

FORMER WAR CORRESPONDENT IS REUNITED WITH 'DEAD' PARTNER

Awakening to love after death

Karen Frances McCarthy is an author, public speaker and medium. Formerly a major media political journalist and war correspondent, she now focuses on writing and speaking about spirituality and belief systems surrounding death, dying and the afterlife.

Karen's first book, "The Other Irish," was supported by Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs as part of Ireland's cross-border peace process. She was named one of the top Irish female broadcasters who have made an international impact.

Turning to TV, Karen produced "The Crystal Cave" and "Alchemy: The Art of Spiritual Transformation" for Indian-American author Deepak Chopra.

Karen holds three Certificates of Recognition in mediumship from the Spiritualists' National Union and has a private mediumship and healing practice based in New York City.

In her latest book, "Till Death Don't Us Part: A True Story of Awakening to Love After Life," she describes how her partner Johann gave evidence of his continued existence.

Written especially for "Psychic News," in this feature Karen tells how Johann returned to prove his survival.

HOW does a sceptic who doesn't believe in a soul recognise signs from the dearly departed? How does that sceptic even come to believe there is such a thing as signs? And what about the Other Side?

What happens to a sceptical loved one when he realises that he's died, but isn't dead – at least not in the way we traditionally define death?

Ends often give rise to beginnings, to rather extraordinary beginnings, which I discovered shortly after Johann, my beloved, died of a sudden heart attack one

afternoon in New York City while out for a bike ride.

Johann was an artist, German, creative but pragmatic, and very much a sceptic himself. How surprised must he have been to find himself in spirit form.

As a journalist, I was researching a story in Virginia at the time. Not able to face returning to New York, I decided to caretake a large house in the bay area. How surprised was I when inexplicable events began to occur around me?

In the early days of my grief, I barely had



KAREN FRANCES MCCARTHY: "What happens to a sceptical loved one when he realises that he's died, but isn't dead?"

the energy to get out of bed. That's where tiny imprints appeared on the duvet, tip-toeing their way from end to top as if an invisible cat was on the bed.

That's where I was when I heard the stairs creaking in the empty house. It's where I was in the early hours when I was jolted awake. The bed frame was groaning under a great weight.

My heart raced. Someone had sat on the bed behind me. Someone big. Someone silent.

"Turn around!" I told myself. I couldn't

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move. “Turn around! On three. One, two, three.”

I flipped around. No one. I scrambled up, got tangled in the sheet, fell over, whacked my face on the windowsill and bounced back onto the floor. Pain scorched my head.

“Get up!” I thought. My hands were shaking. I fumbled with the switch of the gaudy lamp. It flipped on. No one was there. No one could have got down the stairs that fast and without a sound.

And on they went, these incidences, until I was convinced that I had gone out of my mind with grief. That's when helpful people appeared in my path.

After two accidental – but fortuitous – meetings with the local Roman Catholic priest and psychologist Dr Lou LaGrand, I learned about the signs loved ones show us after they shake off their physical existence.

Admittedly, that was too much for me to swallow at that stage, but I still devoured books on the subject, until it I came to acknowledge that something beyond our physical form survived death. But what?

As a former political journalist, war correspondent and atheist, awakening to life after death didn't come easy.

I needed facts, evidence, something so compelling that I would be left with no option but to accept that we don't die, that consciousness is not an emergent property of the brain, that love endures and that we are never alone.

It would take some convincing that Johann – his consciousness and his personality – had survived and not just some abstract concept or energetic imprint.

The priest and the professor talked to me of butterflies, feathers and pennies, of clocks chiming and rainbows forming. None, unfortunately, did I see.

Truthfully, had I seen a feather or a butterfly or a penny, I certainly wouldn't have thought them indicative of messages from Johann.

Neither would a fleeting glance of something odd in the corner of my eye or a floating orb do the job. Those were easily explainable and weren't his style. But putting something right in my face, well, that was a different story.

One afternoon, I went into the kitchen of this big country house to forage for snacks.

There were slim pickings except for a few oranges in the fridge. I took a couple, shut the door, and swung around to come face-to-face with a large, two-dimensional, solid-black figure standing in the doorway.

I froze. It looked like a black hole I'd seen on TV with a perfectly crisp edge that delineated its dense dark form from the event horizon surrounding it.

But this wasn't a black hole. It was crudely outlined and had no neck so that the shoulders and head were fused like a gorilla. But this wasn't a gorilla.

It was a tall, broad man, six-foot easily, silent and unmoving. It wasn't just blocking the doorway; it had been lurking behind me while I rummaged in the fridge. It disappeared.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Juice was dripping onto my feet and all over the floor. I'd gripped the oranges so hard that I punctured the skin.

My breath was shallow and my heart was still racing. I scanned the kitchen for an explanation. Billions of times a day my brain created three-dimensional constructs out of the two-dimensional images impinging on my retina.

Neurons in my visual cortex made the third dimension appear, but not this time. The kitchen was bright, so it wasn't a trick of the light.

I couldn't blame it on peripheral vision where floaters or fleeting black flashes often appear in tired eyes. This, whatever it was, was solid, stationary, in full-frontal vision, and by no means fleeting.

A little while later, another incident happened that literally smelt of Johann. It was as if he were right beside me.

I was startled, not just by how strong it was or how clearly I remembered it, but that it happened at all. Smells trigger memories; memories don't trigger smells.

Shortly after that, the most compelling evidence came in the form of technology. Johann had a great love of technology. He was the first to buy every gadget, the

one to fix even the most hopeless broken computer or phone.

While I was dozing one afternoon, the letters CIS floated into my field of vision like a colourful prism floating on a soap bubble – crisp and vibrant and drifting slowly from side to side of their own accord, as if someone had hijacked the electrical impulses in my brain and inserted an image between my optic nerve and occipital cortex.

I hopped to my computer keyboard to search for “optic nerve hallucinations.” I found nothing of interest in the results. Neither did anything interesting come up for “CIS.”

Then it occurred to me that if I could entertain just for a moment that the survival of individual consciousness were possible, then CIS could be German. I searched Google Deutschland, which listed CIS as a European notation for the musical note C-sharp.

I also searched for an MP3 of C-sharp and clicked play. The second it sounded, my GPS, which was lying dead on the table beside my computer, crackled to life and announced loudly, “You have reached your destination.” I leapt off my chair and backed away from the desk.

On and on these incidents went, until I couldn’t deny humour, Johann’s persistence and his intelligence in what was happening around me on a daily basis. It got to the point where I felt more foolish maintaining denial than I did accepting the reality of what was happening.

It was Occam’s razor, the theory that there exists two explanations for an occurrence and the one which requires the smallest number of assumptions is usually correct.

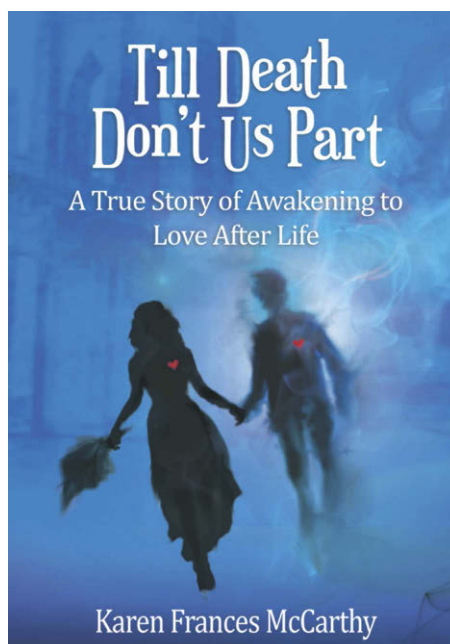
It became clear that simplest explanation for these phenomena was that consciousness survives death and we can continue to communicate and maintain bonds between the here and the hereafter.

That was when everything changed, not just the paradigm shift that occurred in my own thinking and being, but the awakening to the tangibility of love after life.

Leaving Virginia and returning to New York where we had lived, I was sure the signs or extraordinary encounters would be more pronounced and more numerous. After all, we had accumulated so many memories there over the years. But there was nothing. Nothing that I recognised anyway.

It took a long dark night of the soul, tantrums, grief and despair before I finally realised that Johann had stopped manipulating the world out there to reach me and was whispering ever so quietly inside instead.

It took a lot of learning to be still, to



release futile attempts to control my own world and to move forward from there. I had to dust off an old and underused meditation cushion and resumed a regular practice.

I took classes in intuitive and psychic development to better understand the language he was using – the “clairs,” the language of Spirit.

As an artist, Johann mainly communicated clairvoyantly or with images, which made sense. Over time, and with a little focus and work, I began to feel, hear and see him and his messages within my being but not from my being.

It was a whole new level of sophistication in terms of our interdimensional communication, and over time it became our new normal. Johann did as he’d always done, nudging me out of outworn patterns and towards something new.

I wanted this for us. I wanted to develop my psychic and mediumistic faculties to develop my ability to communicate with him better. I wanted to reach that state of interbeing, of which Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh speaks.

My desire led me on a journey that was fraught with charlatans and superstitions. I sat in circles to be told, “He’s earthbound,” “You’re holding him back” or “You have a spirit stuck to you.”

On and on it went causing me much distress. Thankfully, our relationship and his commitment to my learning was stronger than their superstitions, but this part of the journey itself, as distressing as it was, was also vital.

Without it, I would never have undertaken so much research to understand that superstitious concepts, such as earthbound spirits, lost spirits,

stuck spirits and more were just nonsense wrought by centuries of ignorance and misunderstanding.

Those harrowing experiences inspired me not to just use my mediumship to maintain our relationship, but also use it to benefit others. If I had been harmed by superstition, then others must be too.

I resolved to be informed and properly trained, which led me first to a better practice circle and then to the Arthur Findlay College, Essex. From there I worked towards awards from the Spiritualists’ National Union.

In all of this progress, there was never a static moment in my relationship with my beloved.

Certainly, it’s that relationship that has helped me help others today, especially spouses who know their loved one is still present and don’t want to listen when well-meaning but misguided friends deliver the cliché of “You need to move on.”

Where do we move on to? It is love that binds us and that love does not die at death. Certainly, it is important to be able to grieve and re-engage in life.

We don’t get over grief. We learn to live with it. It becomes part of our being, but that’s not to say we can have a full, albeit different, life than perhaps we expected.

I’ve learned over the years to trust my beloved more than any prejudices or superstitions. I’ve also learned how to recognise when he’s present and helping me.

Unfortunately, too many people come to me having read a book that listed a lot of signs they haven’t seen and it causes them anxiety, or they’ve heard the superstitions I heard and are in a terrible state of distress.

Why do you need a book to know how your loved one is communicating with you? Don’t discount the butterfly, or feather, or penny or hundreds of other signs that you read about, but look for your beloved’s character in signs you receive.

Trust your loved one and trust your intuition; learn to listen to that inner voice because that’s the place where he or she whispers.

It’s there you’ll experience your loved one’s personality, their continued presence, their ongoing guidance and most of all their undying love.

■ *Running to 220 pages, “Till Death Don’t Us Part: A True Story of Awakening to Love After Life” is published by White Crow Books at £11.99.*

It is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones and other major booksellers or go to www.whitecrowbooks.com