

## Where We Go

I don't know when I first became obsessed with the afterlife. I believe it had to do with my father's untimely death in 1981. His father had died earlier the same year at 92, and I thought my dad would live forever. But he didn't. I got the phone call from his minister in the middle of the night, July 29<sup>th</sup>. The date is etched firmly in my memory because at 6:20 AM, unable to sleep, I was watching Prince Charles and Princess Di being married at St. Charles Cathedral in London.

I grew up as a main-line Protestant so my life after death prospects were limited to either Heaven or Hell. Based on my actions and secret-keeping as a young person, I was pretty sure I was going the wrong place. I didn't even have the Catholic wiggle room of Purgatory so I was eager to find other possible afterlife explanations. Mainly, though, I wanted the assurance that my Dad was all right.

When my Father died, I became aware of a sub culture that dealt in the questions of life after death and paranormal phenomena. I became a regular at our local "New Age" bookstore, the *Celestial Plume*.

The first time I visited the store I was greeted by a very nice woman, the owner I learned, named Anna who asked, "Are you looking for anything in particular?"

I answered, "My father recently died and I thought you might be able to help me work through it."

"It's really hard when you lose someone you love, but there's a lot here to help you. In fact, we just got a book in last week that's remarkable. It's about a man named Mellen-Thomas Benedict. He was dead for over an-hour-and-a-half while dying of cancer. I think you'll find his experiences riveting."

"Thanks, Anna. I'll let you know."

The account was fascinating because it told, in startling detail, of one man's visit to the afterlife and his return to tell about it. I was hooked and it led me back to Anna to ask about reincarnation.

"Is there a leading expert I should read to find out about reincarnation?"

"Absolutely," said Anna. "Dr. Ian Stevenson. He's conducted more than 3,000 studies all over the world and if you don't believe in reincarnation after reading that, you're not paying attention."

Anna was a great help to me in my education into the paranormal. She was always kind, patient and yet insistent that I push myself into new areas of understanding. She introduced me to the

OBE's, or "Out of Body Experiences," where people remembered experiences, such as floating above the operating table, that would have been impossible while unconscious.

During the same period, in 1983, Anna suggested I read Shirley MacLaine's controversial autobiography, "Out on a Limb." That covered all the topics I had been pursuing as well as UFO's.

I spent hours when I was supposed to be working reading book after book which, I was convinced, held the pathway to making contact with my father. Even when I did work and I was on planes for long hours, I would enter meditational trances which would leave me with an overwhelming sense of peace and serenity.

And so my life went for five years.

I had read in one of the books on meditation that if I went into deep trance I could likely pick up communication among the dead. And so, in February 1988, my wife and I celebrated her 40th birthday with a trip to Sedona, Arizona, considered by the metaphysical community to be one of the spiritual centers of the world.

Sedona is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen but it was its spiritual component that most fascinated me. When I wasn't staring at the beautiful red rock bluffs of Sedona, I was meditating and listening for spiritual cross-talk. At least 3 times I heard what I interpreted as other-worldly exchanges.

Everything changed two weeks later. My mother, typically a tireless go-getter, was not feeling well and was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer of the peritoneum. She was given two choices--undergo extensive chemo and radiation therapy which would have a low probability of success or put her affairs in order and say goodbye to the ones she loved. My mom chose the latter and for the next five months I spent every other weekend getting to know her and helping her to die in a dignified way.

I must say that during that time I spent more meaningful time with my mother than I had in the previous 20 years. We talked about things that were important and things that were trivial.

One Saturday my mom said to me,

"I want you to know how much joy I got from watching you play your sports at West--your baseball, your football, but especially your basketball. You boys were so good when you were seniors." She paused and then added, "But that Central game that you lost, that was a TERRIBLE game."

I laughed because that was one of mom's favorite expressions and because she was right.

"You're right, mom. That was a TERRIBLE game."

A few seconds later, with a smile still on her face, she said, "You know the most fun I ever had with a sporting event? It wasn't with you. It was when the Twins won the World Series last year. That was a miracle and I got to go to the parade down on Nicollet Mall. Now, I think I've seen it all, except for the Vikings. I think I'm going to have to miss that."

A month or so before mom died she was joined by a Hospice nurse named Millie. She began working 8-hour shifts which became 12 hour shifts and eventually turned into round-the-clock care. Millie was remarkable and she gave me an overwhelming appreciation for her type of health care worker.

As the days were drawing short for my mom and I knew I was saying goodbye for the last time, I stood over her bed. I wasn't sure she was conscious but I started speaking to her anyway.

"Mom," I said. "Thank you for bringing me into the world and loving me more than I thought possible. I don't want to let you go, but I know it's time. Mom, I'm going to try and get in touch with you."

My mom's eyes opened and she forced as much a smile as she could when she said, "That would be nice."

She died three days later and the family reconvened in Minneapolis for her funeral which featured the pipe organ at Westminster Presbyterian blasting, "Amazing Grace."

Three weeks later, I was flying to Washington National Airport where I rented a car and drove to the Reston Metaphysical Church, led by R. Steele Green, a world renowned medium. For all appearances, the chapel looked like a regular church. What took place inside was anything but normal. I had made an appointment with Rev. Green by phone and I was greeted warmly by his assistant.

"Please write your questions for Rev. Green on this note card, fold it up when you're finished and then give to the Reverend when you are called."

I followed instructions and wrote these questions:

1. Is there golf in the afterlife?
2. Have you seen Dad or John Bates (a close friend) since you got there?
3. What do you think of Tim naming the Amos J. Picker Trophy after you?

I folded the card and waited for perhaps 10 minutes. Then I was called to see the Rev. R. Steele Green.

I handed him the card. I expected him to open the card, read the questions and deliver his answers. Surprisingly, he didn't open it up. Instead, he held the folded card and, with eyes closed, proceeded to answer each of my questions.

The answers were, apparently coming from my Mother:

1. Yes, there's golf all the time although I haven't played yet.
- 2 I have seen both Dad and John. They are better friends that you might think.
3. At this answer, Rev. Green broke into tears and mumbled about how much of an honor it was to have such an important trophy renamed for her.

I felt myself tearing up and I had run out of questions on my note card, but I wanted something more, something definitive.

"Rev. Green, can I just ask one question that isn't on the card, one that only my mom would know?"

Rev. Green said nothing, just looking at me.

"Can I?" I said

He opened his mouth and said in a most unexpected way, "That's a TERRible idea."

"What did you say?"

And with that peculiar emphasis that I couldn't mistake, he repeated, "That's a TERRible idea."

I looked at Rev. Green and he looked at me and I smiled.

Thank you Rev. Green. I appreciate everything you've done.