

Through the Tunnel

Martin Brofman, PhD

A Personal Account of NDE by a Walk-In

I was at the Episcopal Hospital in Philadelphia. I had just been told that I had a "blockage" in my spinal cord, from the fourth to the seventh cervical vertebrae at the level of the neck, that had been responsible for the symptoms I had been experiencing. My right arm was paralyzed, my legs were spastic, and there were sensations like electric shocks running through my body when I moved my head. I was told that I had to have an operation immediately, and that if I lived through the operation, I might come out of it a quadriplegic. When I asked if I had time for a second opinion, I was told that if I coughed or sneezed at that time, I might die. Naturally, I agreed to have the operation in a few hours.

I realized that according to what the doctors had said, I might be dead in a few hours. I went through the stages that many people go through when they know they are about to die. First, there was the sense that this was a movie set, and that these things were not really happening to me. I found myself negotiating with what was happening, bargaining if I could, for something different to happen. Slowly, the realization that it was real, and happening to me, came closer and closer, until I had to emotionally accept that I might very soon be dead.

When I accepted the unacceptable, my body shook violently as an intensity of energy moved through me. I opened more and more to it, and after one or two very long minutes it was complete. I felt a calm inside that I had not known before. All my senses were sharper. My vision was clearer. Colors were brighter. Hearing was clearer. Sensations were more alive.

I realized that I had released a perceptual filter that had been standing between me and the experience of life, and ironically, it had been the fear of death. Now that I had released that fear, I was experiencing more of life, more of being alive, even if just for a short while longer.

I thought of the life I had lived, and the things I could have done but didn't, and I found myself saying to myself, "I wish I had." There were a lot of "I wish I had." I thought to myself that it was, in fact, a sad way to end a life, and that if I had to do it again, there would be a lot of "I'm glad I did."

I had to decide what I wanted to do with the short time I had left. If I spent my remaining time worrying or feeling bad about what was, in fact, inevitable, I would have just wasted the rest of my life, thrown it away, and it was too valuable for that.

I decided to spend my remaining time feeling good, and just thinking of things that helped me to feel good - the color of the paint on the walls, the smell of flowers in the room, anything positive. I knew I could always find something.

Finally, the time came. I was taken to the operating room, and as I was being given the anesthetic, I thought that this might be the last experience I would ever have. I had no idea what might come afterwards. I had been agnostic, with no beliefs, believing in nothing that I had not experienced. Perhaps the next step after death was just oblivion.

I let go.

I began to experience a vertigo, a sense of spinning, and it didn't feel good, so I stabilized myself in the center of it until I was still, and everything else was spinning around me. I was moving through the spinning scenes, which were memories from the life I had lived, memories that were calling for my attention. If I put my attention on them, though, I felt myself "pulled," because I was moving through these spinning memories, like being pulled through a tunnel, or falling down a well, but discovering that half-way down the well. Reaching for the walls would not work. My only hope would be to aim for the water at the bottom.

I had to withdraw my attention from these scenes, then, these memories, and put my attention on the place to which I was being drawn, aiming for it. I was headed there anyway, but aiming for it gave me more of a sense of being in the driver's seat, and that was a lot more comfortable for me. It was a bit like riding a roller coaster in the front car, and pretending that you're driving the thing along the tracks. It gives a totally different ride, I can assure you, than being swept out of control.

The ride was long, but I had nothing else to do but go for it. Finally, the end of the tunnel was in sight. I came out into a kind of space, a stillness, where there was a glow of energy addressing me. It was like a spark of life, energy glowing with intelligence, not in a human form, just pure consciousness. It seemed that some distance away, there was another spark just observing the scene.

I felt as though I were having an exit interview, something like, "Well, your trip is over now, so complete things in your consciousness about that, and we'll move on." I looked back and saw my life as I had lived it, completed my thoughts about things that had happened, understood a lot of things differently, and then expressed that I was ready.

The Being began to move away. I began to follow, and then I paused. The Being quickly asked me what the thought was that had just entered my consciousness. I had thought that it would be a shame for my daughters to have grown up without their father in their life. I had spent a large part of my life without my father in it, and I would have liked my daughters to not have to have experienced that. Anyway, I was ready to go.

The Being said that because my reason for wanting to return was somebody outside myself, I would be allowed to return. Before I had the chance to express

that I didn't really want to return, there was a rapid, confused movement, something happened, the other spark which had been "observing" was somehow a part of it, and then I was waking up in this body, in traumatic pain, with intense drama going on around me in the hospital.

I felt as if I had just jumped into a movie that had been underway, but that I had not been the one in the body before this moment. Because of the trauma and the drama, my attention was directed to things happening in the physical world, and the memory of what had happened before was somehow obliterated. I had other things happening which were demanding my attention, and besides, I did not have the belief systems that would allow me to accept what had just happened.

Over the next year, I began to explore ideas and philosophies I had no experience of before. I read books like "Life After Life," and "Life After Death," and other writings that described what people called, "Near Death Experiences," and I began to remember what had happened. I saw the similarities to what others had experienced, and I knew then what had happened to me. I thought also of the similarities to what we consider the "normal" birth process, where babies are born into bright lights and loud sounds and being slapped, and perhaps, their attention is so much directed to outer things that they forget their inner experiences just before the process of being born.

>From time to time, I meet others who have made the trip, and we compare notes. "What was it like for you?" One woman said that before, she was certain there would be a Being on the other side with a big book, looking at what she had and had not done, and making checks and crosses, good marks and bad marks. When she got to the other side, there really was a Being there with a big book, just as she thought there would be. The only bad marks she got, though, were for the things that she hadn't done. Her only sin was self-denial.

My diagnosis on leaving the hospital was "Spinal Cord Tumor." There was no treatment possible. I was given one or two months to live, and I decided to do that living my new philosophy of "I'm glad I did." I decided to work on myself, working in my consciousness to release the tumor. Later, the doctors decided that they must have made a mistaken diagnosis.

But that's another story.

© Martin Brofman 1988