phenomenon that you’d think there would be a clear answer to when the aliens started probing unwary humans. Many UFO books written after 1992 refer to it, and many of the most recent simply assume that it’s a standard extraterrestrial medical procedure during an abduction, but surprisingly no one has yet created a definitive catalog of anal probing events or a timeline of when they supposedly started. Even the otherwise exhaustive Wikipedia lacks an entry for alien anal probes. In a world where there are two competing online databases of movie defecation scenes, this seems like an unusual omission for so famous an abduction trope. There must be something more to the story.

Barney Hill's Anal Adventure

Ufology isn’t much help in the matter. In his *A UFO Hunter's Guide* (2012), Brad Lueder simply denies that there were any anal probes, dismissing the formulation as “misinterpreted and misunderstood” sexual experiments on board alien craft. He’s wrong, of course, but it shows that some ufologists want to distance themselves from what Lueder calls the “sneers and jokes” of “modern popular culture.” On the other hand, author Zen Beniefel self-published a book called *Alien Agendas and Anal Probes* (2014) that promised to investigate “the science behind the anal probes” and what these probes can tell us about why the aliens are really here. But his book isn’t a history so much as New Age-influenced fringe speculation, so it is of limited use in peeling back the layers of the abduction experience.



Scene from “Cartman Gets an Anal Probe”

While under hypnosis in 1964 Barney Hill actually did claim that he had been anally probed three years earlier, but because that claim was not included in *The Interrupted Journey* (1965), the account by Dr. John G. Fuller of the hypnotic regression he performed on the Hills, this claim was not generally known until a 1965 report by NICAP investigator Walter Webb was popularized much later. In that report, Webb stated that during the hypnotic regression, Barney Hill stated that “A cylindrical object was inserted up the rectum, and once again the witness believed something was extracted.” Fuller left this out of the book, along with a claim by Hill that a cup was used to extract sperm.

As I have [previously demonstrated](#), nearly all of the imagery Barney Hill used to describe his alien encounter closely paralleled imagery from three episodes of the classic *Outer Limits* television series that aired in the three weeks immediately preceding his hypnosis session. Although Hill started hypnosis in January 1964, his claims about the appearance and activities of the aliens begin on February 22, 1964, just after the episodes of February 3, 10, and 17 aired, all of which share elements of Hill’s statements. The aliens’ appearance—wearing black leather jackets—parallels the aliens seen in the *Twilight Zone* episode “Black Leather Jackets” on January 31, 1964. Further, none of this imagery appears in claims Hill and his wife made about their abduction prior to the hypnosis session.

In the February 3 episode “The Invisibles,” invisible aliens performed surgical experiments on humans who, like Barney Hill, were lying face down on a table. In “The Invisibles” a crab-like alien monster with a long, tube-like tail is placed on a supine human’s back, and the tail enters the human’s back to inject an invisible parasite. Hill’s anal probe is a reasonably nightmarish inference from the alien tube of the broadcast original, especially since the framing of the scene, with clenched teeth and hands gripping the edge of the table suggests the imagery of sexual violation.



Scene from “The Invisibles”

But because Hill’s claims of anal violation were not published until decades later, the general public was not aware of them. We do not find that other abductees of the 1960s claimed anal probing. Therefore, we can narrow down a bit further when the trope reached the general public. In 1994 John E. Mack’s *Abduction* described a tube inserted in the rectum as part of alien abduction and reported that under hypnosis an abductee named Peter said he was anally probed and that “These guys don’t know how to touch people ... like get some bedside manner.” What a contrast from Betty and Barney Hill! Barney Hill had told his hypnotist that “I wish I had gone with them ... Oh, what an experience to go to some distant planet. ... Maybe this will prove the existence of God.” By 1994, abductions and anal probes had become blasé.

Toward a Science of Anal Probing

In 1992, David M. Jacobs claimed in *Secret Life* that aliens conducted rectal examinations with an instrument shaped like a wire whisk. Also in 1992, UFO researcher Karla Turner [defined](#) anal probing as one of the key elements of an alien abduction: “genitalia and anal probes are performed, on children as well as adults.” She said “numerous” reports confirmed anal probing.

So let’s go back still further to horror fiction writer Whitley Strieber’s *Communion* (1987), widely considered to be the most influential alien abduction account, even though Strieber did not specifically identify the creatures that abducted him as space aliens. He was almost certainly familiar with the Hill abduction material before he wrote his book, and in 1989 he even recorded the audiobook of *The Interrupted Journey*. Although he never uses the phrase “anal probing” in recounting what he supposedly “remembered” of his 1985 alien abduction while undergoing hypnotic regression, he does discuss the aliens violating him anally:

“ Soon I was in more intimate surroundings once again. There were clothes strewn about, and two of the stocky ones drew my legs apart. The next thing I knew I was being shown an enormous and extremely ugly object, gray and scaly, with a sort of network of wires on the end. It was at least a foot long, narrow, and triangular in structure. They inserted this thing into my rectum. It seemed to swarm into me as if it had a life of its own. Apparently its purpose was to take samples, possibly of fecal matter, but at the time I had the impression I was being raped, and for the first time I felt anger.

Before his death, the painter and ufologist Budd Hopkins—who consulted with Strieber before he wrote *Communion*—took the rape analogy still further and argued that the actual procedure is not, as Strieber suggested, to collect a stool sample but rather electroejaculation stimulation to collect a semen sample through prostate stimulation. Hopkins had become convinced that aliens had a reproductive agenda, not a scatological one.

Hopkins claims to have spoken with people who say they were anally probed in the 1970s. However these claims were made after Strieber’s, as evidenced from Hopkins’s first UFO book, *Missing Time* (1981), in which probing was discussed, but not up the ass. Curiously, the aliens seemed uninterested in asses between 1965 and 1987.

Instead, Hopkins told of the hypnotic revelations of Betty Andreasson who claimed to have been abducted in 1967. She was hypnotized in the late 1970s, when she revealed the probing: “Oh! He’s putting that thing in my nose. [...] He had that thing up in my head!” Sandy Larson, hypnotized in 1975, similarly reported nasal probing to Hopkins. Virginia Horton, in 1979, also claimed under hypnosis to have had a nasal probing. For what it’s worth, Horton’s nasal “probe” (it was “a nice smooth texture,” looked like “a microphone,” and hummed) seems to be the model for the anal probe of later literature. After her nasal probing, Horton was treated to a party with the aliens, complete with electronic music and gossip about dating. What she learned at the party about the aliens’ research program, she said, was “one of those things people like to deal with in science fiction themes.”

Things changed once Strieber published his account in 1987. That same year saw the famous 1987 MUFON convention at American University that triggered national headlines (including in the *Washington Post*) when several abductees told their stories of aliens experimenting on them. That claim is common enough; the famous 1970s abductee Travis Walton also described a medical examination like those of the Hills and Vilas-Boas, which is not surprising since his alleged abduction occurred not long after he viewed an NBC TV-movie on the Hill abduction. But just as the movie did not include an anal probe, Walton does not have one either. Budd Hopkins—again!—was back in 1987 with a new book called *Intruders*, in which he introduced more hypnosis evidence, this time of gynecological examinations—vaginal probes. (He tended to focus heavily on violations of women.) It was a big year for probing, but once again, there wasn’t any anal probing except for Strieber.

It seems therefore that Strieber must be the direct source for claims of anal probing made after 1987. After his book—and especially after the 1992 film version of *Communion*, with its famous scene of Christopher Walken receiving a writhing, phallic anal probe—the number of references to anal probing multiplied exponentially in the literature, including a rising number of people in the 1990s who claimed to have been so probed. As early as 1990 *Mademoiselle* magazine reported that *Communion* had already inspired a “cult” of believers who started reporting similar abductions. The movie, however, seems to be the most important source for making anal probes a standard part of the abduction experience, at least in its pop culture form, but it’s interesting that the stereotypical anal probe is closer in description to the nasal vibrator of the 1970s than to the scaly pseudo-penis of Strieber’s version. It is an interesting question whether the throbbing, thrashing probe he described lacked the technological sophistication abductees had come to expect from their alien overlords. Unfortunately, science has yet to explore this question.

Aliens Absconding with Animals' Anuses

Yet there must be something more to justify the widespread and near immediate adoption of anal probing between 1987 and 1994. Other aspects of *Communion* did not become commonplace, such as the clothes-strewn dressing room. It is possible that the trope appealed to preexisting ideas about aliens’ anal interest from the previous decade, when claims that unusual deaths of livestock around the country—famously dubbed “cattle mutilations”—became associated with aliens. In those claims, too, the aliens are said to be particularly interested in anuses. Newspaper accounts from the 1970s asked whether UFOs were responsible for the supposed mutilation, and according to [FBI files](#) from the 1970s, sexual organs were among the most frequently reported subjects of mutilation. The FBI had been asked to investigate cattle mutilations at the request of U.S. Sen. Floyd K. Haskell. The Bureau explained in 1975 that they lacked jurisdiction and that their experts concluded that scavengers simply ate the soft tissues first.

Sen. Haskell wouldn’t take no for an answer and in 1979 gave the FBI jurisdiction over cattle mutilations by helping pass a law to do so. He also seems to have been involved in popularizing the aliens’ taste for cow rectum. In an August 29, 1975 letter to the FBI on official U.S. Senate letterhead, he wrote that as part of the “bizarre mutilations” that the “rectum and sex organs of each animal has (sic) been cut away.” Media accounts from the era also tended to focus on, as *OUI* magazine put it in 1976, “the anus ... cow vulvas and bull dongles.” Decades later, the chupacabra (itself a myth created by a [combination of a sci-fi movie with folklore](#)) would take over many of the aspects of the cattle mutilation myth, leading Lynn Picknett to report in the *Mammoth Book of UFOs* (2001) that the chupacabra not only was witnessed entering passing UFOs (or could be an alien itself) but also was involved in anally probing its victims: “Sometimes the rectal area showed evidence of having been probed.”

The emphasis on sexual organs and the anus in the 1970s immediately attracted claims that sexual perverts (or “weirdos,” as *OUI* put it) were behind the mutilations. Once UFOs were suggested as an explanation for the cattle mutilations, it must have logically followed that aliens were interested in sex organs in general and the anus in particular. If the aliens were removing cow anuses with “surgical precision,” then they must logically want to probe abductees’ asses, too. This association occurred just before the rise of claims that aliens wanted sperm samples or gestational carriers to make hybrid children—claims that folklorist Thomas E. Bullard noted first occur in the work of Budd Hopkins and John E. Mack, who by his own admission built on Hopkins’s work. But, again, this focused on reproductive organs rather than asses.

Ufologist Dr. R. Leo Sprinkle specifically connected cattle mutilation to the abduction phenomenon, apparently in the early 1987 (if friend journalist Linda Moulton-Howe can be trusted to have reported this accurately), so it seems he is partially to blame for shifting the aliens’ anal interest from animals to abductees at the perfect moment in time, right when Whitley Strieber decided to tell the world that the aliens were also interested in his ass. Sprinkle reported that under hypnosis in 1987 a woman named Judy Doraty claimed to have witnessed a cattle mutilation in 1973 while she was a passenger on a UFO, though she described only mutilated sex organs, not an anus. Nevertheless, this appears to be the first connection between animal and human abductions as part of the same “phenomenon.”

Probing Questions about 1980s Culture

It is interesting to note that anal probing enters ufology as a form of (primarily) male rape, and that this occurs in the late 1980s at the height of the AIDS crisis when penetrative male on male sexuality was heavily stigmatized as a carrier of disease and therefore something to dread. Notice that Strieber described his probing as essentially a rape and that the penile device was thrusting within him as though it were a living phallus. I’m not the only one to make this connection; several books from the 1990s drew a parallel between alien anal probes and AIDS fears.

Similarly, stories of anal probing don’t seem to become common before the invention of colonoscopies in June 1969. The procedure gradually expanded in use in the 1970s, though generally only after a colon cancer diagnosis, so it was still largely off-camera to most Americans of the era. It did not become a procedure widely used for the general public as a preventative measure until after—wait for it—January 1987, when Ronald Reagan famously underwent the procedure to remove polyps from his colon. Shortly after colonoscopies had their moment in the sun, aliens seem to have decided to make use of the same technology. It doesn’t seem like this gives enough time for Strieber to be influenced by it, given the long lead time on books, but it must have helped make it one of the key details from his book that subsequent abductees seized upon.