

Biography of Alec Harris (1897-1974)

A native of Wales, Alexander "Alec" Harris (1897 – February 12, 1974) was unaware of his mediumistic abilities until age 35, when his brother-in-law, Ted, became a Spiritualist. When Alec's wife, Louie, was persuaded by Ted to attend a table-tilting séance, Alec vehemently objected, claiming it was all a hoax. After Louie attended the séance and told Alec of the positive results, he agreed to sit with her and show her how the "trick" was done. Although Alec's deceased sister Connie communicated, he still doubted, until he asked his sister the name of the book he read to her just before she died. When the table correctly spelled out "Girl of The Limberlost," Alec began to believe there might be something to it.



Some weeks later, Louie glanced at Alec, who was sleeping on the divan, and noticed that his features were changing. "As I watched, he slowly acquired a Mongolian appearance, with the unmistakable high cheek bones," Louie recalled. "Alec's eyes narrowed, becoming upturned at the outer corners. His mouth was drawn slightly downward...Then from Alec came a voice. It was Oriental in inflection, high-pitched

and nasal. 'Little Lady!' it said. 'Chang come to help, not to harm you.'"¹

Chang was to become Alec's chief guide as Alec's first experiences were as a trance-voice medium, while Louie developed as an automatic writing medium. Sometime around 1937, Chang, speaking through the entranced Alec, told Louie that Alec must go into a cabinet and begin developing as a physical medium, including the direct voice, which, like the materialization phenomenon, involves ectoplasm. New guides named Christopher and Rohan were introduced to assist in the physical phenomena. Although Alec Harris initially objected to sitting in a cabinet, he finally consented to sitting alongside the cabinet, which was required for the ectoplasm to condense itself. The cabinet itself was nothing more than a curtain. Initially, the experiments carried out by the guides failed as the trumpet, through which voices are heard in the direct-voice phenomenon, failed to move. When they instructed Louie to place the trumpet inside the cabinet things began to happen. However, it took two years for Alec to fully develop the direct-voice phenomenon. When he finally did, there were times when three trumpets operated at the same time, *i.e.*, three different discarnate voices would be speaking at the same time. Moreover, Alec was no longer required to be in a trance. To assure guest sitters that there was no trickery, he would be bound tightly by ropes in his chair.

Materializations began during 1940. "At first, only heads appeared, but we recognized many faces easily," Louis Harris wrote. "Then, after some time, came full forms...In producing this, the faces became less clear, rather like those on an out of focus film. The curtains would part – and fully materialized spirit forms stand before us."²

Initially, the forms did not speak, but as Alec Harris developed and the power became stronger the voice gradually came and Rohan became the chief guide. "At the first séance I had with Alec Harris, 15 spirits materialized that evening," wrote Ernest Thompson, the editor of *Two Worlds Magazine*. "They were tall and short, fat and thin, male and female. Some were visitors from other lands, one being an American Red Indian who stood quite seven feet tall. As evidence of the genuineness of these manifestations, Rohan, the spirit in charge of the proceedings, materialized, and drawing the cabinet curtains to one side revealed the entranced medium sitting in his corner upon a chair so that we could see them together."³

Thompson also reported observing the materialization process. "First of all, there appeared what seemed to be a white rod which thrust itself along the floor from under the cabinet curtains. It moved as if it were alive and stopped about a yard in front of the curtains. The end began to enlarge into a ball until there was a mass of moving, pulsating ectoplasm about the size of a large stone. It became elongated vertically until it was the height of a human being. Gradually, as if it were being sculptured, there appeared a face and then a head. Soon the form was completely human, clothed in ectoplasmic draperies. The materialized spirit began to walk about the room and was able to speak to us. As the power waned we saw the spirit dissolve and collapse into empty space."⁴

In 1952, T. J. Haarhoff, professor of classics at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, sat with the Harris circle and had a spirit materialize and speak to him in ancient Greek, a language which Haarhoff understood but of which Harris knew nothing. Haarhoff noted that modern Greek is pronounced differently than the ancient Greek and this materialized spirit clearly spoke in the ancient Greek language. "The ectoplasm which issues in abundance from [Harris'] body and which the etheric entities use to make themselves visible, streams

like a mist and assumes all sorts of shapes yet can be compacted into something absolutely solid while the power lasts – and what amazing power it is!" Haarhoff was quoted from an article in *Psychic News*.⁵

Alec and Louie Harris moved to South Africa, where their son lived, in 1956. There, during 1965, Dr. Bernard J. F. Laubscher, a psychiatrist, anthropologist, and psychical researcher, witnessed a number of full materializations and reported on them in two of his several books. As explained by Laubscher, nine people, including one other physician, an engineer, and some businessmen, and their wives, sat in a half-moon circle in a room with only one door, which was locked. Harris sat in a corner in a curtained-off "cabinet" in which there was nothing but a chair. The séance was held under red lights. "After a while the curtains opened and we could see the medium in his chair apparently in a deep trance and unconscious of all around," Laubscher described the event. "Then a white cloudlike column formed within the opening of the curtains and began to assume the outline and figure of a person. It occurred to my mind that unseen hands were covering an unseen personality with some doughlike substance, namely ectoplasm, drawn from the medium as well as ourselves."⁶

Dressed in flowing garments and a veil, all of ectoplasm, the figure moved and spoke in a female voice. "She moved among us and appeared quite solid and was recognized and greeted as the deceased mother of Mr. Harris, the medium," Laubscher continued the story.⁷ He recognized that the skeptic would believe that Alec Harris was impersonating his mother or that a confederate had been smuggled into the room, but said that neither was a possibility, mentioning that he could see the medium in the chair and that the red light permitted him to see all others and any movement in the room while the door remained locked at all times.

After she spoke a few words, the woman disappeared and a fully materialized male spirit appeared. "Speaking quite distinctly, he moved

freely amongst us, inquiring after our well-being with words of comfort and good wishes," Laubscher went on. "Then, turning round, he vanished slowly into the floor."⁸

A short, Cockney man then materialized and spoke. He walked up to Laubscher and permitted him to touch his nose. Then a spirit known for his healing powers appeared and was greeted by others in the room who were familiar with him. "His materialized body was draped in free-flowing veils of ectoplasmic chiffon-like material," Laubscher noted. "The whole effect was most ethereal and beautiful...But the most amazing spectacle of all, concerning this being, was the radiation of a luminosity from the solar plexus in an area of about twelve inches in diameter. It was a light in the nature of a radiance like phosphorescence shining without heat or without any known source. It seemed to be pulsating. The spirit approached every sitter and held each one's hand."⁹

When Laubscher held his hand, he further observed the light and felt a radiating sensation from the spirit's hands. After the spirit spoke to everyone, his form also diminished downward, into the floor, as he approached the curtain.

A small boy also materialized and walked about the circle. He was followed by a Native American known as Black Feather. Both Laubscher and the other physician examined him thoroughly, "This solid being with a clearly defined personality, who came to give Dr. Williams and myself a demonstration of how ectoplasm could perform miracles by means of laws manipulated by thought, stood there before us and then melted away into the world which our physical senses could not penetrate," Laubscher wrote.¹⁰

A girl of about five years also formed in front of them and roamed about the circle. She was followed by a tall woman. The girl embraced the woman and then both vanished before the eyes of the sitters. Toward the end of the sitting, another spirit gave a demonstration of how ectoplasm could be used. "...we watched a small white mass forming about three feet in front of me," Laubscher described the scene. "It gradually rose higher and higher and, growing broader, assumed the shape of a marble column. It rose to about seven feet or more, a plain white column. Then it gradually began to shrink towards the floor until nothing visible remained."¹¹

Laubscher stressed that fraud, self-deception, or any other illusionary explanation was out of the question. As he understood the materialization phenomenon, the invisible astral or soul body would reduce his or her rates of vibration to attract to them sufficient of the matter energy to produce ectoplasm. The thought forms of their former selves would then mold the ectoplasm to give the replica of the former body.

Harris continued to conduct séances until his health failed during the early 1970s. His health problems may have been accelerated by an incident in South Africa when two reporters, intent on exposing him as a fraud, flipped on the lights during a séance. When one of the reporters attempted to grab Rohan, the spirit figure quickly dematerialized within his grasp. As the ectoplasm was forced to return to Harris' body instantly, he suffered severe pain and was ill for months. His health seemed to go downhill after that.



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¹ Harris, Louie, *They Walked Among Us*, Psychic Press, Ltd., 1980, p. 38.

² _____, p. 85.

³ _____, p. 93.

⁴ _____, p. 94.

⁵ _____, p. 103.

⁶ Laubscher, B. J. F., *Beyond Life's Curtain*, Neville Spearman, 1967, p. 24.

⁷ _____, p. 24.

⁸ Laubscher, B. J. F., *In Quest of the Unseen*, Vantage Press, 1969, p. 69.

⁹ _____, p. 69.

¹⁰ _____, p. 70.

¹¹ _____, p. 73.