

## **A Tribute to Diane Corcoran (7/20/1946 – 3/5/2023)**

Robert Mays

International Association of Near-Death Studies

Over the years it has become clear to me that our destinies – our life plans – lead us to *crucial encounters* with others, which then steers our lives in certain directions. Indeed, *everyone* has these encounters that guide their destinies.

Reflecting on Diane Corcoran's life, we get a sense of the threads of her destiny that were laid out before she was born in 1946.

As an Army nurse serving in Vietnam in 1969, Diane had one of these destined encounters while caring for a wounded American soldier. He said to her, "I need to tell you something, but you have to promise that you'll believe me; you have to believe me." Diane agreed and the soldier told her that, when he was wounded, he rose out of his body and went to a heavenly place where he saw departed loved ones and deceased comrades. He said it was the most real thing he had ever experienced.

The soldier was describing a near-death experience (NDE), but at that time there was no name for it.

Diane was not alone encountering a near-death experiencer (NDER). Around the same time, in 1964, philosophy undergraduate Raymond Moody met NDER George Ritchie who told a story of his profound out-of-body encounter with the Being of Light whom he claimed was Christ. In 1971, intern psychiatrist Bruce Greyson encountered Holly – a suicide attempter – who related accurate, veridical perceptions while she was out-of-body during her coma.

At the time, neither Diane, Raymond, or Bruce knew what to make of these experiences. However, they would not be merely "chance" encounters, instead they set a life direction for each person. Raymond and Bruce pursued pioneering research on NDEs and were among the founders of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS).

Diane remained in the military, rising to the rank of Colonel, and devoted her life to NDE education and advocacy especially among active-duty military and veterans. She established education programs for military nurses, doctors, psychiatrists, and chaplains, promoting the message that NDEs are normal occurrences that should not be pathologized or stigmatized.

One of Diane's most enduring accomplishments was championing the funding and production of the IANDS medical training video "NDEs: What Medical Professionals Need to Know" and especially the veterans' video, "Understanding Veterans' Near-Death Experiences."

Diane served on the IANDS Board of Directors for many years and as president for a total of 12 years, the longest term in IANDS's 42-year history. In 2008, she became president for the second time when several missteps led to a financial crisis that threatened the organization. IANDS could easily have folded but over three months, she moved the IANDS office from Connecticut to Durham, hired new staff, and instituted a fundraising campaign called "Light the Way," which, stabilized IANDS financially for three more years.

I was privileged to serve as IANDS Treasurer during this time and for many subsequent years. Diane was a no-nonsense, take-charge woman who led with authority, clarity, and compassion. Over the following years, IANDS grew and flourished under her guidance and direction.

She was also a guardian angel to many, many people whom she took under her wing—in particular Pat Fenske, a former IANDS president and a leader of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship in Philadelphia. In 2012, Pat and her husband Paul's health was declining and they could no longer take care of themselves. Diane moved them down to Durham, set them up in an assisted care facility, and took care of their needs until their final days.

Under Diane's leadership, IANDS grew strong and the worldwide NDE movement likewise benefited.

Diane certainly followed her destiny—her life plan— triggered by that initial encounter with the wounded soldier in 1969.

Many near-death experiencers, during the review of their life, are told how important it is to show kindness, care, and compassion to others. It's much more important than any worldly accomplishments. However, Diane certainly excelled at both.

Indeed, the angels are rejoicing that she has finally returned to her True Home.

## References

*NDEs: What Medical Professionals Need to Know:* <https://youtu.be/WINKMeiEKWM>  
*Understanding Veterans' Near-Death Experiences:* <https://youtu.be/iCwehw0XBFg>  
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