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KEITH M. T. HEARNE

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by KEITH M. T. HEARNE

Dept. of Psychology, University of Hull

ABSTRACT

The case of an ostensible precognition of the 1974 Flixborough chemical-plant explosion (which resulted in 28 deaths) is reported. The woman involved saw a TV 'Newsflash' about the disaster and told two persons shortly afterwards. In fact, the event did not happen until several hours later. The two witnesses confirmed her account. Recently, another ostensible precognition by the same woman concerned a non-injurious explosion in a local house, however the precognition was not communicated to others before the event.

Personality and background information about the woman is given for use in any future scientific comparisons with other percipients.

THE OSTENSIBLE PRECOGNITION

At approximately noon on Saturday, 1 June 1974, a 24 year old woman living in Cleethorpes, South Humberside, was watching television alone, when the word 'Newsflash' appeared on the screen and a male voice gave news of an explosion at Flixborough (some 40 km away) in which several people had been killed and injured. A couple who were staying with her at the time, came in shortly afterwards and the woman informed them of what she had heard. That evening they saw television reports of the disaster but were puzzled by the fact that the time of the event was given as late afternoon. The next day, on reading that the explosion had indeed happened then, the woman and her friends realized that an ostensible precognition had been experienced.

THE FLIXBOROUGH DISASTER

At 4.53 p.m. on Saturday, 1 June 1974 at the Nypro (UK) Ltd. chemical plant at Flixborough, South Humberside, a massive explosion occurred which virtually demolished the 60 acre complex. The disaster happened suddenly and unexpectedly, resulting in 28 deaths and hundreds of injuries. The effects of the blast were widespread: 1,821 houses and 167 shops and factories in the vicinity reported damage. The plant had been producing, annually, some 70,000 tons of caprolactam, which is a basic raw material for Nylon 6. The official report of the catastrophe¹ found that a 20-inch temporary by-pass pipe had ruptured, releasing a large vapour cloud of cyclohexane at 155°C, which ignited producing an explosion ('of warlike dimensions') equivalent to some 15-45 tons of TNT.

THE WOMAN PERCIPIENT

The following information is provided for use in any future comparative studies of personality and background data of other percipients.

The woman was born on 16 February 1950. She reports having had a stressful childhood in which a dominating, aggressive father was cruel to her mother and 3 brothers (2 are twins). Two of the brothers (including one of the twins) have

epilepsy. She went to a Grammar school and obtained 7 'O' levels. She has a musical ability and reached Grade 5 in music examinations, playing the viola. She married on 24 February 1968 and had 2 children (and a miscarriage in June 1969) before her divorce in September 1974. At the time of the Flixborough disaster, the woman was waiting for the decree absolute. She worked in a bank. The woman remarried on 29 October 1978 and has had another child.

Now aged 31 (1981), the woman is attractive and has a superficially 'bubbly' personality, although various worries can make her depressed. She is also subject to pre-menstrual tension and depression. She is broadminded, witty and intelligent in conversation. She has a phobia of sharp knives which developed after the birth of her last child. Her scores on Cattell's 16PF (form C, 1969 version) personality test² are: Factor: A, 5; B, 8; C, 3; E, 6; F, 6; G, 4; H, 8; I, 5; L, 4; M, 6; O, 4; Q1, 4; Q2, 7; Q3, 4; Q4, 6. M.D. standard score: 7 (factors O, Q4; C, Q3 therefore adjusted to those shown). Her Eysenck Personality Inventory, Form A,³ scores are: Extraversion, 15; Neuroticism, 5; L scale, 5.

The woman reports that she has had no personal experience of being frightened or hurt by any physical explosion in the past, but that as a child she used to lie in bed listening to small explosion-like bangs from a pumping-station near the house.

THE WITNESSES

The male witness, aged 23 at the time, was a welder with a local engineering firm. The female, also aged 23, worked in the same bank as the Percipient.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. The author became aware of the case in 1980, on meeting Mr. Robin Furman, who had written a brief account of the precognition in *The Grimsby News*. The matter appeared to be very important to parapsychology so a detailed investigation was undertaken. The woman was interviewed at length on several occasions and the witnesses were also visited to check their signed statement.

2. The television programmes for 1 June 1974 at lunchtime are listed in the Appendix. The woman is unsure which programme she was watching at the time but thinks it might have been the Anglia film. A letter was sent to each of the television Companies enquiring as to whether any unscheduled news bulletins were transmitted that lunchtime. All replied and all stated that no 'Newsflashes' went out then.

3. Recently, a second ostensible precognition was experienced by the same woman, concerning a non-injurious gas-explosion in a local house. However, the precognition was not communicated to anyone else before the event. The woman reported that while taking her baby round to a friend's house on the morning of 24 June 1980, at about 9 a.m., she felt compelled to take a different route from usual. Passing along Welholme Road, Grimsby, a strange thought entered her head. It was 'wouldn't it be awful if a gas-explosion happened in one of these houses, while children are nearby'. She did not tell anyone of her notion 'in case it sounded odd'. At lunchtime (12.30) that same day, an accidental gas-cylinder explosion occurred at 153 Welholme Road, Grimsby. The premises were severely damaged, but no one was hurt.

DISCUSSION

The case strongly supports the precognitive hypothesis. Often, there is the philosophical problem of separating out the alternative explanations of telepathy or clairvoyance. However, at the time of the precognition, no-one at the plant appeared concerned about a possible explosion. The shift which finished at 3 p.m. reported some trouble with a reactor but it was not considered to be at all serious. Therefore telepathy seems an unlikely explanation. Also, a clairvoyant intelligence of a faulty reactor-vessel would not have been particularly meaningful to the non-scientific percipient. The specificity of the precognition was such that an explanation in terms of a 'coincidental hallucination' must surely be exceedingly unlikely. The remaining possibility—that the woman and witnesses concocted the story—seems equally implausible to the author.

One theoretical point for consideration is whether a PK force (generated by some outside effect) altered the television signals so that the woman perceived a modified programme, or whether she visualized the sub-consciously obtained precognitive information and substituted it for, or superimposed it on, the actual television programme. Since no one else saw the precognitive 'Newsflash' with the woman, the point remains unclear.

The second case reported is similar to the Flixborough precognition in that, here too, an explosion was involved. Also, the precognition was a few hours ahead of the event. Perhaps the woman has a specific sensitivity for detecting such disasters, and might therefore conceivably be useful in providing fore-warning of accidental or natural (and even nuclear!) catastrophes. The percipient intends to inform the author immediately on sensing another precognition.

The woman reports that, at the time of both precognitions, her life was generally stressful although she has said that at times of stress her mind is not full of ideas of possible disasters—one of which might coincide with an actual event. It may be that a stressful state is conducive to psi sensitivity in her for some reason. Only further information can shed light on that aspect. The precognitions themselves have caused concern to the woman in that she has debated whether she 'caused' the events. That is a philosophical issue which no doubt worries many 'seers into the future'.

An interesting similar case to the Flixborough precognition was reported in the *Hull Daily Mail* of 16 December 1980. A 'medium', Mrs. Ruby Crowther of Huddersfield, stated that she was watching television on Easter Monday 1979, when the programme went off and she saw a 'vision' of a man murdering a blonde woman. She reported it to the police. Presumably some qualitative difference made her appreciate that the scene was not like a normal television picture. Perhaps it is not surprising that psi information should be conveyed via a TV screen in view of the fact that so much of our knowledge of the world reaches us by that means.

Note: The Percipient and witnesses have seen typewritten copies of this paper and have confirmed that they are satisfied with the report.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX

1. *T.V. programmes, lunchtime 1 June 1974*

BBC 1: 10.50 Weather. 10.55 Cricket. 1.00 Grandstand.

BBC 2: No programmes.

Yorkshire TV: 11.00 The Nevadan (film). 12.30 World of Sport.

Tyne-Tees TV: Same as YTV.

Anglia TV: 10.10 West Point Story (film). 12.05 Woody Woodpecker. 12.30 World of Sport.

2. *Statement*

I was watching television on Saturday, 1 June 1974, at early lunchtime, when I saw the word 'Newsflash' appear on the screen. A voice said that a serious accident, involving several deaths, had occurred at Flixborough. I was alone at the time. Two friends (named), who were living with me, came in a little later (between noon and 2 p.m.) and I mentioned the news to them. The next day we realised that the accident did not happen until several hours after I saw the Newsflash. I had no links with Flixborough and knew no one who worked at the plant.

(Signed).

3. *Statement*

We confirm that we have seen the statement made by (name) concerning the ostensible precognition of the 1974 Flixborough disaster and that she did communicate to us news of the accident at lunchtime on Saturday 1 June 1974.

(Signed by both witnesses).

Note. Further information may be obtained from the author, by *bona fide* researchers.