



VITAL SIGNS

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Submissions to *Vital Signs* are welcome. Please submit materials to vs@iands.org. Please use Word format for attached documents. All submissions are subject to *Vital Signs* editorial review and approval processes.

Suggestions & Feedback

We welcome your questions, comments, or suggestions. Your opinion matters!

IANDS
2741 Campus Walk Avenue
Building 500
Durham, NC 27705

919.383.7940 | vs@iands.org | www.iands.org



Founded in 1981, the International Association for Near-Death Studies, Inc. (IANDS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. The organization is dedicated to encouraging scientific research, education, and support regarding the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual nature and ramifications of near-death and related experiences. IANDS associates comprise a broad audience from around the world including experiencers; researchers; medical, mental, social, and religious/spiritual healthcare professionals; educators; and the general public. For more information, or to become an IANDS member, visit <https://iands.org>

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Cover Image: *QUARTZ MOON*,
painting by Cynthia E. Marsh, MA
(Please see Cynthia's article on page 13.)





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Announcing IANDS's Listing of Specially-Prepared Mental Health Providers



At the recent annual meeting of the IANDS Board of Directors, we affirmed a revised IANDS mission: To advance global understanding of near-death experiences and related phenomena through research, education, and supportive communities and resources. One ongoing need of near-death experiencers (NDErs) is support in the aftermath of their NDEs. Sometimes they seek help in the integration process from mental health providers, such as counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. We know from talking with them that their experiences in this regard have been mixed. In a study I did, 1/5 of participant NDErs reported that they felt harmed by their experience of discussing their NDE with a provider.

It stands to reason that mental health providers (MHPs) are more likely to be helpful if they have specialized training to work with clients' transpersonal experiences. "Transpersonal experiences" refers to experiences that transcend the usual personal limits of space, time, identity, or influence. They include, but are not limited to, near-death experiences, after-death communication, out-of-body experiences, precognition (knowing the future), clairvoyance (sometimes called remote viewing), kundalini awakening, and past-life memories.

An ad hoc IANDS Mental Health Committee—comprised of psychiatrist Rebecca Valla, social workers Diana DiFranco and Jan Melcher, pastoral marriage and family therapist Angie Willson-Quayle, and licensed professional counselor me; and with the help of website wrangler Daniel Endy and marketing wiz Maryann Sperry—has been working on a project to list transpersonally-prepared mental health providers at the IANDS website. The listing is free to MHPs. Our first step is to solicit applications from such providers.

Our criteria are:

- Licensed as a mental health provider in one or more states
- Wants to provide services to clients with transpersonal experiences
- Completed at least one of the following:
 - a transpersonally-oriented graduate mental health degree, documented by a transcript copy,
 - a graduate course on transpersonal counseling, such as offered in the graduate counseling programs at the University of North Texas and William & Mary, documented by a transcript copy, or
 - continuing education in transpersonal counseling/psychotherapy, documented by a certificate of completion, such as certification as a mental health professional by the American Center for the Integration of Spiritually Transformative Experiences (ACISTE; ACISTE-Certified Mental Health Professional [ACMHP]).

The Committee will review applications submitted by June 1. Interested MHPs can apply here:

<https://forms.gle/R54KpR1TPrNSqWrKA>

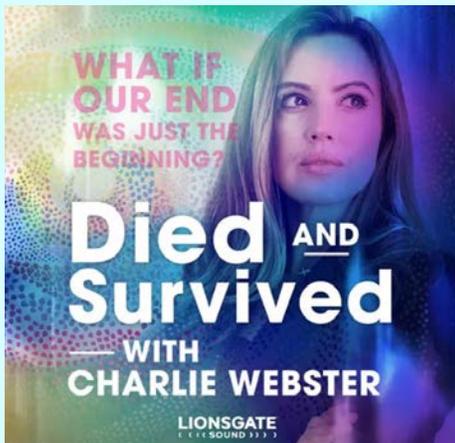
Following this first review, the Committee will review applications every three months.

The Committee hopes to have the first listing posted at the IANDS website by mid-June. If you are a potential user of this listing, stay tuned for an announcement of the posted listing and more details.

This project is just one example of how IANDS continues to grow and develop in the support aspect of our mission!

Janice Miner Holden, EdD, PCP-S, ACMHP

Jan Holden, EdD featured on Lionsgate Podcast



Award-winning British journalist and broadcaster Charlie Webster experienced life after death. After completing a 3,000-mile charity cycling challenge from Europe to South America ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games, she became critically ill and was put on life support. Her dire situation made global headlines. But after two weeks in a coma, Charlie made a miraculous recovery that baffled doctors both in Brazil and the UK.

While in the coma, Charlie had a near-death experience (NDE) in which her mind was very much alive despite her body giving up.

In this eight-part documentary, *Died and Survived* from Charlie Webster and Lionsgate Sound, Charlie chronicles her profound and captivating experience, sharing vivid memories of being in a coma while doctors

worked to save her and family gathered to await her fate, opening up a greater conversation about the afterlife.

In Episode 7: *The Summer of 2022 (The Start of a New Me)*, Dr. Jan Holden of the International Association for Near-Death Studies enables host Charlie to finally, fully open up on the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that she has carried since her NDE in 2016. Their conversation provides an enlightening and optimistic analysis of shared trauma and hopeful recovery.

<https://lionsgatesound.com/shows/died-and-survived>

WELCOME New IANDES Board Members:



Angela Harris, BAEd

As the director of IANDES Groups and Events and as a board member, Angela Harris brings a near-death experienter's passion for sharing the message of spiritually transformative experiences to the world and advocates.

Responsible for overseeing all facets of IANDES Groups and Events, she drives operations, marketing, technology, volunteer engagement, and event production to help fulfill IANDES mission and to fund the organization. Angela aligns sharing groups with IANDES values to provide diverse, inclusive, and accessible sharing groups. These groups provide participants with hope, validation, and comfort through sharing of spiritually transformative experiences with like-minded people. She aligns webinars to make them approachable for a community that looks to IANDES to learn from leaders and researchers, while also hearing fresh, new experience narratives.

Angela's main goal is to grow the IANDES community while providing continuous, quality content and engagement for the IANDES community. You can reach Angela at: angela@iands.org



Evan Mecham, MA (Transpersonal Psychology); Chair Emeritus, EMA and Associates, Division of BPE, Inc.

I experienced an NDE in a catastrophic automobile accident some 30 years ago. Since then, I have been on a spiritual journey in which I struggle each day to show the Infinite gratitude for my life. Yet, even more important to me, using Michael Pollan's narrative, is to "never forget what a gift and mystery it is that there is something rather than nothing." Therefore, I welcome each opportunity that greets me to share the gifts of healing that returned with me from my soul's journey to the ethereal realms.

Joining the IANDES Board as the Local Groups Coordinator is a gift of service that I am thrilled to offer. Being a part of the IANDES organization is an honor and an opportunity to associate with inspired people dedicated to better understanding our multidimensional and ever-evolving world.

The International Association for Near-Death Studies, Inc
conference.iands.org



Aug 30 - Sep 3

2023 CONFERENCE

Inspired to
Loving Action

The Transformative Power of

NEAR-DEATH and RELATED EXPERIENCES



Bruce Greyson, MD



Karen Newell & Eben Alexander, MD



Bob Coppes, PhD



Jeffrey Mishlove, PhD

- **Speakers • Workshops**
- **Panels • Music & Meditation**
- **Military/Veterans Discussion Group**
- **Experiencer's Sharing Lounge**
- **Optional Healing Sessions**
- **Film Premieres • Banquet**
- **Evening Party**

WASHINGTON, DC



A Tribute to Diane Corcoran, PhD, RN, US Army Col (Ret)

7/20/1946 – 3/5/2023

by Robert Mays, BSc, IANDS Treasurer



Over the years it has become clear to me that our destiny, our life plan, leads us to crucial encounters with others, which then steer our life in certain directions. Indeed, everyone has these encounters that guide their destiny.

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

As a nurse serving in the Army in Vietnam in 1969, Diane had one of these destiny encounters when she cared 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 then 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 some of his comrades who had died. He said it was the realest thing he had ever experienced.

Clearly, the soldier was describing a near-death experience (NDE), but at that time there was no name for such experiences.

Diane was not alone in having an encounter with a near-death experiencer (NDER) around that time. In 1964, philosophy undergraduate Raymond Moody met NDER George Ritchie and heard Ritchie's story of his profound out-of-body encounter with the Being of Light whom he took to be Christ. And 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, nor Raymond, nor Bruce knew what to make of these experiences. Still, these three encounters with NDEs over those seven years were not "chance" encounters. Rather, they set a life direction for each person. Raymond and Bruce pursued pioneering research on NDEs and were among the founders of IANDS.

And Diane devoted her life to NDE education and advocacy, especially among active-duty military and veterans. She remained in the military and rose to the rank of Colonel. 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.

Probably Diane's most enduring accomplishments in this area were 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 as President in IANDS's 42-year history. She became President for the second time at the beginning of 2008 at a very critical time for IANDS: several missteps had led to a financial crisis that threatened the organization. IANDS could easily have folded. In quick order, Diane stepped in. Over three months, she moved the IANDS office from Connecticut to Durham and hired new staff. And she instituted a fundraising campaign called "Light the Way," which raised funds over the next three years that stabilized IANDS and got it back on track.

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.

Diane was also a guardian angel to many, many people whom she took under her wing—in particular, Pat Fenske, a former IANDS President from 1986-1991, and also a leader of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship in Philadelphia for a time. Pat and her husband, Paul, were no longer able to care for themselves, so Diane took care of them until their final days.

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

So, Diane certainly followed her destiny—her life plan—that was triggered in that initial encounter with the wounded soldier in 1969. And the whole world now has benefited greatly from her productive life and her many sacrifices.

Many NDEs are shown, in the review of their life during their NDE, how important showing kindness, care, and compassion to others is. It's much more important than any worldly accomplishments. Diane certainly excelled in each of these qualities.

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



Loving Memories of Diane



Having known Diane Corcoran for over 30 years and having served with her on the IANDS board back in the 1990s, I can't think of anyone having done more for IANDS in so many different ways. She was IANDS's Swiss Army knife, being president multiple times, planning conferences, checking out presentation rooms ahead of time, arranging for speakers, and so much more. To use one of her favorite sayings, Diane not only talked the talk, but more so walked the walk. After a few moments of shock after hearing the news, all the memories of her make me smile. - Bruce Horacek, IANDS President Emeritus



You will be very, very missed in the NDE community and the military community. Enjoy your rewards in Heaven for a beautiful life of service. God bless you. - Christine Duminiak

Dearest Diane, Shine On! You are a shining star in God's galaxy of goodness. LOVE IS ETERNAL.
- Ann Marie Karl

What you have helped to create with IANDS is now a safe place for me. To create safety and belonging for others where there was none: That's on top of the list for life's greatest achievements! Thank you!
- Dominique Margolis

Dearest Diane, You were the first person to really help me gain an understanding of my NDE. You were & are a Hero. I will meet you again. All my love & care, forever. Your friend, Glenn Brymer

You blessed so many lives. I feel lucky to be one of those in the shadow of your love. I only knew you for a little over a decade, but I feel enriched and grateful for having had your friendship all these years. You will be greatly missed by so many, but your work for veterans will continue onward for decades to come. You were a true advocate and pioneer of near-death studies involving the veteran community. Gone but far from forgotten - I salute you Col. Corcoran! A life well lived with honor! - Rev. Bill McDonald

Diane was an amazing, upbeat, and inspirational guest [on my show]. Diane was always genuine, sincere, and funny. She was the same in person as she was on stage and camera. She was a unique and amazing woman who made a difference in the world. - Mark Anthony, JD, Psychic Explorer

Being in Diane's presence was pure magic. - JoAnn May

I wish to acknowledge the profound contribution Diane made through her personal story and her IANDS contributions during the most difficult time in my life. NDEs and the equally extensive STEs portray a much higher purpose to our place in the world, providing much solace and hope to earthly inhabitants. Thank you, Diane, for a life well served to your country and humanity. Love and Light, Pam Mulready

It was an honor and pleasure to know you; thank you again for your service!
- Arnulfo Gonzalez - Nickname "Chico"

I was informed about Diane's departure with mixed feelings. We lost a wonderful woman and servant of humanity. The photos of her youth show a beautiful woman. Those of us who were associated with her later in life witnessed the beauty of her soul. As a true soldier of spiritual peace that she was, perhaps she thought that she served enough the NDE phenomenon from this side, and decided to cross the border so we can have an insider from the less explored side. Rest in peace, Diane. The few times that we communicated made you look in my eyes strong and immortal. There is no doubt that you have gained immortality in our hearts!
- Dr. Stathis Avramidis

Diane has been a marvelous visionary. Her extraordinary leadership skills and commitment to IANDS is unparalleled. Collaborating with Diane has been a dream come true. Diane's vibrant presence remains. I send her my very deepest LOVE as she travels onward, continuing to share her wisdom on earth and beyond. Sending you much LOVE Diane, always and forever. - Rebecca Austill-Clausen



Please consider donating to:

COLONEL DIANE CORCORAN VETERAN'S FUND
in honor of Diane Corcoran's many contributions to veteran NDEs.

This fund was created to develop and deliver NDE educational outreach programs to veteran and military hospitals.

CLICK LINK TO DONATE:

<https://iands.app.neoncrm.com/forms/veterans-fund>

With deep gratitude to all who have already contributed!

While we are mourning the loss of our Service Sister, others are rejoicing to meet her behind the veil. I will always be grateful for how she made me feel! - Venus-Val Tower, US Army (ret.)

IANDS has lost a living legend and passionate advocate. It will be almost impossible for me to think of IANDS without Diane being there. She was so welcoming and encouraging to me when I joined years ago. She promised me a community of like-minded / like-hearted friends, and she was so very right. Diane personally supported my projects and was always there to lend a helping hand. Now that she is finally out of pain, and at peace, I strongly suspect she's taking charge of things on "the other side," but she will be missed so very much here. I will be forever grateful for having the honor and privilege of knowing Diane.
- Carol Vengroff

Diane Corcoran exemplified the Unconditional Love of the NDE and STE. IANDS began their research on Love as an everlasting and forever Truth, about 40 years ago, and Diane held this beautiful truth, as if a huge Bright with Light flag. Diane, you are precious to my heart: you lived inclusivity as it should be. You helped so many to feel their worth, of Love. In gratitude Diane. Until we meet again, I hold you in my heart, God's heart. I love you, Diane. -Alma A. Blazquez

Diane, we believe, had a safe loving passage into the beyond. She is a sweet, courageous, compassionate soul, she was very helpful and supportive in our research on mystical experience. Her presence is long lasting and optimistic and inspiring. With much love, Thank you, Diane. - Andy

Thank You, Diane, for befriending me at the 24th Evac Reunion in 2014 and inviting me to participate in IANDS conference the following year. I will always be grateful of this opportunity you gave me to experience IANDS. See you on the Other Side.
- Michael E. Bongart

From the Netherlands (Holland): Through YouTube I have enjoyed her experiences and help to others for years. I am sure she is now in a place where she receives wonderful love for all her good and wonderful work on this earth. - Robert Wessels (age 83)

Dear Diane, An honor meeting you during the IANDS conferences and being embraced by your ever glowing presence. They say, Love never dies - so shall you always be remembered by the families of those you cared for their loved ones, easing the darkest hours to many. The Work you did is the Legacy you created that will live on for generations to come, beyond borders and worldwide. I am sending our love in the name of many. Your friends from Hungary. - Kornel Tas / Light of Love Public Foundation, Hungary

I will never forget Diane's quiet, majestic, and powerful presence. Her wisdom, dedication, and fortitude is unsurpassed. Such an amazing soul! I miss you, and your essence lives on in so many ways. Thank you, dear heart!
- Martha (Cassandra Musgrave) St. Claire

Diane's life example was far-reaching and truly inspirational. I love her wisdom, her laughter, her hospitality, her leadership, her life-long willingness to learn. She was one-of-a-kind and we each benefited from her presence, her guidance and the way she lived her daily life. May her spirit continue to guide and bless us long into the future! - Martina Straub



Great presentations from our *Explore the Extraordinary* podcast
and previous IANDS conferences:

<https://www.youtube.com/@IANDSvideos>



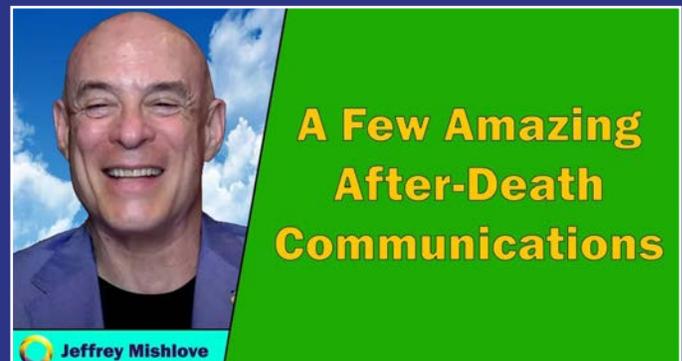
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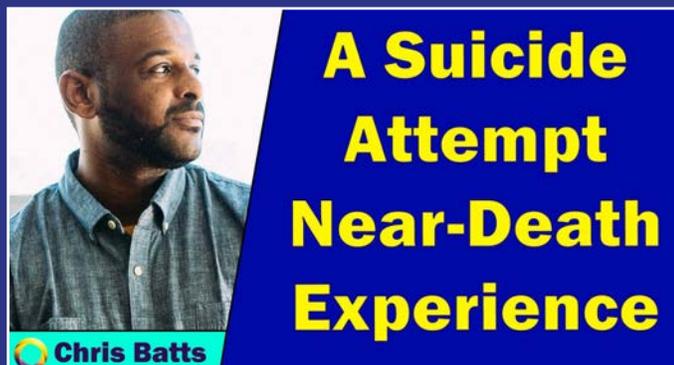
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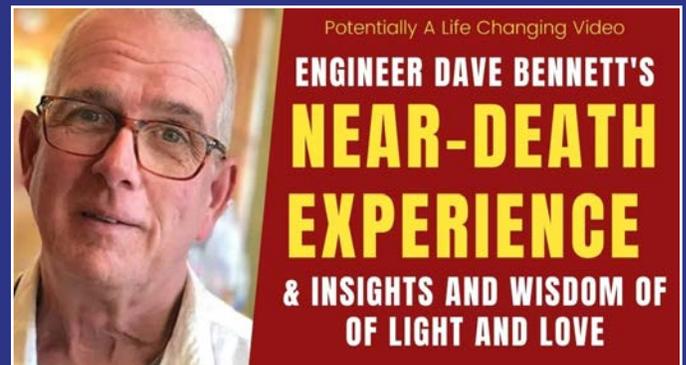
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Email Conversation with Ken Ring, PhD, and Jan Holden, EdD

Pioneering near-death experience (NDE) researcher and founding IANDS president, Ken Ring, PhD, just published his most recent book, *A Near-Death Researcher's Notebook* (2023, Wheatmark). Another long-time NDE researcher and current IANDS president, Jan Holden, EdD, read it. Ken agreed to an email interview by Jan; here is their exchange.

Jan: Ken, I just finished reading your newest book, *A Near-Death Researcher's Notebook*. Although you gave me permission to prepare for this e-interview by perusing rather than completely reading the book, I was frankly entranced and ended up reading every word. As an NDE researcher myself, as well as an aging person facing physical deterioration and demise, I related to much of what you wrote. But I think your book would be engaging for anyone interested in how learning deeply about NDEs, as you have, can affect someone's outlook on everything from the most personal—such as peeing challenges—to the most general—such as prophetic visions about the global future of humanity.

That said, here are a few of my questions and reactions, to which I invite your response—and any additional comments you might wish to make.

On page 13, you described how, even fairly early into your NDE research, you felt as if what you were learning was provoking in you an “extended religious awakening.” I was struck by the word “religious,” which I associate with organized religion. The reason is that NDErs often (but not always) gravitate away from organized religion because they find it is not big enough to accommodate what they experienced in their NDEs. And you yourself, later in the book, say you have no use for the religion of your upbringing—Judaism—and that Buddhism comes closest to your views—though you also don't consider yourself a Buddhist, per se. If I'm on target with all those points, perhaps you actually meant “an extended *spiritual* awakening?”

Ken: Yes, you're right, but I think I can explain the contradiction. I wrote that article when I had just started interviewing my first NDErs in the late 1970s. At that time, I often felt a sacred atmosphere enveloping me when conducting those interviews and a numinous feeling would come over me. In those days, I thought of it as a profound religious experience. But in time, I realized, as you did,

that it was really a spiritual, and not a religious experience as such. I do not consider myself religious, but I do have a sense of the Holy, which I guess is more mystical rather than religious. I never have read Rudolf Otto's book, *The Idea of the Holy*, but what I have read about it seems to reflect what I experienced during those first interviews.

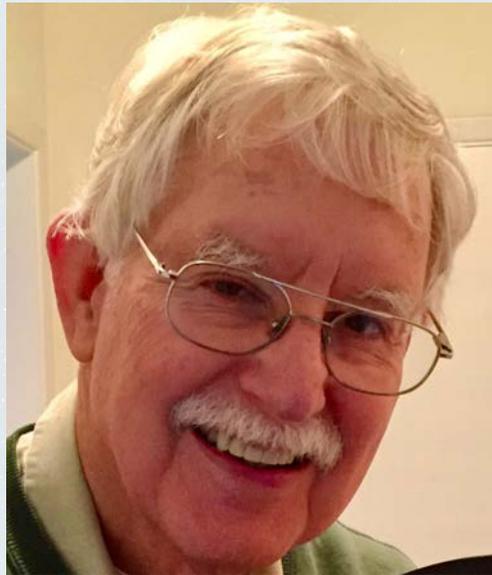
Jan: I loved how your book chapters were so substantial while being so short. Your book structure enabled me to read, even briefly, and take a break whenever I felt a need to ponder what I'd read. In reading your chapters on the process of aging and dying—including your reconciliation with your dying father as well as your attention to the “warehousing” of the elderly in senior living homes, loneliness, and accompaniment of the dying in their final days, I often felt, in turn, touched, saddened, and uplifted. I've always considered you an exceptionally talented thinker and writer, and despite any other changes you've experienced, those qualities have not changed. I don't have a question here but, maybe, an opportunity for you to express gratitude that you still have so much to give humanity?

Ken: Thank you so much for these words of appreciation, Jan, both for me personally and for what I wrote in my book.

I'm coming to the end of my working life—and perhaps my life itself before too much longer. I'm 87 now, and I have many physical difficulties to cope with, including at present a really bad case of tendonitis, which makes it very difficult to write now. But of course, I'm very grateful to have lived a long life and been able, somehow, to continue to write not only my own books and blogs, but to tout the work of others, as I do in this book.

It has been the privilege of my life to have devoted so much of it to my work on NDEs and to have met so many wonderful and loving people over so many years from whom I have learned so much. As the old song goes, “Who could ask for anything more?” I have been blessed beyond measure.

Jan: I was so glad you gave a rave review for Bruce Greyson's recent book, *After*. I was also surprised and pleased to learn about some of your most-recommended books on NDEs of which I wasn't aware, such as David Sunfellow's 2019 *The Purpose of Life: As Revealed by*



Near-Death Experiences From Around the World and his 2020 *500 Quotes From Heaven: Life-Changing Quotes That Reveal the Wisdom and Power of Near-Death Experiences*. I was also pleased to be alerted to very recent and impending publications, such as Jeff Janssen's *Your Life's Ripple Effects*, which you seem to consider an ultimate treatment of the NDE life review, and Alex Batthyány's *Threshold: Terminal Lucidity and the Border of Life and Death*, which is due out in September 2023. These books contribute clearly to the field of near-death studies. If you could wish one more NDE-related book into existence that you think either would further enhance the field or would potentially greatly influence humanity, what would it be?

Ken: I'm going to do an end run around this question, and respond to it in a different way. We have been studying NDEs and similar transformative experiences for nearly a half a century now, and there have already been so many wonderful books published on this subject, including several recent ones you alluded to. So, while acknowledging my limited prophetic powers, I don't see any new NDE bombshell books on the horizon.

But I can tell you what *does* excite me, and what I think may be "the coming thing" in near-death studies. It's one of the books you mentioned—Alex Batthyány's on terminal lucidity (TL). When I first read about TL several years ago, having come across the pioneering work one Michael Nahm on the subject, I was thrilled. And later, I got in touch with Alex, and we had and still have a very warm and cordial connection. I told him then that if I could still be active in doing research, I would certainly be studying TL myself. I subsequently read the draft of his book, and when it comes out this September, I think what it will do for terminal lucidity what Raymond Moody's *Life After Life* did for NDEs—open up a new and exciting frontier for near-death studies.

Jan: I also loved that you touched on your own experiences with psychedelics and their potential to facilitate NDE-like experiences and/or aftereffects. I myself very recently participated in ketamine-assisted therapy as a consciousness exploration exercise. It was awesome, and I plan to write an article about it for an upcoming issue of *Vital Signs*. I'm embarking on a study of how reliable ketamine can be in facilitated NDE-like experiences and aftereffects in healthy adults seeking such experiences but

not wanting to nearly die or engage in 10 years of meditation to experience them. Anything you'd like to comment on regarding such research?

Ken: I was very interested to read about your ketamine experience, Jan, and how you want to look into how it may be used to induce NDE-like experiences in healthy volunteers. Of course, ketamine has become quite in vogue lately, but, actually, you're running about 30 years behind me.

In brief, in 1985, I was approached by a ketamine therapist who wanted to use me as an "expert" (she said) on NDEs to see whether ketamine could engender an NDE-type experience. (She and an oncologist were then working with terminally ill cancer patients.) I wound up using ketamine a total of nine times during the late 1980s, and eventually published an article about my experiences called "Ketamine Days," in a book entitled *The Ketamine Papers: Science, Therapy, and Transformation*, edited by Phil Wolfson and Glenn Hartelius.

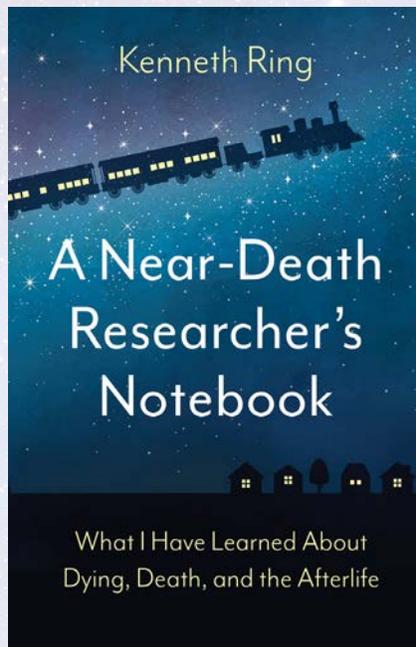
You might well want to consult this book, Jan, and if you do, you can find out what I experienced when I was using

it. I'll leave it at that, but, if you read my article, I think you will agree that my own experiences were "out of this world."

Jan: One thing that struck me was your use of the term "life preview" to describe how some NDErs get what you have called "personal flashforwards (PFs)"—glimpses into specific scenes of their likely futures that often bear out in their actual future lives. In the interest of verbal economy, I wondered about changing the lexicon to: life review, life preview (instead of "personal flashforward"), and global preview (instead of "prophetic visions"). What do you think?

Ken: Well, I have a fondness for the terms I used (originally in my book, *Heading Toward Omega*), but I agree that your proposal certainly has the virtue of verbal economy. You don't need my blessing, of course, but I have no objection. I just wonder how you could get people to adopt your terminology, but I'll leave that to you.

Jan: Something I resonated to was your occasional reference to, "If only ___ had read / would read about NDEs: I wonder how their [atheistic, nihilistic, warring] attitudes might change." What about making your next book *A Letter to Current and Would-Be World Leaders*? In it, you could address both the life review and what I'm calling global previews—for them to take into consideration when they make policy or military decisions.



(Continued)

(Continued from page 11)

Ken: Well, Jan, that is a beguiling but impossible fantasy in two ways. First, I can no longer write any more books. (Hell, with this damn tendonitis, I can hardly write this e-mail today.) But, second, world leaders would surely find a way to dismiss such testimony as fantasies of another kind and would never read it, much less be influenced by it.

No, the lessons of the life review would be lost on such people, but they can and do change the lives of us mere mortals, and to me, as I make clear in my book, I think the most important takeaway from the study of NDEs is the life review. It may not change the world, but it can transform people's lives if they take the time to read and reflect on it.

Jan: Well, my friend, anything else you'd like to say before we sign off? For my part, I'm very glad to have had this opportunity to reconnect with you, and especially on these particular topics! Thank you for your Notebook, and I encourage anyone interested in the implications of NDEs for meaning in death and purpose in life to read it. It was well worth my already-stretched-too-thin time!!

Ken: No, Jan, I think I had best rest my tortured fingers today and let you have the last word—particularly your concluding advice to the readers of this e-mail exchange. I don't expect to enter into the days (I say days, not years, deliberately) of my retirement living off the royalties of this book on Majorca, but perhaps, thanks to this interview, I won't have to end my career as a literary failure.

Thanks so much for making the time to do this interview with me. It was a pleasure in every way but digitally.

Jan: It was my pleasure, Ken! Your book was a rich read, from your reminiscence about the early days of IANDS to your musings about the future of our planet and humanity. And, of course, your sense of humor and your Renaissance-man knowledge of literary and other figures only contributed to the experience. I believe that others will find it as enriching a read as I did. And best wishes grappling with those irritatingly persistent health challenges!

IANDS Groups and Events would like to introduce our new *EXPLORE THE EXTRAORDINARY* podcast with host, Betty Guadagno

Betty Guadagno had a spiritually transformative experience in March of 2019. Betty underwent a 180-degree transformation from drug addict, sex worker, and radical atheist to a devout believer, in long term recovery, and working as a recovery coach. During her integration process, she felt an incredible pull towards establishing spiritual community in her life. She has been connected to the IANDS community since December of 2020. Betty began her involvement with IANDS as an attendee of our sharing groups. She quickly got involved with service to the community by volunteering as a facilitator and moderator. Betty then moved into the role of Webinar Coordinator for IANDS Groups and Events.

ABOUT THE PODCAST:

Explore The Extraordinary is a groundbreaking podcast brought to you by the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS). Exploring everything from near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, lucid dreaming, encounters with divine beings, and more, this podcast delves deep into extraordinary experiences and perspectives that challenge our understanding of the world around us (and our place in it). Through thought-provoking interviews, insightful discussions, and personal anecdotes, *Explore the Extraordinary* offers a unique platform for listeners to broaden perspectives and contemplate profound mysteries of human (and spiritual) consciousness. Join us on this incredible journey of discovery as we explore the fascinating realm of the extraordinary.

VIEW episodes on our YouTube Channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/@IANDSvideos>

VIEW episode on Spotify here: <https://open.spotify.com/show/741H0NhAH9z3nv0anvstSa?si=c3e6dfcd98af47b4>

Please email exploretheextraordinarypodcast@gmail.com to be considered as a guest for the show.



The following account is a beautiful example in line with the theme of our 2023 IANDS Conference - **Loving Action: The Transformative Power of Near-Death and Related Experiences**. Just as an NDE expands one's worldview and inspires new ways of experiencing life, so can a "related experience" such as a spiritually transformative experience (STE). Click link below to read IANDS's document **What Are Related Experiences?**
https://iands.org/images/stories/pdf_downloads/What_Are_Related_Experiences.pdf

SACRED GEOMETRY SOUL WORK by Cynthia E. Marsh, MA

The impact of a UFO encounter at the age of 14 changed my life. It marked the beginning of a spiritual worldview, a deep concern for the environment, and the development of psychic abilities. I've received visions and downloads that have instilled a strong sense of purpose and a desire to serve. Some of those gifts are dreams of mysterious symbols and geometric forms; the source of my Sacred Geometry work today. This is my story of how these otherworldly experiences have influenced me and my creative process.

In the summer of 1973, my good friend and I were walking through our neighborhood in Westchester County, New York. It was a blue sky cloudless day and we came across a dirt road marked "NO TRESPASSING." The private road wove its way through a thick wooded area to a nearby water treatment plant. Without much debate, we both agreed to explore.

About 500 yards down the road, we heard a strange humming noise. Disoriented, I looked around to locate the origin of the sound. To my right I saw the water treatment plant and for a moment found myself transfixed watching the water circulate in the large cement container. This wasn't the origin of the sound, however; the sound was coming from the sky.

Hovering just 20 feet above us was an oval-shaped silver object with a smooth, metallic skin. It had no seams, screws, or any clues of construction. In awe, my mind raced to understand what I was seeing. I felt no fear, and my consciousness was fully locked on the object in a timeless state. When the hypnotic hold subsided, I looked around to find that my friend was far away at the end of the road. She was running fast, and a wave of terror rushed over me. I ran after her, leaving the silver UFO hovering in place.

That event changed my perception of reality. I stopped eating meat and began having prophetic and apocalyptic dreams. I felt I had a mission, a purpose, and I spent the next decade developing a spiritual practice and searching for answers. Who am I? What am I supposed to do? How can I help others?

Who or what are *they*? Over the years I've had many more encounters. I've explored energy and healing practices and have learned to trust my intuition and inner knowing.

In 2012 I underwent training to become a Forensic Artist working for Law Enforcement. It was a way that I could use my talents as an artist to support others, and it equipped me with a broad skill set for documenting people's memories. 2012 was

also the year that I began receiving dreams with unfamiliar symbols. Each time the dreams began I felt my consciousness shift into a hyper-focused state and somehow knew it was from *them*. The dreams were downloads presented in a slideshow format—beginning slowly and exponentially speeding up. Thousands of symbols would flood my consciousness during each of these sessions. They felt significant and recurred for years, but the dreams always took me by surprise, and I was unable to document detailed memories of them at the time.

In 2020, when many of us had the opportunity to go within, I decided it was time to explore intentional ways to document what I was shown. After much self-doubt and frustration, a good friend, artist, and fellow experiencer said, "Cynthia it's all inside you. It's an energetic, you just have to get out of the way and begin." Those words unlocked a resistance within me, and I felt I finally had the permission I needed to dive into this mysterious unknown territory. This marked the beginning of my *Sacred Geometry Soul Work* series.

After writing down what I remembered of the strange symbols, the dreams not only returned, but evolved into complicated geometric forms that required study. I began educating myself about sacred geometry and documented each dream. At one point I realized that while the world was falling apart and fear was palpable, the practice of drawing and painting these geometries shifted that fear into joy and love. It was becoming apparent that these ancient geometries and strange symbols transformed energy and shifted emotion.

Much like my work as a Forensic Artist documenting other people's memories, this evolving body of art represents my best effort at stepping out of the way and documenting these mysterious, cosmic dreams while contemplating what a wonder this life is.

Clients have shared that they use my *Sacred Geometry Soul Work* art in their meditation practice, and many pieces are displayed in healing centers. I am grateful to be able to share the gifts of my spiritually transformative experiences with my community.

To view Cynthia's artwork, please visit:

Website: <http://cynthiamarsh.fineaw.com> or

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cmarshstudio/>

Cynthia can be reached at: cmarshstudio@gmail.com



Aidan's Story

Walt Scotson, IANDS Volunteer Coordinator

My son, Levi, and my daughter-in-law, Sarah, have always wanted a large family. When they began that large family it became apparent that Sarah was not the most perfect baby maker. During her first pregnancy she developed preeclampsia and struggled with high blood pressure early on. The first pregnancy resulted in their first child, Aidan, being born nine weeks premature, weighing in at 2 lbs 15 oz. He could fit in the palm of his father's hand. When I was informed of the need to take the baby early because of preeclampsia, I went to hours of earnest prayer. During that prayer I felt God spoke to me and said, "Pray that the baby's internal organs will be fully mature upon his birth." He told me to have others pray likewise. I did that. Levi reported to me that when the baby was born they did an immediate Apgar reading followed by a second 20 minutes later. It's my understanding that is standard practice for all newborns. The NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) nurse said to my son, "I've done a lot of Apgar scores in my day, but this is simply amazing, I've never had a baby score a 10, and yet this little preemie just scored a 10 on both tests. It's as though his internal organs are fully mature!" It appears prayers were answered. After a miscarriage following Aidan, Sarah would go on to have four beautiful babies all born premature because of preeclampsia.

Both my son and daughter-in-law wanted one more child, but things did not go according to plan. Sarah had four more miscarriages, so they quit trying for a while. Unexpectedly, she became pregnant once again and seemed to be having a very normal pregnancy—well, for her, anyway. They were all excited that this pregnancy would bring them their last child. They were monitoring the baby's progress daily. She was five months along, and everything was right on schedule. They planned a gender reveal and name party for the next weekend. Thursday morning, they could not find a heartbeat. Sarah went to the hospital where they did

an ultrasound and discovered the baby was no longer viable. The baby had died. When the stillborn baby was delivered it was discovered that he had four wraps of the umbilical cord around his neck. Very unusual, the doctor said.

I've had a lot of experience and have done hours of study on NDEs and related subjects. I am convinced that all life is preplanned, and we are born, die, and are born again in a process of growing in wisdom and understanding that the most important thing in life is "love." Learning to love more and be more other-centered, self-giving of that love. Every life experience is designed for our learning and growth. In the face of

the tragic loss of what would have been my ninth grandchild, I found myself crying out to source/God to please show me what the lesson/lessons are here in this perceived tragedy. What are we supposed to learn in the midst of this grief? All I could think of was maybe Levi and Sarah were supposed to heal through the process and then be able to help other couples who have lost a child. Then out of nowhere, in my right ear, so distinctly I actually turned, I heard in a child's voice, "My mommy would not have survived the pregnancy." Was I actually hearing my grandson from across the veil telling me that he had chosen not to be born so that his mother could



The Scotson family

survive to be mother to his four siblings and wife to his daddy? Based upon my experience and training, yes. That is exactly what had just happened. I felt I should talk with Levi and Sarah and share my experience. I called and told Sarah what I had experienced, and she said, "Do you know the story behind the baby's name?" I responded, "No, not really." She proceeded to remind me how much she and Levi love their Irish/ Scottish/ Celtic heritage. They named their first child Aidan, second Keela, third Tristan after a Knight of the Round Table, and their fourth Guenivier. Sarah told me this baby was to be named Dagonet, pronounced Dagney.

Besides loving Celtic names, Levi and Sarah had gone to the movie *King Arthur* sometime between the birth of their second and third child. In the movie they had learned of a knight who was Sir Lancelot's favorite, his dearest friend. In the movie near the end, Lancelot and his knights were rescuing the inhabitants of a small village when the Dark Knight and his evil band came charging across a frozen lake to kill and plunder the villagers. Lancelot ordered his men to shoot their arrows out into the frozen lake in an effort to break the ice and cause the Dark Knight and his horde to drown. This plan did not work, so Dagonet jumped on his horse and rode out onto the ice and began chopping with his battle ax, resulting in the ice breaking and drowning the Dark Knight and his evil horde—along with Dagonet. Dagonet was the hero of the story as he gave his life for that of the villagers. Sarah was weeping as she told me the story because she felt that her Dagonet had just confirmed he had given his life so his mommy could live.

This story would be fantastic enough if that were all that there is, but there is more. Aidan, Levi and Sarah's first, as I described earlier, was quite premature. I spent many hours praying for the wellbeing of my new grandson during the first hours, days, and weeks, following his arrival. Aidan did so exceptionally well in the NICU that he was able to come home early. Aidan walked early and talked early, both of which are unusual for a preemie. When Aidan was between two and three years old, his daddy was reading to him from a children's Bible story book. When they came to a picture of Jesus, Levi told Aidan, "This is Jesus." Aidan replied, "I know, I saw him. He was in the NICU with Papa Walt when I was born." Levi was so shocked, he called me and told me the whole story. We were all shocked and amazed by what Aidan had said. As I pondered this experience, I was not really surprised Aidan saw Jesus, but why / how did he see me at the same time? The only thing I can figure out is that because I was fervently praying, somehow my spiritual presence was in the NICU with Aidan, and he could see it.

In the ensuing years as Sarah would become pregnant, Aidan would diligently pray for the babies in Mommy's tummy. He would talk to them each night at bedtime and tell them how excited he was to see them and how much he loved them. As Sarah began to have miscarriages Aidan would report that the babies had come to him at night and would talk to him and tell him they missed him and loved him. Aidan would relate to his mom and dad the baby's sex and names. This phenomenon continued through the births and miscarriages that Sarah would experience over the next six years. Shortly after the stillbirth of Dagonet, Aidan reported that mommy's babies had come to visit him again and this time Dagonet was with them. Sarah, still dealing with the trauma of having lost Dagonet, asked Aidan, "Ask Dagonet what would have happened to mommy if he had been born?" Aidan responded, "I can't ask him now; he's playing." Sarah replied, "No, not right now, I mean the next time you talk to him." Aidan said, "Oh, ok." The following day Aidan came to his mom and said, "I talked to Dagonet last night and he said you would have had a blood clot go to your heart and brain." As far as I know, 10-year-old Aidan does not know that one of the risks of preeclampsia is high blood pressure and blood clots.

Blessings Always and All Ways, Walt

PS. Aidan still talks to Dagonet and his other brothers and sisters on the other side of the veil, all the time, usually at night in bed.

Addendum: The family just found out that a mutual friend of Sarah's had shared this information about Dagonet along with a picture of his tiny feet, with a young lady who was pregnant out of wedlock. She was at just the same time in her pregnancy and was considering an abortion. After hearing the story and seeing the tiny perfectly formed little feet, she decided to keep the baby and accept the offers of love and support her family had been offering. It seems that Dagonet's sacrifice has now saved two lives!



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