

The REALL News

The official newsletter of the Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land

"It's a very dangerous thing to believe in nonsense." — James Randi

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Why Nightmares Are Good

Part 2: The Misinterpretation of Dreams

by Bob Ladendorf

Author's Note: While completing the second part, the horrible attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. occurred. This terrorist act is a "nightmare" of the worst kind. The nightmares that I refer to in this article, though, are strictly those of the individual dreamer.

The function of dreams is poorly understood. - Owen Flanagan

In Part 1 ("The Sentinel,") I hypothesized that during sleep two external stimuli — tingling hands that restricted blood circulation caused by the head lying on them and the need to urinate — triggered nightmares that were created by the sleeper to wake up. My primary evidence was a journal documenting two years of nightmares that I experienced.

This hypothesis stands as an alternative one, at least in part, to the two major theories of dreams currently recognized - Freud's repressed wishes and the neurological "activation-synthesis" hypothesis involving subjective awareness of dreaming.

Although Freud is best known for psychoanalytical dream analysis — the interpretation of dreams, he also touched on the external stimulus aspect. However, he did not place much value on it. "The function of the dream as a guardian of sleep," he said in *On Dreams*, "becomes particularly evident when an external stimulus impinges upon the senses of a sleeper. It is generally recognized that sensory stimuli arising during sleep influence the content of dreams; this can be proved experimentally and is among the few certain (but, incidentally, greatly overvalued) findings of medical investigation into dreams." He goes on to say that the sleeper can get rid of the external stimulus by waking up or continuing to sleep and subjecting dreams about the stimulus to different interpretations. Freud terms dreams that wake us instead of helping us sleep as "marginal cases." (Freud, p. 68)

Freud has touched on my important hypothesis after all, but he missed the significance of dreams that wake us up. We need those creative nightmares from which to awake.

The Misinterpretation of Dreams

Everyone hallucinates, whether from dreams, sleep deprivation, psychological conditions such as schizophrenia, drugs, or food poisoning.

"A common, although insufficiently well-known, psychological syndrome rather like alien abduction," Carl Sagan said, "is called sleep paralysis. Many people experience it. It happens in that twilight world between being fully awake and fully asleep. For a few minutes, maybe longer, you're immobile and acutely anxious. You feel a weight on your chest as if some being is sitting or lying there. Your heartbeat is quick, your breathing labored. You may experience auditory or visual hallucinations — of people, demons, ghosts, animals, or birds." (Sagan, p.109)

Does dreaming of such entities as demons and ghosts prove that the paranormal world indeed exists? I don't think so, and here's why.

Does dreaming of such entities as demons and ghosts prove that the paranormal world indeed exists? I don't think so, and here's why.

To interpret means to provide *an* explanation. Because the dream content is available to the dreamer only, any recollection of it is subject to any number of interpretations, or explanations. The problem with interpretation then, of course, is that misinterpretation of a dream is a likely outcome. If Occam's razor is applied and the simplest explanation is just more probable,

then psychological and neurological interpretations of the meaning of the content of dreams should be approached skeptically. After all, dream interpretation has been with us throughout history from early Egyptian dynasties.

"Since antiquity dreams have been viewed as a source of divination, as a form of reality, as a curative force, and as an extension or adjunct of the waking state. Psychoanalytical theo-

("Nightmares" continued on page 6)



In This Issue

Why Nightmares Are Good, Part 2.....	1
John Edward and the "Energy Place"	3
<i>Quantum Leaps</i> Separates Science & Pseudoscience	4
Psychic Parasites	5

Purpose

The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe-science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL does not reject paranormal claims on *a priori* grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

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From the Chairman:

By David Bloomberg

As you will see later in this issue, with my article on "Psychic Parasites," I am disgusted with the way certain people have taken advantage of the terrorist attacks of September 11. In fact, I originally intended that article to be my Chairman's column, but it grew so long I decided to keep it separate. I also thought about making it the topic of this month's meeting, but I am still angry enough that I don't think that would be a good idea. As much as we emphasize rational thought, I decided I'd better do my best to cool down before even considering a talk on such a topic.

Instead we will go with the topic we were planning to have – which happens to fit nicely with Bob Ladendorf's second article on nightmares. See the back page for details.

In September, we had our annual Skeptic Jeopardy game. The team of Jim, Clark, and Bob won with 400 points to the – 1200 of their opponents. It was a lot of fun, and everybody learned something too. For example, did you know that Richard Hoagland, of "face on Mars" fame, thought that the loss of the Mars Polar Lander was actually a sacrifice to the goddess Isis? Or that he blames his heart attack (but not the Cubs failure to win a World Series) on a government conspiracy? If you had been at Skeptic Jeopardy, you would have found out about these and more.

That's about all I have for now, since I'm pretty well drained for the moment. See you on Tuesday!

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John Edward and the "Energy Place"

by Bob Ladendorf

The other day, I ran into a Nonnie Mussource, and she told me that psychic John Edward, who REALLY does see dead people, would reap a bonanza from the relatives of the World Trade Center victims. I told her how disgusted I was that she could even think about that at a time like this. She just shrugged her shoulders and said, "Just you wait and see!"

So I decided to take a closer look at this psychic PHENOM, who appeared recently on the Larry King Show. The title of the show was "Talking to the Dead." Knowing from Mr. King's fine performance on the show where 16 or so people who REALLY do see ghosts were pitted against two skeptics, James Randi and Michael Shermer, I wasn't rushing for the videotape. Mr. King managed to fawn over the ghost groupies while Randi and Shermer had about three minutes each for the whole hour in which to debunk ghost sightings.

Right off the bat, I have to say that I have to admire John Edward because I have never seen anybody cram so many words into a minute since one of my aunts accomplished that some 30 years ago. His delivery taxed my transcription ability and left me exhausted. Sometimes, I had to scratch my head as I tried to figure out what he said. Such as this:

King: Doesn't it drive you nuts if you see Grandma Ethel behind every person walking down the street?

Edward: OK. Me. Uh. It does happen. It is a little...because there is a responsibility of do I say something or do I not say anything. It's delicate. There's a responsibility here. What that person's not in the position to be able to receive that.

Nonnie: Huh?

I guess he was saying that he sees dead people all around but doesn't want to spook everybody. Curious, because a little later in the interview, he says, "I don't see them. I get images in my head. It's like playing psychic charades."

Nonnie: Huh?

King presses him on what he sees. Edward replies that he saw them in the beginning, but not now - he sees "flashes, pictures, thoughts."

So in just a few minutes, he acknowledges seeing dead people over the shoulders of relatives, then he says he doesn't see them - he gets images, and then he comments that he saw them in the beginning but now he sees "flashes, pictures, thoughts."

Just before that, King asks him where the dead people are, and Edward replies, "They are in an energy place."

Nonnie: Huh? That sounds like a health club.

Looking into the past

So who is this guy? John Edward is 31, comes from Long Island, claims to have this ability since he was 15, debuted last year with his show *Crossing Over* on the Science Fiction Channel, has written a book of the same name (which uses the back cover blurb to slam skeptics - *Ed.*), and now has his show on network TV. The American Dream! He appears with groups on TV and has private \$300 sessions.

Nonnie: Edward rattles off question after question in a breakneck pace and sometimes appears to hit on some poor schmuck's dead relative.

What he does is cold reading, even though he denied it on the Larry King Show. Edward told King that he didn't "mike" the audience beforehand either.

"It's a trick," says Joe Nickell, senior research fellow for the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Nickell told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that the trick "preys upon the gullibility and emotions of the sitter."

"So what's wrong with telling people what they want to hear?" asks the newspaper.

"The problem," Nickell says, "is that they're not being made aware of the deception, and it becomes a crutch. It keeps people from actually reaching the closure they need to get on with their lives."

Questions, questions, questions

During the show, King and Edward banter for awhile before taking 11 phone calls - nine from women and two from men. Edward immediately dismisses one female caller from Dublin, Georgia, because he couldn't get a reading - it was perhaps the next caller. The next caller, Carol from Washington, Indiana, appears perplexed when Edward pursues with her that there are "cows" that are important to her! She keeps saying "no" and brings her husband to the phone, who appears to be even more perplexed. Another caller is cut off, but they weren't

("Edward" continued on page 7)



Nobody ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the common people.

— H.L. Mencken

Quantum Leaps Separates Science & Pseudoscience

by David Bloomberg

The way in which the media report scientific discoveries these days can sometimes make it difficult to tell real science from pseudoscience – ideas that try to claim the mantle of science but don't actually have the proper backing. For example, the same television show featuring a DNA analysis and medical evidence from an unsolved crime might move into the next segment in which a man with impressive-sounding credentials talks about aliens that crashed in New Mexico some five decades ago. So how is a person to know what is real science and what isn't?

Charles Wynn, Sr., and Arthur Wiggins are trying to help answer that question with their new book, *Quantum Leaps in the Wrong Direction: Where Real Science Ends... and Pseudoscience Begins* (Joseph Henry Press, \$18.95). Illustrated by well-known science cartoonist Sidney Harris, this book is meant to be a primer for those who are not science professors like the authors, but who want to understand what good science is and is not.

Most of this book focuses on the pseudoscience aspect. The authors begin by looking at the Heaven's Gate cult suicide – the result of pseudoscience, they say. The discovery of the Hale-Bopp comet was good science. After the two men for which it was named originally discovered the comet, other scientists replicated that discovery to validate it.

But Marshall Applewhite, leader of the Heaven's Gate cult, claimed a gigantic alien spaceship was coming along with the comet. A couple members of the group tried to find the comet through a telescope. When they could not, they returned the telescope but continued to believe. As the authors note, "Clinging to this belief cost them their lives."

This is one group the authors hope to reach with this book – not the dead cultists, but those who already have beliefs that are at odds with science. They hope that those people will see that beliefs based on incorrect evidence need to be reviewed and revised. That is what science is all about.

Many people think science is just for the laboratory. They may not realize that they use a variant of scientific procedure almost every day. The authors use an example of a person who hears a sound in the middle of the night. Was it a family pet knocking something over? Could be – that is a reasonable hypothesis. But what if checking it out finds that the pet is sleeping peacefully and nothing is knocked over? The person must revise his hypothesis and look for more evidence. After gathering more evidence – such as an open window or missing stereo equipment, they may decide it's time to call 911.

This is pretty much the way science works. Pseudoscience, on the other hand, might suggest that because there is no evidence, the noise must have been made by ghosts, who then disappeared when the person came looking. Or maybe it was alien beings. Or... The possibilities are almost endless when the evidence is ignored.

But most people are more exposed to pseudoscience than

to real science. The authors say the five most widely-believed ideas that are claimed to be scientific are: UFOs and alien abductions, ghosts and near-death experiences, astrology, creationism, and ESP. Gallup poll results released this month support much of this, indicating that 50% of those asked believe in ESP, 42% believe in hauntings, 33% believe in alien visitation, and 28% believe in astrology. They cover these five topics in depth, along with shorter discussions devoted to related ideas.

In each category, they talk about the supposed scientific backing and explain why the claims simply do not add up to real science. One amusing claim relates to Springfield's own Lincoln family. In the section on ghosts the authors discuss William H. Mummler, a Boston, Massachusetts, man who claimed to have taken a photo of Mary Todd Lincoln standing by herself. But when he developed the picture, Abraham Lincoln's "spirit" appeared. Mind you, this was in 1862 – three years before Lincoln died – so his spirit apparently only left his body temporarily to be in the photo.

Among other areas, the authors explain why psychic readings seem to work and even risk a lawsuit (if history is any guide) by specifically stating that Uri Geller – who is famous for supposedly bending silverware with his mind – "simply bends the objects when no one is watching." They continue: "That he can fool so many people is a tribute to sleight-of-hand artistry, not psychic power."

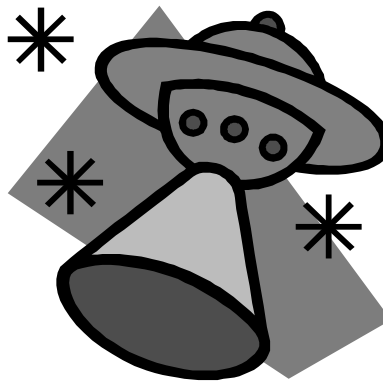
But many may question the usefulness of this book. After all, what's the harm in believing pseudoscience? For one thing, that question could be answered with the Heaven's Gate cult

mentioned earlier. But even beyond that extreme example, the authors discuss the money given to fund ill-conceived ideas or con artists, spent on quack medical claims, etc. These dollars could be put to better use in supporting real scientific or medical advances. And we shouldn't forget that people's own health can suffer from going to one of the aforementioned quacks or con artists instead of getting real help.

The book closes with a reprint of what may be the best scientific cartoon ever made. Two scientists stand at a blackboard that is filled with complex mathematical calculations. In the middle of all of these are the words, "Then a miracle occurs." One scientist says to the other, "I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Unfortunately, it's not so funny when pseudoscientists try to make scientific claims using essentially that same reasoning. They may couch it in weighty terms, but it all comes down to the same thing – when they don't have evidence, they have to retreat to miracles. Miracles are not science, and Wynn, Wiggins, and Harris do an admirable job of showing precisely what the difference is.

[This article originally appeared in the State Journal-Register (Springfield, IL) and is reprinted by the author's permission.]



Psychic Parasites

by David Bloomberg

As I write this, it is exactly two weeks after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. The anger at these actions is still palpable, but it is slowly being overwhelmed in me by the anger at some fellow Americans.

I am talking about those who prey on death, who prey on the fear of death, who prey on the grieving. I am talking about the James Van Praags, the John Edwards, the Sylvia Brownes of the world. They make their money by selling their false visions to a public that is all-too-willing to believe. They put out best-selling books full of nonsense, have highly-rated television show, and are supported by fawning talk-show hosts.

One of these, John Edward, appears in these pages this month because of one of his appearances with Larry King. Edward also has a new book out and, as Bob Ladendorf indicated in his article, I would not at all be surprised to see a "special" World Trade Center victim edition of his show, which has moved from the Science Fiction Channel to syndication across the country.

So far, though, the one who has earned my complete disgust is Sylvia Browne. Like Edward and Van Praagh, Browne claims to talk to the dead. But she also is in the business of making predictions. Needless to say, she didn't predict this horrible tragedy. But she is trying to make money off of it. Other than those who perpetrated this attack, I can think of nothing more heinous than that. I consider her to be a parasite, feeding off of the blood of her victims.

I realize these are strong words. That is one reason I waited until the last possible minute to pen them – I wanted to give myself time to think them over. But instead of calming down, I found myself growing ever angrier at Browne and people like her.

Allow me to explain exactly what Browne did. After the attack, Browne set up a pop-up screen on her website. This screen came up whenever anybody went to her homepage. The text noted that Browne had not predicted these attacks because she is not "omniscient." Well, that's as good an excuse as any. But then it went on to state that she had, indeed, predicted terrorist attacks for 1999. So she said her timing was just off. She failed to mention, by the way, that her 1999 prediction was for terrorism in London and Florida. So she was two years off and wasn't even *close* to the actual locations. Yet she's trying to claim some sort of "hit" for this? Forget, for a moment, the fact that she's trying to take advantage of a horrible situation for her own personal gain. She's still trying to claim an accurate prediction where there is absolutely no way it could be interpreted that way! Add to this the fact that she's using the deaths of thousands of people to do this and, well, you see my cause for disgust.

But wait, there's more. On that pop-up, she informed readers that she had gotten some important information (implying, but not stating outright, that it came from the spirit realm). Osama bin Laden "and another group" is behind it. Really?! Wow. What a revelation. I'm sure glad we had her around to tell us that. Better call the FBI and CIA to alert them. She also provided a couple of Arabic-sounding names which she

claimed we should "watch for." And claimed we should be aware of "Triad of Jordan" and "Palestinian Republic of Burundi." She also claimed, "A weapon or bomb known as the 'Z' was involved with the aircraft." The Z? Last I checked, boxcutters and knives were not referred to as anything other than, well, boxcutters and knives. All of these were part of the standard ploy of throwing some things out and hoping that one of them sticks. The others, of course, will be forgotten. (For more on this technique, see Bob's article on John Edwards in this issue.)

Now we get to the really bad part. At the bottom of this pop-up was an advertisement for readers to pay her up to \$4867 to "take a **sacred journey** with Sylvia to **Greece and Turkey.**" (Emphasis in original.) Mind you, this was not just some ad that happened to be on a page that her prediction was on. I wouldn't expect people to pull ads that normally appeared on their websites just because they were discussing the tragedy. This was an ad in a pop-up screen that was specifically designed to capitalize on the deaths of thousands of people.

But who am I to judge her? After all, her webpage says she "is truly on a mission for God. Simply put, she is determined to show the world that the soul survives death." Apparently, she does this by advertising cruises and taking advantage of those very deaths. She also says she "feels that all people can reach God by knowledge and reason, rather than relying upon faith alone." Baloney. Whenever reason has been tried with her, it has failed, just as she has.

Her incorrect prediction about terrorism was only the tip of the iceberg. In her list of 1999 predictions, we see the usual meaningless pap (such as "Tornadoes do great damage in Illinois in April and May"), but we also see that the U.S. was supposed to have called for an air attack on Iran in July. There should have been Embassies attacked in Egypt and South Africa in July. Breast cancer should have become "absolutely preventable and cured by year's end."

For 2000, she predicted another Democratic president, a thwarted airline hijacking out of Florida in August, Courtney Cox (of *Friends*) getting pregnant and having a baby boy, and David Letterman quitting his show.

But if you want to have a personal reading, which I'm sure is *just as good* as these predictions, you can have one over the phone for just \$700. Wow, what a bargain!

Of course, Browne was not the only parasite. Others followed in close pursuit. But she is certainly the most well-known. Closely behind these sorts of people are those who started circulating the Nostradamus claims or the numerological "11" e-mails shortly after the attack. The Nostradamus ones were dispelled quickly and easily on various sites (one prediction was cited as being about 100 years after he died!), but Nostradamus books still sold out of bookstores and rose to Amazon.com's best-seller list.

Even with all of this going on, I psychically predict that Browne will come out of it smelling like a rose. People like her manage to every time.

Parasites like this simply disgust me.

(“Nightmares” continued from page 1)

rists stress the individual meaningfulness of dreams and their relation to personal hopes and fears. Contemporary research focuses on efforts to discover and describe unique, complex biochemical and neurophysiological bases of dreaming. Among the plethora of theories ranging from those that assert dreaming to be awareness of a god’s voice to those that reduce the dream to physical activity in the nervous system, no single encompassing theory seems yet to be available.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 308)

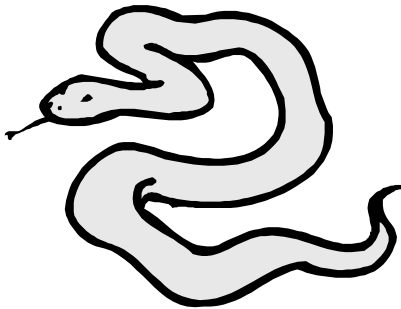
Although there is no consensus on the reason, or reasons, for dreams, there certainly is no valid scientific evidence for the existence in reality of “monsters,” such as bug-eyed alien beings, Bigfoot, or the thousands of others that seem to appear and vanish now and then. Why then do these alleged creatures persist in human history? The reason lies in the realm of dreams, nightmares, hallucinations, illusions and delusions.

For instance, in my dream on Sept. 20, 1999, in Part 1, hissing flowers turn out to be flat, two-dimensional snakes. “The ‘snake’ curls its flat ‘body’ towards my head. I try to hold it back at arms’ length. Then he curled part sticks to my forehead. I try to pull it off, but it sticks like Velcro. Then the ‘body’ flattens over my entire forehead. I wake up, and my right hand is tingling. I’m cutting off circulation.”

In that dream, I created a real entity – a snake – and twisted it into a bizarre “alien” form that was so scary to me that I woke up immediately. Also in that dream, that “snake” put pressure on my forehead, similar to the chest-pressing demons that persist in history. I thus created a monster from real snake fears, which shows the value of a nightmare.

That may thus be an example why more value needs to be placed on the interaction of the outside stimuli with the inside of the dreamer’s mind. After the past century’s flirtation with psychological and neurological theories of dreaming, the 19th century investigations by Alfred Maury may have pointed the way to the creative nightmare hypothesis.

“In spite of Aristotle’s unusually modern views and even after a devastating attack by the Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) on dream divination . . . , views that dreams have supernatural attributes persisted vigorously until the 1850s and the classical work of French physician Alfred Maury, who studied more than 3,000 recollections of dreams. Maury concluded that dreams arose from external stimuli, instantaneously accompanying such impressions as they acted upon the sleeping person.” Maury cited his own example. When part of his bed fell on the back of his neck, he woke up “leaving the memory of dreaming that he had been brought before a French revolutionary tribunal, questioned, condemned, led to the scaffold, and bound by an executioner, and that the guillotine blade had fallen.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 306)



Throughout history, visions in dreams or hallucinations in reality have resulted in dire consequences to innocent victims.

Beyond Dreams

Throughout history, visions in dreams or hallucinations in reality, such as the worldwide allegations of witchcraft, have resulted in dire consequences to innocent victims. For example, author Mary Matossian in *Poisons of the Past* relates that in 1800, many Kentuckians had fits and hallucinations. She quotes Peter Cartwright, a Methodist preacher, about what he observed:

From these wild exercises another great evil arose from the heated and wild imagination of some. They professed to fall into trances and see visions, and lay apparently powerless and motionless for days, sometimes a week at a time, without food and drink; and when they came to they professed to have seen heaven and hell, to have seen God, angels, the devil, and the damned; they would prophesy, and, under the presence of Divine inspiration, predict the time of the end of the world, and the ushering in of the great millennium. (Matossian, p. 139)

Matossian goes on to state, “As a premonition, victims experienced a prickly sensation as if the hands and feet were asleep (the symptom is called formication) and felt like a weight on the chest or about the heart Some people experienced ecstasy, while others thought they deserved Hell.”

Based on extensive research, Matossian argues that this case, and many others in history such as the Salem witchcraft occurrences, were caused by food poisoning – namely ergotism – from toxins in rye bread. Her argument was further buttressed by Linnda Caporael’s research into the Salem episodes that concluded that the bizarre behavior exhibited there was caused by LSD-like poisoning. (*Secrets of the Dead: Witches Curse*) “Ergot,” Matossian says, “is the source of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), and it may include natural alkaloids that act like LSD.” (Matossian, p. 116)

Back to Reality

Hallucinations just blur the line between perceived fantasy and reality. Dreams, in a sense, are hallucinations during sleep and between sleep and wakefulness. What they do not prove is that the paranormal world exists. As Carl Sagan said, “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. However, none of this makes hallucinations part of an external rather than an internal reality.” (Sagan, p. 107)

The persistence of the mystery and power of dreams, nightmares and visions from Biblical to modern times is astounding. Throughout the Old Testament, dreams and visions provoke the actions of kings and civilizations. For instance, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, kills his psychics because they could not tell him the content of his dreams before interpreting them!

(“Nightmares” Continued on page 7)

(“Nightmares” continued from page 6)

We have come a long way from those Biblical times when dreams were considered “a medium by which messages were believed to be communicated from the realm of the gods to humans.” (Concordance, p. 287) From those early times when humans channeled God and interpreted dreams to modern times when the interpretation of dreams and nightmares is still big business, we have marveled at their power. Human history is wracked yet today with more destruction as the words of Job eerily reflect those early beliefs: “In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, Then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction.” (Holy Bible — Job, 33: 15-16)

While those nightmares that wake us up because of an external stimulus are good for us, we still must face the wrath of those who terrorize real life and turn their dreams into our nightmares.

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(“Edward” continued from page 3)

connecting anyway.

That’s really pretty much how the night went - Edward kept striking out. Here are a couple excerpts, with the caller’s reply bracketed:

A male caller from Hickory, North Carolina, wanting to connect with his father. *Edward*: There’s a Bill. [No.] Yes there is. Connection. Older male person. Tumor? [Uncle.] Mom still here? [Yes.] A B. [Betty.] Uniform - congratulations. Cadet. Mom’s mom. Make sense? [Yes, it is.] Double amputee. Paralyzed both legs. [Doesn’t ring a bell.] *King*: (unintelligible) Cirrhosis. Liver disease. [Cancer of the brain.] Not connecting your dad. END

Remember that this conversation goes at a fast pace. There’s no time to sort out if the caller is confused or what his or her answer refers to in the exchange. Then there’s that bizarre answer [Cancer of the brain.] to an inquiry about liver disease!

Another excerpt. The first caller was Lisa from Michigan looking for her father or grandfather. *Edward*: There’s an L. (Indistinct) Cousin? Richard or Rich? August? [No.] 8th. Anniversary. Father? [No.] Father figure. [(Hesitates) OK] Male figure? 8th or father figure. Like a sister. [No.] END

Nonnie: (Sighs) Pretty convincing stuff there.

In fact, in only three of the calls did he appear to make some connections. In the following transcript, the female caller was ready to break down at the slightest connection. Female caller from Virginia Beach wants to know if her father is happy with her and the family in getting along without him, and what was the true date of his death. He was found dead. *Edward*: Dad has dog that passed? [No.] Dog with father. Old pet? [OK] 14th? B or A. (Indistinct) Twin. Sign at (indistinct). Dad has sister or female figure that passed. A Gina? Janey? Two-day delay before someone would have seen this person? [OK] Someone seen him two days before? [We all did. (Crying)] Not getting cake. [Yes.] Diabetic? [Yes. (Crying)] Two wives. Married twice.? [No.] Wife and significant friend? [No.] Two female energies for this man. Elizabeth? [Sister] Hernia? [Yes.] Book of poems [I don’t know which book.] Symbol. Family Bible? Picture? Pressed rose? Letter? [No reply.] END

Nonnie: She never did find out his date of death.

His technique is throw out letters, numbers, names, diseases and other common phenomena that the callers are straining with which to make a connection. He quickly picks up on cues from the callers, and if he senses no connections, quickly switches gears and heads into a different area.

Even at the end as John Edward seemed to be striking out a lot, Larry King had a bemused expression on his face, as if he was doubting Edward’s alleged psychic ability.

That’s entertainment!

References

- “Talking to the Dead.” The Larry King Show. September 2001.
- Weiner, Jennifer. “Psychic show’s past makes its future easy to see.” August 23, 2001. *Philadelphia Inquirer* (online). 📺

Our Next Meeting

Food Poisoning as a Cause of Hallucination in History A PBS Videotape and Discussion

Could food poisoning have caused the bizarre behavior experienced in Salem, Massachusetts during the witchcraft trials? Through microbiology, agriculture history, and detective techniques, we may have an answer. Ergot poisoning of rye bread, which produces LSD-like substances, may have caused the fits and visions that many people attributed to witches. Indeed, it seems that many episodes of bizarre behavior in history may have been similarly caused.

Join us for this videotape and a discussion led by Bob Ladendorf, who has been looking into this interesting theory.

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