

Biography of Eileen J. Garrett (1893-1970)

Eileen Garrett (March 17, 1893 to September 15, 1970) is considered among the very best mediums of the Twentieth Century. She was primarily a trance voice medium, but also had abilities in clairvoyance, clairaudience, automatic writing, precognition, and healing.

Born in County Meath, Ireland, Eileen Jeanette Vancho Lyttle (hereinafter Garrett, her third married name) was raised by an aunt after her parents both committed suicide. As a child, she could see auras or energy fields, or what she called "surround," around plants, animals, and people. "From their tone and color, I could tell whether a person was ill or well, and this was equally true of the plants and animals," she recalled.¹

Because of latent tuberculosis, Eileen's doctor recommended she leave the damp Irish climate, and so at age 15 she moved to London to live with a cousin. The first of her three marriages took place shortly thereafter. Her mediumistic talents were discovered in 1926 when she joined a group of women in a table-tilting session. "I was told afterward that an astonishing thing had happened during the session," she explained. "It seems I went to sleep and began to speak of seeing the dead relatives of those at the table."²

It was suggested that Garrett consult with a Mr. Huhnli, who was an authority on psychic matters. After observing her trance condition, Huhnli told Garrett that an entity calling himself "Uvani" spoke through her and told him that he (Uvani) wanted to do serious work through her to prove the validity of survival after death. Uvani claimed to be the surviving spirit of one Yasuf ben Hafik ben Ali, an Arab who had lived in Basrah during the early 1800s, dying at the age of 48 in a battle with the Turks. He said he had been a member of a noble merchant family. This very

much disturbed Garrett as she feared Uvani was constantly watching her or invading her privacy. Although Huhnli told her that the "control personality" is not interested in her daily life and would not approach her unless she made it possible, Garrett remained fearful. She was later introduced to Hewat McKenzie of the British College of Psychic Science, who helped her develop and understand her gift.



Uvani would begin speaking through Garrett's mouth, addressing the sitter and inviting questions. Generally, after a brief conversation with the sitter, he would find or attempt to find deceased loved ones. He would frequently allow the deceased entities to speak directly through Garrett (rather than relaying their words as other controls often do). At the conclusion of the séance, Uvani would again take over her organism, give a few parting words and say a short closing prayer.

A second "control," who identified himself as "Abdul Latif," and claimed to be a 12th

Century Persian physician and astronomer, later emerged and began controlling Garrett for healing purposes.

Some years later, researcher Hereward Carrington studied Garrett and her controls. He interviewed Uvani as to his nature and methods. Uvani told him that he had always been in close contact with Garrett during the uncharted years of her life and said that the moment he would see the wanderings of her underconsciousness, he would be drawn to her. "As the time draws near, I am able to impress upon the underconsciousness not only my presence, but others, and I control that underconsciousness," Uvani told Carrington. "Of the conscious mind I have no control at all, nor would I find it right."³

Uvani further told Carrington that Garrett's conscious mind "is permitted to go into the Cosmos, to renew itself, where it receives strength and is purified," just as in the sleep state for everyone, during the time he and others are using her organism.

When Carrington asked how Uvani influences her brain and body, Uvani responded that he does not influence either. "I use a 'figment' - the fabric of the soul - which is stimulated by my thoughts; this stimulates the fabric and produces automatic expression," he explained, adding that it took him many years (of earth time) to learn to subdue the conscious mind.⁴

Asked how he knew when Garrett was ready for him to come, Uvani said he gets a "telegraphed" impression that the "Instrument" is ready, explaining that the moment that the conscious mind becomes very low, the soul-body becomes more vibrant and that serves as a "telegram" for him to operate. As for language, Uvani said he does not speak English. He simply impresses his thoughts upon that "figment" with which he works and his thoughts are converted to English automatically.

No doubt the most intriguing case Garrett is identified with is that of the British R-101 airship which crashed in France on its maiden voyage on October 5, 1930. A little more than a

year earlier, during September 1929, warnings came through Garrett's mediumship from Captain Raymond Hinchliffe, who had been killed the prior year when his plane crashed at sea. Through Garrett, Hinchliffe told his wife Emile of technical problems involved in the construction of the giant dirigible and asked her to relay the information on to authorities. When those in charge did not heed his warning, Hinchliffe said, again through Garrett, that there would be an accident.

After the crash, Flight Lieutenant H. Carmichael Irwin, the captain of the R-101, who had perished in the accident, began communicating through Garrett and explained to Major Oliver Villiers, an air command intelligence officer, what went wrong. Many names and technical details that Garrett could not possibly have known were mentioned by Irwin, leaving Villiers convinced that he was actually speaking with the spirit of the man he had known as Irwin. Another crash victim, Sir Sefton Brancker, who was the director of the British Air Ministry, also communicated with Villiers as did three other victims. (See Top 40 cases for more detail on the R-101 case.)

While working in California for the American Society for Psychical Research during 1933, Garrett was touring the Paramount film studio and observing a movie being filmed. Standing near Cecil B. De Mille, the famous movie director, Garrett saw a woman pleading with De Mille to change some of the scenes. However, when the woman disappeared before her eyes, she realized she was seeing a spirit. Moments later, the woman appeared to Garrett and asked her to try and make him understand what he was doing wrong. When Garrett spoke with a Paramount employee about talking to De Mille, she was told it was not possible. She later told the incident to Hamlin Garland, a psychical researcher with whom she had been working. (See separate biography on Garland.) Garland was a friend of De Mille's and told her to drop him a note. De Mille replied by telling her to contact him when she returned to California from New York. When she returned in 1935, Garrett met with him and told him of the

episode two years earlier. She then sensed the same woman at her side. "She urged me on, saying: 'Go on, go on.' I had a stream of consciousness which I can only describe as being in a state of receptivity where her personality overflowed to drown mine," Garrett related. "I was speaking with her precision, taking on some of her personality, and actually using her gestures. I remember that she spoke sharply, rather like a schoolmistress, and in an assured manner that commanded attention."⁵

After "Garrett" counseled and scolded De Mille, she realized that tears were rolling down De Mille's cheeks and was informed by him that it was his mother talking to him. When she returned to her apartment, it was filled with roses from De Mille, who asked her to please visit him again on her next trip to California.

Grieving the World-War-II death of her son Bill, Adela Rogers St. Johns, a renowned American journalist, contacted Garrett, then living in New York, and arranged to see her, not telling her why. Shortly after the journalist entered Garrett's Manhattan apartment, Garrett said, "Well, here's Bill." As far as St. Johns knew, Garrett did not know she had a son named Bill. Clairvoyantly looking high up at the otherwise invisible figure of Bill, Garrett said he appeared to be wearing a British uniform. In fact, Bill, who stood 6'-7", was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which he joined before the United States entered the war.

St. Johns told of her experiences with Garrett in her book, *No Goodbyes*, published in 1981 and subtitled *My Search into Life Beyond Death*. St. Johns wrote that Garrett probably had the most "commanding presence" she had ever encountered in a woman. And, she had known many dynamic women, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Wallis Simpson, wife of the Duke of Windsor, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Jeane Dixon, Ethel Barrymore, and Gloria Swanson, to name just some.

Through Garrett, Bill asked his mother to stop grieving for him so that he could get on with his life over there. "Pray for me, Mama. Pray for

all of us here. It helps us advance," Bill said through Garrett. St. Johns noted that Bill was the only one of her children who called her "Mama."⁶

Before St. Johns left Garrett's apartment, Garrett told her that the person waiting downstairs in the lobby for her had mediumistic abilities and could further contact Bill for her, if necessary. In fact, St. Johns' adult daughter, Elaine, was waiting in the lobby, but she did not know how Garrett knew that, nor did St. Johns have any idea that her daughter had such a gift, although she later recalled that Elaine frequently spoke with a deceased family friend when she was four years old. Elaine, also ignorant of her ability, was brought upstairs to meet Garrett, who explained automatic writing to her. She further mentioned that it was Bill who told her that his sister had the faculty for automatic writing. After several failed attempts, Elaine, also a journalist, established contact with her brother and further developed her mediumship.

"Aside from religious teachings, philosophical discussion, and the massed evidence of the psychical societies, I am myself convinced that the spirit of man survives the death of the physical body," Garrett wrote in her 1943 book. "The conviction is the result of my own experience with the living, the dying, and the dead."⁷ However, she continually struggled with the idea that her controls were who they said they were rather than some aspect of her subconscious. This struggle persisted in spite of the fact that Abdul Latif worked through a number of other mediums around the world.

In 1951, Garrett founded the Parapsychology Foundation to conduct further research in consciousness. In changing hats from medium to researcher, Garrett seems to have become more properly "scientific" and skeptical. In writing her autobiography, published two years before her death, she was clearly conflicted. "I have given proof, during my life, of the mind's ability to travel and observe over long distances," she wrote, "and I have carried out extensive spontaneous journeys in cross-correspondence tests with

the living as well as with the alleged departed. If I could carry on long sustained conversations with the departed, I could earnestly say that communication had been proven, but the test I set for such evidence has not yet been met. I am aware that this sounds like a contradiction of things I have written elsewhere. Nevertheless, I feel I must say it.”⁸

However, she does not say why she thinks her subconscious would play such a trick on itself and lie about its identity, nor does she offer any real explanation as to how the “alleged departed” replace the “controls” and discourse on very personal and evidential matters.

“The conclusion to which we seem driven, therefore, as the result of the argument thus, is that ‘Uvani,’ and especially the other alleged entities, represent some sort of independent entities, with no strong emotional or memory connection with the normal Mrs. Garrett, or with any gettable portion of her subconsciousness,” Carrington concluded, going on to say that his experimental tests “seem to have furnished material which is at least *indicative* of survival.”⁹

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¹ Garrett, Eileen, J. *Adventures in the Supernormal*, Creative Age Press, 1949, p. 19

² Garrett, *Many Voices*, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1968, p. 47

³ Carrington, Hereward, *The Case for Psychic Survival*, The Citadel Press, 1957, p. 142

⁴ _____, p. 143

⁵ Garret, *Many Voices*, p. 106

⁶ St. Johns, Adela Roger, *No Goodbyes*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., p. 8

⁷ Garrett, Eileen, *Awareness*, Creative Age Press, 1943, p. 144

⁸ Garrett, Eileen J.. *Many Voices*, 1968, p. 187

⁹ Carrington, p. 128