

ROBERT MONROE [1915 —1995]

Robert A. Monroe, author of *Journeys Out of the Body* and two other books on his and others' out-of-body experiences died on Friday morning, March 17, 1995. Hundreds of thousands of people read his book(s) over the years, and many who had themselves had out-of-body experiences were reassured of their sanity by his books. Bob touched a lot of people's spiritual lives through his books and Monroe Institute trainings.

My wife Judy and I first met Bob in the fall of 1965, shortly after we had moved to Charlottesville for me to take up a research position at UVA. I had looked forward to this meeting for years, having heard about Bob's out-of-body experiences through a mutual acquaintance. Such experiences had long fascinated me and I had already done some research on them. I expected to meet an unusual person that I was professionally interested in: little did I know that this professional interest aspect would be a small part of a deep friendship that spanned the next 30 years.

For Bob and I, 1965 was an exciting year. I had interests in unusual areas like parapsychology and the nature of the mind by choice, having been fascinated by it since I was a teenager. Bob's interest in the area had been forced on him by his out-of-body experiences. "Why Me?" was a very real and persistent question for him back then and through the rest of his life, as were questions about his out-of-body experiences, like "Is it real?" or "What should I do with this information?" Because our culture was ignorant, pig-headedly ignorant, about these aspects of life, Bob had been struggling to answer these questions pretty much in lonely isolation. But by 1965 cultural changes were occurring, the dawning of what was later called "New Age" culture. Bob and I gave each other much good company and stimulation as we saw the world starting to open up to spiritual realities.

We discussed questions like how could we learn more about out-of-body experiences, both scientifically and spiritually? What did they mean? Was there a soul? What parts of religion were about great truths, what parts were misleading? How could you teach other people to experience out-of-body experiences for themselves, to see for themselves what was real? How could the insights of spiritual experiences lead to a better world?

In a formal sense, Bob wasn't "religious" and he wasn't a "scientist," yet he was deeply both in the highest sense. If "religious" is taken to mean dogmatic and narrow—aspects of religion that are, unfortunately, all too common in our world, then "religious" certainly didn't describe Bob. But insofar as "religious" means trying to fathom the meaning of life and acting with integrity and kindness along the way, Bob was deeply religious. Indeed, Bob had many personal experiences that are traditionally classified as mystical, the kind of deeply moving revelations that can lead the less mature to an attitude of "I know the truth and you don't, so just believe me and do what I say!" Yet Bob always kept a light touch about his experiences, valuing them, trying to share them, trying to help others experience them too, yet staying open to learning from life and not getting carried away by them.

If "scientist" is taken to mean an establishment authority figure who explains "away" all the spiritual aspects of life, and insists on his or her rightness because of their formal credentials—and there are all too many dogmatic people like that—Bob wasn't a scientist. But in the best sense of "scientist," someone who is always curious about reality and is willing to keep testing their ideas and beliefs, to experiment, Bob was a scientist. I have always thought of him as a brilliant colleague in my investigations of out-of-body experiences, of the nature of the mind, and of the meaning of life.

Bob devoted the last 30 years of his life to sharing what he had learned with others, while he kept experimenting and learning himself. The Monroe Institute and its training programs are as great a testament to his competence and kindness as could be given. Many people have had deep experiences which have markedly enhanced the spiritual aspects of their lives in these programs. His books have had, and continue to have, an even wider reach. These legacies are not just a great gift to knowledge, but a real service to people who are plagued by doubts and unfulfilled spiritual longings.

To end on this note would be high praise—and deserved praise—for my dear friend Bob has really contributed to making this world a better place. It would be quite incomplete, though, for it is a little too impersonal and doesn't

touch on Bob's great personal kindness to many people he came in contact with. I can remember many situations I saw Bob in, or heard about, where most people would have gotten angry and walked away, justifiably saying "This isn't my mess, I didn't cause this, the other person has created their own problem and suffering, they have to solve it for themselves" —but so often Bob stayed and helped. Many people know this kindness. Bob walked his Path with Heart. We will all miss him, even though we know he was ready and willing to continue the Great Journey Beyond.

I'll end with an anecdote that Bob would appreciate. A couple of hours after writing these words, and still strongly caught in my thoughts and feelings about Bob, I had just sat at my desk to do some work. My daughter and granddaughter, knowing my sadness over Bob's departure, had bought me a helium filled balloon shaped like a colorful fish. It had been mainly passively hovering near a wall that morning. Before I could start working, the fish balloon caught my eye, for it drifted quickly past me across the room to a corner where I have a picture of Bob on a bulletin board. As I watched, the fish balloon repeatedly drifted up and down, "kissing" Bob's picture with its lips! My careful and somewhat skeptical mind can reject this as coincidence, but my heart warmly says it might well be Bob saying a playful goodbye—it has strong elements of his style.

If you feel moved to remember Bob, the family suggests donations to the Nelson County Humane Society, P. O. Box 85, Arlington, VA 22922 earmarked for the cat wing. Bob was a great lover of cats.

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Of Interest

June 21-27. The American Holistic Medical Association in conjunction with the American Holistic Nurses Association annual conference, **The Changing Face of Healing**, will be held in Phoenix, AZ. For additional information call 604-943-6687 or 604-536-5037 or 919-787-5146.

June 23-26. ISSSEEM Fifth Annual Conference, **Integrating The Science and Art of Energy Medicine**, will be held in Boulder, CO with Willis Harman, Ph.D.; Caroline Myss; Elliott Dacher, M.D.; and Steven L. Fahrion, Ph.D. *See additional details on page 16 or contact ISSSEEM at 303-278-2228.*

July 12-17. The Fourth Annual IONS Conference, **Open Heart, Open Mind, The Transformative Spirit of Service**, San Diego, CA. For more information contact: IONS, 475 Gate Five Road, Suite 300, P. O. Box 909, Sausalito, CA 94966-0909 • VOICE 317-329-8445 • FAX 317-328-1475.

August 3-6. The Association for Transpersonal Psychology annual conference, **Imagination and the Arts: Gateways to the Soul**, will be held at Asilomar Conference Center, Monterey, CA. For more information contact: ATP, P. O. Box 30049, Stanford, CA 94309 • VOICE 415-327-0437 • FAX 415-327-0535.

August 8-12. **Integrated Complementary Medicine for All in the 21st Century**, the Third World Congress of Medical Acupuncture and Natural Medicine, will be held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. For more details regarding submission of abstracts or general conference information contact them at: 9904 - 106th Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 1C4 • Voice 403-424-22331 or 1-800-815-1116 • FAX 424-8520.

August 24-27. The Scientific and Medical Network and the Institute of Noetic Sciences announce a joint conference **Beyond the Brain: New Avenues in Consciousness Research** in Cambridge, England. For additional information contact: David Middleton, Merry Cottage, Grafton, Hereford HR2 8BL, UK VOICE +44 1432 276966.

December 4-10. **The Psychology of Health, Immunity & Disease** sponsored by the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine, will be held at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Contact NICABM, P. O. Box 523, Mansfield Center, CT 006250 • VOICE 1-800-7473-2226 or 203-456-21153 • FAX 203-423-4512

Parapsychology Research Scholarship. The Annual Eileen J. Garrett Scholarship of \$3,000 offers assistance to a student attending an accredited college or university wishing to pursue the academic study of the science of parapsychology. **Contact:** Parapsychology Foundation, 228 East 71st Street, New York, NY 10021 • VOICE 212-628-1550 • FAX 212-628-1559.