

# Felicia Parise

Felicia Parise is an American woman who in the early 1970s taught herself to move small objects by means of psychokinesis and was observed doing so in test conditions. This article is based on a 1993 retrospective description of the episode by Charles Honorton, an American parapsychologist, and a more recent interview by Parise.

## Background

Felicia Parise's first psychic experience was a [crisis impression](#) at age sixteen.<sup>[1]</sup> She had befriended a neighbour's son who had joined the US Air Force, and corresponded frequently with him during his deployment in a distant state. One night she suddenly found herself struggling to breathe, for no apparent reason. She learned later that her friend had choked to death on that same night due to an undiscovered tumour on his trachea.

In the late 1960s, Felicia Parise worked as a medical technician New York's Maimonides Medical Center, in its Department of Special Hematology. A friend volunteered to take part in ESP experiments being carried out there by [Ramakrishna Rao](#), and also put forward Parise's name. Parise scored well at discerning pictures in sealed envelopes and was invited to participate in long-running [experiments on dream telepathy](#) being carried out in the Center's sleep laboratory by parapsychologists [Montague Ullman](#), [Stanley Krippner](#) and [Charles Honorton](#).

In two pilot sessions Parise had no dreams about the information being telepathically 'transmitted' but did experience crisis impressions. In one, she dreamed of a traffic accident on a particular bridge in New York, possibly connected with a friend's motorcycle accident on the bridge the previous night, which she had not known about. On the second night she dreamed of her grandmother sitting unconscious in a pool of blood, and received a phone call the next day informing her that this had indeed happened, though her grandmother was not seriously injured. She then started scoring strongly in dream telepathy, and when her dreaming mind was not occupied with more pressing events, she proved herself one of the program's most successful subjects.<sup>[2]</sup>

In the early 1970s, Ullman and other parapsychologists travelled to Leningrad (now St Petersburg) to observe the psychokinetic abilities of [Ninel Kulagina](#). Parise was present when Ullman presented a film of Kulagina's feats to an audience at Maimonides; inspired, Parise resolved secretly to try to emulate them. As later described by Charles Honorton, she first tried to induce movement by entering a relaxed, meditative-type state. This failed, as did a subsequent attempt to induce a state of anxiety and project it onto the target object. She eventually succeeded, apparently as a result of emotion induced by the impending death of her beloved grandmother: having again tried in vain to move a small pill bottle with her mind, she was called to the hospital and, as she reached to put the bottle away, it moved away from her.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Observation and Testing

After a month's practice the movements had become more frequent and controlled. Parise now wrote to inform Honorton that she could move an alcohol bottle. He visited her house on 13 October 1971.<sup>[4]</sup> In his report he wrote:

The alcohol bottle was actually a small clear plastic medicine bottle (59 mm. high and 34 mm. in diameter), filled approximately one-fourth with denatured alcohol. ... As we arrived in the kitchen, she placed the bottle on the formica countertop, approximately one foot back from the

edge of the counter. She placed her hands on the edge of the counter, then silently looked at the bottle for two to three minutes. At that point she exclaimed that the bottle had moved. I did not see any movement. Parise was silent for another minute or two.

Then the bottle moved one and one-half to two inches to my right and away from her. I then picked up the bottle and examined it carefully to be sure there was no moisture present and nothing attached to it, then replaced it on the counter to see if it would slide by itself. The bottle did not move. Later, Parise again placed her fingers on the edge of the counter. This time the bottle began slowly to move forward and to my right, in a curved trajectory. It stopped and started again three times and finally (after reaching a distance of approximately four and one-half inches from its starting position) reversed direction, returning toward me, and then stopped.<sup>[5]</sup>

Amazed and disbelieving – Parise recalled that he went pale<sup>[6]</sup> – Honorton examined the bottle and attempted to move it without touching it himself. He spent half an hour examining the counter, drawers, and other parts of the kitchen, pressing, jarring, pouring some alcohol from the bottle on the table to help it move, and so on, all to no avail.

In the following months, Parise repeated these actions under his observation. She also learned to deflect the needle of a compass from north. This movement was not disrupted even when Honorton grabbed her hands to see if they concealed magnets or metal that might be affecting the compass.

In March 1972, photographer and amateur magician Norman Moses filmed Parise psychokinetically moving objects that had been placed underneath a fifteen-pound glass bell jar. The objects included an empty pill vial, a pill vial partially filled with water, several small corks, some pieces of twisted aluminium foil, and a pocket compass. She managed to move everything, including the vial with water, which Moses said moved up to ten inches in total. When the foil fragments moved, Moses wrote, they seemed as if they were charged with electricity. The compass needle did a complete revolution.<sup>[7]</sup>

Parise's ability to deflect a compass needle was demonstrated to parapsychologist [J Gaither Pratt](#) in the summer of 1972. She then visited the [Rhine Research Center](#) where Honorton arranged testing. Here she was again successful with the compass and also with attempts to psychically [awaken sedated mice](#), experiments run by Graham and Anita Watkins.<sup>[8]</sup>

To succeed at psychokinesis required Parise to concentrate intensely on the object until all else disappeared, envisioning its movement. Her heartrate, respiration and blood pressure rose significantly (as had been observed in Kulagina). Sometimes she perspired or trembled; her eyes and nose ran, and she was left feeling tired and unable to speak coherently for a short time. She therefore decided to discontinue the demonstrations, drained by the effort and discouraged by having repeatedly to overcome the scepticism of strangers.

## Effects

The Watkins's setup for testing was as follows (in part):

Felicia Parise was located outside the room that contained the experimental setup; she attempted to move a small bottle which she could see through a one-way glass. The bottle was located in the field coil of a metal detector, and packets of film in opaque envelopes were located under the metal detector and at approximately one, two, and three meters distance from it.<sup>[9]</sup>

No results were obtained until a compass was substituted for the bottle and, at Parise's request, the

glass barrier was removed.

When the compass needle began to move, the frequency of the sound generated by the metal detector changed, and then there was a 'total shatter' sound, which the experimenters could only cause the detector to replicate by placing a large metal mass (a two-pound roll of solder) in its coil. The compass needle smoothly moved westward about 15° in two minutes and stayed there.

After fifteen minutes, Parise was asked to walk to a far corner of the room. The compass needle remained stationary and would not move in response to a knife blade or magnet being held close. The compass was then moved away from the point of concentration, upon which the needle gradually returned to north; it reverted to its westerly position when it was brought back. Left in place over about 25 minutes, it gradually returned to north and began responding naturally to the magnet and knife blade. The experimenters noted that they had also observed this approximately thirty-minute 'linger effect' in their mouse experiments.

The film directly under the compass was found to be almost completely exposed and the other film packets partially exposed, in proportion to their distance from the compass. This effect had also been observed in the mouse experiments.

## Advice to Psychokinesis Aspirants

Asked how to perform psychokinesis, Parise answered 'Keep your hands away from it, and believe you can do it. ... I can tell you not to bother if there's any doubt in your mind that this cannot [sic] be done. Because you're defeated already'.<sup>[10]</sup> She notes that heavier objects are not more difficult to influence than light ones except as a psychological barrier, and that, as with any skill, ability improves with practice. In contrast to séance mediums who claimed the involvement of deceased spirits, Parise said she believed she was entirely responsible for the effects.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Criticism

Sceptic author and amateur magician [Martin Gardner](#) stated that 'Felicia Parise thoroughly bamboozled parapsychologist Charles Honorton by using invisible thread stretched between her hands when she pushed a pill bottle across her kitchen counter',<sup>[12]</sup> but offered no evidence for this, nor attempted to explain her successes with compass needles or items inside bell jars.

KM Wehrstein

## Literature

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## Endnotes

### Footnotes

1. ^ Pilkington (2015). All information in this section is drawn from this source except where otherwise noted.
2. ^ Honorton (2015), 64-6.
3. ^ Honorton (2015), 66.
4. ^ Honorton (2015). All information in this section is drawn from this source except where otherwise noted.
5. ^ Honorton (1973), 130-31.
6. ^ Pilkington (2015), 93.
7. ^ This film was accompanied by a letter signed by Moses, reproduced in Honorton (2015), 69-70.
8. ^ Watkins & Watkins (1974).
9. ^ Watkins & Watkins (1974), 132. All information in this section is drawn from this source.
10. ^ Pilkington (2015). All information in this section is drawn from this source.
11. ^ Pilkington (2015), 82-83.
12. ^ Gardner (1996), 384.