

Ryan Hammons (reincarnation case)

Ryan Hammons is an American boy who holds the record for the number of memories of a previous life related before the previous person was identified. Jim Tucker presented the initial report of this case in a 2013 book. Since then it has been studied by other researchers who, while adding new details, have fully confirmed his portrayal and assessment.

Marty Martyn

Marty Martyn was born Morris Kolinsky in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 19 May 1903. His parents were Ukrainian Jews who had then recently immigrated to the United States. He had two sisters, one of whom died young. In the 1920s, he and his surviving sister went to New York City, where he tap-danced on Broadway as Marty Kolinsky.

Later, he moved to Los Angeles, changed his name to Marty Martyn, and tried to make it in the movies. When his acting career failed, he opened a talent agency, the Marty Martyn Agency. This was successful and he became wealthy later in life.

Martyn was a staunch Republican who favoured Chinese restaurants, enjoyed the beach, and had an extensive collection of sunglasses. He owned a large house with an outdoor swimming pool on Roxbury Drive in Beverly Hills. He travelled frequently to New York and on four occasions sailed to Europe on the *Queen Mary* to visit his sister, then living in Paris.

Martyn was married four times, but had only one daughter of his own, with his last wife. He had five step-children, including three boys he adopted when he married the final time. He was stricken with leukaemia and died in hospital on 25 December 1964, of a cerebral haemorrhage, at age 61.^[1]

Ryan Hammons

Late Speaker

Ryan Hammons was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma in 2004, nearly forty years after Martyn's death. His parents, Cyndi and Kevin, were Protestant Christians. Cyndi served as the deputy county clerk; Kevin was a lieutenant in the police department.

Ryan was late speaking due to enlarged adenoids. Adenoids are a mass of lymphatic tissue situated between the back of the nose and the throat; they help protect the body from viruses and bacteria, but if inflamed can hinder breathing and speaking in young children.

When he was four years old, Ryan's adenoids were removed. He then started to speak in complete sentences and soon began to relate memories that ultimately were identified with Marty Martyn.^[2] His first comments concerned three adopted sons to whom he had given his name. He said he was from Hollywood and pleaded with Cyndi to take him there so he could see his 'other family'.

Ryan said that he had a big house with a swimming pool that was located on a street whose name had 'rock' in it. He had owned a green car he would allow no one else to drive. He had liked to go to the beach with his girlfriends. Ryan had a fascination with sunglasses and said that he was often sunburned in the life he remembered.

He said that he had worked for an 'agency' where people changed their names. He also talked a lot about a 'Senator Five', whom he used to see in New York. He did not like Franklin Delano Roosevelt

(a Democrat). He had travelled a lot, had gone to Europe by boat, visited Paris, and seen the Eiffel Tower.

The peak of Ryan's memories came when he was four, but they continued for years thereafter. He would recount his memories in nursery school as well at home. Although he made many comments in response to things he saw and heard during the day, he was especially inclined to tell his tales at bath time before bed. Sometimes he awoke screaming from nightmares, although he could not remember what they were about. Occasionally when he got up, he complained that his chest hurt, and he would gasp for air.

In an effort to help him remember more and perhaps learn to whom he was referring, Cyndi began to borrow books about Hollywood from her local library. Ryan recognized Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe. Then when Cyndi brought home a book that included information about a 1932 movie, *Night After Night*, Ryan spotted a photo of an actor he said was his past self. Unfortunately, this man was an extra in the film. His name was never used and the movie credits did not make clear who he was.

Life in the Movies

In February 2010, Cyndi wrote to [Jim Tucker](#) at the University of Virginia. She listed some of Ryan's statements and included the picture of the extra in *Night After Night* that Ryan had said was his previous incarnation.

A month before he received Cyndi's letter, Tucker had been contacted by a producer for the cable television series *The UneXplained*, expressing interest in documenting his reincarnation research. Tucker told him about Ryan and was sent a camera with which to record his first interview with the boy, which was arranged for April.

Two weeks after Tucker's return from Oklahoma, the show's producers decided to move Ryan's case up their priority list. They identified an actor they believed was the one Ryan recalled having been and flew him to Los Angeles, but he did not recognize any houses connected to this man. He did, however, recognize a house that had belonged to another actor, Wild Bill Elliot, who had appeared in *Night After Night* and who he had previously said was his friend.

It turned out that the production crew had made the identification on the basis of a perceived resemblance between the actor and the extra in *Night After Night*, but nothing in his biography matched Ryan's memories. A film archivist hired to take a second look was able to determine the name of the extra – he was Marty Martyn. Research into Martyn's life showed him to be a good fit for Ryan's memories.

Ryan was six years old when he was flown back to Los Angeles and given a tour of places associated with Marty Martyn. He responded to all of them, leaving little doubt that this new identification was the correct one.

Cyndi's Journal

At Kevin's suggestion, Cyndi recorded Ryan's memories in a journal. She began doing this when Ryan was five but before contacting Jim Tucker, and continued afterwards. As of March 2016 she had listed 230 items, of which 55 (24%) had proven correct and fifteen (6.5%) incorrect or implausible for Marty Martyn; with the passage of time, the majority (140, or 69.5%) were unverifiable.^[3]

Eight of Ryan's correct statements were of such a general nature that Cyndi was able to verify them (in books or through internet searches) even before she wrote to Tucker. For instance, she was able

to confirm the identities of the actors that Ryan recognized by name in the pictures from *Night After Night*.^[4]

Ryan made each of the other 47 correct statements about Marty Martyn before his name was known. These 47 statements were abstracted from Cyndi's journal and published in a book by Leslie Kean.^[5]

- He is the man in the photograph from the movie *Night After Night*.
- He lived in Hollywood.
- He lived somewhere with the word “rock” or “mount” in it; a street address.
- He was very rich.
- His house was big.
- There was a brick wall at the house.
- There were three boys.
- He didn't think the boys were his but he gave them his name.
- He had a daughter.
- He brought coloring books home.
- He had trouble with his oldest stepdaughter—she wouldn't listen; she didn't respect him.
- He had a large swimming pool.
- His mother had curly brown hair.
- He had a younger sister.
- He bought his daughter a dog when she was about six.
- She didn't like the dog.
- He hated cats.
- He knew Senator Ives (Five).
- He used to see Senator Ives in New York (found on a map).
- He had a green car.
- He didn't let anyone else drive the green car.
- He had many wives.
- His wife drove a nice black car.
- He was an agent; he ran an agency.
- The agency changed people's names.
- He tap-danced on the stage.
- The stage was in New York City.
- He saw the world on big boats where he danced with pretty ladies.
- He ate in Chinatown a lot; his favorite restaurant was there.
- He got “skin burns” in Hollywood.
- He went to Paris; saw the Eiffel Tower.
- He took his girlfriends to the ocean.
- He played the piano; owned one.
- He had an African American maid.
- He knew Rita Hayworth—she made “ice drinks” (photo recognition).
- He knew that Mary lady—you couldn't get close to talk to her (photo recognition, Marilyn Monroe).
- Bread was his favorite food.
- He had a sunglass collection.
- He was a smoker.
- He had many girlfriends and affairs—never had problems getting the ladies.
- He liked to watch surfers on the beach.
- He owned guns.
- He didn't have a TV when he was a little boy; they had radio first.
- He hated FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat].

- You go to a room with numbers on the door before dying.
- “I’m not 5; I’m closer to 105 when I was here before” (would have been 106).
- He died at age sixty-one.

The assertion that he had died when he was 61 is particularly interesting, because Martyn’s death certificate gave his birth date as 1905, which would mean that he was only 59 in 1964. However, subsequent research showed that in fact Martyn was born in 1903, so Ryan was right. The correct date is given in Martyn’s online IMDb biography,^[6] which was not available for Tucker initially, so that he counted this as an error in his write-up of the case.^[7]

Among the fifteen statements that turned out to be wrong or doubtful for Marty Martyn were:

- His father had died when he was a child (in his last life). Martyn’s father died only six years before Martyn.
- His wife enjoyed putting their daughter’s hair in pigtails or a ponytail. If he did, it must have been when she was very young, because his daughter did not recall this.
- He gave his daughter a watchdog she didn’t like. Martyn indeed did buy his daughter a dog which she did not like, but it was a Yorkshire Terrier, not much of a watchdog.
- He died when his heart exploded. Martyn’s death was unwitnessed, but as the cause of his death was a brain haemorrhage, this seems unlikely.
- His body was cremated. Martyn’s death certificate states that he was buried.^[8]

After Death

In addition to talking about Martyn’s life, Ryan commented on what happened when one died. There was an ‘awesome’ light one should go towards, but everyone came back in a new body to live again.

When he died, he had gone to a waiting place, rather than to heaven. On another occasion, Ryan told Cyndi that he had seen her from heaven and that he had known her from an earlier life. He said that he had chosen her for his mother so that he could take care of her in this life.

Ryan said he recalled being in Cyndi’s womb and asked why she had wanted him to be a girl. In fact, Cyndi very much had wanted to have a girl. Ryan added that he had seen her cry for a long time when she learned that she was going to be a boy.

This doctor guy did a test and told you I was a boy. You got mad and said he was wrong. You just knew that I was going to be a girl. Mommy, it was Daddy’s birthday, you went to a restaurant afterward to eat and you cried for a very long time.

Cyndi soon regretted her behaviour on this occasion, which so embarrassed her that she rarely talked about it, but she could not deny that what Ryan had said was true in all respects.^[9]

Behavioural Carryovers

Ryan’s identity with Marty Martyn was expressed not only in his memories but through his personality, emotions and behaviour. As with his memories, the greatest intensity of his behavioural identification with Martyn came when he was four, but it never disappeared entirely.

In narrating his memories, Ryan adopted a mature tone of voice and acted the part. Once he explained to Cyndi: ‘I am not the same as the man in the picture on the outside, but on the inside I am still that man.’ He was haunted by the things he could not remember. Most nights, his main concerns were, What happened to the children? What was my other mother’s name? What became of my sister?

Ryan once saw a cartoon that reminded him of the tap-dancing he said he had done in New York. He began humming show tunes and tap-danced. He asked Cyndi to get him some tap shoes and started a routine in the middle of the floor, saying ‘Tip tap tip tap’ as if keeping beat.

He wanted to wear what he called ‘agent clothes’ – suits, dress shirts, ties – and black-rimmed ‘agent glasses’. He took a pair of children’s 3-D spectacles, popped out the lenses, and wore them everywhere.

He would play at making movies. At a birthday party when he was four, he assembled all the children present to direct them for his movie. He yelled at the adults that he needed help because it was hard to act and direct a major motion picture at the same time.

He recalled having been badly scratched by a cat; he hated cats and was afraid of them. He related that he had liked going to restaurants in Chinatown. When his parents first took him to a Chinese restaurant, he expertly employed chopsticks without being taught how.^[10]

Picture Recognition Tests

When Marty Martyn was identified, Tucker prepared sets of pictures to present to Ryan to see if he could pick out persons Martyn had known. He did this without letting Cyndi or Kevin know the correct answers, and without even informing them of Martyn’s name, to ensure that they did no background research in advance of the recognition tests.

Ryan, who had just turned six, was in bad humour when Tucker arrived. He was not in a mood to do the tests and it was obvious that he was pointing at pictures haphazardly. After dinner, however, he was ready. Tucker showed him the first set of four pictures, of women, and asked if any looked familiar. Ryan pointed to one, but when asked, said he did not know who she was. It was Martyn’s fourth wife.

Tucker next showed Ryan pictures of four men, one of whom he believed was ‘Senator Five’. Ryan pointed to one of the pictures. Tucker asked him if he was sure, and he said that he was. The picture was of Irving Ives, a Senator from New York during Martyn’s lifetime.

Ryan also correctly identified a picture of Martyn as a young man, in a pose and attire very different from his appearance in *Night After Night*. But he then began to miss and after two more trials, Tucker called a halt to the experiment.

In retrospect, Tucker realized that it might have been better to have shown Ryan the pictures one at a time.^[11] He could have alternated his decoys with the targets in randomized order and shown Ryan all of them, rather than stopping part way through. Kean observed that ideally someone who did not know the identities of any of the individuals would have presented the pictures, to avoid giving Ryan unconscious cues.^[12] Still, even if the recognition tests could have been better handled, Ryan made correct selections in three out of five trials.

Martyn’s Daughter

Ryan very much wanted to meet Martyn’s three adopted sons and make amends for what he believed was bad treatment of them, but this never became possible. However, he was able to meet Martyn’s daughter, who had been eight when he died. She was 57 when Ryan met her, and naturally had changed a great deal in the interim. Ryan complained that she had ‘not waited’ for him; he recognized her face, he said, but her energy was different, and he did not want to see her again.^[13]

For her part, Martyn’s daughter tried to be helpful. She confirmed the accuracy of many of Ryan’s

memories of personal things – for instance, that he had driven a green car he did not allow anyone else to drive; that Martyn hated cats and had bought her a dog she did not like; that he had a large collection of sunglasses. Because she was young when he died, there were many things she could not verify, but her testimony proved invaluable in evaluating Ryan's statements.^[14]

Psychic Sense

Ryan is unusual among children with past-life memories in having a well-developed psychic sense. Many reincarnation case subjects with ESP direct it towards members of the previous family,^[15] but Ryan's talent was concerned with people and events in his own life.

Once he talked to Cyndi about one of her siblings who had died in infancy, something he had not been told about. He went on and on about needing to buy Kevin a watch. When Cyndi noted that Kevin already had a watch, Ryan said he would need a replacement by Father's Day, and indeed, Kevin's watch was broken on the eve of Father's Day. On his first trip to Los Angeles, Ryan predicted correctly that they would be given white cars. There were several other incidents of this nature.^[16]

Later Development

On his second visit to Los Angeles, Ryan was excited and happy to be back in the places he recalled, but the trip brought resolution, and afterwards he was better able to live in the present. After meeting Martyn's daughter, he rarely mentioned his memories unless he was reminded of them. One night six months after the premiere of *The Unexplained: A Life in the Movies* on 30 April 2011, Cyndi walked into his room to find that he had removed all of his decorations related to Martyn, even his iron Eiffel Tower and pictures of New York. He told her it was time to be just a regular kid.^[17]

The influence of Martyn's personality persisted, however, and at eleven Ryan still loved 1950s music and wanted to go to New York. He continued to be fascinated with sunglasses and liked to wear button-down dress shirts. He followed politics and identified as a Republican. He had also become interested in Judaism, creating tensions in his Christian family. But he was no longer as hostile to cats; although not his favourite creatures, he could now tolerate them without anxiety.^[18]

Analysis

Ryan's case is similar to other reincarnation cases, but the penetrance of imaged memories, emotions and behaviours is uncommonly strong. At first, this seems curious, because children who start talking about their memories as late as Ryan normally have fewer memories and behavioural carryovers than children who start sharing their memories a year or two earlier. This may be an effect of his enlarged adenoids, which kept him from engaging fully with the world about him, allowing his memories of Martyn to be retained more clearly and for a longer period than with other young children.^[19]

Ryan was observed by so many people that the possibility that the case was a hoax concocted by his parents for publicity or financial gain may be set aside. It is hard to see how Cyndi could have fed him information or shaped his behaviours, even had she secretly discovered Martyn's identity before it became generally known. Most of the information about Martyn now available on the internet was not there as this case was developing, in any event. Kean observes that Cyndi 'was forced to endure the trauma along with him. Her primary goal was to find peace for Ryan'.^[20]

But Ryan demonstrated strong psychic abilities. Could he have learned the things he knew about Martyn through ESP, rather than through reincarnation and memory? His emotional turmoil, his longing for the past, his nightmares and his play reminiscent of Martyn all suggest something deeper

and more extensive than the acquisition of information through ESP, and Ryan's ESP was directed to his present life anyway. Although the possibility of an unusual psychic mechanism cannot be ruled out, it would appear unlikely to have played a role in Ryan's case.^[21]

James G Matlock

Literature

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References

Footnotes

- 1.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 214-18; Tucker (2013), 88-119.
- 2.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 215. The following account merges details given by Tucker (2013), Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), Hammons (2017), and Kean (2017). For another summary of the case, see https://uvamagazine.org/articles/the_science_of_reincarnation.
- 3.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 217.
- 4.^ Kean (2017), 70.
- 5.^ Kean (2017), 70-72.
- 6.^ See https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0554421/?ref=fn_al_nm_1.
- 7.^ For a discussion of the error on the death certificate and its correction, see Kean (2017, 78-79).
- 8.^ Kean (2017), 72.
- 9.^ Tucker (2013), 97.
- 10.^ The main source for this section is Hammons (2017), with elements drawn from Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) and Tucker (2013).
- 11.^ Tucker (2013), 105-7.
- 12.^ Kean (2017), 77.
- 13.^ Tucker (2013), 108-9.
- 14.^ Hammons (2017), 65.
- 15.^ Matlock (2019), 135.
- 16.^ Tucker (2013), 113-16.
- 17.^ Tucker (2013), 117-19; Hammons (2017), 66.
- 18.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 217-18.
- 19.^ Matlock (2019), 203.
- 20.^ Kean (2017), 77.
- 21.^ Kean (2017), 76-78.

