



Survival Top 40 — Case #71 — ESS = 275

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A Country Revival

This story concerns two women, Susan Singer¹ and Sharon DeMint, who lived about 60 miles apart and never met or heard of one another prior to the occurrences detailed here.

Singer was raised on a tobacco farm near Owingsville, Kentucky. She never attended school, picked up her very basic reading and writing skills from a friend, got married at 15 to Jacob Singer, moved into his parent's home and, 3 years later, gave birth to a son.

In contrast, DeMint's father was a college professor in Berea, Kentucky, and she took advantage of the complementary tuition to get her bachelor's degree in home economics. She was married at 18 and had two sons.

Only 6 months after the birth of her second child, on the 19th of May, DeMint's dead body was discovered lying between the tracks of the local railway.

One of DeMint's uncles had visited her the evening before and reports that she had been crying over mistreatment by her in-laws, but that she had not seemed suicidal. DeMint's father accused her in-laws of murder, but a police investigation failed to find compelling evidence thereof. No doubt this failure was partly due the fact that her husband had her body cremated immediately, so there was no way to confirm eye-witness testimony that the corpse did not appear to be mangled as would be expected if hit by a train.

A few months prior to DeMint's rather suspicious demise in Berea, Singer began to suffer periods of loss of consciousness that lasted from a

few minutes to an entire day. On two occasions she was seemingly possessed briefly by discarnate personalities. One of these claimed to have been a local Owingsville woman who had drowned herself in a well; the other asserted that he had been a man from Muncie, Indiana.

Although the ministrations of a local healer did seem to calm Singer at times, they did not stop her intermittent trances. During one mid-summer episode, she predicted her own imminent demise, and 3 days later she seemed to have achieved that state. Her respiration and pulse were undetectable and her face became drained of blood like that of a dead person. A considerable group of persons surrounding her were convinced that she had died, and some began to cry. There was no doctor available to make a declaration, so we'll never know whether or not Singer was clinically dead. All we know is that, when she revived several minutes later, she recognized neither her surroundings nor her family. She said little or nothing for a day after her revival. Then she announced that she her name was Sharon DeMint, and she demanded to be taken to her two sons in Berea. By that time, the actual body of Sharon DeMint had been naught but a pile of ashes for nearly two months.

Singer's in-laws thought that she had become possessed by a wandering discarnate personality who could be exorcised away or might leave spontaneously as had previous ones. But they made no attempt to verify that any such person had ever lived in Berea. Whatever efforts they made to banish the invading personality were clearly failures as the spirit of Sharon DeMint remained in control of Singer's body for 13 years, until she died – or died again.

¹ All names in this discussion have been changed for reasons explained later.

It took a month before DeMint's father got wind of a story about a young girl claiming to be his deceased daughter. On October 20th, he traveled to Owingsville and tracked down the girl, who immediately recognized him as her father.

These incidents soon caught the attention of the press, and folks sent clippings from two different newspapers to the best-known investigator of such cases, Dr. Ian Stevenson. Within a month, Stevenson and his colleagues began interviewing witnesses. Over the next three years, interviews were conducted, and re-conducted, with 24 family members and another 29 folks who were in a position to furnish background information, especially concerning the communities and the intercourse between them. About 22 years later, a follow-up investigation was done by other researchers that involved interviewing some 15 surviving witnesses and examining a couple of previously unavailable letters that Singer/DeMint had written to DeMint's father. Rarely, if ever, has an apparent case of possession been so thoroughly investigated.

The pertinent facts these researches revealed are:

- All those who were part of, or had knowledge of, Singer's family testified that they had no previous acquaintance with DeMint's family.
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- When DeMint's father heard a rumor that his dead daughter had taken possession of a girl in Owingsville, he did not even know where the town was located.
- The revived Singer/DeMint (hereinafter referred to as "DeMint"— in quote marks) had knowledge of several of DeMint's possessions, including a particular yellow dress, and a watch and the box in which it was kept.

- "DeMint" knew the respective order of birth of DeMint's maternal uncles (although one who was younger actually looked older than one of the older uncles).
- "DeMint" knew which two colleges DeMint had attended.
- "DeMint" knew both of DeMint's pet names (as used by her family) and the names of her two children, two brothers, two of her sisters, two of her maternal uncles, a maternal aunt, and a nephew.
- When DeMint's father showed "DeMint" a photograph taken 18 years earlier, she correctly identified all six persons, including "herself," saying "This is me."
- "DeMint" was equally accurate in identifying the people in several other photographs, none of which had ever been available to the public or the press.
- In one of these photographs, she identified DeMint's sister-in-law, describing her additionally as the person "who hit me with a brick."
- On the other hand, "DeMint" recognized no member of the Singer family and none of the locations in which Sharon Singer had lived.
- Letters written by DeMint and "DeMint" were analyzed by a handwriting and fingerprint expert who concluded that there was "an overwhelming preponderance of probabilities that these letters have been written by the same person."
- Although Singer had virtually no education and could barely write, "DeMint" demonstrated a degree of literacy and knowledge one might expect from a college-educated spirit working through an unfamiliar body.
- Once she awoke, it soon became apparent that "DeMint" was unaccustomed to having to leave the house to relieve herself. Unlike the Singer home, the DeMint home had indoor toilets.

The number of witnesses, the number of researchers, and the number of facts presented, combine to make this a most convincing case for possession. Some might argue that it does not add to the proof for Survival after death because the spirit of DeMint was operating not from the grave but from a living body. The proper rejoinder to that is to ask: Where was the spirit of Sharon DeMint during the two months between the time her body was cremated and the time she awoke in the body of Susan Singer?

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As stated in the initial footnote, the names of the people and locations described in this case have been changed. The reason for this is rather unusual; it wasn't done to protect anyone's privacy, but to facilitate comprehension of the facts of the case. The actual events described took place in India. The research papers from which this case was derived used, quite naturally, the actual names of the people and villages involved. The strangeness of these terms to my English-educated ear and eye greatly increased the effort required to sort out who did what to whom and where. On the assumption that others might face the same resistance to absorbing the facts — and thinking that this difficulty might explain why the case has not been more widely recognized — I took the step of “translating” the names into those more easily digested by western readers. I certainly do not mean to denigrate the ancient and honorable languages of the Indian subcontinent. Neither, by the way, do I mean to suggest any ill regard for the people of Kentucky. In fact, my maternal ancestors were from the areas mentioned and I choose Owingsville to honor the memories from visiting there in my youth — tobacco fields, outhouses, and all.

END CASE 71

Source:

The documents on which this article is based are:

“A Case of the Possession Type in India With Evidence of Paranormal Knowledge” by Ian Stevenson, Satwant Pasricha, and Nicolas McClean-Rice, in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol. 3, No. I, pp. 81 - 101, 1989.

“Shiva Returned in the Body of Sumitra: A Post-humous Longitudinal Study of the Significance of the Shiva/Sumitra Case of the Possession Type,” by Antonia Mills and Kuldop Dhiman, in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 59, Part 233, October, 2011.