



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH, INC.

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THE A.I.P.R. NEWS

Ouija Board 'Blowback' by Colin Mitchell

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A woman and three young boys got more than they bargained for when they used a Ouija board for a bit of fun on Saturday evening May 5, 2007. Following some disturbing experiences the woman contacted Robb Tilley of the AIPR in Sydney. Robb referred her to me as they live in suburban Adelaide. I interviewed her and the boys. The following account is a condensed version of my report (real names are not used).

Anna and her two sons Greg (aged 13) and Tom (aged 11) together with another teenage boy Robert (aged 16) decided to use a Ouija board on the occasion of Greg's birthday in the grounds of their local Primary School just after sunset. During the session Anna and Robert both "picked up" the idea of a boy about 6 or 7 years old who had been involved in a hit and run accident. They got the name "Ethen" for the boy, but Anna cannot remember whether the board spelled out the name or whether they just thought of it. The details of the session are not remembered clearly. During the session they also asked for some specific noises and these then occurred, not straight away but after some delay. They in-

cluded clanging metal, a bang from the tin roof of the school and a car backfiring from the street. They also heard noises like a kid screaming, a child's laughter and a child crying. After about half an hour they finished the session, but according to Anna did not "close the board down properly."

When they then went for a walk across the school oval, one of the boys said that

"They all saw a dark figure walking across the oval"

there was someone in the school grounds. They all saw a dark figure walking across the oval some distance away. The figure seemed to be looking towards them but the face was dark and appeared to be "fuzzed out" so that they could not see the face. It walked with a bouncing up and down gait with the arms held in an unusual way, hanging down like an ape's. They thought it was a boy about 12-15 years old. To Anna it appeared he was wearing 1970s or 1980s type dark clothing. She did not get the feeling of an evil presence, but felt that he was depressed or even suicidal. The figure faded away and disappeared. It was a somewhat frightening experience

but they dismissed it afterwards as possibly their minds playing tricks on them. That could be the case but Robb Tilley's comment is that denial is often a first reaction after seeing a ghost or apparition.

They then headed towards the main township intending to go to a cemetery at a church there which was across the other side of a main road. They walked through a huge area of vacant land to do so, and about half way across Anna had an overwhelming experience. She

experienced what she called a "premonition" that one of her boys would be killed in a hit and run accident at the main road that very night. She had a realistic and vivid vision of a child lying on the road with a blanket over him and herself frozen on the spot, shaking and in tears and unable to move on the side of the road. It was pitch black and then there was an ambulance with flashing lights as Anna and Robert were carrying the body off the road. It was quite terrifying and Robert said that he also experienced part of a similar vision. Anna thought that the child involved was Greg. Robert thought that it was Tom. (cont'd page 2)

At My Desk

For many parapsychologists and psi enthusiasts, the word *skepticism* is a dirty word. Parapsychologist Adrian Parker once wrote about **the good, the bad, and the ugly in parapsychology**. He argued that too much funding for psi research was going to skeptics—many with the wrong (anti-psi) attitude. I want to take his point further. There are good skeptics and there are bad skeptics. Some I know personally (the good ones, that is), and I admire them and their work. But there are others in positions of authority who don't want parapsychology in their universities, and they make it so. These are the bad skeptics—they let personal ideology and prejudice get in the way of all that is fair and proper in academia. However, they deny this—they toss around jargon like **accountability** and **research restructuring** to rid themselves of parapsychology—they've been doing it since the mid-20th Century. It all smacks of hypocrisy to me, and here's why. If you argue that universities have to **'think corporate'** to survive, then you don't rid yourself of productive researchers, even if they study psi and nothing else. Every parapsychologist I know functions in exactly the same way as any other responsible university scholar—psi researchers attract funding; they write parapsychological papers for peer-reviewed journals; they publish books on psi. All this helps fill university coffers. If the kind of skepticism I'm talking about is not blatant hypocrisy in disguise, I don't know what is. The **UPSHOT** of all of this? Academia needs a major shot in the arm. Until things change, it will be an unending struggle for us. ♣

* * *

Got something to say about parapsychology or the paranormal? Submit your contribution to:

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or e-mail me at:
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Enjoy this second issue of
The A.I.P.R. News!

—Lance Storm

Ouija Board 'Blowback' (cont'd from page 1)

There was a strong sense of urgency about Anna's vision and a strong sense of knowing with certainty that it would happen that night if they went over the road.

Shaken, Anna attempted to make all of them promise that they were not going to cross the main road, but Greg, who is headstrong and difficult to control, refused to give a definite undertaking that he would not.

They continued walking in the same direction, intending to return home before reaching the main road, and found themselves before a barbed wire fence which they had to climb over. Anna had checked her watch shortly before—it was 7:00 pm. They climbed over the fence and took a few steps the other side. Anna looked at her watch again and it now read 8:00 pm. Suddenly the scenery seemed to have completely changed and they were back in the area where they had started from, in the other direction from the main road and quite some distance from where they thought they had been. They were in an unfamiliar street, but managed to find their way home. On getting home to a worried husband they said the Lord's Prayer together (although they are not religious) and Anna made them use the Ouija board again so that they could close it down properly.

The following Sunday morning they went back to try and retrace their steps, but could not find the fence they had climbed over the night before in the vacant land at the position they thought they had reached. However, they did find what they said were their footprints in the dirt at this spot and the prints matched all their shoes. However, the prints did not seem to go anywhere. Anna also felt that the field had been so muddy on the night (there was mud on their shoes when

they got back) that it could not have dried out overnight, yet the field was now not muddy. She wondered whether they had been transported back to an earlier time period due to a number of anomalies in the appearance of their surroundings while crossing the field on the Saturday night. She was also perplexed by the apparent one hour missing time.

During the walk on Sunday Tom walked ahead of them acting strangely, swinging his arms and humming and staggering like he was drunk. He went pale and almost collapsed, saying he was not feeling well. He continued to be unwell for a couple of days afterwards.

It seemed as though on Satur-

“Anna may have had an hallucinatory experience”

day night they had been transported somehow in a direction away from the main road following the experience of the “premonition.” A non-paranormal explanation could be that they had become disorientated and walked back in that direction themselves. But they themselves were certain of the direction they were heading in. However, they could not afterwards find the fence they had climbed over. The fence had felt solid and real on the night.

My comments:

There are possible natural and psychological explanations for all the experiences of Anna and the boys. But the “premonition” experience was an impressive event. And there is a link between the Ouija board session and the premonition—the theme of a hit and run accident occurring to a boy.

A number of possibilities present themselves. One is simply that Anna may have had a hallucinatory experience triggered by a suggestion about a “hit and run accident” from the Ouija board session.

Another explanation that would involve psi could be that Anna had a true (precognitive) premonition of an accident occurring to her child that night and the first manifestation of that premonition was the message from the Ouija board session—caused by herself. Did Anna have a true premonition that enabled her to avoid tragedy by acting on her precognitive vision? And was there some kind of translocation in time and space that helped out?

Another explanation that would involve the spirit hypothesis could be that an actual spirit involved in a past hit and run accident came through during the session and then triggered Anna's later vision in the field. Anna said later that

although she had assumed the child in her vision was her own at the

time, she never saw the actual body because it was covered by a blanket.

There was apparent translocation and missing time. It is possible Anna misread her watch (although she is adamant she did not). If not, then could they have walked unconsciously for an hour in what seemed like a few minutes? Robert says they all went quiet after they had climbed over the fence. But they were all surprised when they ended up back at the housing estate they had started from. The fence almost seems like a symbolic “barrier” that they crossed in both time and space. “Missing time” is a phenomenon (occurring often in UFO abduction experiences) that remains to be explained, whether in natural/psychological terms or paranormal terms.

I have experimented with the Ouija board myself about a dozen times with various people in various settings and have never myself had any untoward effects or unusual or interesting experiences—on the contrary I have so far found it tedious and

The Weird and the Wonderful by Hannah Jenkins

the “messages” nonsensical, banal and unimpressive. However, it is certainly true that some people experience strong reactions and can have frightening and unusual experiences as a result. Psychologically vulnerable people and young children should not use the Ouija board. Robb Tilley (AIPR) warns that young children can become psychologically disturbed from Ouija board sessions. The Ouija board can act as a channel for evoking the unconscious and this may have negative results for some. And as we have seen from the experiences of Anna and co, unusual, interesting and frightening experiences can result.

As to whether psi or other paranormal phenomena can result, that is an open question. Whether spirits exist and, if so, whether they can communicate through the Ouija board, is also an open question. Ψ

The paranormal is the place we put things that don't fit anywhere else. It is a limbo land for events that we don't quite get, but we think are real. For me that makes the paranormal exciting, enticing and fascinating; above all, the evidence for the paranormal provides us with a puzzle to solve. That's what makes it weird and wonderful.

What connects me and you out there is a mutual interest in these elusive anomalous events—all those crazy, unexplained occurrences screaming out for some kind of assessment and explanation. I just love it. I feel sad for those who think it can all be explained by fraud or fluke. Of course, some phenomena can be attributed to fraud or coincidence for sure. But *all* of it? *Every single* instance of apparent anomalous communication,

anomalous action at a distance, every UFO sighting or spooky experience across all times and cultures? *Really???* I think not. If one is acquainted with the evidence it is hard to conceive of how much fraud must be postulated in order to account for all the events associated with the paranormal.

“the paranormal is defined by the limits of what is conceived as plausible”

The challenge is to come to terms with the strangeness of the phenomena and to approach the explanation of the phenomena rationally and with as little assumed about its apparent anomalousness as possible. Fraud cannot be automatically ascribed as an explanation without further justification or else the explanation is too credulous. The persistent and continually renewed body of evidence for paranormal

events that can't readily be accounted for indicates that there are anomalous phenomena that require further explanation of some sort.

It helps to realise that the paranormal is defined by the limits of what is conceived as plausible and to do this it is important to put the history of the explanation of the phenomena into perspective. One major issue to bear in mind is that

science is not a stagnant set of fixed rules. Far from it. Scientific certainties and theories change and develop over time.

A key to solving the paranormal puzzle is to realise that the limits of what is considered explainable by science today were forged during a different era. The modern world view was first formed at a time when both natural and supernatural categories were available. This



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The *Australian Journal of Parapsychology* features research articles on ESP (extra-sensory perception), PK (psychokinesis), and the afterlife.

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(see page 4)

The Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research is a non-profit community association. Based in Sydney but with a world-wide membership base, it was established in 1977. The aims of the organisation are:

- To collect, assess and disseminate factual information about claims of psychic (paranormal) phenomena.
- To support and encourage parapsychology (the scientific study of paranormal phenomena).
- To undertake or promote activities (e.g., fundraising, social activities, etc.) in support of the above.

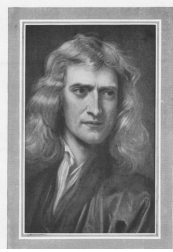
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- Apparitions, ghosts and hauntings
- Out of body experiences
- Near-death experiences
- The human aura

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The Weird and the Wonderful (cont'd from page 3)

was back when Newton was nutting out the laws of gravity. He was doing a few other things too, like trying to find the philosopher's stone in his alchemy lab, and predicting the exact date of the apocalypse (2060 in case you need to start hoarding those cans). The main thing he was doing was helping to determine what science explained and what was left to the dominant religions of the time, especially when it came to things like action at a distance. God, it was thought then, existed in an intangible non-physical realm and set the mechanisms of the natural world in motion, the explanation of which was the duty of science.



Sir Isaac Newton
[SOURCE: Wikimedia Commons]

Today we are presented with a different scenario. Whatever

your private views on religion, mainstream science does not recognise the supernatural category as a valid category of explanation or as an integral part of human attempts to explain phenomena. The scope and limits of scientific explanation were thus set under a different world view to the one that obtains in scientific circles today. Consequently phenomena that were previously considered supernatural are beyond the explanatory scope of current science and hence considered paranormal.

This explanatory history suggests to me that explanation of paranormal phenomena is best undertaken by reconsidering the limits and scope of scientific explanation. I think that this is key to coming to grips with how best to proceed to explain paranormal events that can't readily be accounted for once fraud or coincidence has been excluded as plausible.

It is also very important that if one has private views about

religion or atheism, and one engages with public assessment of the paranormal, then the beliefs that inform the assessment should be placed out the front, on the porch, or, even better, in big letters on a billboard for everyone to see where you're coming from. Too much discussion about the paranormal is carried out in the mainstream without recognising that these private views will impact on the assessment of the phenomena because of the explanatory history of the phenomena.

So saying, I guess I'd best state mine here for the record, right up front before we go any further. *Yes*, I think that some evidence can't currently be accounted for by fraud or fluke or flaky investigations and therefore there are genuinely anomalous phenomena in need of an explanation. And *no*, I don't think that religious explanations for the phenomena are relevant; the mundane nature of much of the phenomena in question indicates to me that

science is the best place to look for an explanation. And finally because I think the explanatory history has informed the current status of the phenomena, *yes*, I think that science needs to be revised in order to find a way to adapt and adopt theories that can plausibly account for the anomalous phenomena. And since I am in 'fessing-up' mode, I'll take this opportunity to lay my other cards on the table. I am a monist in the sense that I think there is one thing, energy, in the universe and it is best informed by philosophical analysis and investigated across scientific disciplines. However, I think our knowledge of the form of its existence, and how it works, is miniscule.

There is much more to discover. It is most appropriate to let rational assessment of the evidence and explanatory options guide our assessment of the paranormal. There's heaps to do. It is a weird and wonderful world and there's much to explore.

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