

OBITUARY

INGO DOUGLAS SWANN

1933–2013

BY EDWIN C. MAY

Ingo Swann, born September 14, 1933, in Telluride, Colorado, passed away on February 1, 2013, in New York, New York.

Ingo's contribution to parapsychology is incalculable. His early activity in what eventually became known as remote viewing was in 1971–1973 when he participated in out-of-body trials at the American Society for Psychical Research in New York. In these experiments, Ingo was asked to describe the content of a sealed box a meter or so above his head.

His early work, in what is now known as Star Gate—the U.S. government's 20-year, 20-million-dollar program to study and use ESP as a collection asset for intelligence during the Cold War, is well documented in *Mind-Reach* (Targ & Puthoff, 1977). Rather than enumerating all of Ingo's significant contributions to the field, I thought I would tell a personal narrative to illustrate this remarkable and complex individual.

I first met Ingo at a party in his flat near 3rd Street in Manhattan, during which Ingo learned of my own interest in psi and that I was halfway through a lengthy research adventure in India. Later we met for dinner in the Village, where Ingo told of his work in California in rather vague terms. I did not know it at the time, but he was unable to provide specifics given that the ESP program at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) at the time was highly classified.

I returned from India in the spring of 1975 and began working at Maimonides Medical Center with Chuck Honorton, mainly on RNG studies. Ingo was quick to volunteer for some of those studies. He was always a willing and intently curious participant. In particular, he was fascinated with the random number generator (RNG) work coupled with the idea of separately counting trials and hits when he was in a particular EEG alpha bandwidth and power. We reported this work at an American Physical Society meeting that year. Ingo expressed great interest in that I was an experimental physicist as opposed to a theoretical one.

I later found out that Ingo encouraged Hal Puthoff to hire me at SRI as consultant (and later as a senior research physicist) to help with an ongoing, Navy-funded PK experiment with a magnetometer, and with ongoing EEG studies. Ingo told me then that he did not want some critic to invalidate his PK work because someone threw a light switch down the hall. Thus, I owe my job to Ingo.

Now that we were both working with Hal Puthoff and Russell Targ at SRI, Ingo and I grew close as friends. He began to introduce me to a variety of his art friends, which included a trip to Mexico to restore some artwork there that had been damaged by a hurricane. I was fortunate to watch Ingo work on some of his best known paintings, some of which are now hanging in the executive section of the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum. *Aft Ship's View of Sagittarius* is a 20-foot masterpiece and was my first introduction to Ingo's ability for intensive concentration and dedication to work. Always puffing away on his cigars, he might work for many hours uninterrupted. Ingo's flat did not have a proper kitchen, but he had a large number of "hot-plate" specials that bordered on the gourmet. And, of course, there was always the hamburger joint next door.

From my perspective, Ingo's major contribution to psi was with his training methodology. During the late 70s and early 80s Ingo's dedication and work ethic were far superior to any of us in the field! He was studying conditioning theory and, in particular, operant conditioning, which took him to the Stanford University library for sometimes as long as 12 hours. What he gleaned from all that work was then and remains today his primary contribution to the field.

At SRI in those days, we all had noticed that the data early on in a remote viewing session tended to be more accurate than the later data. What Ingo did was to formalize this in his special variant of operant

conditioning. Psychologists have often used word association tests in therapy to try to get at what is going on emotionally with their clients. Say the first word that comes to mind when you hear, for example, “fast.” The idea here is that the client would not have enough time to fabricate a response in order to “please” the therapist.

So Ingo invented a stimulus/response methodology to incorporate this notion into remote viewing sessions. The stimulus was not a word but rather the geographical coordinates of a randomly selected site on the globe. An RV trainee was asked to respond rapidly but within a tight structure. In fact, Ingo was so adamant about structure, he posted signs in the laboratory that read: “Content be damned; structure is all that matters!”

This is not the place to provide a scientific critique of his overall training procedure that was eventually adopted by the newly established Army Ft. Meade remote viewing group. It suffices to say that the stimulus/response aspect of his training method was a jewel of wisdom, but many of the other aspects, while seeming straightforward within the context of classical conditioning theory, were not especially helpful.

Ingo had, at times, a wicked sense of humor, and if you were going up against him you might be the victim of one of his intense gazes that could melt lead at 100 meters! One time we were giving a joint presentation to a group of secondary education teachers in the Bay Area of San Francisco. During the Q & A portion, one teacher asked the rather hostile question, “Since you are a Scientologist who believes in reincarnation, why not get rid of your fat, 40ish body and come back in a nicer one.” Ingo responded, “Well, what keeps me in this fat, 40ish body is the threat of secondary education all over again!” That brought down the house.

Ingo loved to push the social envelope by deliberately being outrageous. We both appreciated ballet, and after seeing the movie *Turning Point*, Ingo decided that nothing would do but he must take ballet lessons at a studio near SRI. So on the days of lessons, he would change into his tights on the third floor of our building at SRI and nearly prance his way through the multitude of engineers at their desks on the first floor for dramatic effect. On one of these occasions, Ingo insisted that Hal, Beverly Humphrey, and I come to watch his lesson. We were surprised that the next youngest person in his class was probably 7 or 8 and limber as a piece of string. But Ingo was struggling in the warm-up to even touch his feet while sitting on the floor! Ingo was not at all amused given that the three of us could hardly contain our laughter. The good news was that Ingo took it all in and continued his lessons for some time.

A book could easily be written about Ingo and his many idiosyncrasies—some funny, some not—but always engaging and interesting.

Ingo will be remembered for his contribution to psi research, and some day when the data are released, his contribution to gathering intelligence. The world has yet to learn of this remarkable man’s contributions in that arena.

Ingo’s last activity in Star Gate was in 1986, when he participated in an extensive magneto-encephalograph study we did at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He told me near the end of that work that he was tired of research and would rather focus upon his art, writing, and other things. We parted then as colleagues and friends.

Travel well, dear Ingo. You are missed.

Reference

Targ, R., & Puthoff, H. E. (1977). *Mind-reach: Scientists look at psychic ability*. New York: Dell.

Laboratories for Fundamental Research
330 Cowper St., Suite 300
Palo Alto, CA 94301, USA
may@lfr.org