

Nigel Buckmaster

The Psi Encyclopedia exists largely thanks to the generosity of Nigel Buckmaster (1918-2010), who willed a sum of money to the Society for Psychical Research with instructions to publish works that would make the evidence for psi and survival phenomena better known. Buckmaster became interested in the subject after he and his sister, in their separate homes in London, experienced synchronous anomalous experiences at the time of the death of their mother in 1966. He related the event to the Society, which published a report in its Journal the following year. The report is given in full here. Titled 'Two Synchronous Experiences Connected with a Death', it consists of Buckmaster's 1966 statement, a supporting statement by his sister, and comment by the author of the report GW Lambert. (The report refers to Buckmaster by the pseudonym 'Peter Davidson'.)

Nigel Buckmaster's Statement

I come from a family of five children. I am the only son with two older sisters and two younger. My eldest sister Constance is in her early fifties and I am in my late forties.

My father died on the 29 August, 1965 and my mother suffered a coronary thrombosis some weeks later and was taken from her Kensington flat to the local hospital. She recovered sufficiently well to return to her flat in December and my eldest sister Constance moved in to look after her.

Early in 1966, my mother had another coronary and was re-admitted to the local hospital where she died on 20th February, 1966 at 'just before 3 a.m.' (Originally the hospital gave me the time of death as 3.30 a.m. but after I had the experience related below I asked the hospital chaplain to find out for me the exact time of death, and after he made enquiries from the night nursing staff he told me that it was just before 3 a.m.)

I live in a flat a few miles from my mother's Kensington flat—in Knightsbridge. In the early hours of the morning of the 22nd February, 1966 (48 hours after my mother's death)—I woke up to find myself in a state of what I presume is called a trance. I was lying in bed on my back in a sleep-like conscious state. I did not (or could not?) move. I was breathing heavily—pantingly—with effort. (I thought/ felt 'this is what my mother experienced at the time of her death'). The thing that impressed me most was the heavy, thump-thump beat of my heart—it was so loud that the beats were thumping in my eardrums.

Mentally I saw a television screen and I immediately thought 'I am now going to see my mother and father together or a message in pictorial form'. I was greatly disappointed when I only saw some female nut brown hair coming out of the TV screen, in the bottom right hand corner. Again, I thought this is not my mother's hair—hers was black going grey and very long. This was short and curly. I reached out to grasp and pull the hair towards me. Instead of the hair coming towards me it

literally pulled me head first through the TV screen. The moment I went through the screen my heart stopped beating and I no longer had to breathe. I literally floated through. I had an instant glimpse of a golden yellow light above me. Apart from this I cannot recall seeing or hearing anything after passing through the screen. (I have tried to remember but cannot do so—I was then virtually unconscious and have no reckoning as to the lapse of time). I do remember thinking—this (communication?) is so easy—I must do it again.

The next thing I knew I was lying in my bed and felt my heart coming to life again—only with a difference. My heart felt burning hot with love and joy—words cannot describe it. I felt my heart being filled with liquid divine love—an exquisitely heavenly experience. I was now fully conscious and breathing quite normally with my eyes still closed. I no longer heard my heart-beats. During this state of ecstasy I saw a number of scenes of places of my childhood days— very rapidly—one of these was a vision of my four sisters and myself sitting round our dining room table 37 to 40 years ago but the chairs at the two ends of the table, where my mother and father sat were empty—to my regret. I also saw the letter 5. Finally, I had a quick flash of seeing a policeman walking towards me and I was lying in a gutter opposite Kensington High Street underground station. (My mother was knocked down by a car on the pedestrian crossing at Ken. High St. Station some ?? years ago when she was 74.)

I then opened my eyes and saw a luminous cloud about 18 inches or so from my face. I hoped it would form into my mother's face but it just seemed to disappear.

I switched on the bed light and looked at my watch, it was 2.55 a.m. I felt a very strong urge to go over immediately to the Kensington flat to my sister Constance. It was so strong I got out of bed to get dressed. On reflection I realised how absurd it would be to waken her at that hour of the morning and then went back to bed. As I lay in bed I pictured a slum street scene with 'God is Love' chalked on a wall and for the first time in my life I realised the truth and deeper meaning of this phrase. I felt so elated (with a feeling of enormous power) that had I been sentenced to death I would have gone to my execution with joy in my heart and welcomed life in spirit.

The following morning I told my wife about my marvellous experience—I was still feeling enormously elated. My feelings of sadness about my mother had completely gone—somehow and I could not think why or how, I felt blissfully happy about her. My younger sister Rhona called in to see me and I told her about it. We decided to go over together to visit Constance at the Kensington flat.

When we got over to the Kensington flat we found that my youngest sister, Lily, and her husband had called in and Constance had already told them of an experience she had had in the early hours of that morning. (Up to this time neither Constance or I had any knowledge about each other's experience and we had both related the details to other persons before this meeting.)

Constance's experience was as follows: She had been very unhappy the previous evening, alone in the flat—crying and reproaching herself. She took a strong sleeping tablet and went to bed about midnight— this usually makes her sleep

heavily and soundly. She was woken up by having her head or hair pulled and then heard our mother's voice speaking—she heard the message, opened her eyes but could see nothing in the room. She then called out 'Mummy, darling' and my mother repeated the message, only much louder this time, and with more emphasis on the 'anything'. This was as follows:

Nobody need reproach themselves for anything. All my children have been wonderful.

The voice did not seem to come from any particular direction but went right through the flat.

She said it sounded like our mother's voice when she was much younger, perhaps 30 or 40 years ago. It was very strong and clear.

Constance then switched on her light and looked at her watch it said 3 a.m. (but she told me that this could have been 4 or 5 minutes fast). Something made her write down the message immediately.

Constance did not shed any more tears and was of course overjoyed. She felt happy right through the funeral and showed no emotion which I am sure she would have done had it not been for this experience.

My feeling of ecstasy lasted for 10 to 14 days, fading away very gradually. It has left me with a very happy feeling about my experience, an absolute conviction of survival of the human personality, an awareness and a strong desire to be a better and more loving person than I was before I had the experience.

Statement by Mrs Constance Edwards (née Buckmaster) - sister of Nigel Buckmaster

The following is a true account of my experience on the night of 21st/22nd February 1966:

My mother died in the early hours of February 20th and I continued to live on in her flat where I had nursed her through part of her illness.

During the evening of February' 21st I was alone in the flat and had been going through old letters and diaries belonging to my mother, which naturally saddened me. I was feeling very unhappy and miserable, thinking, as one does on such occasions, that I ought to have done more for my mother and bitterly regretting something I had said to her on one occasion.

Around midnight, feeling sad and extremely weary I took a strong sleeping pill and went to bed. In the early hours of the morning I was suddenly woken up. I felt someone rock my head by tugging at my hair. I immediately heard my mother's voice speaking to me. I was so amazed I just could not believe it. I had heard the message. I called out to her 'Darling, where are you' and sat up in bed. The room was in darkness and I could not see anything. I deliberately called out to her hoping she would speak to me again to make sure I had not been dreaming or deluding

myself. My mother then repeated the message, only this time it seemed much louder, when she said: 'Nobody need reproach themselves for anything. All my children have been wonderful.' Her voice was so strong it reminded me of the way she used to speak when she was in her thirties or forties. I quickly switched on the light hoping that I might see her—but of course I didn't.

I knew I had to write down the message straight away lest I should forget it or think it was a dream. I wrote out the message. It was then 3 a.m. I lay there for a little while feeling rather stunned but blissfully happy. I longed for the morning to tell the family although I feared that they might not believe me. I then fell into a deep peaceful sleep.

The following morning my youngest sister, Lily and her husband, James called in early for coffee and I told them exactly what had happened. Shortly afterwards, whilst they were still in the flat, my brother Peter called in with another sister, Rhona. We then both learned for the first time about each other's experiences of that morning. I was stunned, yet relieved, as it was in a way a sort of corroboration of my experience. My brother was also pleased for the same reason.

My sister Lily and brother-in-law James (Cmdr. & Mrs. J. Bell R.N.) can confirm that the details given above are a truthful account as far as their part in it is concerned.

Constance Edwards (Signed)

Confirmation [partial] of Statement II

We are the brother-in-law and sister respectively of the writer of Statement II above, and confirm the details so far as we are concerned, notably, that we learned about Mrs Edwards' experience before we heard about Nigel Buckmaster's experience.

J. Bell. .. Cmdr. R.N.

Lily Bell ... Wife of above

Comment by GW Lambert

Mr Nigel Buckmaster has been interviewed by the writer of this report. Before this experience he was not interested in psychical research, and is sure he had never read any literature on 'out-of-the-body' experiences or 'crisis dreams'. His wife had a copy of the two-volume edition of Human Personality by FWH Myers, but nothing by Muldoon and Carrington or Prof. JH Whiteman. It is therefore interesting to compare the description of the onset of the experience in paragraph 5 of Statement I with the following passage in Professor Whiteman's description of the onset of a 'separation' experience given by him.

I seemed to be awake in bed ... Alongside I perceived, in a startling flash, a human head, turned away so that chiefly the back of it was seen, the person being instinctively named within me as myself ... I reached out with a hand (in the separated state) in an endeavour to confirm or refute this presence. For a

few moments I was conscious of the warm feel of the head and hair, being too startled however to see anything further. On becoming able to see again, the person was no longer there.^[1]

For 'the glimpse of a golden yellow light above me' compare Prof. Whiteman's 'general view of sunlight, golden in quality' *ibid.* 264. For the feeling of elation after the experience, see Prof. Whiteman, *passim*. For two or more experiences in different places apparently connected with the same crisis and death, see the 'La Plata' case and cases cited therein.^[2]

As in the case now under consideration the death was already known to both percipients, it may be thought that each experience was the natural result of grief, and a mere reflection in dramatic form of some reassurance for which there was a strong subconscious wish. The first night's sleep following the announcement of the death may in each case have brought about a psycho-physical condition conducive to such an emotional release.

But such an explanation would hardly account for two curious features :

(1) the close coincidence in time of the two experiences;

(2) the remarkable similarity of the Buckmaster and 'Whiteman' experiences, as described above, indicating in the case of the former, that it was an incipient out-of-the-body experience, not a mere dream.

Literature

Lambert, G.W. (1967). Two Synchronous Experiences Connected with a Death. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 44, 232-37.

Whiteman, J.H. (1935). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 50, 259.

Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Whiteman (1935).

2. ^ Lambert (1961).