

In Memoriam Erlendur Haraldsson (1931-2020)

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In Iceland, people are called by their first names followed by a patronymic. Erlendur's father's name was Harald, so he was known as Erlendur Haraldsson. In reference lists his works are attributed to Haraldsson, Erlendur. However, he preferred simply to be called Erlendur, so that name is adopted here when describing an outstanding career in parapsychology.

He was born on November 3, 1931, near Reykjavik. A variety of mystical and paranormal experiences in childhood and youth are recounted in his recently published memoir, *Towards the Unknown*. His higher education was at first devoted to other interests, notably philosophy, pursued at a succession of European universities. In Germany, when required to take classes in German along with other foreign students, he encountered Iraqi Kurds. He became immersed in Kurdish history and politics, for a while abandoning academia for journalism. He spent time in Kurdistan, the topic of his first book (Haraldsson, 1964), published in Icelandic and German but never translated into English.

Returning to graduate school, Erlendur attended a lecture on parapsychology given by Hans Bender. Impressed with what had been done in this area, he decided to pursue it for his doctorate, attained under Bender. He then spent a year with J. B. Rhine at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man in 1969-70, followed by a year in clinical psychology with Robert van de Castle at the University of Virginia. There he got to know Ian Stevenson. After receiving his diploma, he accepted an appointment at the University of Iceland but returned to the United States to work with Karlis Osis at the American Society for Psychical Research in 1973 and 1974.

Erlendur was one of the few parapsychologists involved in both laboratory and field research. During his year with Rhine, he looked for physiological correlates of ESP in high-scoring subjects. He performed one of the first PK studies using Helmut Schmidt's random event generator. Later, he examined psi performance in relation to psychological testing instruments, especially the Defense Mechanism Test. He was himself a good subject and apparently a psi-conductive experimenter.

Erlendur published regularly in parapsychology journals and mainstream outlets, with books designed for general readership. The first, *At the Hour of Death* (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977), was about

deathbed visions reported to doctors and nurses in the United States and India. He made eight trips to India over ensuing years to investigate events associated with Sathya Sai Baba, resulting in *Miracles are My Visiting Cards* (Haraldsson, 1987). Erlendur wrote a book about the great Icelandic physical medium Indridi Indridason (Haraldsson & Gissurarson, 2015) and was keenly interested in evidence for postmortem survival. His surveys of apparitions and other psychic phenomena in Iceland led to *The Departed among the Living* (Haraldsson, 2012). In the late 1980s, he joined a project to replicate Stevenson's cases of children remembering previous lives, culminating in *I Saw a Light and Came Here: Children's Experiences of Reincarnation* (Haraldsson & Matlock, 2016).

Erlendur was honored with an Outstanding Career Award by the Parapsychological Association in 1997 and in 2010 was awarded the Myers Memorial Medal by the Society for Psychical Research. He retired from teaching in 1996, leaving more time for research and writing. In later years, he was a prolific lecturer. Erlendur kept a list of publications and speaking engagements on his web site, <https://notendur.hi.is/~erlendur/english/>, which the University of Iceland reportedly has no plans to remove. Erlendur contributed an autobiographical essay to the second volume of Rosemarie Pilkington's *Men and Women in Parapsychology: Personal Reflections* (Haraldsson, 2013). Additional information about his life and work may be found in his *Psi Encyclopedia* biography (Matlock, 2020).

Erlendur preferred to keep his personal life private, rarely writing or talking about it. He tells us in *Towards the Unknown* (Haraldsson, 2021) that he was married three times, had a son, daughter, and two grandchildren. Early in his 89th year, diagnosed with an aggressive cancer, he checked himself into a Reykjavik hospice and died there on November 22, 2020 (Morgunblaðið, 2020). He was one of the most versatile researchers parapsychology has produced; the field is greatly diminished by his passing. He was soft-spoken and gentlemanly in demeanor, his range of experience and knowledge notwithstanding. Those of us who knew him personally mourn him for his ever-supportive friendship.

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