

The American Society for Psychical Research 1941-1985: A Personal View

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This article describes the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) from the so-called "palace revolution" in 1941 until the present. Information has been drawn from the ASPR's library and archives, from interviews, and from my own personal notes and recollections of the period following 1962, when I joined the staff.

THE "PALACE REVOLUTION"

In 1936, as editor, Jocelyn Pierson Kennedy opened the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* to reports by experimental parapsychologists such as Murphy, Rhine, and Taves. She was an intelligent woman, astute enough to be able to correct ([Pierson], 1941) the work of the renowned Oxford historian, E. R. Dodds (1934). And, according to Mauskopf and McVaugh (1980, p. 298), she was one of the leaders of a revolt that has become known as the "palace revolution." The revolution took place because of extreme dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Society, which neglected the modern experimental approach to parapsychology, and instead emphasized seance-room phenomena, the "Margery" mediumship in particular. A new experimentally-minded generation of parapsychologists emerged, having banded together under the Boston Society for Psychic Research. They captured public interest and aroused some attention from the academic community. Although Rhine's Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University was undoubtedly the leading center of the new experimentalists, the Boston Society for Psychic Research and the ASPR were also affected.

The terms of five ASPR trustees expired in 1941, and all were up for re-election. At the January 28, 1941 election of ASPR officers, William H. Button (a lawyer by profession), who had served as president of the ASPR since 1932, and three other incumbents were defeated. All four candidates from the competing slate won: George Hyslop, Mrs. Laurence Jacob, Gardner Murphy, and John

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Whitehead. Four trustees whose terms did not expire resigned ("Notice to Members," 1941a). Another two trustees resigned later ("Notice to Members," 1941b). Jocelyn Pierson (now Mrs. R. L. Kennedy) and Lydia Allison were appointed to the Board on March 25th, 1941. Psychiatrist George Hyslop, son of the ASPR's founding father, James Hervey Hyslop, became President, and Gardner Murphy became the Chairman of the Research Committee. Gardner Murphy, according to his wife, Lois Murphy (personal communication), was strongly concerned that the ASPR become a genuine scientific organization.

With the new Board came many changes. The ASPR's official involvement in the Margery mediumship ended: The chief investigator, Brackett K. Thorogood, was dismissed, and he was not replaced. The Constitution and by-laws were revised, and the almost defunct Boston Society for Psychic Research was absorbed into the body of the ASPR. A new editorial committee was formed, and the monthly journal was turned into a quarterly; the *Proceedings* was temporarily suspended. Laura Dale was hired as a full-time staff member with the title of Editor and Research Associate. The Hyslop-Prince Fellowship was established (Hyslop, Murphy, Kaempfert, Zabriskie, & Kennedy, 1941) and was awarded to a student of Columbia University, Ernest Taves, under the supervision of Gardner Murphy ("Announcement," 1941).

The changes consisted of more than just new faces and the termination of the Margery investigation (by that time, according to Thorogood [personal communication], Margery was in ill health and drinking heavily, so that the research was nearing a close anyway—she died on November 1, 1941 ["Mina Stinson Crandon," 1942]). Rather, the entire outlook of the organization underwent a metamorphosis. The Button group had been running the ASPR so that it would appeal to the lay public. The Society had organized seances for its members, published short essays and anecdotes on mediumistic performances, and did not keep up with current research methodology and interests. Murphy, on the other hand, pressed for a contemporary scientific orientation with a strong emphasis on the psychology of the paranormal. Button held a derogatory attitude toward psychologists, as illustrated in the following remarks from his 1939 presidential address:

Any such ideas as those promulgated by Dr. Rhine were not at all acceptable to our psychological friends. They are in the unfortunate position of living in a house something like one of the prehistoric dwellings perched on poles in a remote European swamp. They are not pleased to be told that a lot of their foundations are rotten—hence one source of opposition is that they might have to hire other quarters, possibly at increased rental. (Button, 1939)

These sarcastic remarks were uttered at a time when Murphy and Rhine were trying hard to recruit psychologists, including some of great stature.

In all fairness to Button's administration, it must be mentioned that reports of Rhine's work were published in the *Journal*, and the Administrative Secretary was allowed to recruit ASPR members as subjects for an experiment of Murphy and Taves. Button even went so far as to allocate a small sum for Taves' work: In 1939, he received \$50 per month plus expenses for building a testing apparatus. Button and John O'Neill (1940), then Chairman of the Research Committee, wrote a kind, paternalistic introduction to the *Proceedings* in which the experiments of Murphy and Taves (1940) were published. Thus, a new parapsychology was taking root in the old ASPR even before Button's administration was ousted.

Overall, the break was not as drastic as is commonly thought. Out of the four officers of the Board, only the President and Secretary were new; the Vice-President and Treasurer continued in their positions after the 1941 election. The Vice-President, Mark Richardson, was one of the core members of the Margery group, and he was reelected in 1942 when the new faction had a firm hold on the organization. The *Journal*, unlike the strictly experimental *Journal of Parapsychology*, continued to publish mainly theoretical, often speculative, papers. Reports on mediumistic phenomena continued, although at a reduced rate, and spontaneous cases were frequently reported. Due to her upcoming marriage, in 1941 Jocelyn Pierson resigned as Editor of the *Journal* and was replaced by Laura Dale.

Nevertheless, a policy change was made public. Hyslop (1941) described the Board's new policy in the *Journal* as follows:

We must again be guided by the original purpose of the Society, a purpose which centered about the collection of information and the investigation of the various phenomena which psychical research has traditionally accepted as being within its province. Equally important is the publication of reports which measure up to the standards required in any other branch of science. (Hyslop, 1941, p. 113)

There was, however, something in common between the old, out-voted faction of the ASPR and J. B. Rhine that the Murphy group did not share: a tremendously high expectation for what the acceptance of the paranormal and its implications would mean to humanity. Button's expectancy was based on the seance-room phenomena and Rhine's on the application of rigorous scientific methodology to research on ESP and PK in college students. Murphy's expectations were more modest and were bent on integrating the paranormal with mainstream psychology and philosophy. Ini-

tially, he and Rhine shared the hope that soliciting criticism, which could be incorporated into future research, from leading psychologists would win their acceptance of and involvement in parapsychology. This hope was thoroughly frustrated in the course of events.

THE 1940s: REJUVENATION

The ASPR has attracted relatively few leaders who were known at a national or international level outside of the field of parapsychology itself. Perhaps the best known are William James, William McDougall, and Gardner Murphy. The ASPR has sometimes flourished under the leadership of such men. This is not to say that these leaders always got their way. Even Gulliver was tied down with invisible strings. Gardner Murphy was the leader of the ASPR from the 1940s until illness incapacitated him in the mid-1970s. Ernest Taves (personal communication), who witnessed the beginning of that era, wrote me: "As far as I was concerned, Murphy was the Society." This was also true when I joined the staff: Gardner Murphy was the center of the Society. The ASPR flourished when he was present, declined in the 1950s when he was absorbed in other work in another state, and declined yet again when his poor health prevented his active involvement. However, Murphy was not a loner. He brought many valuable professionals to the Society and integrated them into its functioning.

In his autobiographical paper, Gardner Murphy (1957) states that in the early 1940s he worked at the ASPR five or six mornings per week (p. 173). Such extensive participation by an intellectual giant was bound to lead to the rejuvenation and growth of the organization. Out of this period of intensive study came a series of seminal papers on parapsychology which Murphy was to publish in *JASPR* in the 1940s (Murphy, 1943, 1944, 1945a, 1945b, 1945c, 1946), as well as the sound remarks in his SPR presidential address (Murphy, 1949b). This period also provided Murphy with the background information which later was to be presented in the lectures which Murphy gave to the ASPR in the 1950s through the early 1970s and which also were published in *JASPR* (e.g., Murphy, 1952, 1956, 1959, 1962b, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1973).

Gardner Murphy was an eminent psychologist with an unusually wide range of informed interests. He had a genius for seeing things in a holistic way. President of the American Psychological Association in 1943-1944, he was at home in experimental psychology, personality, social psychology, and research on clinical methods. He was able to take into consideration the older, prescientific

thinking of Europe and Asia, together with the latest developments in the field. Whenever he walked through the door into the ASPR's headquarters, I felt the presence of a giant who could see further and deeper than could I. Everything he considered was raised to a higher plane, the larger landscape of thoughtful humanness. His social touch was warm, considerate, and deeply understanding. He shaped the ASPR like a gardener who loved his plants.

Gardner Murphy tried to involve productive, contemporary researchers in the ASPR and in other ways improve the Society's status. In 1942, such luminaries as Margaret Mead, J. B. Rhine, and Henry James (son of William James) were elected to the Board, as was professor of psychology Bernard Riess. None of them were notably active in the ASPR, and, I was told, they were bored with the nitty-gritty matters which Hyslop often put on the Board agenda. However, Mead was especially insightful, exposing the deficiencies in the experimental methods of the 1940s. The following is a quote from the minutes of a Research Committee meeting in which Mead criticized the bivariate design which was dominant at the time: "Our approach is in error; our approach must be a study of the nature of what occurs in its whole setting, not just a search for the paranormal element in an unspecified context." She went on to say, "A study of times and circumstances of telepathic experience is necessary. Why and when is there a loss of ability? Anthropological comparisons are indicated, as well as the study of motivation. Our testing procedures are dull. Our methods are a cultural punishment of psychic ability" ("Minutes of Research Committee," 1947).

It is of interest that in the minutes of a 1943 Board meeting it is noted that the membership of a certain G. Jung from Kusnacht, Switzerland was suspended. No reason was given, and it might have been a trivial matter such as not paying dues. Nevertheless, it is strange that, although at that time Rhine was able to develop a friendship and exchange of ideas with Jung, a fruitful relation did not develop with the ASPR.

As President, George Hyslop seemed oriented primarily toward guarding the treasury and handling the daily administrative and financial affairs of the Society. He was an uninspiring person who had a great interest in small details. In later years, he told me that his main concern had been to maintain the endowment amassed by his father. He said that he watched the fund with the eyes of a hawk, guarding it from abuse. His critics said that he was so narrowly focused on this goal that his hawk eyes did not see the real needs of the Society. Hyslop's Scottish thrift embittered many, and thrift it certainly was. For example, Laura Dale's first full-time salary was set at \$100 per month; the Board minutes even con-

tained a mention of the decision to purchase an electric clock—a weighty decision which obviously necessitated careful deliberation by the Trustees! In the early 1940s, the ASPR's annual disbursements were kept under \$12,000; by 1950, they had reached approximately \$14,000. The endowment was indeed preserved, and it increased year after year. I do not have exact information on what this did to the plans of Murphy's group, but it certainly was counterproductive to growth and expansion. Gulliver was, once again, held down. According to Hyslop's presidential report, only in the late 1950s was there readiness to sponsor research by utilizing the capital (Hyslop, 1959). The budget became a little more generous in 1961, the last year Hyslop held the presidency. The total expenditures, including the publication of the *Journal*, amounted to an astonishingly low \$25,000. However, no matter what else might be said of him, George Hyslop showed his generosity through the amount of time he volunteered to the Society over his 25-year involvement.

A real spark, and a hard worker for the ASPR since those early days of the Murphy era, was Laura A. Dale. The ASPR publications of those days reflected a very positive attitude toward a wide range of research, such as experimentation on ESP and PK, surveys and individual case studies, work with mediums, a review of the survival research of J. F. Thomas (Dale, 1941), theoretical papers. Laura Dale's enthusiasm and productivity as a researcher in this early period was very high; as she herself implied, she had a "Midas touch" (Taves & Dale, 1943; Taves, Dale, & Murphy, 1943). The 1943 annual report of the Research Committee alone lists three studies with mediums: Eileen Garrett, Chester Grady, and a "Philadelphia group" in all of which Laura Dale was involved.

In 1941, Ernest Taves had an office at the ASPR and collaborated closely with Dale and with Joseph L. Woodruff, who was at City College and was holder of the Hodgson Fellowship from Harvard (Allison, 1958, p. 42). Taves published a number of methodological and experimental papers in the *Journal*, but as an experimenter, he lacked the "Midas touch," as one can see from the unimpressive results of his joint research with Laura Dale (Taves & Dale, 1943; Taves, Dale, & Murphy, 1943). Eventually, he became disappointed, lost interest, and went on to a career as a psychiatrist.

Another successful experimenter, Gertrude Schmeidler, became interested in parapsychology when she attended a summer course on the subject given by Murphy at Harvard University. Some of her papers about her now-famous "sheep-goat" studies were published in *JASPR* (Schmeidler, 1943a, 1943b). In 1946, she was ap-

pointed Research Officer of the Society and conducted a joint experiment with Lydia Allison (Schmeidler & Allison, 1948). However, with Murphy's help, Schmeidler soon obtained a teaching position at City College of New York and conducted research under their auspices instead of those of the ASPR. Nevertheless, Schmeidler continued her involvement with the ASPR as a trustee, as a member of the Research Committee, and later as the Society's president.

Joseph L. Woodruff, who had been trained in parapsychology at Tarkio College and at Duke, also obtained a teaching position at City College. Dale and Woodruff (1947) conducted a successful PK experiment, which replicated Dale's (1946) replication of the dice-throwing research of Rhine's lab, and a study of experimenter-subject relationships (Woodruff & Dale, 1950). Woodruff was a member of the ASPR Board for several years, but his interest in parapsychology waned, and in the 1960s he retired to Florida.

In 1947, Laura Dale resigned as editor of *JASPR* in order to devote full time to research (Allison, 1958, p. 43). Allison was made head of publications, and under her direction the *Journal* became a lively forum for a much wider variety of parapsychological approaches than Rhine's *Journal of Parapsychology*. Murphy's broad horizons were partly responsible. However, the *Journal* shrank in size. Before the "revolution," it had contained close to 400 pages annually; now it was reduced to just under 250. The content of the *Journal*, however, was much improved. Short, inadequate reports on mediumistic sessions were pruned, giving way to papers by the best available authors: theoretical papers by Murphy, Rhine, and G. N. M. Tyrrell; experimental reports by Dale, Taves, and Schmeidler; spontaneous case reports by Dale; and accounts of successful sittings with mediums by Allison herself. Several papers were also published on various aspects of the survival question.

Membership in the ASPR had declined during the later years of Button's administration. It dropped from 826 in 1935 to 448 in 1940. The first four years under the new leadership did not improve this situation. Only in the mid-1940s did a slow upswing begin. Membership reached the 600 mark in 1947 and stabilized at approximately 800 during the period from 1953-1962. A membership survey by Allison (1944) showed that the new experimental slant of the Murphy team aroused the interest of only a minority of members. The majority were intelligent laypersons, not scientists and psychologists who could understand the need for modern sophisticated techniques.

In 1948, something radically new emerged at the ASPR: the

establishment of a "Medical Section" ("The Medical Section," 1948). A group of highly intelligent and creative psychiatrists developed a clinical approach to parapsychology. From this group, Jan Ehrenwald, Jule Eisenbud, and Montague Ullman emerged, all very influential figures. Although Rhine had championed and won the dominance of the quantitative experimental approach, the Medical Section promulgated the qualitative methods of clinical case studies and attempted to integrate them with quantitative testing. Psychiatric theories were brought to bear on the paranormal, and Eisenbud, who has called himself "a card-bearing Freudian," was an especially psi-conducive person whose patients provided a remarkable abundance of ESP in the therapeutic situation. Others in the group, such as Geraldine Pederson-Krag, also presented many cases for discussion (see some of the papers in Devereux, 1953; Pederson-Krag, 1954). There was a lively cross-fertilization between Murphy's psychological approach and this new breed, which he warmly welcomed to parapsychology. Although the majority of the group did not share Murphy's broad horizon, his metatheoretical interpretations of psi, or his interest in survival, they did have a common base in the application of depth psychology to psi. Later in the 1950s, when Eisenbud relocated in Denver, Colorado, the activities of the Medical Section declined and eventually ceased. Nevertheless, the impact of the ASPR's Medical Section was seminal: Ullman's epochal dream experiments and the many book and journal publications of Ehrenwald, Eisenbud, and Ullman have become an integral part of modern parapsychology (see Ullman, 1975, for an overview and a bibliography which cites books by Ehrenwald and Eisenbud, among others. Since then, Ehrenwald and Eisenbud have published additional books [Ehrenwald, 1978; Eisenbud, 1982, 1983]).

THE 1950S: REORIENTATION

In 1950-1951, Gardner Murphy left the United States in order to spend a year in India, and in 1952 he relocated in Kansas, becoming Director of Research at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka. Even though he continued to participate in the Society from a distance, his absence was strongly felt. Although extensive experimentation was going on at the ASPR, fewer positive results occurred.

In 1949-1950, the "Midas touch" had flared up at Harvard, where two students, S. David Kahn and Ulric W. Neisser, carried out an innovative ESP experiment using a computer (Kahn, 1952). Positive results were obtained from students in a basically skeptical

psychology department. According to Kahn (personal communication), Laura Dale, representing the ASPR, became so interested in their work that she assisted him with some of the evaluations and in writing the report. Then Dale attempted a replication of the Kahn-Neisser experiment using students at Hunter College. The ASPR gave Kahn and Neisser summer stipends to carry out another repetition on its own premises (Research Committee, 1953). Both replication attempts failed.

In the 1950s, Kahn continued to participate in well-designed experiments at the ASPR conducted jointly with Dale and Ehrenwald, but the Midas touch did not return.

Ullman and Dale conducted an exploratory experiment on dream telepathy, which created the impetus for the famous Maimonides project, but the results were not conclusive enough to merit independent publication. (They are described, however, by Ullman and Krippner, 1970, pp. 13-27, and by Ullman, Krippner, with Vaughan, 1973, pp. 57-72.)

In the mid-1950s, Gardner Murphy turned the ASPR's focus to spontaneous case investigations, where experimenter effects would not matter, and which he hoped would provide a richer source of information on the nature of psi than did the then current experimental research (Murphy, 1953, 1955).

In 1955, the Society for Psychical Research organized and the Parapsychology Foundation sponsored a conference in Cambridge, England on spontaneous case research ("The Cambridge Conference," 1955). Gardner Murphy played a prominent role in organizing the conference, and he and other ASPR officers attended (Lydia Allison, Laura Dale, and Brown philosopher and ASPR trustee C. J. Ducasse). As a result of the conference, a vigorous plan to study spontaneous cases was developed and put into action at the ASPR with the support of a modest grant from the Parapsychology Foundation. Several methods for soliciting cases were tried, but most were not successful. As Dale, White, and Murphy describe it:

The circulation of questionnaires worked out jointly with our British colleagues played some part in preparing us for such studies, but, having found that most of the usual methods of appealing for spontaneous case records, such as individual appeals, round robins, mail inquiries, newspaper advertisements, and public opinion sampling, were bringing almost no returns either in Britain or in the United States, we determined upon a somewhat more radical method. . . . [C]ontact was made with one of the editors of *This Week Magazine*. . . . One of their staff writers came to visit G.M. in Topeka and conducted a series of intensive interviews. . . . In a "box" published in connection with each of the three newspaper articles which ap-

peared on successive Sundays . . . we asked readers to send accounts of experiences to the American Society for Psychical Research. (Dale, White, & Murphy, 1962, pp. 4-5)

About 1,200 replies were received. Dale classified the incoming reports and followed up the "grade A" cases. Although the magazine cases seemed to please Dale, she felt that all the efforts made had netted only a handful of worthwhile reports. Because of Murphy's absence and insufficient funding, this work did not go smoothly and was not written up until years later (Dale, White, & Murphy, 1962).

The *Journal* became smaller and smaller; the Annual Reports mentioned criticisms and discontent concerning the research and membership activities. I recall J. B. Rhine expressing the opinion at a staff meeting that psychical research societies were past their prime as he read a letter from a Texas supporter who called them "moribound." According to the annual presidential reports, the ASPR's Board was groping for a change and a new direction for its research efforts. In 1958, Murphy was asked to come up with a plan. The trustees were now willing to consider funding viable projects with capital taken from the Society's growing endowment. The 20-year era of Hyslop's Scottish thrift, which strangled the ASPR's activities, was at an end.

In 1959, Laura Dale, the ASPR's principal worker, resigned. She had been overworked and underpaid, doing the job of two people: editing the *Journal* and conducting experiments and large surveys of spontaneous cases. She also had to cope with the Society's correspondence and the never-ending stream of visitors to the library, where her desk was. She moved to Long Island, where there was more space to raise her prize boxers, and took a position as a technical editor.

Rhea White, a creative parapsychologist who had been trained by Rhine at the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory, was hired to take Dale's place. White and Dale closely collaborated as colleagues and friends. A psychologist, Marjorie Newstrand, was hired part-time to do joint interviews with White with promising spontaneous case percipients in an effort to cast light on the psychology of the psi process. White made progress in finalizing the report of the ASPR's case survey (Dale, White, & Murphy, 1962), primarily because after a year at the office she insisted on doing her writing and editorial work at home where she was free from constant interruptions. She succeeded well as editor, and she conducted several classroom ESP experiments with the collaboration of a friend who was a guidance counselor on Long Island (White & Angstadt, 1961, 1963a, 1963b, 1965). However, White found herself

working 70 hours a week for a subsistence wage and decided to find a more productive means of earning a living as well as free herself to think about parapsychological problems in a fresh way. She resigned in 1962 and enrolled in the Pratt Institute Graduate Library School while also doing research on ESP and creativity under the direction of Gardner Murphy. White having established that the *Journal* could be edited from a home base, Laura Dale agreed once more to assume the editorship of the *Journal*, working from her home on Long Island.

THE 1960s AND 1970s: DECADES OF PROGRESS

From 1962 on, the *Journal* was firmly shaped and its high standards maintained by Laura Dale. The research issues were still unsolved, but the ASPR was now ready for action. First came the engagement of Fraser Nicol, who had previously worked with Rhine and then had been supported by the Parapsychology Foundation. In 1961 and 1962, he was employed as the ASPR's Research Associate. He had pioneered multivariate methodology in parapsychology and loved the history of psychical research. However, instead of the expected thrust forward with research projects, Nicol wanted to remedy a grave error of the past: The ASPR's publications did not have a cumulative index, thus access to their contents was difficult to accomplish. Nicol set out to index the Society's publications. He did more work than he had initially promised, adding short abstracts of each item indexed. This was monumental, painstaking work for which Nicol found a publisher. Inadvertently, he stepped on some toes: Dale opposed the publication of Nicol's work, indicating some slight errors, and there was concern over the ownership of the work, if published. A committee was established to consider the matter, and finally the project was dropped. I watched this development with cold shivers, seeing how easily good, painstaking work done over a period of years could be buried in the ASPR files.

The ASPR's tide turned in 1962 when Gardner Murphy took over the presidency. Once again, he was decisively and devotedly spending much of his time in parapsychology. He began his administration with a published statement to the Board in which he expressed his goals for the ASPR: to "do solid work in the nurture, encouragement, and training of research scientists in the prosecution of research, and in the establishment of an intelligent public attitude toward psychical research in this generation and those that are to come" (Murphy, 1962a, p. 204). Murphy had received a large grant from the Hutcheson Family Foundation for his work on creativ-

ity and ESP. He was determined to kindle flames in many places, including his old love, the ASPR. Later that year, he invited me to join the staff as the new worker in his old, beloved place. I was given the optimistic, forward-looking title of "Director of Research," although, at that time, there was no one to direct but myself, a circumstance which I later changed. From now on, this will be an insider's report. I have the advantage of knowing this period firsthand and very well, but I also have the disadvantage of no longer being a detached, neutral observer. I was in the thick and thin of it, immersing my life in that of the ASPR.

In those days, we had a posh address—880 Fifth Avenue—a residential area of well-to-do New Yorkers. However, everything else about the place looked poor and inadequate. There were two good-sized rooms and an alcove between them for the desk of the Administrative Secretary, Adele Wellman. "Oh, you survived the weekend," she would greet me with a faint smile that could not hide the suffering of a thoroughly disillusioned person. Both rooms were lined with dusty library shelves, and one room contained my desk. There was no lab, no research staff, no equipment to speak of, and no enthusiasm on the faces of the people who walked in. Everything looked out-of-date and run down, except for the excellent air conditioner behind me. Rhea White worked on her research project mostly at home and, at the time, also seemed dispirited about the organization. The formerly well-attended ASPR lectures now mostly drew only 40–60 persons.

At the time it was difficult for me to understand (as I do now) the heroism of Dale and the others who worked to keep the Society going, in spite of the obvious signs of mismanagement. The effect of the Scottish thrift was evident in every corner. I took this as a challenge and was determined to help Murphy turn the tide. In retrospect, it would have been wiser to have been less ego involved and to have paid more heed to continuity, thus enabling me to keep on more friendly terms with the old guard.

Murphy basically gave me carte blanche and warm help whenever needed. He urged me to immediately start raising funds for our research program. A second survey on the deathbed observations by physicians and nurses was on my agenda as a carry-over from my work at the Parapsychology Foundation (Osis, 1961). Murphy had backed the earlier project and showed no less support for it now. We also had several ESP research projects in mind: ESP in relation to space and time, and the relation of ESP to states of consciousness, mood, and attention states, all of which seemed to be promising directions. I was attracted to Murphy's broad views, which integrated research problems with the larger outlook

of human personality. We also shared an interest in such metatheories as the transpersonal factors of ESP and the survival issue. Murphy returned to these issues again and again in the papers he published in the 1960s (Murphy, 1964, 1965, 1969). Small, disconnected research problems were in vogue at the time, but they seemed unattractive to us, like the clickity-clack noises coming from technicians' workshops.

Fund-raising was the number one task. Murphy and I approached a dozen selected foundations, and all the replies we received were negative, although some offered Murphy grants on psychology instead. He said, "Karlis, money is actually thrown at me now, but I cannot get anything for this."

Fortunately, we fared better with personal contacts with wealthy individuals. The first check came from Texas, and with it I could hope that more would be forthcoming to sustain the position. We had a long talk with Chester Carlson and received some modest but immediate help. Carlson later invited me to visit his home. As I could not afford a plane ticket, I took a bus and was received by that great man in a shabby bus station. There was something in Chester and his wife Dorris that fascinated me: their melding of the experiential, philosophical, and empirical aspects of psi together with the spiritual. Maybe it is a large whole that is not to be splintered into small parts, as we usually try to do in investigating it! With Murphy, one could breathe the mountain air which arose from vast cultural horizons; with the Carlsons, it was the experiential immediacy which struck me. Murphy theorized about altered states as conducive to psi; the Carlsons experienced them through very intensive meditation, and they achieved psi as well. Dorris Carlson was the psychic in the house, whereas Chester Carlson said he had been as materialistic as any of his physicist colleagues. However, he had been kind enough to let Dorris do a telepathy experiment with him. He made a drawing in their downstairs living room while she was in their upstairs bedroom trying to match his with a drawing of her own. She scored some similarities, which the skeptical physicist explained away. According to Chester, on one try, she came downstairs apologizing. She said: "I couldn't get it; I just got the hind part of our dachshund dog," which turned out to be exactly what Chester had drawn to tease her. That did it: From then on, Chester was convinced of the reality of psi.

Chester Carlson himself became deeply interested in parapsychology, read the journals, and gave financial support to several research centers. He was an ASPR Board member from 1964 to 1968, and he regularly financed our projects from the beginning of

my career at the ASPR until his untimely death in 1968. Then Dorris Carlson continued the same level of support through 1972.

Carlson supported several kinds of causes, parapsychology being just one among them. His wife was basically centered on the spiritual and also the paranormal. So far as I can tell, she seemed to have swayed and supported his interests in these directions. Carlson left a legacy of about one million dollars to the ASPR—the main source of its endowment.

Carlson's help was much more than financial. He helped me in envisioning projects. We used to brainstorm at his home before funding was decided. These long sessions often improved our research designs. His style and manner were different from Murphy's, but he, too, was concerned about metatheoretical issues in parapsychology, such as the essential nature of ESP, its relationship to physical and spiritual dimensions, and the survival issue. He supported our projects designed to investigate these metatheoretical issues. Just three days before his death, we brainstormed all day in my office with another spiritually minded physicist, Edward Samson. Carlson searched Eastern philosophy as well as Western thought for insights on the spiritual and the paranormal.

Contact with the Carlsons put me on the spiritual path of meditation. It was personally very rewarding and I feel made me a better parapsychologist, but it also alienated me from some of my colleagues both within and without the ASPR. Dorris had a knack of getting across to me the qualitative side of spiritual and psychic processes, which was a great help for my work, especially when designing and conducting our experiments on ESP and meditation.

Proper space for research work was necessary. In 1963, we rented three rooms on East 73rd Street, which provided office space for three persons and housed our first experimental equipment, including a first-generation small computer. As our work progressed, we began searching for a town house. In 1966, our present headquarters was on the market, but the Board decided against the building. I then arranged for Carlson to see the house. Along with an architect who was on the Board, we entered the building with flashlights. The shades were closed, there was no electricity, and dirt and dust were everywhere. Carlson thoroughly inspected the house. The debris did not seem to bother him; he saw the place with eyes that looked to the future of the ASPR and its growth potential. Suddenly, he turned toward me and said, "Karl, you need something like this for your work. I will double my pledge to the building fund." Because all the divergent factions of the Board understood that language, we purchased the building.

The growth of the ASPR, as Carlson had envisioned it, was on its way.

Equipping the laboratory with the appropriate apparatus was not easy. My first bet was on the wrong horse. Psychological literature contained reports about conditioning people to hallucinate. We knew, of course, that the veridical hallucination was a primary modality of spontaneous ESP. Therefore, we assembled equipment to condition hallucinations which could serve as a vehicle for ESP. We did not get any clear extrachance results. A polygraph was essential for experiments on psychophysiological variables, as well as physical ones. Murphy was especially interested in psychophysiological indicators of psi, hoping to find conducive states and induce them through biofeedback methods. Once again, Gulliver was tied down; "We don't need a polygraph" was the consensus of the Research Committee. However, Murphy encouraged me to order one if I could find outside money for it. I raised some of the needed funds from friends in Texas, Pennsylvania, etc., but I was still \$500 short. Murphy then got out his own checkbook, and the polygraph was ordered. I was moved to tears by this gesture, and sympathized when he had to face a stormy Board session because of it. The polygraph later became our centerpiece for recording lab data from specially designed equipment built for out-of-body research. It has been the pride of the ASPR: At least 40 television crews have filmed the red ink wriggles of its eight pens.

Research Projects

Early in the 1960s, with the support of a grant from the Ittleson Family Foundation and later the Scaife Foundation, Gardner Murphy set out to explore the similarities between creative and ESP processes, funding several researchers under his program, myself included. He saw in both processes the greater play of the unconscious when conscious control was de-emphasized. He favored investigating relaxed, dissociative states, whereas I proposed that we explore the highly aroused, intensive states which artists, musicians, and writers use for their peak achievements. Murphy was intrigued by this idea. I conducted in-depth interviews with 29 artists, asking questions for about four hours each. Their statements were carded, cross-indexed, and evaluated by qualitative and quantitative methods. Through her literature research, Marian Nester assisted by supplying statements by and about well-known sensitives and mediums in regard to their experiences of psi and

altered states. We compared her material with that provided by the artists I interviewed. The results were compiled in a book manuscript, *Creativity and ESP*, which interested Murphy so much that he worked it over and advised us chapter by chapter. He liked the book. However, over the years we received only two proposals from publishers: Both asked for ASPR support if the book did not pay its way. Despite Murphy's considerable interest, the Board refused to give the manuscript their financial support. Once again, years of work got buried in the files, as had Nicol's book of abstracts. Only a small percentage of the sum invested in the project was needed to get the book over the hump, and I personally could not afford to pay this myself.

My first survey of the deathbed observations of physicians and nurses was conducted at the Parapsychology Foundation (Osis, 1961). The second survey was started there and carried over to the ASPR when I joined the ASPR staff. It was a large-scale statistical study, which later Dr. Thomas Todd helped me see through at the computer evaluation stage. Clear trends, which I felt favored the survival interpretation, emerged; my interpretation could be countered, however, by the possible influence of expectations based on religious beliefs. American belief systems (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish) were too similar for effective comparisons. We had to investigate the same phenomenon in another culture where dissimilar beliefs were present. Northern India was chosen as the target country. Funding was supplied by the Carlsons, as well as by the James Kidd Fund, which consisted of money that an uneducated miner bequeathed to survival research. (After prolonged litigation, the ASPR received a substantial portion of the Kidd Fund [one-third was given to the Psychological Research Foundation]. That was a national event: Four television crews came to the ASPR in the first week after the court decision.) The work itself was difficult and long. Dr. Erlendur Haraldsson worked closely with me on the Indian survey, and Dr. Ian Stevenson provided many helpful introductions in that country. The data collection was carried out in the early 1970s, and the book based on this work, *At the Hour of Death*, was published in 1977 (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977); 12 foreign editions were subsequently published.

The ESP channel, that is, the nature of the link between perceiver and object perceived, was an issue that had interested both Murphy and Carlson. I had also been fascinated by this question many years before in Munich when I was writing my dissertation on ESP (Osis, 1950). Murphy tended to favor Whately Carington's "big mind" theory (Murphy, 1962b, 1973). I proposed that we gather data on the hypothetical ESP channel by doing long-distance experiments. I hypothesized that if distance had (or did not have)

an effect on ESP while other factors, e.g., psychological, were kept constant, distance-related variations could be attributed to the channel. Carlson sponsored this study, and Murphy agreed to an all-out effort. Statistician Malcolm Turner helped to design and evaluate these investigations.

Our first step was a literature search covering all experiments that had been published in English (Osis, 1965). We found a statistically significant decline in ESP efficiency with distance. However, this decline was much smaller than the inverse square law of known energies. It seemed evident that this "small voice" of the distance effect was embedded in the louder "noise" of such psychological variables as personality, attitudes, and subjects' beliefs, moods, and attention states. We gradually developed a multivariate design which, we hoped, would enable us to unscramble the influence of distance effects from the multitude of factors comprising the psychological noise.

We conducted four experiments (Osis, 1976; Osis & Turner, 1968; Osis, Turner, & Carlson, 1971; Turner, 1965). In the first of the series, stimuli were presented by three collaborators in New York, Los Angeles, and Australia; their presence seemed to influence the scores. We then conducted an experiment in which one person exposed the stimuli during various stops on a trip around the world; such complex statistical evaluations as multiple regression and canonical correlation revealed distance effects. This trend was opposite from the dominant beliefs in parapsychology at the time. The complexity of this work was puzzling to those colleagues who were not well-versed in multivariate design and statistics; our results were challenged. The analysis was then reviewed by an expert in multivariate statistics and found to be correct. A by-product of these experiments was an abundance of information on the moods and attention states affecting ESP. On the whole, the moods of the experimenters, who exposed the stimuli in different locations thousands of miles away from the percepts, appeared to affect subjects' scores on clairvoyance tasks as strongly as did the moods of the subjects themselves (Osis, Turner, & Carlson, 1971). The effects of the moods of bystanders (those who were in the vicinity of the targets) were later explored in a specially designed experiment (Osis & Carlson, 1972).

Murphy's investigations on the subject of creativity and ESP revealed the importance of altered states in psi functioning (Morari & Murphy, 1967; Murphy, 1966). One way in which to induce altered states was meditation. Murphy, Carlson, and I were ready to probe this matter even further. Meditation seemed to release transpersonal or spiritual factors which are said to be relevant to psi functioning. The experience of oneness or unity, as described in

prescientific meditation literature, seemed to suggest an ease of information flow. We again developed a multivariate design to explore the effects of meditation on ESP scores. It was difficult to segregate the many factors involved, but we succeeded in identifying the ingredients active in the meditation experience. Ed Bokert, Mary Lou Carlson, and I worked closely together and published this work both in the ASPR's *Journal* (Osis & Bokert, 1971) and in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (Osis, Bokert, & Carlson, 1973). Our work was frequently cited by others in the meditation literature, and the psychological scales we developed to measure dimensions of the meditation experience were often used by other researchers.

In the 1970s, we organized and carried out the Indian portion of the aforementioned survey on deathbed and near-death experiences, and we developed methods for experimental and survey research on out-of-body experiences (OBEs). The OBE experiment was designed to measure psychophysiology, visual perception, and physical indices of the ostensible OBE presence. We chose a positive approach: to test aspects of the experience which could indicate that something of the personality could act independently of the physical body.

At the time, a negative, reductionist approach to the OBE was fashionable, such as testing variables such as imaging skills and peculiarities of dreaming in the hope of reducing OBEs to a product of these and other psychological functions. With the help of many staff members and consultants, we developed new procedures and equipment to tackle the problems involved in OBE research. We obtained highly pertinent results (Osis, 1978), chiefly with Alex Tanous and Ingo Swann (Osis & McCormick, 1980; Osis & Mitchell, 1977). Donna McCormick assisted in most of these experiments, and Boneita Perskari and Janet Mitchell assisted in some. Our research attracted international interest from the media. On the other hand, we received stiff opposition from many of our colleagues.

Membership

Before Gardner Murphy took over the presidency in 1962, our membership had plateaued at around 800. However, under Murphy's leadership, various efforts were devoted to recruit more desirable members and to actively involve them in the ASPR. Lecture attendance more than tripled by 1965, each lecture averaging well over 200 people. Small group activities were instituted. Our research projects used the talents of our members, e.g., 500 members were pretested for our long-distance experiments, and about 200 participated in transcontinental experiments. In 1965, a

day-long ASPR forum was held, aimed at attracting academics in the New York area. Faculty members and researchers from 34 institutions were in attendance.

Marian Nester, Eloise Yerger, and Frances Kish served as Membership Secretaries, part-time positions supported by donations from Arthur Twitchell and W. P. Bentley, were the driving wedge of the membership campaign. The position was abandoned later, and Executive Secretary Laura F. Knipe took over most of its functions. Rhea White updated and improved our library, instituting a new cataloguing system to provide better access to the book collection. By 1965, membership reached over the 1,200 mark, and this was doubled by 1968. Marian Nester launched the *ASPR Newsletter* in 1968. This greatly improved the contact between the membership and our headquarters.

An air of excitement and enthusiasm was present and felt by the members during that era; this atmosphere helped to build a new ASPR. Part of the success can be attributed to the strong effort that was made to bolster the Society's membership activities, as well as to the efforts of the research staff and volunteers. It was aided also by the changed cultural climate, initiated by the subculture of the 1960s, which included interest in ESP and the search for a new meaning of life. We at the ASPR had all hoped that an increased membership would improve the financial status of the ASPR. However, the expenses for services and administration increased more than the income from dues. Moreover, only the activities of the Research Department were able to attract substantial financial support.

Education

In 1963 and 1964, Frederick C. Dommeyer and Rhea White (1963a, 1963b, 1963c, 1964) published a 122-page survey on "Psychical Research in Colleges and Universities." In 1970, Robert McConnell came up with the potent idea of organizing a campaign to have courses on parapsychology taught in institutions of higher learning; to this end, he produced a curriculum guide. Marian Nester seized this idea and established an Education Department at the ASPR. Her intention was to compile reading lists and other materials for would-be teachers of parapsychology and their students, as well as to provide them with advice about curriculum.

Later, a directory was compiled entitled *Courses and Other Study Opportunities in Parapsychology*. It contained information about college-level opportunities for studying parapsychology, for both credit and non-credit. The directory was arranged geographically. For each state or country it listed the institutions, the type of

course or program, the instructor(s), and any additional details of interest. The directory revealed some surprising information: About 150 institutions of higher learning had courses on parapsychology.

It was not easy to provide students with material that was interesting enough to motivate them in an elective course, while simultaneously being scientifically sound. Many instructors greatly appreciated the information that the ASPR was able to supply. However, as time progressed, many other organizations and individuals flooded the field with competing publications and services; the ASPR's previously exclusive role as provider of educational information was over, but the department still continued.

Journal

As the 1950s drew to a close, the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* was at a low ebb as measured by the amount of qualified publishable material; the annual volumes were slim, totalling about 180 pages. When Rhea White took over the *Journal* in 1959, she was required to split her time between research, answering the ASPR mail requests, and editing *JASPR*. She managed to turn the tide despite that: The *Journal* grew to 208 pages by 1962. When Laura Dale returned in 1962, she became editor on a full-time basis, which is an understatement, as she usually volunteered an extra 20 hours per week to the task. For Dale, *JASPR* became a magnificent obsession, her life's work. Her dedication was evidenced by the growth and quality of the *Journal*. It increased to over 300 pages annually in 1964, to over 400 pages in 1966, and to over 500 pages in the peak-time of the early 1970s. From then on, *JASPR* stayed around the 400 figure, which was the same as in the period prior to the "revolution" in 1941.

Dale's editorship brought with it a shift in *JASPR*'s contents from a predominance of theoretical papers to a clear majority of experimental ones. In the 1940s and 1950s, theoretical and philosophical papers dominated experimental ones by a rough ratio of 3:1. The change in emphasis was gradual, but by the 1970s, *JASPR* completed the shift to a dominance of experimental and technical reports, as in the tradition of the *Journal of Parapsychology*. Although theoretical and philosophical papers diminished in number, book reviews held their ground. Thus, Laura Dale's editorship made a deep impression on the course of parapsychology from 1963 through 1981.

In the 1970s, the conservative wing of parapsychology dominated both of the major American journals in the field, *JASPR* and the *Journal of Parapsychology*. The journals provided a generous

forum for the conservatives, but the more liberal-minded authors were less frequently published. This may be one of the reasons why the student interest, which reached enormous proportions in the 1960s and 1970s, did not take root, develop, and blossom into professional careers. There was no forum available for the discussion of those subjects which excited students (as well as the liberal wing of parapsychology). Yet such a forum is essential for the maturation and concretization of ideas.

This new conservatism also hampered the ASPR laboratory, which was engaged in work that appeared to be "taboo" to advocates of the hard line in parapsychology. In the 1960s, Murphy had intervened and secured the publication of our work by evaluating rejected papers and making suggestions for improvement, which rendered them worthy of publication. In the 1970s, however, the OBE research was communicated primarily at conventions (Osis, 1974, 1975, 1979; Osis & Haraldsson, 1976), through private send-outs (Osis & Perskari, 1975), and in one article in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (Osis & Mitchell, 1977). Only one experimental report was published in *JASPR* (Osis & McCormick, 1980).

THE YEARS AFTER GARDNER MURPHY

The years after 1975, which marked the end of Murphy's active leadership, although he lived until 1979, seem more appropriate for a discussion of the contemporary ASPR, rather than of the history of the Society. I shall, therefore, touch upon these years in a cursory manner, mainly to accentuate Murphy's role in the history of the ASPR.

In the light of his advancing years, Gardner Murphy's strength was admirable. Serious health problems set in around 1970, and by 1975 he was severely incapacitated. In 1971, Murphy stepped down from the presidency in favor of Montague Ullman, his trusted friend and colleague. Ullman greatly respected Murphy. He consulted with him and maintained his ASPR policies. Thus, the change in the leadership of the Society resulted, not in an abrupt discontinuity, but in the gradual decline of Murphy's influence.

Gardner Murphy's absence was strongly felt. Although the Board and the staff were the same, a change nevertheless set in. We lost Carlson's support; the purchasing power of our endowment decreased to half of what it had been; and priorities shifted from research to education and the *Journal*. Membership also slowly declined, as did lecture attendance, which dropped from over 200 to about 60. The enthusiasm which had once been evident and necessary for growth was nowhere to be seen. What did the ASPR

lose along with Gardner Murphy? The following is my own, personal interpretation, which of course, is far from infallible.

Gardner Murphy had a mountaintop view of cultural history, but, at the same time, he had a warm concern for that which blossomed in the valley. He was an authority on the history of psychology (Murphy, 1949a), as well as on prescientific philosophy, which was evident in his books, e.g., *Asian Psychology* (Murphy & Murphy, 1968) and *Western Psychology* (Murphy & Murphy, 1969). Murphy had a talent for discerning good, positive achievements and potentialities, and for a much wider variety of contexts and areas than would be true of most other people. In the book of Genesis, a single line is repeated again and again, "And God saw that it was good." Murphy's sight was not that unconditional: He clearly discerned inefficient methods, views, and research, but he did have an eagle eye for seeing the good. That included people. And that is what made our organization a unified whole.

Those of us who did not make the mountaintop, but camped on its foothills, could not see as far as Murphy did. That which lies in the valley in front of one may be seen clearly and look good, but usually that which is hidden from one's sight is construed as illusory or as sheer nonsense.

When the giant on the mountaintop left, the unifying power of his sight also departed. The Board and staff split sharply into two factions, each perched upon its own hill and holding fast to the truth of singular, narrow landscapes. More often than not, Murphy had been able to reconcile widely divergent perspectives. Within the areas of legitimate research, he brought together those with reductionist views (i.e., reducing all phenomena to ESP, PK, or chance), and those who wished to conduct legitimate research into such problems as survival, OBEs, and psychic healing. The post-Murphy differences in the ASPR were not reconciled, but were manifested in fights between factions and in behind-the-scene politics. Although Murphy trusted people and delegated some of the Board's decision-making power to others, after he was gone the power was misused or even revoked, and the number of trivial topics addressed by the Board increased.

Of course, Murphy was not always right, nor could he always get his way (remember my simile of Gulliver tied down?). Sometimes disputes occurred, and, when they did, he was saddened by them. But Murphy was successful on enough occasions to lead the ASPR to a lengthy period of growth.

In the absence of a giant, a new style of leadership and a line of command needs to be developed, one which subordinates the views from individual vantage points to the larger prospect provided by the ASPR's goals for parapsychology. The ASPR is

still a viable, funded organization, and it has the potential for rebirth into another century of happy, productive existence.

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