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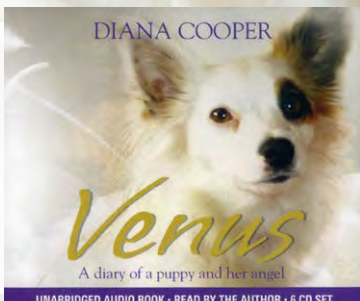
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## INTERVIEW

# FROM TAROT TO TRANCE

## HOW TO BE AN EVIDENTIAL MEDIUM

**JOHN HOLLAND**, one of the world's top exponents of spirit communication, reveals the secrets of his mediumistic development

GROWING up on the streets of Boston, Massachusetts, one of five children from a working class Irish-Italian Catholic family, John Holland realised he was different.

"I used to see spirit people in my bedroom when I was young," he explains, "and I knew what was going to happen or what people would say before they said it. I thought at that time that everyone could do that." When he realised this was not the case, John did his best to hide his psychic ability.

It took an automobile accident at the age of 30, in the early 1990s, to change his life completely. Though he was not seriously injured, the trauma of the crash had suddenly intensified his psychic ability.

"It was instantaneous. It was so fast. And I felt an energy surging straight through me. My psychic abilities seemed to become 100 times stronger."

John, who was living in Los Angeles, California, decided to embark on a psychic career. He was prepared to give up his job at a hotel, but first he needed to start using his abilities and developing them to help people in some way. He did so by giving tarot readings in an aromatherapy shop.

"I never really read the deck – I believe the images, colours and words on them are wonderful teaching tools to access and develop your intuitive abilities. I wasn't going by what the book said, but images would pop into my mind that pertained to the client in front of me."

After two years of doing part-time tarot readings, something strange and totally unexpected happened.

"I'd be giving someone a reading about their career and in would come their Uncle Joe or their Aunt Charlotte, and I said, 'What's happening? What's this all about?' I quickly realised I needed to understand

what was happening."

John started reading books about spirit communication avidly and, in particular, accounts by and about well-known mediums, healers and spirit guides, such as Ena Twigg, Estelle Roberts, Harry Edwards and Silver Birch.

"I was particularly interested in their life stories: how these people developed and lived with their abilities and managed them. I needed to understand what was involved if I was going to follow in their footsteps."

### TEST CONDITIONS

A decade later, John Holland had joined the ranks of America's top mediums, confidently filling large halls with his public demonstrations, bringing comfort to the bereaved and appearing on prime time TV shows about psychic powers. He is so sure of his ability to communicate with the spirit world or to tune into past events psychically that he even agreed to work under strict test conditions for TV documentaries.

Viewers of *Mediums: We See Dead People* which was broadcast in 2005 on A&E Biography channel, saw John in a New York taxi being taken to an unknown destination. Although not familiar with the city, he was blindfolded throughout the journey and at the start of the experiment.

Escorted into a nondescript building, he was taken up in a lift to the ninth floor. Once the blindfold was removed John walked around, followed by a film crew, as he described the feelings he was getting.

As he approached a stairwell he spoke of "feeling female" and then went on to say there had been a fire which he thought, judging by the clothes the women were wearing, would have been in the 1910s or 1920s. "I feel they can't get out," he added.



“  
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”

He was then taken to the ninth floor where the feelings became even more intense.

“It’s like a giant fireball and the heat is overwhelming,” he said, trying to control his emotions, adding that he could hear the women’s screams as they attempted to flee the inferno.

“I feel trapped. There’s no way out... I feel the tightness of how many people they must have put in this area. A lot more people than this place should have held. I was hearing sewing machines. Hard-working women. Textiles. Factory. They’re all lined up. It’s hot anyway, before the fire. It must have been a sweat shop... I felt I wanted to go out of the windows. It was overwhelming.”

The documentary’s voice-over said John’s psychic impressions were “extraordinarily accurate” as was his observation: “This would have been big history when it happened.” John Holland had been taken to a building in New York’s Greenwich Village that once housed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory which made ladies’ blouses. On 25 March, 1911, fire broke out on the eighth floor and quickly spread to the three floors above.

Some escape routes and exits were locked and the final death toll was 146 garment workers of whom 123 were young Italian or Jewish women, most under the age of 22. Of those who perished, 69 either jumped or fell to their deaths from the burning building, which today is a

National Historic Landmark and part of New York University. For the next 90 years, it remained New York’s worst workplace disaster until the events of 9/11.

The same degree of accuracy was displayed when John was filmed by the *Chronicle* newsmagazine TV series, first during a public demonstration and then giving spirit messages to individuals, one of whom was a Channel 5 employee, in private sittings. The impressive results, together with the documentary on the Triangle fire disaster, can be viewed on YouTube.com: see links in panel.

### HEADED FOR BRITAIN

So how did a part-time Los Angeles tarot reader develop and hone his skills to the level seen in these TV films and in his public and private demonstrations?

The answer, surprisingly, is that he left the United States and headed for Britain.

Why?

“What struck me, when I devoured those books on spirit communication and leading mediums, was that they were all from the UK. And I said to myself, ‘If I could only go to England and study with these people how great would that be?’

“Well, two weeks after that I stepped on someone’s foot at a party and we chatted and I discovered he was from England. Although not a Spiritualist he knew about

Spiritualist churches. He lived in Bristol and told me there were 10 churches in the area. I was amazed.

“His name is Simon Steel and we got to know each other, and he invited me over to England.”

It was a tempting offer but not one that seemed likely to materialise since John had a job and a rented apartment in Los Angeles. When his job suddenly came to an end a visit to the UK became more achievable, but he didn’t want to lose his apartment. However, a solution soon presented itself.

“An American friend of mine called me and said, ‘I’d love to come to California and study writing. I know you want to go to England. How about if you were to go to England, I’d pay your rent and live at your place while you’re gone?’”

Everything had effortlessly fallen into place to enable John to realise his ambition.

“Doors had opened. I’m a big advocate of synchronicity. If Spirit want you to go in that direction they’ll make it happen.”

He had never been to the UK before but, even though he loved its history and the architecture, sightseeing was not high on John’s agenda. “I was there to develop and *understand* my mediumship,” he emphasises.

Staying with Simon in Bristol enabled him to get to know the local churches.

“Being an American, I sort of stood out a little. But wherever I went they welcomed me in and gave me wonderful help and

advice. And one person led to another.

"Early on I was introduced to Joan Lambert, a Welsh medium, so I went to Wales to have a private reading with her. She then made contact with Margaret Stanley, president of Melksham Spiritualist Church in Devizes, Wiltshire, telling her, 'This young man has something special. Let's help him.' Margaret then introduced me to Marian Bishop at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, in Bristol, where I was interviewed and, after an assessment of my mediumship, invited to join their development circle."

Lambert, Stanley and Bishop are the three mediums he credits with training him and he says he was blessed that they came into his life when they did.

"Margaret Stanley was a forward-thinking president. She would take students into castles or manors with a pen and paper and say, 'Tell me what you're getting'.

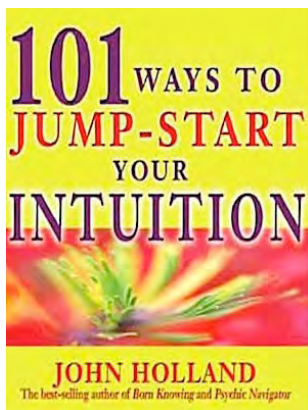
"I would pick up if there had been significant events, or something about the people who had lived there. That gave me the training to do a 'Location Reading', which was why I was able pick up impressions about the Triangle fire in New York many years later.

"So that's where I was for two straight years: every Tuesday night, at 6pm, in a Bristol development circle. They taught me discipline: if Spirit's going to be there for you, you must be there for Spirit. If someone was late, they'd just lock the door.

"That's where I got a lot of my training. I sat in circle, in meditation, with a proper leader – she would see when the spirit guides would come in and she would instruct me. I don't think I ever missed a meeting."

It wasn't long before John heard about the Arthur Findlay College and the various courses conducted at Stansted Hall, Essex. He attended two programmes there with tutors such as Simone King, Jean Bassett, Brenda Lawrence and Glyn Edwards.

"That was another place that taught me



discipline," John observes, "because they really work you and that's exactly what I needed. They taught me what it really meant to link with Spirit: how to do it in front of people, what colours mean, your aura. The Bristol circle was wonderful for practice; it was Stansted that gave me the real fundamentals of evidential mediumship."

Because of time limitations for visitors to the UK, John was required to return to the USA every six months to renew his visa. Such was his enthusiasm and dedication to developing his mediumship that he renewed his visa four times during his stay of a little over two years. "All my mediumship training happened in the UK," he emphasises.

He also got to see many British mediums working, including psychic artist Coral Polge, who drew his Tibetan spirit guide. The most memorable experience, however, was a transfiguration séance with a male medium whose name John can no longer recall. This is a form of physical mediumship, held in a red light, when ectoplasm forms over the medium's face so that the spirit entity can be recognised.

A young man's face appeared and he called for "John". Reluctant to respond at first, John eventually said, "My name is John" to which the spirit replied, "It's me, Michael. Please tell my family I didn't mean to do it."

"Oh my God," was all that John could utter in response.

"Little did anyone know that two weeks before I went to this event the brother of a friend of mine overdosed, and they never could tell if it was a suicide or an accident. I called the family and I told them, because they knew I was into this. They said they were not surprised because since he had passed away he had already appeared to other people in their dreams. That's an experience I'll never forget."

John was also introduced to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain, which was then in London's Belgrave

Square. "I was in my element. I can't tell you how excited I was. I went to a Christmas Cavalcade and there were Gordon Smith and Tony Stockwell, who were then young men in their 20s and are now Britain's top evidential mediums." Both have since played important roles in his life.

He first saw Gordon demonstrating at Melksham Spiritualist Church. "Gordon was kind enough to take me under his wing as a mentor. He took me to Scotland and I stayed with him. He took me to the churches and he even threw me out on the stage, as a student. I was so nervous, but he said, with that beautiful Scottish accent, 'Come on John, don't be nervous, you're not here to be judged.' I learned a lot from him."

John also knew of Tony Stockwell's mediumistic abilities – "he was always on my radar" he explains – but it was not until Tony started demonstrating in America that John got to know him. They both participated in an international conference on mediumship at Omega, New York, since when they have stayed in touch. "Every medium needs a friend: we always need another medium to talk to."

## LONDON DEMONSTRATION

Early next month, John and Tony will be sharing a platform in London for an "Enlightening Evening of Mediumship" at the Royal Geographical Society in Kensington (Friday, 2 October). It also promises to be educational, entertaining and, above all, evidential – a must-see event for all budding mediums. They will also be working together at the College of Psychic Studies on a "Raising the Standards" mediumship weekend (Saturday and Sunday, 3-4 October).

A similar format was used in August at an event in Pompton Plains, New Jersey, organised by The Journey Within – the first American church affiliated to the Spiritualists' National Union. John and its pastor, Janet Nohavec, shared the platform for "Where Two Worlds Meet", an evening of spirit communication open to the public. On the following two days they ran a course on platform mediumship.

As for the future, John – who has already authored four books with a fifth in preparation – expects to be devoting even more time to training and educating tomorrow's mediums.

That's not to say he's learned everything there is to learn.

"I'm now sitting for trance development with Tony Stockwell," he confides. "I'm excited about that and I think I'm ready for it."



A recent development circle at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, Bristol.

