

MEN AND WOMEN OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY, PERSONAL REFLECTIONS: ESPRIT VOLUME 2, edited by Rosemarie Pilkington. San Antonio: Anomalist Books, 2013. Pp. 422. \$18.08 (paperback). ISBN: 978-1-9383-9801-8.

In reviewing a book that chronicles the lives of 21 prominent individuals in the field of parapsychology, the commonalities, pieces of wisdom, helpful insights, and “boggle” experiences were as interesting and varied as were their writing styles, what they chose to emphasize, and the backgrounds and professional interests both in and out of the parapsychological realm.

The participants were asked to respond to the following five questions:

1. How did you become intrigued with, and involved in, investigating the so-called paranormal?
2. What do you feel has been your most important contributions to the field?
3. What might you have done differently, or what beliefs did you have when you entered the field that were changed through your experiences?
4. What unusual experiences have you had that exceeded your “boggle threshold?”
5. What advice would you give to young people entering the field as to what areas are of utmost importance and as to pitfalls of which they should be aware?

With question one, the most frequent response for what drew individuals into the field was hearing J. B. Rhine lecture, reading or having others talk about him, or, in Sally Rhine Feather’s case, growing up with him. Roger Nelson states that he found Rhine’s book *Extrasensory Perception After Sixty Years* “by chance” (p. 242). Stephan Schwartz studied both Rhine and Ian Stevenson’s works while William Braud had read about Rhine in magazine and newspaper articles. Arthur Hastings read his *New Frontiers of the Mind* while John Palmer discovered him in the book, *Treatise on Parapsychology* by René Sudre. Stanley Krippner heard about Rhine from his college instructor at the University of Wisconsin. Similarly, Rex Stanford first became acquainted with him in high school after hearing another student describe his work.

Hans Bender was another inspirer for such people as Erlendur Haraldsson who heard his lectures on parapsychology while, at the same time, corresponding with Rhine. Eberhard Bauer heard Bender for the first time as a 22-year-old medical student and later became associated with his Eichhalde-Institut which would become “the center of my professional life for decades” (p. 31). One of Walter von Lucadou’s instructors gave him a book by Hans Bender dealing with spontaneous paranormal experiences which he read with great interest. The latter would later become his teacher.

Lawrence LeShan was awarded a grant to determine whether the paranormal should be taken seriously. As he started reading the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* and other literature, he realized that the field was not only valid but that his work with Eileen Garrett convinced him that “she had access to information she couldn’t possibly have had through normal means” (p. 228). Fittingly, Richard Broughton read a precursor article to LeShan’s *The Medium, the Mystic, and the Physicist* which proved to be an “eye-opener” (p. 105) for him.

Several people mention that they became interested in the field because of a premonition experience. Larry Dossey had a number of them, some quite dramatic, as did Krippner whose premonition accurately identified that his uncle had died. Guy Lyon Playfair heard his parents discuss the premonitions of people and animals so often that he accepted it as quite normal.

William Roll had a number of OBE experiences which, along with his readings in parapsychology, inspired him to begin pondering the concept of a universal soul or as he called it, the “Big Mind” (p. 286).

Many people such as Serena Roney-Dougal read a seminal book such as Arthur Koestler’s *The Roots of Coincidence*, which motivated her to read other sources. Russell Targ spent a decade reading the research literature of ESP while frequently experiencing psi on the stage as a performing magician. In his 22nd year he traveled to Europe to look for psychics and visit ESP research labs.

Question two, which asks the contributors to identify the most significant contributions they feel they made to the field, elicited many responses that would be impossible to list fully so the following is a sample of some of them:

Dossey introduced the term “nonlocal mind” (p. 135) as well as the idea of “nonlocal medicine” which “acknowledges the intrapersonal effects of thoughts and emotions—but recognizes interpersonal or transpersonal effects as well” (p. 137). He also states that he is “dazzled by the emerging evidence from many areas of science, from physics to biology to medicine, of the interconnectedness of all there is.” (p. 141).

Haraldsson cites *Modern Miracles*, his book about Sai Baba, and *The Departed Among the Living* as some of his most notable contributions. He also included his article on Emil Jensen, Indridi Indridasson and the Copenhagen fire of 1905 that was published in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* in 2011.

Nelson indicates that one of his most important contributions is a “patient and persistent search for more and deeper understanding” (p. 244). A part of that is his long-term experiment, the Global Consciousness Project.

Remote viewing and its related field work was listed by Schwartz as some of his most notable achievements. He also co-founded The International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine, creating and editing its journal *Subtle Energies*.

Similarly, Targ cites his decade of research at SRI dealing with remote viewing as his most significant contribution but has also written a number of books which he hopes will be found useful. Consistent with some other contributors, Serena Roney-Dougal has studied energy healing by enhancing the growth of lettuce leaves. Healing for von Lucadou involves helping people who are troubled by spontaneous paranormal experiences.

Charles Tart came up with the acronym OBE and feels “great satisfaction” (p. 399) that his book *Altered States of Consciousness* helped bring consciousness studies more into the mainstream. He also states that hosting SurvivalNet has been one of the most satisfying things he has done.

For question three, most respondents indicate that they would not have done anything differently nor have their beliefs changed.

Braud states that “what we call psi may be one of a number of ways in which we might acquire knowledge of what is not immediately evident to our familiar senses—some other ways being mystical experience, intuitive and creative insights, and the surfacing of formerly ‘unconscious material’” (p. 74).

In a similar vein, LeShan feels that it was a mistake to advocate that the “solution to the problem of psi lay in the findings and theories of quantum mechanics” (p. 232). Taking it one step further, Tart states that the “apparent properties of psi that make no sense to us now may never make sense in our ordinary state of consciousness, and understanding may await the development of appropriate state-specific sciences.” (p. 399).

Nelson rounds off the above by saying that “our world is so very complex that it demands respect for all the possibilities, including that, even with our very best efforts to find the truth, we may still be wrong” (p. 245).

As with question two, there were many citations of unusual experiences that exceeded the contributors’ “boggle” threshold. A few of the more notable ones include Playfair’s experience with a psychic surgeon in Mexico who performed amazing surgical feats, Schwartz’s very impressive remote viewing results near Alexandria, Egypt, Bauer’s “water” poltergeist, and Krippner’s Maimonides dream experiments as well as his description of the Brazilian psychic, Amyr Amiden, whose incredible exploits took eight and a half pages to explain.

Feather still remembers Leila, a first grader, who correctly identified 24 out of 25 Zener cards, a display of ESP she has never seen before or since. Finally, Tart recalls the incomparable remote viewer, Pat Price, correctly putting his finger on the face of Patty Hearst’s kidnapper while going through a police loose-leaf mug-book of hundreds of photos.

The last question deals with advice one would give to young people going into the field and the pitfalls of which they should be aware.

Mary Rose Barrington suggests that they start by reading a lot about the history of the paranormal. That advice was echoed by many others like Haraldsson and Stephen Braude, who, in addition, advises them to get a solid footing in a mainstream discipline and then “to quietly learn as much as possible about the history and issues of psi research” (p. 97). Many such as Broughton and Nelson indicate that it is difficult to earn a living as a full-time psi researcher because there are so few full-time jobs to be had.

Hastings and a few others recommend that individuals who wish to become parapsychologists study fields such as “psychology, psychiatry, physics, social studies, religion, health, physiology, and neuroscience among others” (p. 197).

“Mess up your mind” is Dossey’s advice which means doing something which periodically takes you out of your intellectual, rational, analytical self. That helps “reboot the psyche, restores sanity, and recharges one’s enthusiasm for our work in the world” (p. 142).

Von Lucadou reflects the J. B. S. Haldane statement that the universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we *can* imagine. Because of that, he urges young people not to be afraid of crazy ideas.

It is perhaps fitting to conclude with a piece of prose and then poetry, both reflecting the same, basic conviction. Larry Dossey states, “I’ve come to believe that the nonlocal model of consciousness will eventually prevail, that this change will be global, and that humankind’s future will be lifted into a dimension we can only partially glimpse currently” (p. 143).

Finally, William Braud ends with a quote from the writings of the 13th-century mystical poet, Jalaluddin Rumi. The latter wrote:

I’ve heard it said there’s a window that opens
From one mind to another,
But if there’s no wall, there’s no need
For fitting the window, or the latch. (p. 79)

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