

Doris Stokes

Doris Stokes (1920-87) was a controversial celebrity medium who was much in the public eye in Britain during the 1980s.

Life and Career

Doris May Fisher Stokes (née Doris Sutton) was born in Grantham, Lincolnshire. In her first memoir *Voices in My Ear*, Stokes described an impoverished childhood, her father dying while she was still at school. She trained to become a nurse and was married in 1944. Having been told that her husband had been killed, Stokes said she was then visited by her deceased father who informed her that he was still alive and would return to her; he also subsequently warned her that her infant son would die – both predictions proving correct. She went on to develop a career as a clairaudient medium, being identified as such by the Spiritualists' National Union in 1949.^[1]

In 1962 Stokes temporarily abandoned mediumship to work as a psychiatric nurse but returned to it in 1972. She came to public attention in 1978 during a visit to Australia, where she gave shows to sell-out audiences at the Sydney Opera House. She was subsequently booked for a capacity audience at the prestigious London Palladium. *Voices in My Ear* was published in 1980, followed by a further six similar books, all co-authored by Linda Dearsley. She won popularity with her 'famously down-to-earth style, straightforward character, and ready smile'.^[2] Her celebrity status was confirmed with broadcast appearances that included the BBC's *Wogan* and *Desert Island Discs* in 1985.

Stokes suffered ill health throughout her life and died in 1987 aged 67, following the removal of a brain tumour.

Controversy

In common with other celebrity mediums, Stokes attracted suspicion, accused of using cold reading and other fraudulent techniques.^[3] Ian Wilson, a British historian and author of critical books on paranormal topics, exposed her frequent reliance on individuals in the audience who were well-known to her to give the appearance of paranormal access to information.^[4] Certain of her claims to have assisted the police with crime cases were contested.^[5]

Her many supporters insisted on the veracity of information that supposedly originated with deceased family members.^[6] It was pointed out that people who were closely associated with Stokes never reported any instances of fraud, despite being offered financial inducements to do so by the media.^[7]

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Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Evans (2004).
2. ^ Kearney (n.d.).
3. ^ Hoggart & Hutchinson (1988), 63-71; Plummer (1981), 1.
4. ^ Wilson (1987), 76-78.

5. ^ Plummer (1981).
6. ^ For instance, Bell (2023).
7. ^ Kearney (n.d.).

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