

17 Near-Death Experience Accounts from the Research of P.M.H.Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.)

Copyright ©1994 by P.M.H.Atwater

[*Beyond the Light*](#) (60kb), originally in hardcover, Birch Lane Press, New York City (reprinted as a paperback through Avon Books, New York City, 1995 - ISBN: 0-380-72540-1)

Seventeen Case-Studies of the Near-Death Experience Follow

1. An example of the out-of-body component of the near-death experience is the case of Jazmyne Cidavia-DeRepentigny of Hull Georgia. She died on the operating table during surgery in late 1979 (pages 10-11, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"I must say that this experience was quite unsettling to say the least. I was floating over my body. I could see and hear everything that was being said and done. I left the room for a short while and then returned to where my body lay. I knew why I died. It was because I couldn't breathe. There was a tube down my throat and the medical staff did not have an oxygen mask on my nose. I had also been given too much anesthetic.

"In my out-of-body state, I'm using my mind to try and make my right arm and hand move - my arms are extended parallel to my physical body. I want my right hand to move, any thing to move. I was trying to pull the tube out of my mouth. I looked down at my face and tears were streaming. One of the nurses blotted the tears from my face but she didn't notice my breathing had stopped, nor did she see me next to her. At this point, I'm trying really hard to make my physical arm move, but it's like my whole body is made of lead."

Cidavia-DeRepentigny's determination in her out-of-body state to make an arm move finally paid off; and, with great clamor and commotion, the tube was pulled out, an oxygen mask attached, and her breathing restored. She had a similar near-death episode when she was hospitalized at thirteen, and again in 1991 when she faced death a third time. The more recent occurrence resulted from a nearly fatal bout with pneumonia, only this time she witnessed her own soul as a spirit residing outside of her body:

"I could see my spirit standing before me. My spirit was so beautifully perfect, dressed in a white gown that was loose, free-flowing, and below the knee. From my spirit there emanated a bright, soft-white halo. My spirit was standing six to eight feet from my body. It was so strange, for I could see my spirit and my spirit could see my pathetic body. I had not an ounce of color and I looked all withered and cold and lifeless. My spirit felt warm and so, so celestial. As my spirit slowly moved away, my spirit told my body goodbye, for my spirit saw the light and wanted to go into it. The light was like a circular opening that was warm and bright."

Cidavia-DeRepentigny spoke of feeling torn between two worlds - wanting to remain on earth while at the same time feeling a strong pull to unite with her spirit self and pass into the light. After another round of hospitalization, she was left confused and disoriented, ready to change her life yet hesitant to begin. She lamented about the lack of people she could discuss her situation with, although her church bishop did express some degree of understanding. Her lament is commonly shared by most experiencers.

2. The case of Robin Michelle Halberdier of Texas City, Texas, illustrates the overwhelming sense of love experiencers often encounter in the light. Her near-death episode took place in a hospital when she was between one and two months of age. Born prematurely, and with Hyaline Membrane disease, she was not expected to live (pages 12-13, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"My first visual memory was looking forward and seeing a brilliant bright light, almost like looking directly at the sun. The strange thing was that I could see my feet in front of me, as if I were floating upward in a vertical position. I do not remember passing through a tunnel or anything like that, just floating in the beautiful light. A tremendous amount of warmth and love came from the light.

"There was a standing figure in the light, shaped like a normal human being, but with no distinct facial features. It had a masculine presence. The light I have described seemed like it emanated from that figure. Light rays shone all around him. I felt very protected and safe and loved.

"The figure in the light told me through what I now know to be mental telepathy that I must go back, that it was not time for me to come here. I wanted to stay because I felt so full of joy and so peaceful. The voice repeated that it wasn't my time; I had a purpose to fulfill and I could come back after I completed it.

"The first time I told my parents about my experience was right after I began to talk. At the time, I believed that what happened to me was something everyone experienced. I told my mom and dad about the big glass case I was in after I was born, and the figure in the light and what he said to me. They took my reference to the glass case to mean the incubator. My father was a medical student at the time, and he had read a book about near-death experiences. From comparing the information in the book with what I told them, they decided that's what I was describing. My mom told me all of this years later when I brought the subject up again.

"I began attending church at the age of five, and I would look at the picture of Jesus in the Bible and tell my mom that's who it was in the light. I still have many physical difficulties with my health because of being premature. But there is a strong need inside me that I should help others with what death is, and talk to terminally ill patients. I was in the other world and I know there is nothing to be afraid of after death."

3. I found that both adults and children occasionally report being greeted on The Other Side by animals, especially if favored pets have previously died. But it is the children who describe an animal heaven, some even insisting that they must go through it before they can reach the heaven where people are. Adult cases can be equally compelling.

Several years before his death, Bryce Bond, a famous New York City media personality turned parapsychologist, shared with me the story of what happened to him when he once collapsed after a violent allergic reaction to pine nuts and was rushed to a hospital. He remembered suddenly passing through a long tunnel toward a brilliant light, and then (pages 13-14, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"I hear a bark, and racing toward me is a dog I once had, a black poodle named Pepe. When I see him, I feel an emotional floodgate open. Tears fill my eyes. He jumps into my arms, licking my face. As I hold him, he is real, more real than I had ever experienced him. I can smell him, feel him, hear his breathing, and sense his great joy at being with me again.

"I put my dog on the ground, and step forward to embrace my stepfather, when a very strong voice is

heard in my consciousness. Not yet, it says. I scream out, Why? Then this inner voice says, What have you learned, and whom have you helped? I am dumb-founded. The voice seems to be from without as well as within. Everything stops for a moment. I have to think of what was asked of me. I cannot answer what I have learned, but I can answer whom I have helped.

"I feel the presence of my dog around me as I ponder those two questions. Then I hear barking, and other dogs appear, dogs I once had. As I stand there for what seems to be an eternity. I want to embrace and be absorbed and merge. I want to stay. The sensation of not wanting to come back is overwhelming."

Bryce was also greeted by all of his relatives who had passed on before him. He experienced these loved ones as somewhat younger in form and face than when he had last seen them, healthier and happier. He remembered racing backward through the same tunnel he had entered when it was time to leave and reviving in time to witness a hypodermic needle being plunged into his arm. "I heard a voice say, 'Welcome back.' I never asked who said that nor did I care. I was told by the doctor that I had been dead for over ten minutes."

4. Yet there are cases of "near-death-like" experiences that mimic those which occur during the trauma of death itself. One of those is the story of Julian A. Milkes. I met Milkes on a bumpy train ride to Long Island Sound, where I was slated to speak at a near-death study group meeting in Syosset, New York. He is a retired teacher, and was returning that day from buying concert tickets in Times Square. Here is what he told me (page 17, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"My mother and I were driving out to the lake one afternoon. My dad was to follow later when he finished work. We were having company for dinner, and, as we rode along, my mother spotted some wild flowers at the side of the road. She asked if I wouldn't stop the car and pick them as they would look nice on the dinner table. I pulled over to the right side of the road (it was not a major highway), parked the car, and went down a small incline to get off the road to pick the flowers. While I was picking the flowers, a car came whizzing by and suddenly headed straight for me.

"As I looked up and saw what I presumed would be an inevitable death, I separated from my body and viewed what was happening from another perspective. My whole life flashed in front of me, from that moment backwards to segments of my life. The review was not like a judgment. It was passive, more like an interesting novelty.

"I can't tell you how many times I think of that near-death experience. Even as I sit here and write my story for you, it seems as though it happened only yesterday."

Milke suffered no injury. The speeding car veered off just as suddenly as it had appeared, and sped away. I have observed that the terror of an ultimate end, the kind of terror that sees no hope, no other alternative except death itself, is sometimes enough to shift people into a near-death mode. Illness, injury, or body trauma is not necessary.

5. Seldom are suicide near-death scenarios hell-like. Contrary to popular notions, most suicide near-death experiences are positive, or at least illustrative of the importance of life and its living. Although I have yet to find a suicide experience that was in any way transcendent or in-depth, just to have something happen, anything that affirms that he or she is loved and special, seems miracle enough for the one involved. Near-death survivors from suicide attempts can and often do return with the same sense of mission that any other experiencer of the phenomenon reports. And that mission is usually to tell other

potential victims that suicide is not the answer. For example, this young man (he asked not to be identified - refer to pages 18-19, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"Since then, suicide has never crossed my mind as a way out. It's a copout to me and not the way to heaven. I wish you luck in your research and hope my experience will help stop someone from taking his own life. It is a terrible waste."

Suicide near-death episodes can lay to rest problems and conflicts, explain away confusions, and emphasize the need to remain embodied. Experiencers usually return with a feeling that suicide solves nothing, and they are notably renewed and refreshed by that feeling, using their near-death event as a source of courage, strength, and inspiration.

But not all suicide scenarios are positive.

Some are negative, and these can be so negative that they upset the individual more than the original problem that precipitated the suicide. This kind of devastation can be transforming if used as a catalyst to help the person make the kind of changes that comprise constructive, long-term solutions. Such changes can come from an inner awakening, or from the fear that what was experienced may indeed herald the individual's final fate if something is not done to turn things around.

6. What happened to the famous novelist Ernest Hemingway is an example of the typical brief or initial near-death experience. During World War I, Hemingway was wounded by shrapnel while fighting on the banks of the river Piave, near Fossalta, Italy. He convalesced in Milan. In a letter from there to his family, he made this cryptic statement: "Dying is a very simple thing. I've looked at death and really I know." Years later, Hemingway explained to a friend what had occurred on that fateful night in 1918 (pages 23-24, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"A big Austrian trench mortar bomb, of the type that used to be called ash cans, exploded in the darkness. I died then. I felt my soul or something coming right out of my body, like you'd pull a silk handkerchief out of a pocket by one corner. It flew around and then came back and went in again and I wasn't dead anymore."

Hemingway remained deeply affected by this out-of-body/initial near-death experience throughout his life, and was never again as "hard-boiled" as he once had been. "A FAREWELL TO ARMS" contains a passage where the character Frederic Henry undergoes the same confrontation with death that Hemingway did:

"I ate the end of my piece of cheese and took a swallow of wine. Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh - then there was a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind. I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back."

7. What happened to John R. Liona of Brooklyn, New York, is also typical of the initial experience (pages 24-27, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"Mine was a difficult birth, according to my mother. She said she didn't hear me cry after I was born because I was a 'blue baby.' They did not bring me to her for two days. My face was black and blue,

and she said the skin was all cut up on the right side of my face. That's where the forceps slipped. I was given a tracheotomy to help me breathe. I am totally deaf in my right ear. Also, the right side of my face and head is less sensitive than the left. When I get tired, the right side of my face droops a little, like Bell's palsy.

"I am forty years old now. All my life going back to my childhood I can remember having this same recurring dream. It is more vivid than any other dream. It starts and ends the same - I am kneeling down and bent over, frantically trying to untie some kind of knots. They almost seem alive. I am pulling on them and they are thick and slippery. I am very upset. Pulling and snapping. I can't see what they're made of. I remember getting hit in the face while trying to untie or break free of the knots, and waking up crying. Then I would go back to sleep thinking it was only a dream or a nightmare. When the dream would happen again on another night, I would sleep through it longer, as I began to get used to it.

"After I am able to sleep through the knotty part, suddenly my struggling stops. I feel like a puppet with all the strings cut. My body goes limp. All the stress and struggle is drained right out of me. I feel very calm and peaceful, but wonder what caused me to lose interest in the knots. They were important one minute; the next minute I am floating in this big bright light. I know I can't touch the ground because there is light there, too. I look at the light and try to move toward it. I can't, and this upsets me. There is a woman in a long, flowing gown floating away to my left. I call and call to her but the light is so bright sound does not travel through it. I want to talk to the woman. My dream ends there.

"About a year ago, I walk out of my house to go to work. The ground is wet from rain, yet I find this book lying there - dry. No one is around, so I pick it up. The book is called 'CLOSER TO THE LIGHT,' by Melvin Morse, M.D., and Paul Perry. It is on the near-death experiences of children. That night I start reading it and cannot put it down. For the first time in my life, I now understand my dream. Those knots were when I struggled in the womb with the umbilical cord; getting hit in the face is when the doctor grabbed me with the forceps, then I died. After that, I went into the light.

"But, wait a second. You're not supposed to remember being born. We don't just sit around at parties and talk about what we remember of our birth. We only talk about what our parents tell us. I look forward to having my dream again. I'm ready now to experience more of it than before, and without being upset."

It can be argued that since Liona's birth was so intensely traumatic, his repetitive dream may be more of the trauma's replay than any memory of a near-death experience. And that argument carries considerable weight, as prebirth awareness is commonly reported and often verified. For instance, David Cheek, past president of the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis and a retired obstetrician, believes that humans are remarkably capable while still in the womb. He is quoted as saying: "Babies are at least somewhat aware from the moment their mothers become aware of their pregnancy."

Yet this supposition does not take into account the woman in the long flowing gown who is also part of Liona's dream sequence. The antiseptic uniforms of attending physicians and medical personnel do not explain away this "gossamer" figure, nor does the idea of a mental replay account for how these images have haunted him. Neither does it explain why, since earliest childhood, he has displayed the typical aftereffects of a near-death survivor.

What we are seeing here, and why I have used Liona's case as an example of the initial experience, is that current near-death research has shown that more and more children are being discovered who remember having had a near-death experience, either before, during, or after the moment of birth. This

memory usually remains vivid in children's minds either from repeated storytelling after they learn how to talk, or because of repetitious imagery that intrudes upon their dreamlife, as in the case of John R. Liona. By the way, I have found that interviewing children can be as surprising as it is revelatory, for children seem able to hear parental conversations while still in the womb, and can repeat what was heard once they are old enough to talk - with embarrassing exactness.

8. The following story from Jeanne L. Eppley of Columbus, Ohio, may seem like another rendering of an initial near-death experience to you. Elements are few, and it is brief, as are the others I wrote about previously. But it is different. . . unpleasant (pages 30-32, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"My experience happened during the birth of my first child. For many years I blamed it on the anesthetic. I had three more children without pain because I believed that if there wasn't any pain, I wouldn't have to have anesthetics that caused experiences like this. Living proof of mind over matter, right?"

"What happened was this: Everything was bright yellow. There was a tiny black dot in the center of all the yellow. Somehow I knew that the dot was me. The dot began to divide. First there was two, then four, then eight. After there had been enough division, the dots formed into a pinwheel and began to spin. As the pinwheel spun, the dots began to rejoin in the same manner as they had divided. I knew that when they were all one again, I would be dead, so I began to fight. The next thing I remember is the doctor trying to awaken me and keep me on the delivery table, because I was getting up.

"When my daughter was born, her head was flattened from her forehead to a point in back. They told me that she had lodged against my pelvic bone. But the doctor had already delivered two others that night and was in a hurry to get home. He took her with forceps. I've often wondered if my experience was actually hers, instead."

Although distressing to her, Eppley had this to say about her experience:

"I survived and became very strong. Before it happened I was a very weak person who had depended on others all my life. It constantly amazes me that people talk about how much they admire my strength. I developed a lot of character having lived this life and raising four children alone. I can honestly say that I like and respect myself now. I did not when the near-death experience happened. I believe maybe it was sent to show me that I could be strong. I certainly needed that strength in the years that came after."

She expressed disappointment that her case did not match all the wonderful stories other near-death survivors tell. A fellow experiencer suggested that maybe the reason for this was her refusal to "let go" and surrender to the experience, that the battle she had waged so fiercely may have blocked any further development of an uplifting scenario. This idea is not so far-fetched, since recent research suggests that "surrender" may indeed be the factor that determines not only depth of experience but who might possibly have one to begin with, i.e., people who refuse to relinquish the power of their will seldom report the phenomenon.

Yet, if you explore Eppley's life before and after her experience, a startling pattern emerges: This disappointing experience presaged two disappointing marriages, the birth of three more children, verbal and physical abuse, an attempt on her life, plus the ordeal of raising her family without support. The battle fear generated in her near-death episode was the first time she had ever stood up for herself. By her admission, the strength she gained from that fight enabled her to call upon deep reservoirs of power

she never knew she had. Thus, winning one battle gave her the courage to win many. She has since remarried, and is now a radiantly happy woman. What was originally fearsome turned out to be a godsend.

Eppley's case is an example of why I challenge the surrender theory. Yes, research is persuasive on this issue: It does appear that people who fight the experience seldom have much of an experience, if any. Still, there is a question worthy of asking here, and that question is: Would Eppley have benefited as much as she did had her scenario been sweetly angelic? No one can say, of course, but the question is a valid one, for in asking it we broaden the base of our inquiry from concentrating on the event alone to an equal consideration of the one who experienced the event.

9. Gloria Hipple of Blakeslee, Pennsylvania, was brought to my attention by Gracia Fay Ellwood (an individual who is investigating hell-like near-death scenarios - refer to pages 32-36, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"My incident took place in August of 1955. I had been taken to Middlesex Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, due to a miscarriage. Placed in a ward because I was a military dependent, the doctor who was to care for me never came. I was placed at a forty-five-degree angle due to bleeding and was left that way for almost eight days. No one heard my pleas. By the eighth day, I could not hear anyone, my eyes could not see, and I was later told that my body temperature registered 87.6 degrees. I should have been dead.

"I recall being pulled down into a spinning vortex. At first, I did not know what was happening. Then I realized my body was being drawn downward, head first. I panicked and fought, trying to grab at the sides of the vortex. All I could think of was my two children. No one would care for them. I pleaded, Please, not now, but I kept moving downward.

"I tried to see something, but all there was to see was this cyclonic void that tapered into a funnel. I kept grabbing at the sides but my fingers had nothing to grasp. Terror set in, true terror. I saw a black spot, darker than the funnel and like a black curtain, falling in front of me. Then there was a white dot, like a bright light at the end of the funnel. But as I grew closer, it was a small white skull. It became larger, grinning at me with bare sockets and gaping mouth, and traveling straight toward me like a baseball. Not only was I terrified, I was really livid, too. I struggled to grab hold of anything to keep me from falling, but the skull loomed larger. 'My kids, my baby is so little. My little boy, he's only two years old. No!' My words rang in my head and ears. With a bellowing yell, I screamed: 'No! damn it, no! Let me go. My babies need me! No! No! No! No!'

"The skull shattered into fragments and I slowed in movement. A white light, the brightest light I have ever known or will ever see again was in place of the skull. It was so bright yet it did not blind me. It was a welcome, calming light. The black spot or curtain was gone. I felt absolute peace of mind and sensed myself floating upward, and I was back. I heard my husband calling me, off in the distance. I opened my eyes but could not see him. Two doctors were at the foot of my bed - both were angry and compassionate at the same time. I was taken to the operating room, given several pints of blood, and was released one week later.

"No one would believe my handshake with the grim reaper. Scoffers almost put me in tears. Everyone laughed at me, including my husband, so I never told my story again - until I wrote to you. It was the most horrendous, yet the most gratifying experience I've ever had in my life."

A flood of memories poured forth once Hipple started talking about her experience, including a nearly

forgotten incident that had occurred in 1943 when she had a tonsillectomy:

"Ether was the sedation used to put me to sleep. I recall being terrified by the mask and the awful smell. I can still taste it as I think about it. As the sedation took hold, there was the vortex, the dizzy spinning sensation, as I was dragged downward into sleep. I screamed, not knowing what was happening to me."

As she compared the two episodes, she recognized that the vortex experienced during surgical anesthesia in childhood was the same as the one she had encountered as an adult - minus the smell and taste. This association underscores what you find in medical literature. It is well known and documented that certain chemicals, especially ether, can cause vortex or spinning hallucinations. Missing from medical literature, however, is mention of anything more significant than this imagery. No attention is given to possible aftereffects (above and beyond chemical side effects). Hipple suffered no side effects from the sedation she was given in 1943, nor any aftereffects from being pulled into the vortex, except for a dislike of ether. But her adult confrontation with the same type of vortex did have aftereffects, the kind associated with the near-death phenomenon.

Unlike Eppley, Hipple's hellish near-death scenario was lengthy, intense, fully involved, and resolved in "heavenly" light. A dream? "Absolutely not!" She continues:

"My near-death experience has made me quite sensitive to many more things than my mind understands. It also helped me to be less serious about myself. I'm dispensable. I have discovered I do not value 'things' as I once did. I befriend people in a different way. I respect their choices to be the people they want to be. The same for my own family. I will guide, but not demand. As for the "Light" - it was then and remains so, my encounter with the most powerful of all entities. The giver of life on both sides of the curtain. After all, I was given a second chance. I am blessed and cannot ask for more."

A closer examination of Hipple's life reveals the sudden development of unique sensitivities afterward. The pending death of an unborn daughter was revealed to her in an usually detailed vision. When her husband died in a trucking accident at 4:15 am, she was up and prepared for it, and even heard a thump against her trailer home at the exact moment he was killed some distance away. Strange sensations about her sister awakened her from a deep sleep at the exact moment her sister died. "I am more sensitive to people's thoughts and actions than before. I follow hunches that are sometimes quite accurate."

Like Eppley, Gloria Hipple now glows with a special confidence, charm, and wisdom. She speaks effusively of God and angels. "The curtain, the darkness, the skull, the void, the terror, the anger, the fight, the light. There was nothing more than that, but it changed my life." Her hellish ex-experience transformed her from being dependent on outer circumstances and material possessions to the realization of greater truths and the power of inner peace. No drug-induced hallucination ever recorded fostered the kind of life-shift that happened to this woman, and she is one of millions.

10. Next is a case of a haunting, and of an experiencer assaulted by entities awaiting her arrival in the tunnel. But there is more to the story of Sandra H. Brock of Staunton, Virginia, than first glance reveals - proof that one cannot judge a near-death scenario solely by its description. You must investigate before and after conditions in the person's life to reach any kind of meaningful context within which to consider the experience (pages 36-39, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"I had a stomach stapling in 1980 and, in the process, had to have a deformed spleen removed. I

hemorrhaged on the operating table, and the doctor said that at three times he thought he was going to lose me. The first day after surgery I had to have transfusions. During one of the transfusions I started feeling really weird. I felt like if I shut my eyes I would never open them again. I called a nurse. Of course, she said it was all in my head, and left the room. I remember she just walked out the door and I started being pulled through a tunnel. It was a terrible experience because all I could see were people from my past, people who were already dead, who had done or said something to me that had hurt me in one way or another. They were laughing and screaming, until I thought I could not stand it. I begged and begged that I be allowed to go back. I could see a light at the end of the tunnel but I never really got close to it. All of a sudden I was back in my bed, just thankful I had not died."

Brock, as it turns out, has had several near-death-type experiences, scattered over a long life.

"My mother told me that when she found she was pregnant with me, she prayed that I would die. They were just coming out of the depression and they already had a baby and could not afford another. When I was born, I was born with a harelip. Mother thought that was her punishment for wanting me dead. Within several days, and without any surgery, my harelip healed itself, and to this day I do not carry a scar. She also told me that when I was only a few weeks old, she came to my bassinet and found me not breathing. I had already turned purple. She grabbed me, shook me, and blew in my face until I started breathing again. I don't remember this experience, but I do remember being in a bassinet that had no liner. I remember studying my hands and what my hands looked like as an infant. My mother said I couldn't possibly remember this, but I did, and I was right."

Until the age of four, Brock survived numerous nearly fatal accidents that caused cessation of breath. Her memory of each is detailed and verified by relatives, even though several occurred when she was only a toddler. Right from her earliest years (I suspect from when she was but a few weeks old), she displayed the typical aftereffects of the near-death phenomenon, including stunningly accurate psychic abilities, extended perceptual range, and heightened faculties. Like Hipple, she has been visited by the dead, "advised" of pending deaths, and has known the exact moment individuals died.

Yet Brock has been haunted throughout her life, and not just by the deceased who grabbed at her in death's tunnel. An overshadowing theme of "Why would anyone want to harm me?" seems to have permeated every aspect of her life's experiences, from her memory of frightening creatures crawling into her bed when she was young and making her scream and cry, to adult misunderstandings and distressing dreams. It's almost as if her mother's prayer that she die imprinted her brain in some manner. I say that because Brock's many brushes with death, even as an infant, were precipitated by acts of self-destructive behavior. That single overshadowing theme continued to undermine the satisfaction that her many accomplishments in life should have given her. This did not change until after her husband's suicide in 1983. At that time, according to Brock, her father and son, long since dead, and her recently deceased husband, physically and in broad day-light, drove up to her front door in an old Cadillac, honked the horn, and called out, "We're together now and we're okay. We just wanted you to know." With that said, the group, car and all, disappeared. This ghostly spectacle gave Brock the reassurance she needed to finally free herself from the "ghost" of her own past. Her mother's death decree, which she had subconsciously been trying to both justify and nullify throughout her life, was finally put to rest when her husband's suicide forced her to confront her own life's issues as she came to terms with his.

In Brock's case, her near-death episode was but one in a long series of similar events that finally brought her to that point of peace within herself where true forgiveness and understanding reside.

11. Since pleasant and/or heaven-like scenarios constitute the vast bulk of reported cases, it is no wonder

that the basic storyline has become virtually mythologized in the last two decades. Just as there is more to the hellish version than meets the eye, so, too, is there more to the tales of heaven than is generally acknowledged.

Our investigation begins with what happened in the spring of 1987 to Jennine Wolff of Troy, New York. She was thirty years old at the time. Due to complications from endometriosis, she suffered numerous bouts of hemorrhaging, several surgeries (including a hysterectomy), an additional hemorrhage of massive proportions, and, finally, emergency surgery. During the final operation, she floated out of her body and entered another realm of existence (pages 51-53, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"Suddenly I was aware of being in the most beautiful garden I've ever seen. I felt whole and loved. My sense of well-being was complete. I heard celestial music clearly and saw vivid colored flowers, like nothing seen on earth, gorgeous greenery and trees.

"As I looked around, I saw at a distance, on a hill, Jesus Christ. All he said to me was that it was up to me whether to come back to earth or not. I chose to come back to finish my work. That is when I was born again.

"The changes in my life? I am now more aware of people's feelings, beliefs, and needs. I am more compassionate and considerate of others. Also more confident in God's love."

When you delve into Wolff's history, a fascinating pattern emerges one of disciplined devotion to the spiritual path. Raised in a strict but loving Presbyterian home, she suddenly developed the ability to have visions when but a teenager. Her concerned parents took her for evaluation to the spiritualist camp of Lily Dale, located in New York State. These experienced psychics advised them that their daughter had a special gift, and that she must decide whether to go on with a normal teenage life or commit herself to spiritual training. She chose to develop her gift. At the age of twenty-one and after seven years of instruction, Wolff met Sam Lentine, a blind biophysicist. He had the scientific background; she had the spiritual. Together they formed a professional partnership dedicated to the restoration of true health and wholeness throughout humankind. Fourteen years later, after the partners had made tremendous strides in the health field and were becoming internationally known for their ability to facilitate the healing process, Lentine died. Today, Wolff is a waitress at a senior citizens' facility.

Reflecting on her own death experience, as well as her present situation, she had this to say:

"It was my mother who came into my hospital room and said, 'You have died and come back.' I knew I had died, but she confirmed it. I felt like a baby afterward, and, at the age of thirty, was faced with learning about life all over again. I couldn't stand light at first. When I could, everything became brighter and better than before. My whole perspective drastically improved; I felt more grounded, solid, okay. My psychic gifts skyrocketed. But it still took me a long time to readjust. The doctors said, Oh, it's just the stress of what you've been through. I disagreed. What I was going through was unrelated to the surgery. My mother and father understood, and, especially, my mother's constant love and support made it possible for me to grasp hold of my new life and deal with it. My death stepped up my original commitment to serve as a healer.

"Afterward, my abilities sharpened, were better and more attuned. I was much more understanding of others. When I went back to work, Sam and I peaked in our performance - we did our best work. Five years later Sam died. You have to understand how close we were, how bonded our families. Even though I knew death didn't end anything, Sam's transition threw me. I had to readjust all over again. I

work with older people now, giving them my love with each touch. I don't know what's ahead for me or where I'll go, but I am taking massage classes - learning to heal in a different way. My life is now in God's hands. New opportunities for me to serve are opening up."

12. Back in 1932, Arthur E. Yensen, a university graduate and staunch-materialist-turned-syndicated-cartoonist, decided to take some time off to research his weekly cartoon strip, "ADVENTUROUS WILLIE WISPO." Since his main character was a hobo, Yensen became one for a while, blending in with the over sixteen million unemployed at that time in our nation's history. He bummed rides from Chicago through Minnesota, until a young man in a convertible coupe picked him up on the way to Winnipeg. Going too fast for the road conditions, the car hit a three-foot-high ridge of oiled gravel and flipped into a series of violent somersaults. Both men were catapulted through the cloth top before the car smashed into a ditch. The driver escaped unharmed, but Yensen was injured, losing consciousness just as two female spectators rushed to his aid (pages 53-56, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"Gradually the earth scene faded away, and through it loomed a bright, new, beautiful world - beautiful beyond imagination! For half a minute I could see both worlds at once. Finally, when the earth was all gone, I stood in a glory that could only be heaven.

"In the background were two beautiful, round-topped mountains, similar to Fujiyama in Japan. The tops were snowcapped, and the slopes were adorned with foliage of indescribable beauty. The mountains appeared to be about fifteen miles away, yet I could see individual flowers growing on their slopes. I estimated my vision to be about one hundred times better than on earth.

"To the left was a shimmering lake containing a different kind of water - clear, golden, radiant, and alluring. It seemed to be alive. The whole landscape was carpeted with grass so vivid, clear, and green, that it defies description. To the right was a grove of large, luxuriant trees, composed of the same clear material that seemed to make up everything.

"I saw twenty people beyond the first trees, playing a singing-dancing game something like Skip-to-My-Lou. They were having a hilarious time holding hands and dancing in a circle - fast and lively. As soon as they saw me, four of the players left the game and joyfully skipped over to greet me. As they approached, I estimated their ages to be: one, thirty; two, twenty; and one, twelve. Their bodies seemed almost weightless, and the grace and beauty of their easy movements was fascinating to watch. Both sexes had long, luxuriant hair entwined with flowers, which hung down in glossy masses to their waists. Their only clothing was a gossamer loin cloth with a loop over one shoulder and a broad ribbon streaming out behind in graceful curves and curlicues. Their magnificence not only thrilled me, but filled me with awe.

"The oldest, largest, and strongest-looking man announced pleasantly, 'You are in the land of the dead. We lived on earth, just like you, 'til we came here.' He invited me to look at my arm. I looked, and it was translucent; that is, I could dimly see through it. Next they had me look at the grass and trees. They were also translucent. It was exactly the way the Bible had described heaven.

"Then I noticed that the landscape was gradually becoming familiar. It seemed as if I had been here before. I remembered what was on the other side of the mountains. Then with a sudden burst of joy, I realized that this was my real home! Back on earth I had been a visitor, a misfit, and a homesick stranger. With a sigh of relief, I said to myself, Thank God I'm back again. This time I'll stay!

"The oldest man, who looked like a Greek god, continued to explain, 'Everything over here is pure.

The elements don't mix or break down as they do on earth. Everything is kept in place by an all-pervading Master-Vibration, which prevents aging. That's why things don't get dirty, or wear out, and why everything looks so bright and new.' Then I understood how heaven could be eternal."

Yensen's rapturous visit was lengthy; more details are contained in his self-published book, "I SAW HEAVEN" (out-of-print, but photocopies available from Eric Yensen, 1415 E. Oak St., Caldwell, Idaho 83605. yensen@micron.net.) He did not want to leave, but was told:

"You have more important work to do on earth, and you must go back and do it! There will come a time of great confusion and the people will need your stabilizing influence. When your work on earth is done, then you can come back here and stay."

Born on a Nebraska sandhill during the blizzard of 1898, Yensen recalled being force-fed religion as a youngster. Not only did he turn against it, but he started challenging his parents at every turn - including questioning the way they ate. He observed that their farm animals did just fine on a diet of fresh greens and whole grains, yet family members were always suffering indigestion and constipation from the white flour, sugar, and grease they consumed. Behind his parents' back, he cured himself by eating bran flakes. He continued to defy the conventions of his day, switching from atheism to mysticism after his near-death experience at the age of thirty-four, marrying afterwards, and built his own home in Parma, Idaho, from blocks of tuffa (pumice) he and his sons quarried. He later became an educator, public speaker, was active in politics, specialized in historical sculpture (his work adorns Parma's city park), was a movie extra in several Hollywood films, an authority on organic gardening and nutrition, and was singled out as one of Idaho's "Most Distinguished Citizens."

Although a public figure, Yensen was frequently at odds with the school boards where he taught: opposing any procedure that capped a child's creative drive; speaking out against the incarceration of American citizens of Japanese ancestry during World War II; and ignoring school rules by sharing his near-death experience in class as proof to his students that morality matters and life really has a purpose. Ironically, Yensen was still questioning whether or not he had fulfilled his life's work when he returned "home" in 1992, the quiet benefactor of thousands.

13. Alice Morrison-Mays nearly died at the Marine Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana, after being rushed there in a coma. She had given birth to her third son two weeks before. It was in May 1952 (pages 56-60, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"From my position near the ceiling, I watched as they began to wrap both my legs from tips of the toes up to my hips, then my arms and hands up to the shoulders. This was to keep what blood remained for my heart and lungs. Then they tilted my body so my legs were up in the air and I was standing on my head!

"I was furious about the way they had handled Jeff's birth and now they were running around like chickens with their heads cut off squawking loudly; and here I was looking at that silent, bandaged body lying on a tilt table, head to the floor, legs and feet in the air. I was venting my anger and frustration from the corner of the ceiling on the right side of my body. I can remember the anger vividly, fury at the powerless position this whole event put me in, and I was very 'verbal' about it - silently - up there, as my mind raced to express its reaction, worry, and concern. Their statements 'We're losing her! We're losing her!' frightened me and I'd get pissed all over again.

"The scene changed and I was no longer in that room. I found myself in a place of such beauty and peace. It was timeless and spaceless. I was aware of delicate and shifting hues of colors with their

accompanying rainbows of 'sound,' though there was no noise in this sound. It might have felt like wind and bells, were it earthly. I 'hung' there - floating. Then I became aware of other loving, caring beings hovering near me. Their presence was so welcoming and nurturing. They appeared 'formless' in the way I was accustomed by now to seeing things. I don't know how to describe them. I was aware of some bearded male figures in white robes in a semicircle around me. The atmosphere became blended as though made of translucent clouds. I watched as these clouds and their delicate shifting colors moved through and around us.

"A dialogue softly started with answers to my unfinished questions almost before I could form them. They said they were my guides and helpers as well as being God's Messengers. Even though they were assigned to me as a human and always available to me - they had other purposes, too. They were in charge of other realms in creation and had the capacity of being in several places simultaneously. They were also 'in charge' of several different levels of knowledge. I became aware of an ecstasy and a joy that permeated the whole, unfolding beyond anything that I had experienced in my living twenty-five years, up to that point. Even having my two previous children, whom I wanted very much, couldn't touch the 'glow' of this special experience.

"Then I was aware of an Immense Presence coming toward me, bathed in white, shimmering light that glowed and at times sparkled like diamonds. Everything else seen, the colors, beings, faded into the distance as the Light Being permeated everything. I was being addressed by an overwhelming presence. Even though I felt unworthy, I was being lifted into that which I could embrace. The Joy and Ecstasy were intoxicating. It was 'explained' that I could remain there if I wanted; it was a choice I could make.

"There was much teaching going on, and I was just 'there' silently, quietly. I felt myself expanding and becoming part of All That Was in Total Freedom Unconditionally. I became aware again that I needed to make a choice. Part of me wanted to remain forever, but I finally realized I didn't want to leave a new baby motherless. I left with sadness and reluctance.

"Almost instantly I felt reentry into my body through the silver cord at the top of my head. There was something skin to a physical bump. As soon as I entered, I heard someone near me say, 'Oh, we've got her back.' I was told I had two pieces of placenta as large as grapefruits removed."

Morrison-Mays told no one except her husband about the monumental experience she had just had. She managed to squelch any noticeable aftereffects until 1967, when developing psychic sensitivities warned her of a need to make a major change in her life or die.

"My inner voice burst into activity, somehow picking up the loose threads of my near-death experience. The growth effect was propelling me to move on and develop my own responsibility and talents. I finally listened. My spiritual life was beginning. I divorced and started a career as a musician (cellist) in a major symphony orchestra."

Twelve years later, because of serious difficulty walking and severe hip pain, she had a right hip osteotomy to reduce arthritic damage (the joint in her hip was placed in a different weight-bearing position). The operation went well, but upon reviving, Morrison-Mays entered an altered state of consciousness similar to a near-death episode that she continued to slip in and out of for six months. Throughout this lengthy visionary experience, she received lessons from The Other Side. These "etheric" teachings covered such topics as the geography of the soul, karma, advanced physics, and the cosmology of the Human Experiment. Again her life was profoundly affected. She began volunteering in a hospice afterward and enrolled in a three-year spiritual psychology course.

A second near-death event seven years later plunked her right back in that same etheric classroom she had "attended" after hip surgery. This occasion was precipitated by the sudden onslaught of a severe type of emphysema and the collapse of her adrenal system (Addison's disease). Severe shakes from what she feels was a Kundalini episode complicated the situation. (Traditionally, Kundalini is said to be a powerful energy that lies dormant in a person's sacrum until he or she begins to develop spiritually. Then it supposedly rises up the spine, stimulating the glandular centers until it bursts out a person's head.) Morrison-Mays turned to a chiropractic physician when medical treatment failed her and, once more, completely changed her life. She left the world she had created for herself after her divorce and moved bag and baggage to Quincy, Illinois, the city of her birth.

Virtually wheelchair bound, and robbed by illness of much of her energy, Morrison-Mays has instituted a series of classical music concerts for the public that are staged in her own living room. Newspaper headlines label her concerts, "Healing Music." You would never know by the glow on her face and her ever-present smile that she lives in almost constant pain.

"I chose a 'big one' this lifetime. The spiritual guidance I receive makes living this life possible. I have walked through the Dark Side and have no fear of my Shadow anymore. I am here to heal my life and do serious writing, though I'm not certain if I am ready to write about the teachings I have been given. What I want is to do a book about the memories I have of choosing my parents before I was born, my experience in the womb, and my rebirthing through the near-death phenomenon."

A role model for the handicapped, Morrison-Mays has become a living legend. She offered this about the severity of her situation: "There's still a quality of life available. You just have to be open enough to explore it. You can empower yourself."

14. "It happened one bright sunny day in the summer of 1973," explained Steven B. Ridenhour of Charlottesville, Virginia. He and his friend Debbie had decided to run the rapids at the bullhole, part of the river that runs behind an old cotton mill in Cooleemee, North Carolina. Both had been smoking pot and were easily bored. Their decision to run the knee-high rapids meant that they had to start at the beginning of the rock incline, run down about twenty feet, and start skiing bare-footed until they reached the moss beds. The sport could have been great fun, but not on this trip (pages 60-63, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT"):

"We smoked another joint and then headed toward the rapids. Debbie begins laughing, and the next thing I know we're overtaken by laughter. The giggling stops as we're swept off our feet and dragged downriver. Debbie cries out, 'Steven I can't swim. I'm drowning.' I feel powerless because I can't get to her and I'm yelling, 'Hang on, don't panic,' when I take a tremendous mouthful of water. Without any warning, time, as I know it, stops.

"The water has a golden glow and I find myself just floating as without gravity, feeling very warm and comfortable. I'm floating in a vertical position with my arms outstretched and my head laying on my left shoulder. I feel totally at peace and full of serenity in this timeless space. Next I go through a past-life review. It was like looking at a very fast slide show of my past life, and I do mean fast, like seconds. I don't quite understand the significance of all the events that were shown to me, but I'm sure there is some importance. When this ended, it was as if I was floating very high up and looking down at a funeral. Suddenly I realized that I was looking at myself in a casket. I saw myself dressed in a black tux with a white shirt and a red rose on my left lapel. Standing around me were my immediate family and significant friends.

"Then, as if some powerful force wrapped around me, I was thrust out of the water, gasping for air.

There was Debbie within arm's reach. I grabbed her by the back of her hair and I was able to get us both over to the rocks and out of the water. After lying on the rocks for a while, I glance over at Debbie and it's like looking at a ghost. As she describes what she went through, it became apparent that we both had the same experience underwater - the golden glow, the serenity, seeing our lives flash before us, floating over a funeral, and seeing ourselves in a casket. That is the only time we ever talked about it. I haven't seen or talked with Debbie since."

For the next eleven years, Ridenhour tried practically every drug in the universe in an attempt to recapture the euphoria of his near-death experience, but to no avail. All he found was loneliness, prisons, and a failed marriage. He entered a treatment center for drug and alcohol abuse in December 1984, and has been in various stages of recovery ever since. Finally, he was able to find a counselor who knew something about the phenomenon he had experienced and she put him in touch with a near-death researcher. He told his story, then quickly disappeared - unable to face the truth of what he had been through. It wasn't until 1993, after suppressing the aftereffects of his experience for a total of twenty years, that Ridenhour found himself flat on his back because of a work-related injury and with no choice but to surrender. "My life started changing right then and I can't stop it, so I'm opening up my heart and my soul to see where this takes me."

Ridenhour is now in nurse's training, determined to repay society for his previous mistakes and to help heal people. His youth was wrapped around horrific incidents of child abuse and abandonment. He grew up thinking he was unlovable and bad. His near-death experience so challenged this distorted self-image that, although he wanted the euphoria back, he could not accept the rest of it. Confused and frightened by the incident, he flung himself into a seemingly endless nightmare of self-destruction.

"None of the drugs worked," he confessed. "They couldn't even come close to matching my near-death experience." Later he was stunned to learn that many of the problems he had afterward are in fact typical aftereffects of the phenomenon.

"I thought it was all me. I never made the connection between my experience and why I felt so lost. It took getting injured at work before I stopped trying to run away and just relaxed and let all that love and joy back, and the golden glow. I had no choice, really. I had to accept the truth that there is a power in me, and I can use it to help others."

Drug and alcohol free, Ridenhour has helped to organize an IANDS chapter in the Washington, D.C., area, one of many dedicated to providing informational meetings for near-death survivors and the interested public.

15. There are near-death scenarios that are so otherworldly, so unusual in the way individuals are affected by them, they belong in a class by themselves. These I call transcendent experiences, and they are often lengthy and involve complex issues and incredible revelations about life, history, and creation's story. Seldom personal, these episodes stretch an experiencer's mind - sometimes beyond belief. Invariably, the people who have them are inspired to take action, to make a difference in the world. Although hearing claims by near-death survivors that they were privy to all knowledge during their experience is quite common, coming back with that knowledge intact rarely occurs.

History gives us two examples that contrast how a society can be affected by an individual who has had a transcendent experience (pages 71-72, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT").

Around 300 B.C. the Greek philosopher Plato wrote of Er, the soldier, whose dead body lay in waste beside his fallen comrades for ten days. When at last help came, many were puzzled, for the body of

Er had not decayed as had the others. Confused, Er's relatives took him home for burial, but upon the funeral pyre he revived, stood up, and recounted what he had learned while on The Other Side for all to hear. He then set about educating people concerning the spiritual truths that had been revealed to him, teaching them how they could live more fulfilling and satisfying lives. (History leaves in doubt whether the story of Er was created by Plato, or a true report.)

By 1837, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, a peasant farmer's son, had failed for the third time to pass the official state examination in Canton, China. He fell into a prolonged delirium, his body wasting away as he lay near death for forty days. He revived after having a miraculous vision that portrayed him and an "elder brother" searching out and slaying legions of evil demons in accordance with God's will. Six years later Hsiu-ch'uan came across a Christian missionary pamphlet. He used what he read in the pamphlet to "substantiate" his conviction that his vision was real, and that he, as the younger brother of Jesus Christ and God's Divine Representative, was ready and willing to overthrow the forces of evil (which he saw as the Manchus and Confucianism). With the help of converts to his cause he established the God Worshippers Society, a puritanical and absolutist group that quickly swelled to the ranks of a revolutionary army. Numerous power struggles later, Hsiu-ch'uan declared war against the Manchus and launched a civil uprising - the bloodiest in all history - which lasted fourteen years and cost twenty million lives.

Both men, Er and Hsiu-ch'uan (who changed his name to T'ien Wang, the Heavenly King), were transfigured and transformed by their unusual near-death experiences and became zealous in their desire to "wake up" the deluded of their day. Each man felt the REAL TRUTH had been revealed to him and to him alone, and thus it was his sacred duty to "save" the populace. With Er, many were educated about the secrets of heaven, some becoming as transformed as he from "the good news." With Hsiu-ch'uan, wholesale carnage forged a "Heavenly Dynasty" that ripped asunder the very fabric of China.

Transcendent cases are powerful in both content and consequences, yet they are "risky business" in the way they can affect experiencers' lives . . . and the lives of countless others. This enigma repeats itself each time an individual is so transfigured and transformed. Modern-day cases are no exception.

16. In 1979, Berkley Carter Mills made history in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the city of Lynchburg by becoming the youngest father ever to win custody of a small child in divorce proceedings. Six months later a massive load of compressed cardboard he was loading slipped out of control, slamming him against a steel pole. He remembers a sharp pain, collapsing, being in a black void, then finding himself floating in a prone position twelve feet above his crumpled body. He saw and heard people running around, yelling for an ambulance and saying, "Don't touch him, give him air." His body went from white to blue; there was no breath. The sight filled him with awe. "I'm here, my body is there. How did this happen?" (Refer to pages 72-75, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT.")

Not understanding how he could suddenly be airborne, Carter Mills attempted to reenter his body. Crawling downward in swimlike strokes he had almost reached his goal when a gentle but firm hand tugged his right arm. When he looked up, there were two angels replete with robes, wings, bare feet, and streaming hair - no color but opaque white - and no particular gender. "What's going on?" he asked. "We've come to take you to God," they answered. After some confusion on Carter Mills's part the trio left the scene at tremendous speed, leaving the earth behind as if it were a star the size of a pinhead. Their destination was an intensely bright light. Carter Mills questioned, "How come I'm not cold and how come I'm not suffocating this far out in space?" An angel replied, "This is your spiritual body, and these things do not affect it." They took him to a suspended platform, and in the center was

a being so powerful Carter Mills thought it was God. The angels bowed and took their places with two others, each with wings outstretched and hands folded in prayer, at the platform's four corners. Male in mannerisms and voice, the clean-shaven being turned out to be Jesus.

Carter Mills could not look Jesus in the face as he perceived himself as naked and unfit for such an audience. After some coaxing from Jesus, he felt more at ease. "I'm going to judge you," Jesus said. Instantly Carter Mills's whole life began to play out, starting at birth. He relived being a tiny spark of light traveling to earth as soon as egg and sperm met and entering his mother's womb. In mere seconds he had to choose hair color and eyes out of the genetic material available to him and any genes that might give him the body he would need. He bypassed the gene for clubfootedness, then watched from a soul's perspective as cells subdivided. He could hear his parents whenever they spoke and feel their emotions, but any knowledge of his past lives dissolved. Birth was a shock: awful lights, giant people, eyes peering over face masks. His only comfort was his mother.

He relived each incident in his life, including killing a mother bird when he was eight. He was so proud of that single shot until he felt the pain the bird's three babies went through when they starved to death without her. "It's not true that only humans have souls," Carter Mills cautions today. "Insects, animals, plants have souls, too. Yes, I still eat meat, for in this plane species eat each other to survive, but I bless my food and say thanks for the gift life gives. If I don't the food sours in my stomach."

He was shown that hell is a black blankness without God. Upset, he yelled back, "How can you sit up here on this throne and allow such misery to happen on Earth?" Gently he was told, "It's your own fault. I gave you the tools to live by. I gave you free will and free choice. And I allow you to be part of my creation. It is your free will and your free choice that is responsible for starvation, war, and hate." Carter Mills felt pangs of guilt when he realized we coexist with God, no one is God's servant or slave.

Jesus, the angels and platform, disintegrated into a giant sphere of light once Carter Mills no longer needed their shape or form to put him at ease. As the sphere grew it absorbed him, infused him with the ecstasy of unconditional love. "Sexual orgasms can't compare. You are so high. Magnify that to infinity!" He zoomed back to his mangled remains as a ball of all knowing light and crashed into his solar plexus with such force it jolted his body to action. He had been told before leaving The Other Side, "No hospital, no blood, no operation, God will show you how to heal yourself." Thus, when Carter Mills stood, he promptly walked to his car and drove home, on the way passing the ambulance that had been sent to rescue him. Those present verified that he had been dead for twenty minutes. The next morning Carter Mills awoke in a pool of blood.

The doctor he went to for aid committed him to a psychiatric ward as insane when he refused surgery. Since three independent psychiatrists had to confirm the verdict, and one objected, Carter Mills was released. Although his injuries were extensive and severe, he recovered by himself and returned to work. His former wife took advantage of his plight and challenged the custody ruling three times. She lost each try.

"The authorities tried to take my son away. I lost half my friends, my job, almost everything else I had, but I didn't lose God's guidance. I wouldn't talk about my experience for two years. I went from an active social life to that of a cripple before I could change things. I wanted to get a degree in psychology, but had to quit several years later when my money ran out."

Carter Mills's appearance on the Geraldo Show in 1989 was preceded by an old buddy breaking off their friendship just because he had agreed to discuss his near-death experience on national television. Carter Mills was heartbroken, yet appear he did, there and hundreds of other places, sharing the

voluminous knowledge he was given while on The Other Side. For this he has been both hated and thanked, shunned and welcomed. His mind is often flooded with incredibly accurate prophecies that leave him frustrated for want of knowing what to do about them. Sometimes he feels as if he's losing personal control. Light bulbs even blow up in his presence if he flips on/off switches too fast. Nonetheless, he is now healthier than ever, youthful and energetic, and he brags about how his son has turned out in spite of all the problems. "My sacrifices were worth it, for my son knows that God is real. He is drug free and tuned to his own soul."

17. Keep in mind what happened to Berkley Carter Mills as you consider the case of Mellen-Thomas Benedict. For many years an accomplished lighting/cameraman for feature films on location outside of Hollywood, Benedict had racked up a lifetime of major events before he was thirty (pages 75-79, paperback version, "BEYOND THE LIGHT").

What may have been a near-death experience occurred several weeks after Benedict's birth when it was discovered that his bowels were ruptured. His body was tossed to one side as a corpse, yet much to everyone's surprise he later revived. As soon as he was big enough to grab hold of crayons, he started what became a compulsive urge to create symbolic renditions of the black/white yin/yang circles of Eastern religious thought. He has no memory of why he drew those particular symbols.

He spent his grade school years in a Catholic boarding school in Vermont, and was baptized in the Salvation Army religion as a youngster. He traveled extensively because of a military stepfather until the family finally settled down in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

In 1982 Benedict was diagnosed as having inoperable cancer. He had retired from the frenzy of filmhood by then and was operating his own stained-glass studio. As his condition worsened, he spent more and more time with his art. One morning he awakened knowing he would die the next day, and he did. As the typical heaven-like scenario began to unfold, Benedict recognized what was happening as it was happening. The process was familiar to him because he had read many books about the near-death phenomenon previously. Just as he reached the light at the end of the tunnel, he shouted, "Stop a minute. This is my death and I want to think about this!" By consciously intervening, Benedict willfully changed his near-death scenario into an exploration of realms beyond imagining, and a complete overview of history from the Big Bang to four hundred years into the future.

Instantly he was pulled by light away from the tunnel, far away from earth, past stars and galaxies, past imagery and physical realities, to a multiangled overview of all worlds and all creation, and past even that to the edge of existence where vibrations cease. He saw all wars from their beginnings, race as personality clusters, species operating like cells in a greater whole. By merging into the matrix of his soul, he confronted the "NO THING" from which all things emerge. Benedict saw planetary energy systems in detail and how human thoughts influence these systems in a simultaneous interplay between past, present, and future. He learned that the earth is a great cosmic being.

Benedict was aware of "walking" back into his body after deciding to return from his journey; as near as anyone can determine his experience took about ninety minutes. His doctor's assessment, though, was the most shocking - the cancer he had once had completely vanished.

"Because this happened to me my fear is gone, and my perspective has changed. You know, we are a very young species. The violence that formed the earth is in us, too. As the earth is mellowing, so are we as a people. Once pollution slows, we will reach a period of sustained consciousness. We have evolved as life forms from single-celled organisms to complex structures, and finally to a global brain. Employment levels will never again be as they once were, which will force a redefinition of human

rights. We will adopt a more nurturing type of consciousness, freeing the mind for exceptional achievement. I now know that all the answers to the world's problems are just beneath the surface in US ALL. Nothing is unsolvable."

Since his experience, Mellen-Thomas Benedict has been flooded with ideas for inventions and the marketing plans necessary to promote them. He has been granted a number of U.S. patents and is actively engaged in developing new types of toys for all age groups, a new type of cellular telephone wristwatch, a new electric power-generating system, a new prototype for self-supporting communities where families can come back together with more control over their lives, and DNA research on the frontiers of science. His first manufacturing project (that of a unique yet simple glass cutter), sold out faster than he could produce the product. "I believe my inventions are channeled psychically because they are beyond my field of expertise," he explained. At my insistence, Benedict participated in an experiment at Baylor University in Texas to identify the cellular makeup of a certain disease pattern, and was able to describe three cellprints a full year before they were verified medically. In 1993, he went on to arrange laboratory experimentation with DNA coding and nerve-cell re-generation that has produced results of far-reaching magnitude.

After his near-death experience Berkley Carter Mills felt "directed" to contact and work with political leaders and the political process. Successful at first, he later turned off more people than he turned on, sidestepping his potential to champion a campaign or run for office by giving talks instead of accomplishing tasks. Although he has remained true to his inner guidance, he has been dogged by job losses, misunderstandings, arguments, and, at times, almost irrational paradoxes. The harder he tries to help people the more doors slam in his face. Although he has raised a wonderful son, he has yet to solve the enigma of how to fulfill the guidance he receives.

Mellen-Thomas Benedict was equally affected after his near-death episode, gifted with the same flow of information from The Other Side as Carter Mills and driven by the same need to reach out and assist others. Benedict learned early on, however, that "obeying" inner guidance can be fraught with peril if one is not grounded. This awareness led him to participate in many different classroom and study opportunities where he could learn to tame his own ego before he tackled "the gifts of spirit." His guidance to become an inventor has kept him solidly in the path of practical application, with results that speak louder than preachments or prophecies.

Not that the cases of Benedict and Carter Mills are the same as those of Er and Hsiu-ch'uan; of course they are not. But they do offer a contemporary rendition of the same subtle yet important message the earlier accounts illustrate (a message present in every transcendent or impactful near-death experience I have encountered), and that is: setting one's self apart, feeling somehow "chosen," tempts one to pursue power OVER others rather than fostering power TO others. The difference here is ego, and how it can waylay even the most sincere. "Heavenly" guidance leads to self-deception if one's ego is not redirected from self-satisfaction to service, from self-righteousness to renewal.

The issue of ego domination or ego desire directly impinges upon how a near-death survivor interprets his or her experience, integrates it, and comes to regard that sense of "mission" each is left with. I cannot begin to emphasize strongly enough how powerfully the ego can misdirect even the best of intentions.

For more cases plus near-death aftereffects, refer to [*Beyond the Light*](#) (60Kb).

Reprinted from the IANDS website... [Follow this link to go to the IANDS Home Page.](#)

If you found this web site helpful and would like to help others have access to such information, [you can support IANDS through ongoing membership; by on-line shopping through our partners; or by donations of](#)

[money, time, and/or talents.](#)

We strive to keep this web site accessible and problem-free. We welcome your comments or problems about this web site e-mailed to services@iands.org. For things not related specifically to the web site, send e-mail to [the IANDS office](#).

Copyright © 1994-2003 by P.M.H. Atwater and by IANDS. [All rights reserved.](#) [Privacy.](#) [Legal notice.](#)
