

Skeptical Journalist Hears From Dead Son

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Grieving the World War II death of her son Bill, Adela Rogers St. Johns (1894-1988) contacted Eileen Garrett, the most famous medium of the day, not telling her why she wanted to meet with her. Shortly after the grieving mother entered Garrett's Manhattan apartment, the medium said, "Well, here's Bill." As far as St. Johns knew, Garrett did not know she had a son named Bill. Clairvoyantly looking high up at the otherwise invisible figure of Bill, Garrett said he appeared to be wearing a British uniform. In fact, Bill, who stood 6-7, was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which he joined before the United States entered the war.

While most journalists smirk, snicker, sneer, and scoff at the paranormal, St. Johns approached it with proper skepticism and objectivity. St. Johns was a highly respected journalist, a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, Joe Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Eddie Rickenbacker, and many other influential people. She reported on crimes, politics, society, and even sports for Hearst Publications, including the *San Francisco Examiner*, *Los Angeles Herald*, *Chicago American*, and *New York American*, covering such events as the assassination of Senator Huey Long, the abdication of King Edward VIII, the Lindbergh kidnapping and murder trial, and the Dempsey-Tunney "long-count" fight. She retired from newspaper work in 1948 to write books and teach journalism at UCLA, Stanford, and the University of Pennsylvania. In 1970, she was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Nixon.

St. Johns told of her experiences with Garrett in her book, *No Goodbyes*, published in 1981

and subtitled "My Search into Life Beyond Death." Most of the book is based on personal experiences, not on information gathered in the course of her work. She states that Garrett probably had the most "commanding presence" she had ever encountered in a woman. And, she had known many dynamic women, including Mrs. Roosevelt, Wallis Simpson, wife of the Duke of Windsor, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Jeane Dixon, Ethel Barrymore, and Gloria Swanson, to name just some



Adela Rogers St. Johns

Through Garrett, Bill asked his mother to stop grieving for him so that he could get on with his life. "Pray for me, Mama. Pray for all of us here. It helps us advance," Garrett transmitted. St. Johns noted that Bill was the only one of her children who called her "Mama."

A debunker would say that Garrett had prior information, but St. Johns did not think so.

Before St. Johns left Garrett's apartment, Garrett told her that the person waiting downstairs in the lobby for her had mediumistic abilities and could further contact Bill for her, if necessary. St. Johns' adult daughter, Elaine, was

waiting in the lobby, but she did not know how Garrett knew that, nor did St. Johns have any idea that her daughter had such a gift, although she later recalled that Elaine frequently spoke with a deceased family friend when she was four years old. Elaine, also ignorant of her ability, was brought upstairs to meet Garrett, who explained automatic writing to her. She further mentioned that it was Bill who told her that his sister had the faculty for automatic writing.

After several failed attempts, Elaine, also a journalist, established contact with her brother. Concerned that she was imagining the responses, Elaine asked for something evidential. The pencil wrote, "The lady in the picture is my bombardier's mother." Neither Elaine nor her mother knew what picture Bill was referring to. Some days later, St. Johns received a letter from Bill's commanding officer, explaining how Bill kept his damaged plane flying while ordering his crew to bail out before crashing into some farm land. She also received a letter with a photo from Bill's navigator. It was of Bill's flag-draped casket with his crew standing around at attention. There was also an attractive matronly woman in the photo. St. Johns wrote to navigator to thank him and request the identity of the woman in the photo. The navigator wrote back that it was the bombardier's mother.

Word of Elaine's gift got around. One day, a German refugee, who had been a writer in her homeland, approached St. Johns at a press club meeting in New York and asked her if Elaine might be able to get a message from her deceased husband, who had been a successful surgeon. The request was passed on to Elaine, who, with pencil in hand, gave Bill the man's name and asked her brother if he could contact the man and get a message from him for his wife. Shortly thereafter, the pencil took off writing page after page, initially in English but then in German, complete with umlaut marks over certain vowels. "Bela, my madonna, I made such a mistake," the writing began. When St. Johns

passed the writing on to the grieving widow, she was informed that her husband had frequently referred to her as his Madonna, and had committed suicide.

Still another interesting experience involved Billy deBeck, the artist who created the "Barney Google" cartoon. After deBeck's death from cancer, his wife Mary was heartbroken. While having lunch with Mary, St. Johns told her friend about Elaine's ability. When Elaine was asked to see if she could get a message from Billy, the pencil didn't write. Instead, it began to sketch. It was a drawing of a woman walking a dog on a leash. However, the woman had no feet. When the experience was related to Mary deBeck, she excitedly explained that Billy had some kind of mental block against drawing feet and would always have an assistant draw the feet of his cartoon characters.

Many years later, during 1967, St. Johns was working on one of her many books and struggling with it when she received a phone call from a friend, Larry Carr. Carr told her that Bonnie Lake, an accomplished singer as well as an automatic writer, had received a message for her from Bill. St. Johns contacted Lake, whom she had never met, and was given the message: "Tell Mama to put aside the novel she is working on and get started on the other book she has in mind. The novel will work itself out later. Bill."

