

Channeling:

Voices from Other Worlds

Who are the beings who speak through people in trance — unearthly entities, creations of the mind or outright frauds?

by Craig Lee
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Part I

IN THE New Age, when people talk to each other it's called "networking." When they talk to God, it's called "channeling."

Or, if you follow a basic tenet of the channeling philosophy, when you talk to God, you talk to yourself, since you create everything. Including, one assumes, the channels who are doing your talking for you.

Last January the television miniseries of Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* hit the airwaves and what was already a rapidly growing grassroots metaphysical movement — and major challenge to Western intellectual thought — was suddenly exposed to millions of people who had neither read Shirley MacLaine's books nor had any exposure to channeling. One of the most famous of the channelers, Kevin Ryerson, was filmed doing a "live" channeling.

Of course, many people thought it was the same kind of quackery as mediums asking Uncle Fred to advise old blue-haired ladies about real estate. The fundamentalists and the religious right jumped on the

bandwagon, denouncing channeling as "devil worship," while learned members of the psychiatric community spoke of delusions, "schizophrenic activation" and such. None of which stopped, or will stop, hordes of newcomers from flocking to see channelers bring forth such entities as Lazaris, Ramtha, Seth, Soli, Torah, Michael, Mathoo, Dr. Peebles, Obidiah, Friend, Beshar or Leah from Venus.

What exactly is "trance channeling"? The process is very simple — people put themselves into trances or meditative states in which, presumably, they set aside their self-consciousness and their ego awareness in order to let other consciousnesses, or energies, come through their physical bodies. The channeler clears the way to use his body as a vehicle for an out-of-the-body entity.

There are many different forms of channeling: automatic writing, painting, dance, music. There are people who say they channel through their computers. There are conscious channelers who listen to and translate

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chickens and live off the land," McNeely relates. "And he told this group of 100 people I was with that if we told anybody about this, he would destroy us — he would bring us down."

Many people now speculate that whatever energy came through J. Z. Knight has either shifted, departed or been replaced by a less benign entity. Which is a pity, because so many of Ramtha's teachings are moving, enlightening testimonies. Once past the silly bits of Ramtha's history in the published *Ramtha* book you find extraordinary material about the nature of human existence; some people find it a remarkable and profound book.

But J. Z. Knight, if not Ramtha, now produces absurd predictions about finding a pyramid in Turkey that will contain a shaft leading to the center of the earth. This was supposed to happen in 1985. Ramtha also predicted the United States would be involved in a big international war as an outgrowth of a high official's sabotaging of the World Bank — this was to have occurred in December 1985. The same late-model Ramtha also tells audiences that AIDS is earth's way of getting back at gays — it is the earth cleansing itself.

Ramtha also recently denounced masturbation as spilling seed, spilling "life blood." In a seminar in Phoenix, J. Z. / Ramtha got 30 gay men in a circle and told them they would all be dead from AIDS in 10 years. People

are now leaving Ramtha seminars with fear in their hearts, not love. Some other channelers say they have to do "clean-up work" after Ramtha's been to town.

If a lot of Ramtha's more recent teachings smell of old biblical morality and retribution, it should come as no surprise that J. Z. Knight has a strict Christian background and once claimed she had read the Bible, front to back, at least six times. When Ramtha speaks now of the "12 Days of Light" holocaust, complete with the return of "Jehovah, the angry God of the Jews," battling "the three gods Yahwe, Id and Ramtha, who will come on their ships of Light" — well, they didn't do it any better in Revelation.

As revealing are some of the dubious Ramtha money matters. The name "Ramtha" is copyrighted, an interesting occurrence, comparable to the Catholic Church's taking out copyrights on "Jesus." And while 700 may spend \$500 on a weekend with Ramtha, they're not getting a tax break. According to McNeely, Knight in 1985 told her followers that Ramtha was a nonprofit organization. A year later Ramtha devotees received a letter noting that, because of Ramtha's antichurch line, Ramtha could no longer be used as a tax deduction. McNeely wonders if the IRS revoked the status or if one existed to begin with. "And why did they wait until August to let people know the status had been revoked in January?"

the voices they hear in their heads — a famous example of this might be Joan of Arc. One well-known Brazilian psychic channels paintings by the great masters using both hands and feet simultaneously to create new Renoirs, van Goghs, Degases and Modiglianis by the hour. (It sounds too incredibly absurd; yet I saw some of the paintings and while I am not an art expert, I instantly recognized the style of the original artists — an extraordinary skill, no matter where it's coming from.)

But the most popular form of channeling, the kind that is starting to pull in the crowds, is vocal channeling, in which people go through sometimes subtle, sometimes dramatic transformations, turning from housewives or former insurance salesmen into ancient Hindi warlords, Irish pickpockets, Chinese philosophers, extraterrestrial friends or, in what must be one of the most unusual spirit forms of all time, the collective consciousness of a group of dolphins.

Yes, people do take this phenomenon very seriously.

Before we go on here, I want to state my intentions in writing this article. I'm not going to do an expose on channeling. I'm sure that I could have dug up dirt on many of the channelers and I did encounter some disreputable people out there cashing in on metaphysics' latest hit, one or two of whom you'll read about here. But there are also some genuine, sincere visionaries in this field, people

with abilities that simply cannot be measured by a cold, clinical science that denies anything that doesn't conform to its version of the naked truth. As one philosopher noted, the naked truth is often only undressed lies.

If the methods the channelers use often seem phantasmagorical, the message is often directly personal, far-reaching, even profound. The channelers consider the present passing of the Piscean age into the Aquarian age as a time of radical change, both in the physical planet and in the consciousness of individuals. They seem to be preparing us for a time of transformation, of new growth, addressing topics from creating success to dealing with AIDS. People go to channelers the way they went to psychoanalysts in the '50's or encounter groups in the '60's or est weekends in the '70's.

My approach to channeling is that it really doesn't matter what the process is — it's the material that counts. Does Jack Pursel really have a collective consciousness through him that was never incarnated on the physical plane, yet can make jokes about items off yesterday's CNN news broadcast? Is J. Z. Knight really allowing an ancient Lumerian-Hindu entity that dubs itself the "Master of the Winds" to use her body to warn followers of an impending holocaust? Is the Seth that speaks through Tom Massarri the same Seth that spoke through Jane Roberts when she wrote her pivotal books on the channeling ex-

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od-man who lived 35,000 years ago.

Ramtha has a devoted cult following, many of whom believe they were, in earlier incarnations, part of Ramtha's army of Lumerians who, the story goes, swept through Atlantis into India. Ramtha claims he was the warrior who created the first war, before ascending into a higher consciousness.

However absurd the story may be to Westerners, there is no denying that Ramtha, or J. Z., has a profound psychic energy. In *Dancing in the Light* Shirley MacLaine relates that tears came to her eyes when she first met Ramtha. He seemed so familiar to her she was convinced she knew him from another life. She also describes how Ramtha gave her the power to go through a performance when she was sick, how she felt as though "something else" had taken over her body.

These days MacLaine isn't talking about Ramtha, and people close to her say she's considering a letter to metaphysical bookstores disclaiming her association with Ramtha. What happened?

Pam McNeely, 32 and single, lives in Sausalito, Calif., and installs computerized accounting systems. She recalls how her fascination with Ramtha turned sour. Originally a follower of Terry Cole-Whittaker (as are many people involved in the channeling movement), McNeely found that Ramtha's brilliant earlier teachings had a profound impact on

her life, particularly Ramtha's message of "love yourself," experienced in 1984 at a Ramtha session at an ashram in Yucca Valley.

"I was still in a state of my life that Lazaris calls the adolescent," McNeely told me. "I was looking for somebody to take care of my life, to teach me about what spirituality was. I wanted to learn but I was also giving my power away. I'd been to the *Course in Miracles* [based on a book reputedly channeled from the Christ consciousness] and it's nice stuff, but it inevitably teaches people how *not* to have impact."

Her interest engaged, McNeely spent more than \$10,000 over two years on Ramtha seminars, video cassettes and audio tapes. She also nearly went bankrupt as a result of following Ramtha's advice.

In May 1985 McNeely went to a Ramtha seminar on past lives. Instead, she heard about a dire future:

"Ramtha told us that in three years, in a thousand days, there would be a great upheaval, a time that he calls 'the 12 Days of Light,' in which the cities would have so much disease in them, they would shut down. He advised people to move to the country, like Washington state, where J. Z. Knight lives."

In 1985 Ramtha told a San Diego audience, "Don't live on the fault line. It's a zipper." As a result many Ramtha acolytes (including Terry Cole-Whittaker) have moved to Oregon.

"Ramtha told us to get pigs and

asked Pursel to define the New Age for which all channels are supposedly spokespersons. "The Old Age was a time when there was a greater sense of destiny," he tells me, "a time when psychics could predict what was going to happen with accuracy, a time when the Pyramid at Cheops could delineate the future, when the calendars of the Mayans and the East Indians could predict events. The New Age is when people take back their power."

Taking back power is a theme that runs through the discourse of many of the channelers.

"The predictions in the pyramids and from Nostradamus," Pursel continues, "usually stop around the year 2000. People take this to mean that the world is going to end. I think that means the world really *begins*, that these people were shrewd enough to be able to see a World One and a World Two, that there would be a time when these predictions couldn't be true anymore because people, individually, are going to create their own reality. In the Old Age you go to a psychic and ask if you're going to get that job promotion. In the New Age you go to a teacher and say, 'What do I need to *create* that job?'"

One of the mistakes the general public makes, Pursel notes, is that "people assume that if it's a channeled entity, then it's got to be speaking the truth, the highest truth. I don't think that's the case at all. You can go to doctors and there are good doctors

and bad doctors. There are good entities and bad entities, as far as the quality of the information goes.

"Back in the 1800's people would go to a seance and ask Uncle Harry what investments they should make, even though Uncle Harry knew nothing about finances when he was alive. Why should he know more because he's not in a physical body? I think there are entities of different calibers. Some are very positive and well-meaning, but they don't have enough vision. With some of the others — well, I don't know if they're so positive, and I don't know what their motivations are. I think there is some fakery going on. Basically people have to discern the truth and find the quality of that truth."

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RECENTLY a lot of people involved in the channeling movement have been questioning the quality of the truth issuing from probably the best-known entity in the channeling world, Ramtha. Basically they are questioning the reliability of Ramtha's channel, a Bo Derek-like woman named J. Z. Knight.

Ramtha/Knight, who lives in Seattle, has been discussing everything from soul mates to the creation of the world and it's all available in a series of cassettes. Knight claims she first saw Ramtha when, experimenting with pyramids at home, she put one on her head and Ramtha appeared in the door, a larger-than-life apparition of an ancient Hindu

Hollywood's metaphysical community. He will be featured in Shirley MacLaine's next book — the best PR a channel can get, putting Lazaris up there with Kevin Ryerson and Ramtha in the channeling Big 3. Recently, Michael York and his wife brought Lazaris with them to *The Merv Griffin Show*.

Lazaris — I mean, Pursel — is staying at the home of Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna in Beverly Hills and I notice Lesley Ann Warren sitting at the end of my row. Next to me is a typical Southern California woman, tan, dressed in the latest mall fashions. She's fondling a large quartz crystal in her hand. The audiences for many channelers are predominantly female, though this group is pretty balanced in terms of gender. An appropriate audience for an entity that defines the supreme being as "God/Goddess/All That Is."

Jack Pursel's bio runs like this: He was a supervisor in a regional insurance office in Florida. His wife Peny (pronounced like "Penny") was interested in metaphysics, though Pursel claims he was too busy climbing the corporate ladder to take much notice of her spiritual interests. However, he would occasionally try meditating with his wife, usually falling asleep in the process. Then one night they tried an experiment — Pursel went into meditation while Peny asked him questions. Pursel says he felt as if he'd fallen asleep, but he began responding to Peny's questions in a voice

markedly different from his own.

Peny grabbed a note pad, thinking this would not happen again. This was in 1974.

Pursel claims he was disturbed and shocked by the initial Lazaris experience. Obviously he's not shocked about it anymore. He sells videos and cassettes and runs two New Age galleries, Illuminaria and Isis Unlimited, in San Francisco. In addition, in 1976 he created Concept: Synergy, Inc., the corporation that has grown up around Lazaris. It might be noted that Pursel was aware of the work of Jane Roberts and Edgar Cayce, but after having read several of Pursel's books, after talking to the man personally and attending his seminars, I find it hard to believe that he is acting, or faking, Lazaris. Too much information comes through, too much varied information that works on several different levels. Jack Pursel seems resolutely normal. Lazaris seems extraordinary. Of course, if I had the time, I might possibly find chinks in the Lazaris armor. But why bother?

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STILL, I wonder if Lazaris has ever subjected himself to any kind of psychological or neurological testing, like Kevin Ryerson, who works with Dr. William Kautz at Stanford Research Institute. "No," Pursel tells me, "and I have no real intention of doing so. Arthur Ford, a wonderful medium who died years ago, and Eileen Garrett, an incredible medium,

were tested and tested. Eileen Garrett's blood pressure changed, her heart rate changed, the results of her urinalysis changed — and they *still* dismissed what she did. She spent a good part of her life being tested. She could have said, 'Forget that. I'm going to do the work I came to do.' What difference does it make if they take an EKG and notice a difference in your brain waves?"

Obviously, no difference at all to the 500 people who've watched Pursel get up on a platform, sit down in a rattan chair, close his eyes and undergo a few facial grimaces before speaking in a mellifluous voice with traces of an English or continental European accent. Lazaris is here.

Lazaris takes people through the concept of "success." He outlines ways that people can create their own success and have fun with their lives. He discusses steps to success and how to deal with fears. He suggests meditation techniques and tells people to visualize a cube of success that they can enter and expand. At the end of three information-packed hours, Lazaris does a "blending" with the audience, giving out individual messages.

For many people in the audience this is an emotionally stirring experience — there are many tear-filled eyes as Lazaris relates a story about how a woman with a severely retarded, violent child came to him and how the child was somehow calmed by the love Lazaris offered him.

Lazaris is a smooth operator. He understands his audience's vulnerabilities and hopes and he manipulates them magnificently. At one point in his pep talk he informs the crowd that many of them are former residents of Atlantis who have chosen to incarnate at this point because they were frustrated at being unable to stop Atlantis' destruction and see this as a perfect time to get a second chance at preventing world destruction. So part of the success that is consciously being created is that of saving the world they have created. This is just what many of these people, with their nuclear nightmares, need to hear — an antinuclear movement is being created before my eyes!

The humanist in me is reluctant to judge somebody who is so affirmative, who is offering such a positive message. Yet, listening to Lazaris, I'm still not ready to surrender the last traces of my cynical, realist self to the unlimited light and beauty of this New Age-think, perhaps only because the retarded-boy story seems such pure tent-show string-pulling. Other little details of the seminar bothered me as well, such as when Lazaris turns on his tape recorder during the meditations in order to fill the room with the pretty, if somewhat maudlin, "Theme From Lazaris." Always in the back of my head there is the niggling fear: What if all this stuff is hokey and I'm being played for a sucker?

When I interviewed him later, I

perience at the end of the '60's? Roberts' Seth said he would never come through another physical body after Roberts passed away.)

The objective newspaper reporter has a hard time swallowing any of this but the sensitive, intuitive human being finds the philosophy of the channels intriguing and inviting.

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WHAT ARE the channelers expounding? Though the language and presentation vary, many of the themes remain basically the same on the deepest levels: You already know everything; going to channelers only reactivates what you already know. You create everything; there are no accidents. You create your own path. There's no death, only change. Every atom in your body contains its own consciousness and memory. Reality is an illusion; only the dream state (or astral plane, or whatever the various channelers choose to call it) is real. We created our physical reality as a framework for personal growth. There is no good or bad; there is only experience. And the old standby: All you need is love.

This is mixed in with various ideas relating to New Age aids and tools — for example, most of the channelers will talk about the seven chakras in the body or will discuss the power of crystals, or how we can get in contact with spirit guides (depending, of course, on whether your guides think you are ready for such contact). They talk of how, just as you determine

your life, you determine what experiences you have during and after death. And the main concept, overriding all others, is how once we attain mastery, we also attain unconditional love. It's easy to remember, folks, if you realize that your highest teacher is your highest self.

Five hundred people have paid \$40 each to get into contact with that higher self at a Lazaris seminar entitled "Consciously Creating Success," held in the ballroom of the LAX Hilton. The house is full — and so is the waiting list to get a private consultation with Lazaris (it takes 12 to 18 months). Jack Pursel, the Lazaris channeler, tells me how he sees the audience that comes to hear Lazaris:

"The majority of Lazaris followers are college graduates, and a good number of these are postgraduates. Lots of professional people, lots of doctors, lots of lawyers, psychologists — successful people, upper-middle income, upwardly mobile, aggressive people. People whose lives are working, people who have ambition and are not going to sit on the sidelines and wait till a fairy godmother gives them success, people who roll up their sleeves and say, 'I want it! I'll go get it and I'm not going to rely on other people to give it to me!'" In other words, young and olduppies who have bought the terms of the U.S. economic system.

Among the go-getters in the Hilton are a lot of Hollywood industry types. Lazaris is now firmly ensconced in

McNeely is one of a group of 40 Ramtha supporters who recently withdrew their support. Many are now considering legal action.

"I think she's lying," McNeely flatly states. "And it's a shame because I feel that J. Z. Knight was a genuinely nice lady. I had many wonderful

moments with Ramtha but I think she's frightening people now and causing damage. What I find interesting is that Ramtha once told us, 'If you want people to start following you, all you have to do is bring fear about in them.'"

This is Part I of a three-part article.

Voices from Other Worlds

Beings from worlds and dimensions beyond our own speak through an assortment of ordinary folk — but are they to be believed?

By Craig Lee
Reprinted from L.A. Weekly

Part II

CHANNELING — in which disembodied entities claiming to be from the ancient past, other planets or other dimensions speak through entranced persons — is the metaphysical craze of the 1980's. Channeled entities say that each of us creates his own reality, that there is no good or bad and that love is the answer. They also state that both the earth and the people who inhabit it are soon going to experience radical changes.

Channeling enthusiasts include large numbers of educated, professional people who follow the teachings of such beings as Lazaris, who speaks through Jack Pursel, a retired insurance supervisor, and Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old Hindu god-man whose channel is a woman named J. Z. Knight. The Ramtha channeling has sparked controversy because of Ramtha/Knight's pronouncements on sex, AIDS and imminent geolog-

DR. PEEBLES does not inspire fear. If anything, I have to suppress a giggle when the Peebles voice comes bolting out of the body of William Rainan, the psychic who's been channeling the good doctor for years. This is taking place in a setting dramatically different from Lazaris' ballroom full of upwardly mobiles.

We are in a church basement. There are 10 of us sitting in candlelit darkness: a few gays, a few senior citizens and several women. Rainan, besides channeling Peebles, also teaches mediumship; one of his students, Thomas Jacobsen, also channels Peebles. The same spirit energy going through several different channels is not a rare occurrence. You can find at least a dozen Seths out there. Which is probably why popular entities such as Lazaris take great pains to point out they employ only one channel.

A small, wiry older man, he's bursting with energy as he goes rapidly around the room before the channeling begins, telling people some of his own psychic perceptions about them. He zeroes in on me and describes a certain work condition he sees around me. He is acutely accurate. I decide he's a gifted psychic.

But the channeling lacks the flair or depth of Lazaris'. The presentation is also hard on the senses: Dr. Peebles speaks in a high-pitched, strained squeal, and quite loudly too. Peebles' opening speech is standard New Age metaphysics about self-created realities, pretty surprising for a 17th-Century Scottish doctor. He then takes questions from the audience. As can be expected, many relate to physical infirmities.

I decide to test Dr. Peebles. I tell him that after I eat I feel drowsy and tend to develop an acute dull pain in my left side. It's not exactly true, but it's not a lie, as I've just eaten a big meal and am feeling its effects.

Peebles says, "God bless you," then promptly tells me that I experienced a life change two years ago, a major cyclical change. And he's correct — two years ago I stopped taking drugs, became a vegetarian, was involved in a tumultuous new love affair and received a job promotion. (I don't take my cycle changes lightly!) Peebles advises me about a dietary system I should implement and warns that my intellect is over-

riding what my body is telling me to eat. Then — catching me in my truth-stretching — he says I *don't* have any symptoms of a physical illness, but the potential is there unless I shape up. Dr. Peebles, as they say, read my beads.

JAMIE SAMS is a different story. There's not much discernment evident at her Burbank channeling session. As I walk into a large, spacious meeting hall, I hear sweeping synthesizers and sweetly keening organ sounds. A young man with a pockmarked face, a semipunk hairdo and a pretty little crystal earring takes my \$15.

I have come to hear Leah from Venus.

Several tables have been set up around the room, offering various accoutrements for the New Age — vitamins, crystals (of course), a selection of used books about "Star People." You can buy some paper 3-D glasses for \$2.00 ("Meditation Glasses — See the Pretty Colors!"). Another table has a display of several pictures of the "energy spot" in New Mexico at which Sams will channel her entities. (Several channels have different entities coming through: Kevin Ryerson has a whole crew of them — from Haitian witch doctors to the biblical John to Nubian slaves — while Sams, not missing a trick, has a Tibetan in addition to her Venusian.) If you want to see Sams channel in New Mexico, it's only

\$600. Later I learn that Sams and her people are eventually planning to move there.

I pick up a copy of Sams' newsletter *Starseed Connection* and read about how we're going to meet our star brothers in 1988, how we are HUM-ans — that's Heavenly Undivided Man, who should be creating "Magic, not tragic!" There's also an advertisement for the Crystal Body Balancing Chair, a rather stiff-looking piece of furniture that contains a huge power crystal under its "star seat." Be careful how long you sit on it, we are warned — the energy is overwhelming! Cost? A mere \$150.

The people assembled here are much more boisterous and excitable than the well-heeled professionals at the Lazaris seminar or the predominantly older, female truth seekers in Dr. Peebles' candle-lit church basement. There are faded flowers from the Hippie and Me generations, commingling with a few younger rock and roll shagheads. There are also a few spry senior citizens and a scuzzy dog named "Starina" pouncing about.

Sams, a rather heavysset woman with catlike eyes and a slight Western drawl, bellows in a husky tone, "Okay, let's start," and takes her place on stage, sitting under a tepee/pyramid shape made of three poles. Two Indian-type masks rest on top.

No matter how silly this is all starting to seem, I suddenly feel a very real presence in the room as

Sams prepares to go into her channeling. It's a sense of an energy, or a spirit, an undefinable something that is passing through everyone, from this somewhat disbelieving reporter to the person aiming the video camera at Sams' face. Whatever it is, though, is dissipated as soon as Leah does her spiel.

According to Leah, the reason that our space probes to Venus revealed no life was that our intentions weren't peaceful — we wanted to set up nuclear warheads on Venus. Consequently, when the spacecraft entered the Venusian atmosphere, the Venusians "loved the thought out of it, causing malfunction." Even had photographs been taken, nothing would have been revealed because Venusian light frequencies travel so fast our "dense" eyes can't see them. I mention density because, according to Leah, the density of Venusians is different from that of earthlings. There are sixth-density, fifth-density and fourth-density beings, while we poor earth slobs are only third-density. But wait, there's hope — we can possibly attain fourth density, in which still-corporeal beings still make use of their mouths to communicate. (They also eat fruits, nuts and vegetables exclusively.)

A tight smile fixed on her face, Sams is motionless during the channeling except for her index fingers, which keep scratching at the palms of her hands in a circular motion.

The Leah voice sounds like a prim little old lady.

Tonight's topic is Egypt. Leah from Venus informs us that Egypt was colonized by people from Sirius, who came to earth by way of Venus. She then informs us that Egyptian life contained what we call Adonai-Elohim energy, the "I AM." This is something you can find in any beginner's occult manuscript. However, it's apparent Leah's audience knows nothing of Theosophy, or the work of England's Golden Dawn Society, or the conjurings of Aleister Crowley. Leah goes on to describe how she was Isis and another (male) Venusian force was Ra; and, moreover, if you take the Is from Isis and the El from Elohim and put Ra in the middle, you get "Is-ra-el!" A couple of people go "Ahhh!" as they are hit with this profound information.

But wait! Another revelatory gem is coming forth. Did you know that Genesis stands for "gene of Isis"? More oohs and aahs from the congregation. Sams/Leah babbles on and on with this revisionist nonsense: how there are cities in Egypt where the priestesses turned into cat people, how the pyramids were created by lasers, how the first letter in America is the same as Atlantis, etc., etc.

Now, I don't care if someone wants to channel metaphysical *Storybook Theater* for people who are tired of watching *The Cosby Show*.

And who knows, maybe Napoleon did see a vision that made him want to shoot the nose off the Sphinx (my favorite bit of the evening). But this night I find it disturbing that when people rise to ask serious questions, Leah toys with them.

One woman, for example, was curious about crystals. Leah related that there are now rare crystals from outer space that can be found in only one mountain range in the Ukraine. The crystals are blue. "Oh, like this blue one I'm wearing?" the woman asks excitedly. "But yours is fastened to a clasp," Leah responds with a tight smile. The woman is confused. What does *that* mean? Is the crystal less functional? "You'll have to go within yourself to find the answer," Leah coyly responds. "What's true for you is true for *you!*"

What is true for me is that I leave during the break, just after Leah tells people they need an extra seed chromosome to be a star-seed person.

I HAVE now seen several channelers, from the extraordinarily impressive to the sublimely dippy. At this point I have many serious questions, among them whether a channeler controls the energy coming through or alienates it (Did J. Z. Knight lose Ramtha?) or colors its perceptions. What kind of relationship exists between the body and the "spirit"?

cases are vocal channels who cannot remember what they've said or done while in the channeling state. In the last four years, however, she's studied what she describes as a surge of *conscious* voice channels, people aware and learning from the energy they're vocalizing.

Chandley believes that in time there will be a method of proof-testing this energy. She suspects a way will be found to measure it in the part of the brain where the pituitary and pineal glands connect with the brain stem.

"We call it 'kundalini,'" Chandley notes, "but that's yogic and I feel that there's another way that we might approach it. The pineal gland is a much smaller organ than the pituitary at the moment — though in our forebears' times, for example, what we know of the Mayans, the pineal was huge and the pituitary was more of a reproductive organ. If we found a way to reverse and measure them, I'm sure we could find proof of the channeling energy."

Gland talk is popular with channelers. Many of them, for example, talk about the thymus gland, located near the heart. Supposedly the center of youth and love energy, it atrophies in adults.

"We're bringing that back," Chandley calmly asserts. "Because we're going glandular. From what I understand, instead of the organs we've been using, we're going to be making this evolutionary change in our

genetic makeup. The glands are going to become more important and the organs are going to atrophy."

In Chandley's view such common psychological disorders as schizophrenia are really something else. "I no longer believe schizophrenia is a disease at all," Chandley tells me. "We believe that through some kind of shock a person was shocked into another dimension. And because they experience that dimension on such a totally different level, one they aren't familiar with, that to come back through [to the level] is very difficult, so they get stuck."

Chandley looks forward to a time when people can integrate the channeled energy with their own personalities. "As development happens more and more with personalities," she notes, "so does the energy that they're bringing through. So that finally, with the conscious channels, we're going to just be an integrated being. And we're not going to have to go into trance anymore, and we're not going to have to localize that station anymore. . . . we're just going to be *us*."

So far only one channel Chandley has studied may have achieved such integration. (She prefers not to say whom.) I'm curious about the channels who might be faking it or experiencing a shift of energy, as some speculate is the case with Ramtha. How do you know what's channeling and what's a performance?

"There's a beautiful relationship between the entity and the channel." Margo Chandley is explaining the process to me. She's a bit defensive, a bit wary of this reporter who's come into her house on a Monday night. In one hour Daryl Anka, a 34-year-old special-effects designer, will create his own effective channeling when he allows Beshar, "an entity from the planet Essassani, which forms a triangle with earth and the star Sirius," to come through him.

Chandley has been working for the past four years on a doctoral thesis in "transformational psychology" at the International College in Westwood, Calif. She's studied 50 channelers and worked closely with 15, one of whom, Shawn Randall, now teaches classes in channeling in conjunction with the spirit she (Randall) channels, called Torah. How does Chandley distinguish between someone channeling his/her own subconscious and a person channeling an out-of-the-body energy?

Chandley smiles tightly. "I allow them to tell me. I've set up a seven-step process of how people develop as channels," Chandley continues. "They start at a very young age with an experience — a major metaphysical experience they all seem to have in common. I call that the 'conceptualization phase.'"

Not coincidentally, Chandley says, many channelers have parents who were disbelieving of their initial

spiritual experiences. Many have abusive parents and the experience becomes repressed. As the years go by, the channels are further suppressively conditioned by peers, by the church (many channels come from Catholic backgrounds), by social pressure.

"Most of the time, what happens is our imagination, the magical part of us, gets left out, becomes more deluded, more intellectual," Chandley notes. "And those initial experiences the channels had as children become fuzzy — until they reexperience them. With the channelers I've studied, this usually happens around age 37. Something triggers it back — sometimes a shock, an epileptic fit, a dream — and they go through a separation stage where they realize they want to be channels. They're drawn to the idea. It's a preparation stage.

"They then go back into a gestation stage where they decide they want to continue this relationship between the physical and nonphysical worlds. And when they've finished with the gestation stage, they come into the recognition stage, where they decide to risk it, to go out where there are not a lot of people doing what they do and go into whatever physical manifestation they've chosen to go into, and say what they're bringing through."

What follows is the stage of active channeling.

Most of Chandley's original study

"You go by intuition," Chandley replies, clearly perturbed by the nature of my question. "To start to judge channeling would be doing all this work a disservice. That's what they've done to mediumship in the past. One of the reasons I wanted to do this dissertation was because all I found in the history of mediumship were people trying to prove that mediums were real or prove they were frauds. And I think neither one is important. I think it's a process that we're developing and that we're understanding and experiencing."

I BEGIN to experience a mind shutoff when Anka begins his channeling in Chandley's living room. Of the channelers I've seen, Anka's method of going into trance is the most dramatic — lots of huffing and puffing, with huge gasps of air and quick neck turns as his head whips back and forth. With his hands forming a triangle or pyramid, Beshar's voice suddenly issues forth, very loud and clear. Compared to the gentle, warm Lazaris or the high-pitched, frenetic-sounding Dr. Peebles, Beshar seems almost stern, pompous. He also uses language that circles around itself:

"Begin to recognize that the idea of integration will, in and of itself, imply less need for the format in which you have chosen to experience limitation, which is the idea of physiological reality. You'll have to find

your physiological reality through a few set parameters, one being the idea of polarity experience, one being the idea of the experience you call linear space time, and in this way you will find you have utilized these tools, utilized these projections, utilized these illusions to give you a sense of the separation you have chosen to experience, to give you a sense of the ability to limit yourselves, to give yourself a sense of the ability to forget that you are the creators of your reality."

In case Beshar's message seems a bit, shall we say, overintellectualized or obscure, you can always buy his *Channeled Dictionary of Metaphysical Terms*. I don't have the inclination. I much prefer the gruff nature of Seth, channeled by Anka's former mediumship teacher, Tom Massarri.

Lazaris followers might find Seth's concepts a bit limited but then all I've attended are Seth's Monday-night discussions in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, instead of his advanced workshop. In a strange way Seth reminds me of leaders of group encounter sessions — he often asks people to stand up and declare their feelings before the crowd. Seth also has stock phrases. "Quit the game" is a popular one. So is "Come alive within your magnificence." Another is "Shift your focus of attention — allow things to be what they want to be."

All Seth evenings with Massarri

s the channeler start the same. After Massarri has gone into trance and has leaned over to turn on his tape recorder, his face contorts into a few grimaces (though nothing like leshar's huffing and puffing). As with many of the channelers, one gets the sense of the energy traveling up his spine.

"Now I'll say hello!" Seth barks. "Hello, Seth!" the room shouts back.

"Now how do you feel?"

"Great!"

"Oh, really?" Seth asks skeptically. "Then show some of your liveliness!"

Of course, there's always somebody who doesn't feel all *that* great. Which is why they've come to hear Seth tell them they have total command, or how, when you "play the victim game," you shut down emotionally.

A lady in the front row is definitely playing the victim game tonight. She's feeling rejected. Her husband has left her. Seth asks her how she feels. "I feel like I'm in suspended animation!" Seth tells her that's because she has rejected herself, is punishing herself.

"I want my husband back," the woman cries.

Gently Seth tells the woman to accept herself. She replies that she is packed with pain.

"So what!" shouts Seth. "Put the pain aside. Now, what would you like to place in that emptiness?"

The woman, sounding dead, says she wants to love unconditionally.

"Say it again!" commands Seth forcefully.

"I want to love unconditionally!" Say it again, he tells her. "Stand up and say it! The key to manifesting is allowing and acceptance."

Seth explains that had the woman allowed her husband to have his own feelings . . . but he's interrupted by the woman's crying. Seth asks how she'd like her life to be. Sharing? Trusting? Allowing? Accepting? Then she needs to change her attitude about herself. She needs to give up her self-judgments. The pain is her own creation, he says, her unconsciousness about how to function in life. Seth suggests that perhaps her abandonment might not cause fear — it might bring excitement with the recognition that she's her own God and therefore has created this.

Whatever Seth is saying, he's hitting home. The woman stops crying and proclaims that she's starting to see things from different angles. She's opening up. However clinical and pop-psychological this scene reads, an emotional energy and intensity are building in the room between Seth, this woman and the crowd.

"You do not have to be stuck within your emotions. You *are* emotional energy." As he says this, another woman starts to cry, releasing more emotional energy.

Massarri's Seth sessions make for

"FATE", July 1987

CHANNELING:

Voices from Other Worlds

Where do the beings that speak through channels come from?

Do they come from other dimensions — or from deep within ourselves?

By Craig Lee

Reprinted from L.A. Weekly

Part III

THE METAPHYSICAL craze of the 1980's is channeling, in which "entities" speak through persons in trance and teach that love is the answer, each of us creates his own reality and the earth is soon to undergo radical changes. Margo Chandley, who has studied 50 channelers while doing research for her Ph.D. in transformational psychology, believes that channeling is related to an energy known in yogic tradition as kundalini. She says that increasingly channelers no longer need to go into altered states of consciousness for this energy to come through. In time the entities and the individuals through whom they speak will be one "integrated being."

THE CHANNELING movement grows and grows. You can go to Susan Levin's Wednesday night "Channeling Connection" meetings in West Los Angeles and see a different channel each week. Then on weekends Levin offers "Consciousness Connection" — part lecture,

part metaphysical singles group. Levin and Margot Chandley have begun producing a channeling show for cable TV.

Meanwhile, many local channelers can be read in a periodical called Spirit Speaks, put out by a jovial woman named Molli Nickell. After Nickell and her husband's business venture went under a few years ago, they read the Seth materials. Their daughter then took them to meet William Rainan and Dr. Peebles. They were hooked.

Nickell sells some 2000 copies of Spirit Speaks a month, primarily through subscriptions and metaphysical bookstores such as the Bodhi Tree in West Hollywood. She never advertises but the demand is increasing steadily for the magazine, which takes an interesting approach — a common topic is chosen and different "entities" express their thoughts on that topic.

"We have three principles that we work with in looking for material," Nickell states. "One, allowance —

great therapy, if one chooses to participate. Does it matter whether Massarri channels the "real" Seth, the one that came through Jane Roberts and was recorded in those famous 1970's communications books? Some critics insist it is a different entity through Massarri and it is using the Seth name to gain attention. Others say it's an aspect of a greater consciousness.

I'm content that Massarri/Seth

helped a woman get a handle, however tenuous, on her personal problem tonight and I don't care how he did it. Maybe she couldn't afford to get the same from therapy. And the message is simple: all you need do is give yourself positive attention. The most empowering mantra there is, the Massarri/Seth tells us, is your own name.

This is Part II of a three-part article.



HOW GENES WORK

IN A REPORT in the November 14, 1986, issue of *Science*, researchers outlined how they transferred the light of fireflies into tobacco plants, producing generations of leafy lanterns that glow in the dark. They used gene-splicing technology to insert the gene that produces a glowing enzyme called luciferase into the plant's deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). The scientists said the firefly glow promises to be a valuable research tool for learning how and when different genetic instructions switch on and off in higher organisms and for

tracing the development of plants and animals.

"This is the first time anyone has taken a gene that codes for light production and transferred it into the genetic material of a complex multicellular organism," said Dr. Donald Helinski, a researcher on the project at the University of California-San Diego.

"The use of tobacco plants has no special significance," another researcher, Dr. Stephen Howell, said. "It is a well-understood model for plant scientists, sort of the lab rat of the plant world."



SORE THROAT STOPS SWORD SWALLOWER

JAMES COOK, a 24-year-old sword swallower billed as the "Baron of Blades," cut a two-inch gash in his esophagus in early September 1986 performing his state fair act. The Arlington, Tex., resident was taken to St. Francis Regional Medical Center in Wichita,

Kans., experiencing throat and stomach pains.

The blade that did the damage was a 24-inch samurai sword which Cook was using for the first time. He told Associated Press that he will perform again but not with that decorative sword.

the loving law of allowance for all things to be in their own time and place; two, increased communication with respect for all life; three, self-responsibility for how you perceive reality."

Nickell recently published a *Spirit Speaks* volume on AIDS. In it the various entities describe AIDS not as a disease but as something created out of social conditions. "There are no incurable diseases. Only incurable people," says one of the entities. "You can't take AIDS and make it a separate issue," Nickell says. "So this book became a sort of metaphysical primer."

What kind of people does Nickell think are attracted to channeling and New Age metaphysics?

"I have a theory. I believe that people on a worldwide level are becoming aware that the earth is imperiled. That, for the first time any of us can ever remember, we have the opportunity of killing our mother. The earth is a living entity, a hostess, a place for us to live and experience and go through incarnations. People have the sense of 'My God, what can I do?' The institutions, the governments, the things that used to work to protect us, they don't seem to be working anymore. So where can you go if you can't go out and find the answer? There's only one place you can look — inside. When people start to look for answers inside themselves, they get in touch with their own infinity-

ness. They find out they really are a piece of God and that they are here to experience — and as they change, everyone around them changes. Channeling is nothing new. It's been going on for years. In the early Bible the prophets were channeling."

* * *

MICHAEL HUGHES hasn't been channeling quite that long, but he's had a bit more preparatory intellectual experience than most of the new breed of channelers. Hughes, who currently lives in West Hollywood, studied metaphysics for 40 years and has a Ph.D. in philosophy. He might seem a natural to cash in on the latest metaphysical trend, and although during the late '60s and early '70s he channeled an entity called John — a "Brother of the Sano-Tarot" — he's become scornful of the practice. "Most of these people are just into demonstrating and I find this kind of demonstrating to be an act of ill faith."

Hughes seems to be what Chandleley considers an integrated being. When asked to, he brings forth a Mayan entity in a scary vocal display, translating the Mayan's babble into English but remaining fully conscious while doing so. Hughes claims a linguist who studied the sounds attested to their Mayan authenticity but he's less concerned with the process than the person performing it.

"There's only one interjection," Hughes notes, meaning one inter-

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area, the state of "lucid dreaming" from which Edgar Cayce, probably the most highly developed psychic of our century, derived his visionary techniques.

Still, I don't have 40 years of metaphysics on my side. That's why I've decided to meet Shawn Randall. I figure the only way I can truly report on the channeling experience is to try to undergo some aspect of it myself. Randall is a very pretty young woman, living in a perfect yuppie condo in Studio City with her boyfriend, a musician with the Count Basie band. She radiates a kind of happy, healthy energy. Her table has a piece of art from Jack Pursel's Illuminarium gallery — a nymphlike figure rising from a bed of crystals.

Randall goes into trance and Torah comes through. The voice is not that radically different from Randall's but it has a bit of masculine edge. Randall contorts her body and twists several times as the energy moves through her. I ask Torah about his name but he pleasantly dodges the subject. Also, with a name like that, implying a connection with Jewish scripture, I aim a few questions related to Judaic philosophy. Once again, Torah skirts them politely. ("Hmmm, she's a nice lady but she's not much of a channel," I think to myself.)

Then she takes me on a meditation filled with imagery of lakes and paths (Michael Hughes would

not approve) and feeling someone come to me. This would be my spirit guide, a person I could possibly channel. I find it hard to separate my self-consciousness from my subconsciousness, but then I suddenly feel myself going into a state where I am aware but yet . . . *not quite there*. It's a kind of deep, sinking feeling, not at all unpleasant, something akin to a hypnotic state.

I've felt from the beginning that many channelers hypnotize themselves; it must be close to the sensation I'm now going through with Torah. When Torah asks me to perceive my inner guide, I am aware of a presence. I also hear a name. The rest of my experience is deeply personal and so firmly from inside myself that even now I can't really define or describe it. Perhaps it is like being under water without drowning. Certainly I can't analyze it. Let's just say that Torah took me on a trip and brought me back and along the way I got to see a place I'd never been to before.

Since the experience I've found my meditations have greatly deepened. I'm still looking at the pictures but they're happening on new stages.

* * *

I PROBABLY will still go to experience channelers. I'm sure some of them will be offended by this article, by the fact that I didn't use the loving "law of allowance," that I have, to some extent, passed

face between this reality and a higher-consciousness energy. "Otherwise we're looking at a mind machine that manufactures differences. What I'm interested in doing is running the machine backwards, rewinding the movie reel so that we can go back to the point of origin, the Source. I'm not really interested in all these self-glorifying motivations."

Hughes goes one step further — he doesn't buy the channeling philosophy that you "create your own reality." "Such talk is for beginners," Hughes says with a slightly scornful smile. "It's for people with weak egos who need these pep talks. But be aware that there's a point where you don't need the sales pitch anymore."

"You're a victim of fate exactly as though you had been hired to go on the stage and play Shakespeare. The challenge [for channelers] is that we have to put all this work into developing an ego identity that is strong enough to then give back into the Divine Will." In other words, only the developed self can influence the larger cosmos that sets the fates of us all. "This conflict we talk about between fate and free will — both of them are interoperating."

Most channelers who choose to help audiences develop methods of concentration take them on "guided meditations," often ones filled with beautiful geometric shapes or lovely landscapes with sparks of light fil-

tering down into consciousness. Visualizing, imaging — these are important components of the work.

Not to Hughes, however. "My intent in my meditation, whether it's 20 minutes or two hours, is that I'm *not* going to focus on these god-damned stories!" Hughes exclaims. "They are all pictures and if I want to watch pictures, I can sit in front of my television. I need to focus upon *who* is doing the looking, because then you're releasing. You're not doing this to learn more things or make out more things. That's just mind trash, effluvia. Your first step is to become cognizant to yourself with some continuity, find out *who* [inside you] is the witness. Because what we're trying to work from, from waking to dreaming, is getting right back to Source.

"The security in all this is that: *It is God who is living you.* All these other things — symbols, names, techniques — are just parts of yourself that were written into the script in the first place. If you accept the dream that everybody in a dream is yourself, then you can accept that waking up is also a dream and then everybody on the physical plane is yourself too."

Like many psychics, notably including Kevin Ryerson, Hughes draws from Jung's dream-analysis theories and concepts of the collective unconscious. Ryerson talks about drawing Spirit from this same

judgment out of concern for people being misled. And I understand why Chandley and others are wary of criticism of the channeling movement. But I don't believe one bad channeler spoils the bunch, no more than the original teachings of Jesus were cheapened by the crimes of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. (I also don't think it's coincidental that the people most concerned with my attitudes about channeling are the ones with the biggest vested financial interests in L.A.'s burgeoning grass roots metaphysical community.)

That said, here is what I now think: Maybe channeling is nothing more than the power of lucid dreaming. If nothing else, channelers can help us remember what we've forgotten. If, like Socrates, you consider that we already know everything — take this as a proposition, because I don't mean it face-

tiously — then there's an awful lot we need to recall.

We particularly always need to be reminded of who, where and what we are now. As Michael Hughes says: "Events will unfold the way they do. All that we are changing is the way we *respond* to the events. The question is, can I retrain myself so that I can react to them more intelligently? [For me, this is the work Lazaris must have come to do.] Because you're moving into this very odd component of immediacy. That's the old Zen talk — be aware in present time. Then you get the sense that you are *always* the right person, in the right place, doing the right thing. What more do you want than that?"

"There are techniques for doing this all over the city," Hughes notes. "Take the one you need. But how lucky you are when you don't need them."



LET'S FALL IN LOVE

CAN EVERYONE fall in love? Not exactly, according to John Money, a professor of medical psychology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. *Omni* magazine reports that people who have had surgery for a pituitary tumor during childhood or early teens may never be smitten.

"These people can show affection," Money says, "but most of them will never experience pair-bonding, the phenomenon most of us call falling in love."

Contrary to poets' belief, says Money, that euphoric romantic feeling is not from the heart. Instead, it is rooted in neural pathways and hormones emanating from the pituitary gland, and when it is damaged, the body's pair-bonding system pays the toll. — Paul Steiner.