

Case #9 — Good Ships and Witches

Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D., has had an undeniably distinguished career. He taught at Harvard and at Yale University, where he became professor of psychology and psychiatry, director of the Yale Psychophysiology Center, and co-director of the Yale Behavioral Medicine Clinic. He is currently professor of psychology, medicine, neurology, and psychiatry at the University of Arizona.

In the fall of 1997, during a business trip to Irvine, California, Schwartz was introduced by a colleague to Laurie Campbell, who quickly began offering messages from Schwartz' deceased mother, father, father-in-law, and others. Schwartz was impressed with the accuracy and insight of Campbell's "reading."

Schwartz was by no means ready to believe, but he could not imagine any realistic scenario for Campbell obtaining the information she offered or so accurately mimicking people she had never met. The incident inspired him to set up an experiment testing not only Campbell but also Susy Smith, a medium he had met when he moved to Tucson. The results of this experiment were impressive enough to prompt the development of a university-sanctioned research project that is described in Schwartz' book *The Afterlife Experiments*. Five psychic mediums (George Anderson, John Edward, Anne Gehman, Suzane Northrop, and Laurie Campbell) participated in one or more experiments, beginning in February of 1999. The results of the

experiments were most impressive and the book is well worth reading. The following incident is especially evidential.

What the book calls "The Canyon Ranch Experiment" involved three mediums doing readings for each of five sitters. The mediums worked simultaneously in different rooms. The sitters moved from one medium to another and were sequestered in a separate room while waiting for their turns to come up. The mediums were not told who the sitters were and had no way of telling what order they were being presented. During each session, the medium was prevented from seeing the sitter by two sets of doubled sheets suspended "wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling." The medium was prevented from obtaining clues from the sitter's voice by the simple expedient of having the sitter remain silent throughout the experiment. In short, there was no opportunity for the medium to identify the sitter or to base any guesses on the sitters age, gender, health, emotional state, or reaction to a question. During the first ten minutes of each sitting, the sitter did not respond to the medium in any way. After this time period, questions would be answered by an experimenter in the room with the sitter calling out to the medium "yes" or "no" according to a nod or head shake by the sitter.

During the totally silent period in which a woman named Sabrina Geoffrion was the sitter, John Edward made two refer-

ences to an elderly woman that the sitter believes was her grandmother. During the yes/no period (hearing only the experimenter's voice, not the sitter's) Edward said he was being shown daisies at a wedding. The sitter later explained that when her mother married, her grandmother had sewn a ring of daisies into her mother's hair. But it was after the session that the really evidential incident happened.

When Sabrina's session was concluded and she had been escorted to the holding room, Edward's next sitter was brought in. This time, however, the "silent" period was far more silent than usual. Several minutes passed, then Edward claimed that the previous sitter's grandmother had not left when her sitting was concluded. Edward could get nothing about the current sitter, but two impressions came through about the previous sitter: One was the title of the TV show *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. The second was *On the Good Ship Lollipop*, the signature song of Shirley Temple.

Later Sabrina explained to Schwartz that it wasn't simply a matter of identifying her name. When she was in school and her classmates taunted her by calling her "Sabrina the witch," her grandmother was the one she would run to for comfort. When Schwartz asked if "on the good ship lollipop" meant anything to her, Sabrina broke out in tears. Although popular long before her time, the song was very meaningful to her because, as a young girl, she had curly hair and, when she sang and danced, her grandmother would tell her she looked like Shirley Temple. She had actually sung Shirley Temple songs for her grandmother.

Discussion

More details and an analysis of this case may be found on pages 63-69 of *The Survival Files*.

For Further Information

See *The Afterlife Experiments* by Gary Schwartz, 2002, pages 183-189.



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