

Fortunetellers (Continued from page 5)

riage, this time to a journalist or lawyer. "This may sound like fortunetelling, but it isn't. It's a science," he assured me.

I have pages more from the transcript, and as I look through them, I am amazed and confused. Was he a fraud? He may not have been too good on his dates, but his analysis of my character and medical history was remarkably accurate. And what about the tape machine? Did he know he was being recorded? I don't believe so—when I left, he shook my hand enthusiastically—yet I can't be sure.

My final soothsayer was a famous clairvoyant. She was recommended by a shirt manufacturer who confers with her on important business decisions. Clairvoyants claim to sense vibrations about your past and future by looking at you, and this particular one was supposed to be so sensitive that Dr. Joseph Rhine, the renowned parapsychologist from Duke University, had conducted tests with her.

No Foolin' the Psychic

"She's psychic," my friend warned. "She'll know about the recorder the minute she looks at you." As I waited in her study, I was secretly hoping she would have such genuine occult powers, and yet I was fearful of being discovered.

"Well, darling," the clairvoyant said as she entered, "you're a fidgety little thing. How old are you?"

"Oh, I thought you'd know." She scowled at me but proceeded in a businesslike tone. "I see an 'F' and a 'B' around you, and—whose's Hal?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I get an 'H.' Sounds like Hal." I started to search my memory for a Hal, but she stopped me. "Never mind, never mind. You're going to meet him shortly." As she rapidly threw more initials at me, I reached into my purse to make sure the tape was running. "Are you never going to get everything out of that purse you want?" she said. I froze. But, a minute later, she was "in a trance" and announcing dreamily: "You will make a change in your living. I get a move around you."

"From my apartment?" I asked.

"Yes, or someone who lives with you will change."

"I live alone."

"Well, it could mean your apartment will be painted," she said, opening her eyes irritably. "That would be a change."

She then saw me in a room with a piano and a great career in music (I can't even carry a tune). With her hand on her forehead, she complained, "You're blocking me." She leaned across the table. "You know, darling, I don't live in your material world. You live in doubts, while I have everything. You haven't found yourself, and I can make you into anything

you want to be," she continued.

"I want to believe in your psychic powers," I said, "but..."

She slammed her fist on the desk. "Why, you sassy little piece of humanity. I don't have to prove myself to you. I work all over the world for millions. You're going to listen to me and learn something if I have to spank you."

I was angry, too, as I paid the woman her fee of \$15 for insulting me. And yet it had been an instructive experience. The technique of the fortuneteller was becoming familiar, and this clairvoyant had used every trick. Ask more questions than you answer. Intimidate, then praise; warn, then console. Flood the customer with prognostication—sooner or later you will hit the truth. If questioned, justify your prediction indignantly, even if you must use spirits to back it up.

The pattern was clear, but at the same time I could see why so many people go to fortunetellers. Few of us ever feel completely satisfied with our lives, and we all have fears about the future. A successful soothsayer can calm our anxiety by offering "knowledge" of what is to come and by promising love, prosperity, and self-expression. Once we believe this is to be our "marvelous" future, we often have a way of making it come true.

Among the fortunetellers I visited, there were enough inconsistencies in the predictions (my age ranged from 19 to 30, children from 0 to 6) that I ended up feeling they were mostly amusing, diverting charlatans. But some, like the astrologer, seemed extraordinarily skillful at "sensing" things about people. Many scientists accept the idea that certain individuals have psychic or intuitive powers of perception which far exceed the realm of chance. Can they predict the future? Who really knows?

That Graphologist Again

When I returned home from the clairvoyant, a second letter from the graphologist was waiting. Eagerly, I compared it with the first character analysis. She obviously had seen a similar character in both of my letters, regardless of the name I'd signed, and yet the tone of the second was more hopeful. She described me as skeptical, not distrustful. Instead of being rebellious, I merely needed action; instead of being undisciplined, I was headstrong.

Penned across the top of the page was a note which read: "Sorry I've taken so long to answer. I was ill and tired recently, and have just come back from a vacation."

Suddenly, I felt like laughing. This was exactly what I had said before writing the second letter. I had predicted her vacation. I wondered: am I psychic?

Hugh Man on the

While raising a family and a fund



The tune is Near Eastern with daughter Deirdre on recorder,

AT 4:45 EACH WEEKDAY MORNING, two shrill alarm clocks (one electric, one mechanical) awaken television host Hugh Downs for work. About 8:30 in the evening he responds to the insistent tone in his 13-year-old daughter's voice:

"Doctor Kildare's coming on—time for you to go to bed, Daddy."

For 20 years Hugh Downs has been at the mercy of predawn alarm clocks and early evening orders to go to bed, and now, as a first-rank tv star with two popular shows, nothing has changed—including Downs' calm approach to the whole business.

Part of the calmness is inherent; part is acquired by the frustrations of a career which has had its darker moments; but most comes from a family which adjusts good-naturedly to Dad's topsy-turvy schedule.

Downs recalls, for example, when he and his wife, the former Ruth Shaheen, were married in Chicago 18 years ago. "We bought a home in suburban Wilmette," Hugh says. "My schedule was so busy then that I saw it only at night the first few weeks. Finally, I got a day off, woke late, and peered out the window in brilliant daylight—what a shock!"

"Ruth," I yelled, "somebody has put a white fence around our whole lot. Don't the neighbors like us?"

"Ruth calmed me down right away. 'That's our fence,' she said. 'It came with the house. Come on, since you're paying for the house, I'll introduce you to it.'"

The early days for Hugh and Ruth had more serious upheavals. Hugh was discharged from the Army in 1943

Downs: Go—But Not in a Hurry

of knowledge, he has steadily climbed to tv stardom **By JACK RYAN**



son H. R. on drum, Hugh on piano, and Ruth the listener.

and grabbed a top announcing spot with NBC in Chicago. But other announcers subsequently were discharged who had more seniority with the network, and Downs found himself being squeezed into unemployment.

Ruth had been a successful radio director, but she now was expecting a baby. She had no intention of resuming her career, her Lebanese traditions insisting on a full-time role of mother. Hugh reluctantly decided to give up on Chicago, a proving ground for future stars, and take a step backward by going to a smaller city. "Why don't you hang on here just a while longer?" Ruth suggested one night. "Let's not act hastily; maybe something will come up."

Hugh hung on—and on and on until NBC found him indispensable. He spent 13 years in Chicago (notably with "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie"), then came to New York for a series of popular shows. Hugh has many characteristics—he's an omnivorous reader, tinker, hobbyist, writer, composer—but his friends inevitably emphasize this ability to "hang on."

PERSISTENCE paid off not only in Chicago but also in New York during those roller-coaster years with Jack Paar. Not everybody could have taken five years of being alternately father confessor and foil to the mercurial star, yet Downs did so with calmness and dignity. In the process, he built up a following of his own, which helped land him the "Today" show and the quiz program, "Concentration."

Nowadays, the Downs' household occupies an eight-room apartment furnished in French provincial and facing Central Park. Downs' son H. R. (Hugh Raymond) is 17 and a sports-car fanatic. "I have a secretary named

Ferrari," Downs says, "and every time H. R. hears the name his ears stiffen. He has saved up \$600 for a sports car from money he has earned, and I wish he had more. I want one myself, you see, but if I bought one, H. R. would stop working for his own, and all the worthwhile fun of it would be gone."

Daughter Deirdre is passing through the teen-age phase of mothering Dad, especially since Mrs. Downs, feeling her youngsters are grown enough now, has returned to her career as president of the family's three-year-old company, Ralin, which makes industrial films.

"Ruth gets the kids off to school and goes to work late," Downs says. "I'm home early enough in the afternoon now to spend more time with them than ever before. I used to worry about my job not allowing me to spend enough time with them, but over the years I learned that the quality of time spent is more important than the quantity. We always have been a family with a great deal of curiosity, and we spend what time we have exploring new things together. That seems better than spending a lot of time together without a purpose."

"Nowadays, of course, I don't get to help with things like homework—education speeds kids along so fast these days. H. R. already is teaching me about things—physiology, for example." Downs pauses, obviously disturbed that there is an area of learning he is deficient in. "I'm going to study that, but now I'm deep in astrology."

Downs' intellectual curiosity isn't just an on-camera gimmick. Sometimes, his life appears keyed to various facts, figures, and footnotes. If he mentions that he and his wife are flying to Washington on separate planes, he doesn't pass it off just as "safety"; instead, he explains the decision in actuarial terms, carefully balancing risk against probability. "This year," he says, in concluding the lecture, "H. R. will be 18, man enough to care for Deirdre, so Ruth and I will fly together."

He tells about the long summer weekends his family enjoys on a yacht and adds: "We charter the yacht. You see, if you can use a boat a certain number of days a year—say 120—it pays to buy one. But if you can't, it's better to charter. We figure we could use it only half the necessary days, so we charter."

Downs watches his weight carefully. It can fluctuate 20 pounds under certain situations: "I gain mostly when I work too hard." He walks about five miles a day to keep trim, but what worries Ruth is his tendency to overwork.

"Once, when the schedule got very heavy," Downs says, "I went to the doctor for a checkup. 'Tell me,' he said, 'do you like what you're doing and the people you work with?' I answered that I certainly did. 'Then don't worry about working too hard,' the doctor told me. 'Come back and see me when you have half the schedule—but are doing something you don't like.'"

It isn't likely Downs will be back for that reason. He likes many things and most people, and now, with H. R. and Deirdre growing up, he is looking forward to sharing more of his career activities with Ruth.

Success has not been an overnight thing for Hugh Downs, but as he has pointed out: "Slow ones seem to stick around longer and enjoy it more."

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