

PSI RESEARCH AT THE RHINE RESEARCH CENTER

The Rhine Research Center is a non-profit research and educational organization devoted to the scientific study of the paranormal, those mysterious powers of the mind that seem to go beyond the known senses. Located off of Morreene Road in western Durham, North Carolina in a modern building designed specifically for research, the RRC is an independent center that continues the traditions and careful methodology that my father JB Rhine developed years ago at Duke University.

Extrasensory perception (ESP) became a household word back in the early 1930's when my father used it to describe the card-guessing ability of selected Duke University students in controlled laboratory tests. Up to that time psychic abilities such as telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition were considered matters of folklore or belief and in most academic circles were too controversial to even discuss.

My parents JB and Louisa E. Rhine questioned the prevailing view. With doctorate degrees from the University of Chicago, they decided to forego promising careers in conventional science to investigate the serious psychic claims they had heard from seemingly normal people and scholars of their time. If people could somehow get extrasensory information over distance and even time, or make contact with a possible spirit world, that indicated something very significant about human consciousness that was worth serious investigation.

Searching for answers, my parents traveled down to the dusty little tobacco town of Durham, North Carolina in the late 1920's to consult with a renowned British psychologist, Dr. William McDougall who was developing the first psychology department at Duke University. McDougall, an independent thinker among his contemporaries, believed that psychical research was a proper subject for university study. Under his supervision, my father began testing Duke students for their ESP abilities using special cards known as Zener cards in standard lab procedures that could easily be evaluated.

As a child my earliest memories are of the excitement of that next decade as the ESP tests began to bring remarkable results and attract visitors and other researchers from around the world to the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory. Positive evidence was obtained first for clairvoyance, now known as Remote Viewing, and the results were not deterred by the nature of the target or by the distance from the target. Telepathy and precognition were the next abilities isolated, the latter demonstrated when subjects predicted the order of Zener cards as they were randomly determined at a given time in the future. The last ability identified in the laboratory was psychokinesis (PK), or “mind over matter” as measured by mental intention in dice-throwing tests. In all of these studies JB and his team were finding internal effects and relationships with psychological variables that helped reassure them that they were dealing with a normal human ability and not some weird statistical artifact.

Those original methods for studying the paranormal abilities, now known as “psi,” have now been superseded by more modern techniques that greatly reduce the possibility of sensory cues and human error. They more nearly duplicate the conditions under which spontaneous psi experiences are known to occur—i.e. quiet relaxed experimental rooms and free-response targets that mimic real life.

Another legacy from the early days is the collection of nearly 14,000 real-life case reports of psi experiences from the general public that was begun by my mother Louisa E. Rhine in 1948. Our RRC collection is now the largest collection of its kind in the world.. A recent book *The Gift: ESP, the Extraordinary Experiences of Ordinary People* (St. Martins Press, 2005) by co-author Michael Schmicker and myself gives an overview of the findings from the early case studies along with 200 representative cases that we have continued to collect over the years. This is an easily readable book that aims to help people realize the ESP is a natural and normal ability, even though some people show much more ability than others.

Many ESP case reports in our book are from local North Carolina people, such as a poignant account from a respected local attorney Bill Olive about an incident that occurred when he was seriously injured while serving in the 95th Infantry in World War II.

At about the same time that he was lying wounded, in freezing weather, on a battlefield in Germany near the Saar River, his mother back home in North Carolina awoke from a sound sleep and began to pace the floor in great distress telling her worried family, “Billy needs me, Oh, I know Billy needs me.” It was uncharacteristic of his mother who had never acted that way before during the time Billy was in service. A nurse who took care of him at a field hospital that night reported that Billy kept calling out “Mother, Mother” as he lay on the stretcher.

A local woman was driving by the Pentagon on her way home from vacation in August 2001, when suddenly she screamed out loud and braced herself against the dashboard in response to a terrifying “vision” of the Pentagon engulfed in billows of smoke that was accompanied by an intense feeling of free falling. When she looked again at her husband’s insistence, the Pentagon looked entirely normal, but then to her horror a few weeks later she watched her original “vision” become a reality as the events of 9/11 unfolded on the TV screen.

Seven of ten of ESP experiences reported to the Rhine Research Center deal with unhappy events or tragedies and most often are about someone to whom he/she is close. .But there are many everyday and less dramatic events typical of what over half of the American public report, such as when you think of an old friend or acquaintance and then they suddenly call or email you that very day. Or have a sense that someone is staring at you from behind, only to turn around and find that they are. We continue to learn more about how ESP operates in everyday life from these reports and welcome receiving more reports of psi experiences from the public to help further our research.

The Rhine Research Center was renamed to honor my parents in 1995 and continues its original mission to gain a better understanding of the “reach of the mind” as indicated by these extrasensory and extramotor experiences. Aided by the media, the public interest in psi is stronger than ever but often lacks the factual basis that the work of the RRC strives to provide.

Current research at the RRC is focusing on the telepathic

ability of folks with special creative or artistic abilities and those who have a history of psychic experiences. A recently completed study looked at the ability of healers and non-healers to use their mental intention in affecting the health of living cells in a test-tube situation.

Sally Rhine Feather, 2005. Dr. Feather is Director of Development at the Rhine Research Center, 2741 Campus Walk Ave., Building 500, Durham NC. Readers are invited to learn more about the center, the educational programs, or volunteer opportunities. Call 919-309-4600 to be on mailing list or check the website at www.rhine.org

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