

The Rebirth of Bridey Murphy

The Survival Files — Case 36 — ESS = 274

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The phrase “a household name” has rarely been more truly applied than it was to the name Bridey Murphy during the late 1950s and early ‘60s. The impact of Morey Bernstein’s book, *The Search for Bridey Murphy*, was felt in virtually every city, town, and hamlet in the Western world because it suggested that the theretofore alien concept of reincarnation was a demonstrable fact. In the media frenzy that followed the book’s release – it was even made into a movie – numerous falsehoods were circulated as debunkers and überskeptics attempted to undermine the evidence. These days, the idea of reincarnation is not so novel and the brouhaha over Bernstein’s book seems almost a bit of quaint Americana; nevertheless, the evidence remains strong and the tale fascinating.

Only a brief summary of that tale can be told here. For the full story, read the 1965 version of Bernstein’s engrossing book. This is referred to as “the counter-attack version” as it includes full rebuttals to all the misinformation spread by overzealous critics. Also, Bernstein had LP records made from the session tapes and some may still be available via the Internet.

Before looking into who was Bridey Murphy, it is important to know who was Morey Bernstein. Some detractors like to picture the man as a dabbler in occult arts and/or an opportunistic seeker of fortune and fame. In fact, Bernstein was a well-to-do and highly respected businessman in both New York and Colorado, where he served on the board of directors of four leading firms. Bernstein was a pragmatic man who had once walked out on a stage demonstration of hypnotism because he wanted to make certain that his friends knew that “this silly business” was beneath his intelligence. Not until years later, when he witnessed a demonstration in a friend’s home, did he decide that hypnotism was a subject worth pursuing. Over a period of 10 years, he became highly skilled at his new avocation. Often the local medical community would request his services to hypnotize a patient and he always complied without accepting any compensation. Furthermore, he did not seek publicity. When a friend of his suggested that a newspaper reporter write an article about his experiences, he was quite resistant to the idea.

Why Bernstein, a materialistic scoffer who laughed at hypnotism and was repulsed by the concept of reincarnation, came to champion both, is a story well told in his book. Suffice it to say that on his very first attempt to regress someone back beyond her infancy, his patient, Virginia Tighe,¹ recalled several previous lives — one of which was as an Irish girl named Bridget Kathleen Murphy. In that session, and five more ensuing, Bridey provided a richly detailed description of her life during the first half of the 19th century. Hundreds of facts were given that were most unlikely to be known by Tighe. More than a few of these were thought wrong by scholars but were proved correct through diligent research.

Particularly striking examples of “impossible-to-know” facts are Bridey’s statements that, while living in Belfast, she brought “foodstuffs” at “John Carrigan’s” and at “Farr’s.” No one living in Belfast, or anywhere else, could confirm that such establishments ever existed, until a

¹ In an attempt to protect her privacy, Bernstein calls his subject “Ruth Simmons,” but her actual name was soon made public. Virginia had to be cajoled to participate in the sessions as neither she nor her husband had any interest in pursuing past lives, and they both shunned the public eye.

local librarian, after weeks of searching, found a directory for 1865 that listed both as greengrocers doing business in the same sector of the city. The two grocer's names were given during different sessions and, by themselves, constitute powerful evidence that Bridey's story is exactly what it claims to be.

Another convincing piece is Bridey's statement that, in her youth in Cork, she lived "outside the village" in a place called "The Meadows" where she had no neighbors. Again, the "Meadows" was unheard of at the time of the regressions, but researchers later found an 1801 map of the Cork area that shows a large pastoral area called "Mardike Meadows" just to the west of the city. This is the only "meadows" on the map. No more than eight buildings are shown, spread throughout 82 acres of land. Thus the area perfectly fits Bridey's description in location, population, and name.

No one, living or dead, could reasonably be expected to recite hundreds of details about their life and never make a mistake, but, so far, none of Bridey's statements have been proved false and no contradictions discovered. Time and again, the "experts" have claimed that Bridey was wrong about one arcane point or another, only to see her vindicated by further research. Her use of the term "slip" to mean a child's frock, or "linen" instead of handkerchief, are just two of many such instances. According to William J. Barker, a journalist who spent weeks in Ireland investigating various statements: "Bridey was dead right on at least two dozen facts 'Ruth' (Virginia Tighe) could not have acquired in this country, even if she had set out deliberately to study up on Irish obscurities."²

As for the possibility of there being other information sources in Tighe's life, despite the fanciful inventions of those desperate to undermine her story, the fact is that no source other than a past-life memory is either feasible or credible.

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² Bernstein, Morey, *The Search for Bridey Murphy*, Lancer Books, Inc., 1965, p. 303.