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What Canst Thou Say?

Friends • Mystical Experience • Contemplative Practice

*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this: but what canst thou say?
Art thou a child of Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest,
is it inwardly from God? —George Fox*

Other Lives

My Sister, Myself

Rhonda Ashurst, Guest Editor

For the first 48 years of my life, I was an only child. In 2015, my father died. As I was going through the box of his most precious possessions, I found her birth certificate. I must have read it over ten times trying to soak in what it meant. I might have a sister!

Linda Gail Ashurst was born on November 22, 1954. The birth certificate listed my father and a woman named Bettie Jo Darneau as her parents. When I asked my mother about it, she said Bettie Jo had been a promiscuous woman and my father never knew for sure if he was Linda's father. Though he never married Bettie Jo, he lived with her for five years and supported Linda and Bettie's other two children.

When Linda was three, my father was inducted into the army and was stationed in San Francisco. While he was there, he reconnected with my mother, whom he'd known from high school. Apparently, he had decided the relationship with Bettie Jo was over (my mother thinks she was already living with another man), and my father began courting my mother. They fell quickly in love and married when he was released from the army. They moved back to Reno and began their new life together in September 1959. I was born on July 23, 1966.

After finding her birth certificate, I was curious about Linda and wondered if I could find her. Maybe she still lived in the Reno area. My partner, Scott, and I went to the Washoe County records department to inquire. The lady behind the counter asked me my relationship and I said, "She might have been my sister." About twenty minutes later she came back and handed me an envelope. Inside, I found Linda's death certificate. She died of brain damage after falling off a slide at school. She was only five years old. I had to fight the tears back until we got to the car. She was gone; I would never get to meet her.

I was struck by the odd coincidence that my father had fallen out of a moving car onto his head when he was four. He was in a coma initially and was hospitalized for a month.

They were not sure he would survive. As his hair receded, I could see the scar where his head had hit the pavement.

Later, Scott found two newspaper articles describing Linda's death and announcing her funeral. He used an online grave locator and found out she was buried in the cemetery near our home, Our Lady of Sorrows. Then I became immersed in settling my father's estate and I set aside the file with Linda's information. I didn't pick it up again until over a year later when I decided to put flowers on her grave for Memorial Day, 2016. I was getting close to my fiftieth birthday and I wanted to make pilgrimages to all the family graves, cleaning them and putting out flowers. I wanted to include Linda in this ritual.

We went to Our Lady of Sorrows and waited while the people in the office located her grave and gave us directions. It is twenty yards out from a big tree, near the entrance of the mausoleum. Our house is a mile away. Inside the mausoleum doors is the final resting place of Scott's Nonna, one of the most significant people in his life. I thought, "What are the odds of so many coincidences?"



I remember kneeling in the grass in front of the stone and touching it. I said in my mind, "I wish I could have known you. I'm sorry you didn't get to live your life."

And then I had one of those moments I have sometimes, where I could clearly feel her presence and this message came

What Canst Thou Say? (WCTS)

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through: *I am already with you.* Then I knew that she had quickly reincarnated into another body and was in my life. I wondered who she was. The list of my friends born after January 1960 began to roll through my head. I mulled it over for the next week, pondering.

I remember vividly when it hit me. I was talking to my close friend Kelly on the phone. Kelly was one of the people born after January 1960 that I thought might have been Linda in her previous life. I was sitting up in my bed, looking at my favorite photo of my father and me that sits on my dresser.



As I gazed at it, my face in the picture started to morph, to shift, almost like a wave. It was no longer solid. Then it struck me like a bolt of lightning. Linda's presence was again strong within me and this stream of awareness came through: *I am you. I came back to be with my Daddy. He was the only one who loved me, took care of me, protected me. I didn't understand why he left. I wanted the chance to grow up with him, as his daughter.*

I reeled with this revelation. It took all my concentration to finish my conversation with Kelly. When I hung up the phone, I grabbed the photo and cried—gut-wrenching sobs that went on for a long time. Linda came back to be with her daddy, the only person she knew really loved her and was there for her. He was gone by the time

she was three. How awful it must have been for her when he left! I could feel her total devastation and the desperate longing to be with him, her despair at being left. The accident ended her life and she returned as me. In a mysterious way, her longing to be with him as his daughter, both ended Linda's life and began mine.

I found myself lying on the bed, holding the photo and reminiscing about life with my dad. He was an amazing father when I was young—playful, loving, kind. I felt like a princess and I knew he adored me. I adored him back. Later he taught me to be tough and strong, to have courage. Sadly, something snapped in him when I became a teenager. It was a combination of things: bipolar disorder, alcoholism, a nervous breakdown after a bad drought that dried up his fields, and my becoming a woman. He withdrew from me emotionally. I began flirting with boys. He called me a whore. I rebelled; he pulled away. It was one of the biggest heartbreaks of my life which led to a 32-year rift between us. A rift that was bridged in small moments here and there over the years, just enough to know deep down he always loved me.

We did come to a peaceful parting before he died. He had slipped into the clutches of dementia and was living in a group home. We took him out for lunch regularly. I recall fastening his seat belt around him and he looked up and said, "I've said some awful things to you. I'm sorry. You didn't deserve that." In that moment, a lump in my heart dissolved and washed away. There was no more pain, resentment, anger, grief.

Thinking about all these memories, I found myself reaching out to his spirit and asking, "Why did you keep leaving me when I needed you? You left when I was so young as Linda, then you did it again when I was a teenager in this life. Why?"

I could feel his presence and this message came through: *I had to pull back, so you could find your own strength. We had a deal. You needed to learn that love is stronger than leaving, cutting off, pulling back; it is stronger than death itself. Our love calls us back to each other over and over. You have sold yourself out lifetime after lifetime trying to keep someone at your side, when you should have let go. Real love is not about desperate clinging.*

I was stunned. This transmission from him reminded me of a shamanic healing I had about fifteen years earlier. The shaman was retrieving lost pieces of my soul and bringing them back to me. When she came out of her trance, she said to me, “I found you in a lifetime several hundred years ago in Mexico. You were a little girl in a village and there was an epidemic. Everyone died except you. Ever since, you have been terrified of being abandoned and have gone to great extremes to avoid it. Even though the people in the neighboring village found you and took you in and you had a good rest of that lifetime, you have never understood that love always finds you and takes care of you. It is your lesson in this lifetime to trust that you are always surrounded by love and to realize love lasts beyond all physical separation.”

I suddenly saw a glimpse into how absolutely perfect it all is. Even in the greatest of tragedies and losses, there is love. Perhaps we have to have these tragic experiences to understand how great love is. It is the eternal force that calls us into form over and over again. While out in nature and in some dreams, I have felt myself a part of a great and mysterious web of energy connecting all of us in an eternal dance. I believe this is God.

I looked again at the photo and watched my face morph and change like a mirage. I recalled the experiments in quantum physics where electrons can act both as particles

and waves depending on the act of observation. In that moment, my spirit emerged and I experienced myself as a wave of energy which manifests in different forms at different times.

This experience has changed my sense of myself as a fixed identity called “Rhonda Ashurst.” I understand more fully something one of my yoga teachers said, “You are not in your body; your body is in You. Your Spirit is unique and eternal. It moves from body to body, lifetime to lifetime. Take good care of your body, but don’t be attached to thinking it is You. One day You will leave it like a broken car and take flight again into a new life.”

There is nothing like putting flowers on your own grave to remind you of this!

In the summer of 2016, I mentioned to my cousin, Shane, that I may have had a half-sister. I told him Linda’s story and he said, “This reminds me of a picture of a little girl with your dad that Grandpa kept on his dresser. I always thought it was you. When I asked about it, he said she had been born before you and had died in a schoolyard accident when she was little.” So I guess she even looked like me.

On July 5, 2017, we took flowers to Linda’s grave. As Scott and I sat in the grass in front of her grave, I asked her, “What did you want in that lifetime?”

She answered: *To be loved by a good man who didn’t go away.*

I turned to my beloved Scott and wrapped my arms around him, tears flowing from my eyes. “Thank you for being that man—for making her and my dream come true in this lifetime. I am so grateful for you!”

I suddenly had another perspective shift where I could see in my mind’s eye where we were at that moment from above. Scott and I were one mile from our home and half a mile

from the University office where we met and worked together twenty-nine years ago. Before my father died, he asked me if I was happy with Scott. I told him yes, I was. He nodded and smiled. He knew I had found my good man in Scott.

From this vantage point, I could see all the threads that connected us. I could see the absolute perfection in everything. We are always protected and guided to move toward that which is in our highest good. I saw that many people in my life are here to help me with this learning and that I have known them before. Scott is one of them.

On September 20, 2017, I had my right hip replaced to correct congenital hip dysplasia. As I started to lose consciousness, my dad suddenly appeared in my mind’s eye. He looked like he did when I was a child. He took my hand in his big, old paws and said, “Come on, kid, let’s go hang out under the apple tree.” Suddenly, I was under the old apple tree behind our ranch house with him, lying in the cool grass and watching the clouds go by. When I was young, and we were both tired from doing chores, this was one of our favorite ways to rest on a hot summer afternoon.

My dad stayed with me during my hospital stay and continued to drift in and out when I returned home. He told me, “I am only a thought away, always.” It was an exceptionally beautiful experience, and I tear up every time I talk about it. It reminds me that life is a mystery greater than we can ever know and love connects us eternally to one another, whether we are in a body or not. This love draws us together over and over again, across space and time.

Rhonda Ashurst lives a quiet, contemplative life with her partner in Reno, Nevada. She writes a blog: <rhondaashurst.com>, practices yoga and serves the cat. She believes we are all part of God’s magnificent, unfolding story, which we weave together throughout eternity.

On Nudges: We Don't Know the End of the Story

Diane Reynolds

I have found that I am not only nudged by God but also shoved and pushed in a certain direction. It's hard to ignore a shove. When I am shoved or nudged along a path, I believe from the outset that I know why God is pushing me this way. I head out with the expectation of a certain outcome.

Often, however, when I arrive at the destination where I have been shoved, I find that the outcome I expected is not what occurs. Sometimes, when I have followed faithfully, I am disappointed when I get to the destination. What is there is not what I thought. I then tend to disbelieve the leading—and even the shoves. I must have misinterpreted. I went where I was led, and yet it has turned out completely different from the way I envisioned it.

This can lead to disorientation, disappointment, depression and distrust of leadings. I thought I was led here (wherever here is) to help the poor, but the poor here don't need my help. I thought I was joining a vibrant community dedicated to peace, but nobody here is interested in social justice causes. I thought you opened the way and pushed me on the path to education so I would get the secure job where I could fully use my gifts. But there is no good job here. Why have you sent me here, just to confront me with a dead end? Was I wrong all along to trust?

I have found, however, that if I wait, more direction inevitably comes, and I begin to realize that what I thought was the reason I was being led in a certain direction (often a very conventional, socially acceptable reason) isn't what God had in mind at all. Yes, I was led here, but for a purpose I never anticipated. Often, once I get my preconceptions out of the way, I recognize that I have been led not only to something different, but also to something better.

Diane Reynolds is an independent scholar of literature and religion, a college instructor, author of The Doubled Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and a member of Stillwater Meeting in Barnesville, Ohio.

Mistake in February issue on "Nudges"

Due to a printing error in the WCTS February 2018 issue, page 4 from the November 2017 issue was substituted for the page 4 of the February issue. So, this is the correct page 4 for the February issue.

Our apologies to Diane Reynolds! —the Editors

Drenched

Michael Resman

*Oh God who watches every wave
and is with each blade of grass
let me know you're here*

The world holds me blind and deaf

*Let me hear the whisper of your breath
in the sighing of the wind*

*Feel the brush of your robe
as you come to me*

*I lay my heart in your hands
and long to throw my body
in your arms*

*Gleaming rose
glowing sunset
pale before your glory*

*Focused on your work
twirling in ecstasy
drenched in love*

*Reaching for the time
when we are one*

*The only way to learn compassion is through our own broken hearts;
we have to back up and pass through our own pain. —Matthew Fox*

Bumping Up Against My Past

Jean Marron-Beebe

I have two episodes of bumping up against an older, former me. Both times when I bumped, it took me by surprise. I remember a feeling of righteous indignation. The incidents happened while I was in college and living in an environment not conducive to such realizations, nor discussions of such incidents.

The first incident happened in an anthropology lecture. We were watching a film my teacher had produced while at the location. He was doing a running narrative as he had not finished editing and producing the official voiceover portions. He was just showing the film part and telling us about the location and the artifacts. At one point the film showed a couple of native workers standing next to a portion of an ancient wall that was still standing. For some reason they had dug under a portion of the remnant wall and had found two clay figurines of a fertility goddess. The figurines would have fit in the palm of my hand. I was sitting there very bored until the film showed the actual figurines displayed in their boxes for preservation.

I suddenly sat up very straight in my chair and had a terrible time restraining myself from pointing at the screen and yelling, “Those are mine! I buried them there. How dare you dig them up?” I was disgruntled and out of sorts for days afterward. I had a very hard time concentrating and controlling my anger. I have never experienced that urge to scream out at the screen since that day.

The second incident happened a year or so later while sitting in my front room watching a TV show titled “In Search Of.” It was an episode about Philip of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. I was studying and the TV was playing in the background. The narrative got to the part where they were showing the funerary goods from his tomb. There were beautifully crafted items of wood, brass, with precious metals and jewels worked into them. Then it showed a woman’s crown. It was worked in dark metal like old, old gold in the likeness of oak leaves and acorns. I thought my heart would stop. I could almost feel the weight of it on my head and a voice in my head stated in a firm, solemn tone, “That crown is mine. I am glad to see it again.” I have never heard that voice in my head before or since. As before, I was left feeling unsettled and disoriented for several days.

I have spoken very little about these experiences, as I do not know what to do with them. It is only recently I have found myself in the company of friends who listen without criticizing or denigrating my memories. I do not know if these occurrences are real memories making themselves known, or if I am looking to put on airs and make myself seem more important in this life.

Jean Marron-Beebe is a member of Urbana-Champaign Meeting. She is a gypsy—born in Illinois. She has moved 44 times, is on her 16th vehicle, and has lived/traveled in all but about six states! About 25 assorted “kids” call her “Mama J.”

Life Before This Life

Helen Weaver Horn

*Down a flight of steps
to a wide lake,
a boat with oars.
Stepping in, rowing.
Turning head to aim
the prow off toward
the far shore.
Beaching.*

*Stepping out on
webbed feet.
Scampering off
on all fours.
Climbing up a tree
where two birds
flutter, screeching
over nestlings,
craved by a snake
circling closer.*

*I, a small lizard,
startle it, diving.
Send it packing,
slithering, hiding.
Ease down to
ground again.
Listen to cooing.*

*Above me a chrysalis
hangs on a twig.
Twitching, turning
Sure to break loose,
fall down, be eaten.*

*Up again, eager.
Back legs steadying.
Front feet easing,
gently opening.
Wee head ventures
out. Chest emerges.
Curved feet clinging.
Damp wings spreading.*

*Down I scamper.
Nimble, joyful.
Watchful, comforting.
Green and given.*

Helen Weaver Horn is a member of Athens Friends Meeting, Ohio. She has woven her way through teaching, counseling, peace activism, family life and the givenness of writing poems for some 55 years.

A Milestone Birthday

William Z. Shetter

The poet's words
"the day is past and gone /
the evening shades appear ..."
have just spoken
a newly persuasive message to me.

Who among us,
dear worship-sharing companions,
can observe that **ninetieth**
without seeing ahead with a fresh clarity
the now foreshortened span of time ahead?
As never before, it has become
a present part of life now,
no longer a distant merely "theoretical" matter
that I can continue to hold at arm's length—
no more is dying just something other people do!
It almost feels as if this is already an "other life."

But how to welcome into my life now
that great final conclusion,
and recognize the reality it is announcing?
Yes, let's say it forthrightly:
the death that awaits us all?
My words here are directed
to thee and to thee, readers,
from one who has just passed this milestone
that many of you will (I hope) eventually pass.
Join me for a moment in pondering this,
and then I'll ask
What canst thou say?

Death sweeps away every last attachment,
the final letting go of all the "cumber"
as life transforms itself
into a preparation for its end.
The extraneous fallen away,
my "real self," my "true nature,"
becomes completely open and known.
The Light shines unobstructed.
So a question: if I now anticipate that finality
by deliberately letting go
of all I've ever been attached to
—even my most deep and cherished relationships,
even my awe at the beauty around me—
does that mean I'm bringing death into life
by what seems like a contradictory process
of desert-ascetic simplification?
Is my life's day really past and gone,
or should I rather endow these evening shades
with a deeper, newly richer, vibrant life,
learning to see with newly open eyes
where the world's mystery breaks through?
What happens at the end of life we can never know,
but that hardly inhibits us from striving
to peer beyond the great threshold,
into life's greatest mystery.

Doesn't that "other life" that this WCTS meditates on
mean both directions:
"earlier life" but also "what follows"?
Isn't my existence after my death simply
a continuation of my existence before my birth?

A dying friend told me of her conviction
that her living consciousness,
the infinite sweep of emotions,
was about to be "enfolded,"—perhaps, I thought,
into some all-inclusive higher Reality,
the holy Ground that is our origin and our destiny.
...If I didn't feel the firm conviction within me
that some form of spiritual consciousness,
an eternal becoming, goes on uninterrupted
("the spirit is a timeless essence" someone wrote)
—adding to the consciousness that pervades
every corner of the enfolding cosmos—
would death as total extinction of consciousness
be worth welcoming into life?

In No Man is an Island, Thomas Merton wrote
"Our whole life should be a meditation
of our last and most important decision:
the choice between life and death. ...
If, during our life we have chosen life,
then in death we will pass
from death into life.
Life is a spiritual thing,
and spiritual things are silent. ...
Those who love true life often think
about their death.
Their life is full of a silence
that is an anticipated victory over death.

Silence makes death our servant
and even our friend."
"Silence" here refers (wouldn't you agree?)
not to absence of sound
but to a whole new higher-order sensing.
The silence in me is where
I find a deep listening,
the most deeply buried center of myself,
my "friend,"
releasing the hidden secrets of my life.
In the same book Merton says
"We cannot find ourselves within ourselves,
but only in others,
yet at the same time before we can
go out to others we must find ourselves. ...
It is therefore of supreme importance
that we consent to live not for ourselves
but for others."

A Milestone Birthday (cont.)

If on death I'm being absorbed
into that diamond-studded web
of relationships
that have made my life what it is,
wouldn't bringing death into my life
then mean bringing in all relationships,
with the passage of time
conceivably ever-deepening ones
finding the divine in every presence,
and in all things, listening to creation?
—with little more to lose and
no more ego-self to defend,
letting go of all and giving up all control,
being able to listen with complete freedom?
If I cannot find myself within myself
but only in others, bringing in others
is the finding of my true hidden self,
closing the circle.

Aren't **you** always able to open to **me**
hidden sides of myself
that I didn't know were there,
and might **you** not awaken something
that lies at the very core of **my** being?
Might I not likewise open new vistas in you?
Every encounter takes on a worship-sharing quality,
one that—I like to trust—
these words here may have already begun.
Thank thee for listening,
worship-sharing companion.
Can thee share with me and each other
what we ponder and do,
nearing my—our common—conclusion?
What canst thou say?

William Shetter has been a member of Bloomington (Indiana) Meeting for more than 50 years. He writes occasional book reviews for *Friends Journal*, and is the author of the recent fantasy, *My Conversation with Sophia: Reflections on Wisdom's Contemplative Path* (available from iUniverse or Amazon).

As usual we got more wonderful submissions than would fit in this print version, so we have published a web edition on our website <whatcanstthousay.org>, which includes interviews with therapists, book reviews, and the continuation of the conversation (right) between Guest Editor Rhonda Ashurst and William Shetter.

A Conversation with William Shetter

Guest Editor Rhonda Ashurst asked me to comment on two questions that arose from my submission. First she wondered what my “soul/spirit/essence” has learned in this lifetime. Quite a daunting question! Well, five years ago I wrote Pendle Hill Pamphlet 418, *Some Thoughts on Becoming Eighty-five* (available at PendleHill.org or in Kindle Edition at Amazon), reflecting on steps of my life's path such as silence at the center, learning to listen to the Inner Guide, letting go, meditation practice, expanding relationships to include all creation, uninterrupted growth.

A bit later I wrote a little book, *My Conversation with Sophia: Reflections on Wisdom's Contemplative Path*. Here some thoughts were presented in the form of a dream dialogue with the Bible's Lady Wisdom, about what the deepest sense of “wisdom” is. “She pervades and permeates all things.” (*Apocrypha, Book of Wisdom* 7:24). My book went well beyond the Pendle Hill Pamphlet, into brief meditations on humility, questioning, contemplation, wonder, transformation, self-awareness, mystery, co-creating, and others. In the Preface I call the book an “attempt to search my inner self. If Lady Wisdom is in reality merely the momentary personification of a deeply buried source within me, then in this inner dialogue I am tapping into and bringing up to the light this source of knowing.”

Rhonda's second question asked what my spirit might seek to learn in the next life, and this one proved to be more difficult to talk confidently about—to some extent because I found myself hesitating by that word “next.” Why? I've come to feel that like each of us I have one life that is composed of two dimensions, one in time and the other untouched by time. The first: for a brief span I, like everyone, have a physical self. When I die, isn't it simply because time has abruptly come to a halt for me? As Merton and many others have said, my “self's” mission throughout physical life is to come to know its “real self.” So wouldn't this real, but hidden, self be the second, the one outside time? That would mean there is one single non-directional consciousness, in mysterious existence before “I” was and still there after “I” no longer am. (The editors of this issue wisely invoked the words “other life” and not a “previous” or “following” one.)

Living in these two inescapable dimensions, time and timelessness, sets up the enormously creative tension we call “our journey”—our human adventure of discernment and discovery. So is this the true home of “wisdom”? After all, Lady Wisdom proclaims “From everlasting I was firmly set, . . . before earth came into being” (Proverbs 8:23). Isn't it the quest for wisdom, the indestructible timeless dimension of our physical life, that all spirituality—“the Divine Breath of all the great sacred paths”—ultimately boils down to? . . . *This conversation continues in the web edition* <whatcanstthousay.org>.

Past Life Regression

David Blair

Twenty years ago, I was struggling with the aftermath of an affair. This journey led me deep into the patterns of behavior around love and shame embedded in me since childhood and recreated in my marriage. It included five “past life regressions” with my friend Peggy. I didn’t know whether I “believed” in past lives but was willing to try anything that might bring insight and healing. I knew Peggy as a yoga and meditation teacher and trusted her. That was enough.

In each session, Peggy led me into a place where I could see and describe my life unfolding in another time and place. I was not asleep. The closest description I’ve read to this state is “lucid dreaming.” I could remember everything I told her when I “awoke.” Once my bladder compelled me to get up and go to the bathroom. I was sure the spell was broken, but when I returned to my chair, I was immediately in that state again.

Peggy always started by asking me to focus on my feet and to see what I was wearing. A pair of sandals took me into the life of a monk in Roncevaux (Roncesvalles), a monastery on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees that I had walked to a number of times. The pass above Roncevaux funnels the pilgrims from Europe onto the Camino de Santiago. The monk leads a life of simple service—I first see his feet in the soil of the garden—refusing the temptation to leave with a woman he loves, and he dies peacefully surrounded by his brothers.

Then I was a young man (again wearing sandals), instructed by a kind older man, whom I recognized as a Cambodian grandfather from my town, to trek up into the Himalayas. Then a Greek sailor whose voyage takes him to an island where he dies in a volcanic eruption like Pompeii; an old woman

who floats down a river in a bulrush boat as a child, and who succors people in suffering until she reaches the ocean and her death; a man in Bulgaria whose life takes him through wars and upheaval until a golden old age and his final sleep on a bench in the sun.

In each past life, Peggy instructed me to watch myself at the moment of death, and in each case I could observe from a place somewhere above. There was a profound peace about these moments.

When I walked as a young man up into the Himalayas through villages in the lowlands of India, I became aware that my head was blue. I was Krishna. In the snows, I saw the tracks of the yeti and felt no fear. My feet were bare yet I was not cold. In the far distance I saw a beautiful walled city. When I finally reached it, I found no gate in. I walked around it several times and found no way in. So I stopped walking and waited. Suddenly I was inside the city enveloped by music, and I was dissolving into that music.

Did I actually exist in those previous lives? I have no idea and no need to know. What has stayed with me through these years is the vividness of each story, its reality at the deepest level and the “rightness” of each life; and the peace I felt as I observed my death, even that of the sailor asphyxiated by the fumes of the volcano. If today I am not afraid of death – and I don’t think I am – it is mostly because of these journeys into past lives. One day I will have walked around the city in the snows searching for the way in; I will pause to let God work; and I will dissolve into celestial music.

David Blair lives in rural NH, has taught in the public schools and co-founded and directed the Mariposa Museum and World Culture Center in Peterborough NH. He lived in China, the Philippines and Vietnam. The inner journey has taken him to even more amazing places.

Playing with Past Life Regression

Judy Lumb

Thirty years ago, my first visitors after I moved to Belize brought along a tape of Past Life Regression techniques. We listened to the tape and followed instructions, lying in beds listening to the white noise of the sea breeze in the coconut palms. We each had very different experiences and enjoyed sharing them. I am writing from memory, so I don’t remember the name of the tape or the person making it, just my results.

Like David Blair, I found that going to the day I died was the most interesting part. In one case I was in a cave and there was an avalanche that blocked the opening. I found myself thinking as if I were in a movie, that I would be rescued, but that didn’t happen. I died in that cave.

In another, I was a Roman Senator named “Triumphatus Erectus.” I was stabbed by the husband of the woman I was having an affair with. What upset me the most was that my body looked grotesque the way it fell.

After my friends were gone, I continued using these techniques, playing with it. One day I thought, “Time is not supposed to be linear, but happening all at once, right? Then I should be able to go to the future.” So I set up my past life regression asking for the year 2510. I got this wretched Egyptian woman with leprosy in a cave. Then I heard a cackling laugh, “You didn’t say A.D.!” Each time I have tried to challenge these spiritual techniques to a test, I have always been outsmarted. For me the message was that I should stop testing the systems and believe in my experience, the essence of mysticism.

Judy Lumb is a member of the WCTS editorial team. She worships with the new Belize City Friends Meeting. For more details on this technique for Past Life Regression, see the web edition.

Other Lives

Cathy Waisvisz

I had a psychotic episode in 2012, during which I was certain that I lived a former life. In that life, I was murdered as a baby in the 15th Century. Almost all other aspects of the psychosis were driven by this belief. I remember it clearly and how I wanted to resurrect and heal that baby, going so far as to involuntarily change the way I spoke English. I spoke what I thought was the “pure” English form, one that I was teaching this pure baby inside my psyche. However, it became more difficult for me to understand other people and for them to understand me.

A month prior, as I was experiencing the psychotic break that led to knowing the 15th century baby, I became certain that I lived as a young girl during World War II. When I adopted my present-day cat in 2004 I felt strongly that we had recognized each other, and at the time of my break in 2012, I was certain that my cat had been with me as a comfort during World War II. The only way I could have lived a former life during that time is if I did not survive past the 1950s. I have had no ideas concerning the end of that life.

Still, after recovery, I remember the baby who was murdered and I feel that the baby was me. The baby had been stabbed in a sexually motivated way, though the imagery was of a sword and a baby left bleeding.

Since then, I’ve read articles about mental health professionals and the work they do on a blog called *Mad in America*. I read that unlike the psychiatric system of dispensing medication in the United States, psychiatrists in Finland have helped psychotic patients to completely recover through the use of psychoanalysis. In the U.S., it has been thought to be inapplicable for psychoses and its use has typically

been reserved for non-psychotic people. Since I still believed in these former lives, I was relieved to read these articles. I interpret the possibility of recovering through psychoanalysis to be affirmation of some kernel of truth or experience imbedded within a psychotic episode, which was very much like a dream from which I could not wake up and which I lived out completely.

Sometimes I think I am an old soul, and it is because of these experiences involving a self from an earlier time. It is possible that my impression of having lived other lives grew out of other fantastic dramatizations that occur in an isolated mind, but it is also possible that the fantastic, blown-up versions were worked up from real events and my feelings about them. I am inclined to think that any related events from baby or girlhood pertain to my past in this life, but I cannot dismiss these impression of former

lives because they have touched me deeply. They came from and remain part of my psyche.

I became more open to belief in that which I cannot see because of this experience and serious consideration of having lived former lives. I continue to be open to profound spirituality and cosmic energy, which has deepened and strengthened my faith. I believe that cosmic energy inhabits the mind and that it does not die when our bodies do. It shares and continually seeks to be united with the mind of God.

Cathy Waisvisz remains a part of a variety of churches, including First Christian Church, Emmanuel Memorial Episcopal Church and her friends from New Covenant Fellowship and Messiah Lutheran. Varying widely in their approaches, they are appreciated by Cathy for the myriad of ways in which to worship. Cathy also feels a strong connection to Quakerism. She lives in Champaign, IL and is nearest to the Urbana Friends meeting.

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August 2018
Angry with God
Editor: **Mike Resman**

"The arrows of the Almighty find their mark in me, and their poison soaks into my spirit. God's onslaughts wear me away. ... Oh how shall I find help within myself? The power to help myself is out of my reach." —Job 6: 4,13

Have you been angry with God? Why did you become angry with God? How was your anger with God resolved? How has your anger with God altered your spiritual experience? Have you been able to let go of your anger with God? What has helped you do that?

Deadline: May 15, 2018

November 2018
Buried Treasure: Insights from My Ancestors
Guest Editor: **Betty Brody**

A reflection on the lives of our ancestors can help us construct an awareness of the whole fabric of who we are. To be whole is to be healed on a deep level. What spiritual or emotional journeys have been inspired by learning about the lives of your family members who have passed on? Whether you have experienced them as positive or negative, what gifts of healing, awareness, challenge, teaching or inspiration have you received from family members?

Deadline: August 15, 2018

February 2019
Being with the Dying
Editor: **Susan Greenler with Judy Lumb**

How then shall we live? Have you supported loved ones with their final journey on earth? How have you and they faced this holy time: creating space for a hope that is ever changing and sharing what needs to be shared in words, touch, or through hearts? How may we and our loved ones feel complete with this life, softening into a future that will be forever changed, living into this time, moment by moment.

Deadline: November 15, 2018

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**Other
Lives**