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Channeling provides many with access to higher spiritual realm, experts say

By Mary Courtis
Of the Emerald

Kevin's head fell to his shoulders as he went into trance. His breathing changed. In about five minutes there was a sudden shudder through his body. His head bobbed up again. His eyes were shut. His mouth opened, and in a few moments these words came:

"Hail, State purpose of gathering."

— Shirley MacLaine, "Dancing in the Light"

Channeling.

Like crystal balls and tarot cards, the word traditionally invokes an image of a middle-age woman with a wild hairdo and makeup who lives in a spooky house. Her specialty is convincing the dim-witted and gullible that she can talk to spirits or that spirits talk through her. Ventriloquism, slights of hand, accomplices or electronic gadgetry are thought to be the methods by which the medium perpetuates her spiritual illusions. The phenomena is generally dismissed by scien-

tific circles.

Either channeling is simple nonsense, hysteria or fakery, its critics claim; or if it does exist, it is better ignored or at least not taken seriously.

Recently, however, attitudes are changing toward channeling and the investigation of the paranormal. Reputable scientists have begun to investigate such diverse phenomena as life after death, telepathy, ESP, reincarnation and precognition.

Celebrities, like Shirley MacLaine and Joyce DeWitt, also have come forward publically to discuss their spiritual experiences and talk show hosts like Phil Donahue have had channelers as guests on their programs.

Current surveys also show that belief in the psychic and unexplained phenomena is increasing among the American population and advertisers have been quick to exploit this new market. Tapes and books on channeling and developing channeling powers now are being offered through bookstores and mail-order business like "The Mystic Traders." Workshops and classes on the subject are available as well.

Clearly, many people are beginning to accept channeling as a legitimate phenomenon. But the questions remain. What is channeling? How does it work? Can anyone do it? What are the possible benefits or dangers of becoming involved in it?

Essentially, channelers can be divided into three groups. The first is the sensitive, or psychically gifted person, who picks up and relays messages for another personality. This process usually involves the channeler going into a "trance" and giving their body over to the other personality, who then speaks through them. In some cases the channelers' transformation also may be physical as well as mental. While in trance, the channeler may sound and or act differently, sometimes displaying mannerisms or tastes that do not characterize his waking state. Some people even state that they can feel a difference in the type of energy the sensitive projects when they are channeling. Shirley MacLaine, for example, writes:

"J.Z. was a beautiful blond with a kind of delicate friendliness. Ramtha was a

definitive masculine energy of loving forcefulness. When she went into trance and Ramtha came through, everything about J.Z. changed. The soul energy of Ramtha was in her. J.Z. is about 5-feet-4-inches tall and not particularly strong. When Ramtha came through, he picked me up in his arms and carried me around the room, nearly lifting me over his head. I could feel his masculine energy through her arms. I am a heavy, muscled woman weighing usually between 130 and 140 pounds. Using his energy to strengthen J.Z.'s arms, he had no problems with my weight."

The second type of channeler is a sensitive who also receives information from one or more personalities but does so without going into trance and "checking out." Unlike the first type, this kind of channeler remains aware of him or herself and his or her own thoughts as well as what the person he or she is channeling is trying to say. Also, these sensitives usually do not display the differences in body kinesics and other mannerisms while they are channeling.

"It's more like having a conversation with someone except that the communication takes place without words," said "Letha," a channeler and science-fiction writer. "When I sit down to write, I mentally give a yoo-hoo to my characters in their dimension. Then we begin to write together — they feeding me their emotions, thoughts, sights and experiences and I writing them down on paper as they are conveyed to me. It's a partnership."

In addition to writing with them, her characters are available to chat with whenever she wants to, Letha said.

"The connection we maintain is very intense, very intimate," she said. "We have weathered some rough times together, and no matter what happens in my life I can count on my friends (channeled personalities) to be there to comfort and support me. Of course we fight sometimes and get exasperated with one other just like in any other relationship. But when it matters we are there for each other; it's a wonderful feeling to be able to share myself so deep-

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