

A LIFE WINDING DOWN

What I have learned, but I could be wrong

By

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Dedication

To my husband who patiently listened to all of this. You are always my support and I thank you.

To my sons. You were the reason I wanted to do more and better.

To my beautiful, smart granddaughters. Always know that I am here for you in this life or the next. Love to all my family and pets here on Earth and those beyond.

It is the energy that never dies.

INTRODUCTION

I am barreling through what is often called “the golden years,” or less euphemistically “senior discount days.” I woke up one day and said to myself (old people are known to talk to themselves), “I should write a book about life and what I have learned.” I wanted to leave my sons something else to contemplate about the path their lives might take. My granddaughters, hopefully, will skip some of the roads I decided to travel that were just basically stupid. My husband “gets me” as far as he can but prefers ESPN.

This is not my first foray into writing. I was an English teacher, although I have misspelled a few words (to my own horror), and I used the term “irregardless” until just recently when someone finally told me it wasn’t a word.

I wrote two books about true crimes, *A Body on the Farm: The Disappearance and Murder of Carol Blades* and *Missing or Murdered in Missouri: Unsolved and Solved Cases*. My inexperience was terrifying, but I was most proud of the fact that I helped those families to keep their stories alive. So, here I am after saying I never wanted to write another book, doing it again. I was a closet author from the time I was a child, and a lot of what I wrote even baffled me. Where did this come from? I will give you a sample poem later and you, too, may scratch your head.

Someday I hope all of my family reads this when they get their first hint that it is time to figure out who they really are and where they might end up when “the final curtain comes down,” or at least maybe when the first application for an AARP card comes in the mail—provided we still receive mail old-school.

For any “senior” (which used to be a prestigious moniker when we were in high school) reading this, I hope

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that I haven't led you astray with all of my scattered knowledge.

Oprah, if you happen to read this (Ha!) don't worry that I will try to mentor others to help them become more enlightened; I am still a little concerned that I might be wrong. Oh, and I do have some very stubborn beliefs that I refuse to let go of. That being said, they are my opinions only. Feel free to scoff, or if I have already "passed on" contact me on the Other Side to tell me if I was right about anything.

I will be serious about some subjects because time is frankly running out and irreverent about others because they are amusing to a point. Topics are in no particular order of importance and I will also try to use as many clichés as I can to reference the "end of days."

My only hope is that you can relate to the journey.

No pessimist ever discovered the secret of the stars or sailed an uncharted land or opened a new doorway for the human spirit.

Helen Keller

MEDIUMS, THE PARANORMAL, UFOS AND 2012

I am fascinated by these people who can talk to the spirit world or channel, or anything related to ghosts or UFOs. I started with Edgar Cayce, who can be a little difficult to read at times, but I collected most of his books. If you haven't read anything about him, start with *There is a River* by Thomas Sugrue. Then I worked my way through Sylvia Brown, John Edward, James Van Praagh, Alison Dubois, Shirley MacLaine, George Anderson, Ruth Montgomery, Rosemary Altea, and Sonja Choquette, and I became friends with a woman who is also a psychic detective, Judy Price. I cannot prove to you or anyone else that what they do is real, and when they get it wrong or make a mistake, I am left with a few doubts myself, but I also realize that they are not super-human. I strongly suggest you read *The Afterlife Experiments* if you are confused about their gifts. Many of them performed very well in cold readings in a clinical setting.

These are the few eerie or "twilight zone" moments in my own life.

1. I had an imaginary friend. I know that one can be explained away. However, some mediums have another explanation. Children appear to be fine-tuned to the spirit world (until adults mess with their energy and tell them that it is their imagination) when

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- they may actually be visiting with their spirit guides or guardian angels or ascended beings.
2. I knew my high school boyfriend was killed in a car accident before anyone told me. I cannot readily explain this.
 3. As a child, I was obsessed with horses. My father was a talented graphic artist and I begged regularly for copies of his horse head sketches. We lived inside the Springfield, Missouri city limits, but that did not quell my incessant begging for a horse of my own. There is a puzzle made from a photo of me on a horse that I recently discovered and it still is a prized possession. In my quest to know if I had lived before, I had a past life reading and was told that I was a male horse trainer for Attila the Hun. Hmm. It is a part of early nomad history that his horses were considered monstrous and mysterious; their breed was rumored to be mythical due to their girth and fierceness. A decidedly deadly army of expert archers in great numbers on menacing, muscular steeds must have panicked many villagers in the Roman Empire, but the folklore concerning the discovery of the bones of a super-sized animal have not been proven, so far. Also, my name is just a little too close to “barbarian” for comfort.
 4. I saw a creature one night when I was about 16, a human-like monster on a bicycle when I was in a car with three other teens. No, I wasn’t drinking that night. It was not a mask, but its whole appearance seemed, well, otherworldly. I have never talked to the others in the car about it, but many years later I was watching a documentary about the strange sightings in Point Pleasant, West Virginia recounted by two young couples. While they were driving past an old abandoned TNT plant, they claimed they were being chased by what appeared to be a moth-like man. This

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account and several more spawned both a book and a movie. Needless to say, I could relate.

5. I have had moments when I thought a sense of dread kept me from being harmed. It felt like a literal gut punch. I know you and the skeptics might be calling this a gut feeling based on healthy fear. (Keep in mind healthy fear wasn't exactly in my vocabulary for a lot of high school and most of college. Oblivious was a little more accurate).
6. I saw a huge silver metal door/window in the sky when I was traveling down a county road in the Ozarks on a sunny, very cloudless, day. This one made me question my own sanity, but I saw what I saw even when it should not have been there. I have no plausible answer, but this door was massive and it blinked in and out in the clear blue sky in just seconds. Later, I read a very strange book about all the space ships that are pretty much parked out there monitoring the earth and its particularly destructive inhabitants. We have the potential to affect the entire universe with our nuclear powers, after all. It was comforting to me and brings whole new meaning to the well-worn phrase, "We are not alone." And they might have some mammoth transportation based on what I saw.
7. When my mother passed away, I was walking into the kitchen of my home with all that grief sitting right there on my chest squeezing my heart. I was having trouble breathing, when suddenly I was filled with warmth beginning from my toes and then winding through my body. I clearly heard her voice in my head say, "I am okay." I can hear the rebuttals in my head as well, "hot flashes," "overcome with grief," or a personal favorite, "hallucinating." Hey, I don't know either, but I felt much better. I choose to believe it was my Mom. It sure sounded like her.

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8. When my beloved basset hound, Drooper, died, I came home just 30 minutes after he was “put to sleep” and saw an image of him in the kitchen where he always stood. I know. I know. The grieving thing again. Others will say he left his energy behind. I miss him.
9. I have known for a number of years now that I have some sort of unseen guides named Mary and Jasmine. If I concentrate, I see Mary as a small, curly headed woman who is both old and young at the same time. I get the sense that she is my grandmother “Mayme” (Mary Margaret). The other is very exotic and middle-eastern looking. (I always think of the song “Walk Like an Egyptian”). I asked about my personal guardian angel and Ariel was the name I was given. Oddly enough, I happened to stumble upon a small book of astrological signs connecting angels to our birth sign and, lo and behold, Leo is connected to the angel Ariel. Hmm. I am clueless about his appearance, only that “it” appears to be a “he” and looks pretty much the way angels might look, but not like John Travolta with those big cumbersome wings in the 1996 movie *Michael*. Ariel is wingless. Actually, I believe the spirits and angels (or alien beings) are androgynous, but they come to us in familiar forms of gender (instead of one-eyed, ten-fingered, hermaphrodites that might scare us off). Wait! Maybe some do. You can stop rolling your eyes now. I am finished, unless something else comes along at the “final hour.” (I like that term even less).

I would like to see a ghost. Well, maybe not one of those skin-scratching kind like they have in some houses and lots of ghost hunting shows, but just a tragic looking woman in a period piece dress. Truthfully, it would scare the crap out of me. (Is it just me, or are all of the ghost hunting shows

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normalizing this occupation so much that most of us are okay with “things that go bump in the night” as long as it is on reality TV?)

Next up, UFOs. They are everywhere. I want to know who is on board and if they are appalled at what they are seeing here (if not, they should be since we are essentially dragging our knuckles along the ground and still killing each other like mindless robots—I will get to War later). And don't get me started on crop circles. Have you seen some of these amazing pieces of art that pop up all over the world literally overnight. Google them. Be in awe and stop believing the skeptics that drunken farmers in pubs or savvy science students are doing all of them. No way they can show up like they do and alter the very ground. A leading expert in the study of these phenomena has determined that a large percentage of them are man-made, however, he has no clue who is making them or why and roughly 20% seem to be from some other more complex source. Wake up people. There are many, many, many witnesses and documents, videos, strange sightings, weird occurrences, abductions, and paranormal experiences out there. Aren't you even a little bit interested?

If this is not enough for you still, Google any temple in Mexico or Egypt or Peru. There are cities and monoliths all over the globe that baffle even the engineers who study them. Case in point, many obelisks in the ancient world have very precise carvings that are geometrically perfect, intricate and detailed. Then Google the crude tools dated to that era and try to imagine a perfect angle made with a stone tied to a stick! Some engineers have said that only lasers and machines could be responsible for their accurate carvings.

By the way, the Bible and other sacred religious texts that we believe in as gospel are rife with paranormal activity: parting the Red Sea, rounding up two of every animal on earth, raising the dead, talking to angels with wings, virgin births, turning a few loaves of bread and fish into enough to

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feed thousands, hands on healings etc., etc. and we do not blink an eye. Why are UFOs, Near Death Experiences, ghosts and alien visits such a stretch?

And what about the Mayan prophecies of December 2012? Why did the Mayan calendar end so abruptly much like the Mayans themselves? If I were a deity, I would be mighty frustrated by the nightly news and the insidious negativity going on and I might be tempted to say, "That is it. I am done trying to get these people on the right track and to hell with Christmas!"

Alas, sorry to all the doomsday preppers, we are still here. You are still prepared, and the rest of us that at least took note of the warnings, are still committing a slow suicide globally and the homicide of Mother Earth, daily. It has to come to an end someday anyway.

I dunno, she's got gaps, I got gaps, together we fill gaps.

Rocky Balboa character
from the movie *Rocky* (1976)

MARRIAGE

I have been married 4 times. It may be dubious expertise, but I may finally have it right. If any of my exes are reading this— not to worry. It takes two to screw it up. I have had a lot of counseling and “program” (the AA and NA variety), and tons of practice with the resentment prayer.

The last man I married is quiet and not the spontaneous type, an analytical mind, usually a slow burner, but I don’t advise you to piss him off. I am garrulous, and sometimes think before I act, but not as often as I should, and I like people not computers (my husband is a computer systems administrator).

Oh, it gets better. He is a registered alien (British) and 18 years younger than I am. It works and I have no packaged answer. Here is what I think might have happened.

1. He loves and respects who I am and vice-versa
2. We are *both* in recovery.
3. I am his polar opposite. (It has been said before that means I am a woman and he is a man). We *would* survive without the other.
4. We disagree, but we talk.
5. I am not crazy about fighting and neither is he.
6. I keep the trying to change him to a minimum, and he doesn’t try at all.

Age has nothing to do with it even if I could have given birth to him. Occasionally, when he is listening to AC/DC and I am listening to Motown that seems a bit off, but he is, as they say, “an old soul” and, well, I am old.

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If I were a young adult today, I would think that all families are blended and that marriage is what falls into place directly after an expensive excursion into bridezilla. Besides, the divorce option is always on the table. In my day, and in my home, you married for life, even when you were strangling. Neither one was a great option. I would be ill-prepared for marriage today in my twenties, and I was then.

I squashed my single-world-traveler dreams, which poverty and a heavy dose of partying would have ultimately done anyway and decided I would do what all the 22-year-old brides in the newspaper were doing. I found someone to marry in college who was decent and hard-working. Beyond that I believed that it was my fate or destiny, depending how you look at it, to become a wife and then a mother.

I was told in college that I had better be an English teacher because I wasn't a very good writer. Good thing I was drinking a lot then because being a young high school teacher would prove to be frightening from all angles. I was pregnant the first year of teaching and managed to dodge one bullet—now I had to figure out how to be a parent.

No offense to you, Mom and Dad, you did the best you could given the tools you had, and no blame is cast, but due to your loveless marriage, the depression, the PTSD, the alcohol, and the continuously negative environment that I was raised in, I had very few parenting skills and even fewer insights into the “institution of marriage.” (We won't go into the ironies of this particular term).

So, a few years into being a spouse, I kept circling around this relationship—this time with two young children in tow. It wasn't working. There was no connection. I was miserably unhappy and felt pretty guilty about that. Have I mentioned that I was once a Catholic?

Like I said I will not point fingers, but at this time I ran into a man who paid attention to me. Unfortunately, the list of women he paid attention to was longer than his... arm. Serial cheaters stop short of being serial killers, but they still

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do a lot of damage, and they are either addicts or sociopaths or both.

I will split hairs here and say that I emotionally cheated and backed off of the ultimate betrayal, but emotional cheating carries some of the same guilt.

All things happen for some bizarre reason, and this time I was to be identified as the latest person he was dallying with, but I wasn't the chief dally. Anyway, all hell broke loose. I can see me raising my hand (student-like) in my mind's eye in a swirl of angry people and meekly protesting. I was still very ashamed of my own behavior and could have stopped that train before it left the station.

So, I needed to air that.

A little more on cheating in general. Killing someone once doesn't make you a serial killer, just as cheating once.....anyway, it is a poor way to end a relationship. It hurts everyone.

Pay attention here and you can learn if you are cheating or thinking of it. It is *self-*destructive, and it is a particular kind of emotional pain that can ruin any chance of parental camaraderie for the children. God forbid you *tell* your children, especially if they had no knowledge anyway, in an attempt to vilify the wandering spouse. You are no better than the cheater in my book and worse—you are venomous.

Now, that said, people make terrible mistakes. If you cannot learn to forgive yourself and others, then you might do what I did. I wasn't high up there on the self-esteem ladder, so I thought I would pick partners later that would contribute to my self-loathing. Sorry guys, alcohol and drug abuse does not make a person a good companion, husband or stepfather. Some of these unions can be really scary. My alcoholism had escalated, and craziness ensued. Let's just say at one point, I could have been seriously harmed.

I stumbled into the program of AA when I was at my emotional and physical bottom. Crawling out of that hole was arduous; the layers were muddy-thick and I felt mired in

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them for a few years. I was vaguely annoyed that these recovering people spoke in bumper stickers, and the program itself had a cult-like air, but ultimately it taught me 12 steps to a sane life. If I had to endure all the sorrow and addiction in my life to come to this kind of clarity, then I am grateful. Regrets? Of, course. My children were present for all of this. I love them deeply and wanted so much more for them than my paralyzed existence.

In the end, practicing the steps, not drinking, praying (to something) and showing up for meetings gave me much more than sobriety. I rediscovered the spiritual being I had always been.

This is where my current husband entered my life. He had already been years on this same journey. It is an old but viable adage that until we are a whole person we aren't ready to have a relationship with another person and, at least in my case, that seems to be true.