

THIS I KNOW

by Paul Carr

When I was a boy, something happened to me that was very much related to the near death experience I would have as an adult. I was an 11 year old cub scout camping out with other scouts at the Green River Gorge, a few miles from Black Diamond in Washington state. After a meal, a group of us started walking down the trail to the river 80 feet below, where we could wash our cooking gear. I'd gone only a short distance when a fork dropped from my pack onto a ledge five feet below me. Seeing a small nearby tree that grew from the face of the cliff, I tested it, then swung down to the ledge, and picked up my fork. I did not re-test the tree when I swung back on it to return to the trail. I never made it, since the tree pulled out from the cliff. Now falling, and still holding onto the tree, there was a moment when time suddenly slowed. In that instant I heard a commanding but loving voice say clearly, "Kick the tree away." It was the type of moment and the type of voice where I did as I was told immediately. There was no room for thinking. Looking up from the floor of the gorge, 75 feet below, three of my friends noticed something quite interesting happen: that when I kicked the tree, my trajectory was slightly altered. It wasn't much, but it was enough that instead of landing on some large rocks, I landed butt first in this huge blackberry bush, 10 to 12 feet high. Straight back. I never did touch the ground, and had to be cut out. The tree, on the other hand, did land on the rocks. Later, when I asked my friends if they'd heard the voice, none of them indicated that they had. But I did receive some funny looks. So I told no one else about this incident except my mother. I never forgot this incident and was convinced that somebody up there really cared about me.

Seventeen years later, on January 30, 1970, I was wheeled into Mercy Hospital in Sacramento, California, with an apparent paralysis of my body from the waist down. This was the result of a fall in my kitchen while cooking a late breakfast for my two boys and my mother. When I arrived, the staff felt they could do nothing until my doctor returned from out of town the following day. They made me comfortable and, at my request, fed me a big meal in the afternoon. After several hours, my stomach became extremely painful and began to swell (it finally looked like a basketball) and I began going into shock. This condition worsened until I started losing consciousness. No one could figure out what was happening, but in order to do something I was rolled into an examination room, and three doctors were found to try to help me. As they attempted to examine me, all my vital signs stopped.

What I recollect is that as my condition worsened, I felt myself sinking, falling away. And then suddenly, all of that disappeared. I was spinning sideways through a dark, spiraling kind of tunnel. It had to have had a fairly large diameter, because I have a claustrophobic sensitivity, and I experienced none of that there. I went through this towards a light at the end of it, that was very bright. Things like light shafts went whizzing past, and as I neared the light this incredible feeling came over me that everything was PERFECT. I have never felt so peaceful before or sense, ever. When I entered the light I suddenly became aware that I was in the presence of a being. And when he began to speak, I recall very distinctly thinking "Oh, it's you!", because I instantly recognized the timbre and tone of the voice. It was the same voice I had heard when I fell into the gorge as a boy. I never did "see" this being. I was aware only of his tremendous energy, and his voice. But if I was going to associate a body with that voice it would be a human male, a fairly authoritative looking figure, because that's how he sounded. Not authoritative in a stern way, but in the sense that whatever it said was exactly right. It wasn't unambiguous about anything. If it said something, that was it, because it simply "knew" it, not because it was saying "It has to be this way." Understand that none of our communication happened at a verbal level, since I heard this internally. This being I have always thought of as "The Greeter", not the voice of God, but a voice from There, a Messenger.

We had a brief discussion of my life. This review was not a recitation of "good" and "bad" events; it was more in the nature of a synopsis of my life so far that was non-judgmental. The purpose of this was so that I could see that I hadn't accomplished what I had come to do, and that apparently I had helped set up. There was, it seemed, a reason, or as he made clear to me, at least two reasons for my physical existence. One involved raising my eldest son, who had some health problems, and who really needed me to stay if he was to become a functioning adult. The other missing element of my life was that I had never had a real loving relationship with somebody. I was raised basically in a single parent home. Then I had been married for nine years in a pretty unhealthy marriage and had been separated 20 days when this accident happened. So I didn't really have any idea of what it was like to love somebody, and have them love you back on a one to one basis in a healthy, everyday way.

Now it seemed that I had already gone around a couple "bends" in this tunnel, from left to right, and I had the sense that if I went around a few more, that I wouldn't be able to go back. The being gave me the choice to stay where I was. And he made it clear it would be okay to do this. There was a kind of "glow" in this portion of the tunnel, and for the first time since I could recall I was completely happy. I was warm. I was safe. I didn't have any problems any more, which besides my recent separation, included being up to my eyeballs in debt, and at that point raising two pretty disturbed little boys. Here it was wonderful. I really wanted to keep going down the tunnel. On the other hand, if I returned to earth, I would be able to finish raising this one son. And somehow I would have that relationship. What he presented me was very much my choice--there was absolutely no coercion in either direction that I can recall. And I made my choice. The next thing I knew I had somehow "jumped" to the upper corner of the examination room.

Below me, one doctor was bent over my physical body; the other two were trying to get some kind of machinery into the room. They all seemed very panicky and frustrated (though I viewed it all with a certain amount of amused detachment). Then they started talking about whether or not to cut me open, and then cut open my stomach to "take a look". And I remember sending them a very strong impression that said "Don't cut me open!!" They must have gotten that, because when I talked to a doctor the next day, he told me that they still were trying to figure out which one of them said "Don't cut him open." Suddenly I felt like I sort of compressed into a beam of energy, and shot right back down through my chest, and then expanded up into everything.

That was 22 years ago. I was able to raise the son in question, and he's grown to become a very intelligent, very caring guy. And I got the other part of the deal as well. A few years after my NDE I met a woman, a person who I not only love but like, who I've been married to for over 20 years.

We can discuss near-death experiences more openly now, and doing so has helped me to understand more of what happened to me, and what I am. These things I know unshakably: Life goes on beyond our bodies, and beyond this time and place in space. There is a "there" there, and it is for everybody--not just for the members of whatever club or tribe we happen to belong to. My new sense that comes from my NDE is of our interconnectedness, that there may be as many religions on earth as there are people, and that they may all be right. There's a lot of different compartments on this train we're on, but we're all taking the ride together. Most importantly I know that a greater entity/being/presence loves us all.