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DRYING OUT FOOD BY HOLDING IT IN ONE'S HANDS

AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD GRAD, PhD

IJHC: Today is Saturday, May 24, 2003, and I am with Bernard Grad and we're discussing an unusual ability of healers. Can you tell us, Bernie, how you discovered this ability?

DR. GRAD: I conducted a series of experiments with a man called George Ille. George was recommended to come to me by a friend of his whom he met at a fencing class, the friend being a psychiatrist who worked in the same psychiatric institute that I did. George came to me initially in the lab in the early 1980s, claiming that he was producing a strange effect on meat and other animal protein that he had handled. He said he produced a kind of cessation of rotting that normally took place and spoke of it as a kind of mummification. He brought with him some material – dried meat he had worked on in that way.

We began to do experiments. We started out with taking square bits of beef and leaving them in the lab with controls and it certainly seemed as if those that he had handled dried up. However, the same thing happened to the controls. We decided not to investigate that aspect of his effects and we abandoned meat as the target.

It happened that I had been doing some unrelated studies on the weight loss of bananas in the lab and I so thought it might be a good idea to use them in the experiments with George in the place of meat because I knew for sure that bananas rotted in my lab whenever my wife gave me a banana for lunch and I had forgotten to eat it.

Now, the way he impacted on the green bananas was by holding each banana, sometimes two at a time, with one hand at each tip of the bananas. Occasionally, he would handle one banana at a time and twirl it, slowly. That was all his treatment involved. He held the bananas in this way for 2-1/2 minutes, then paused for about a minute or two, then repeated the procedure six times – that is, doing it seven times in all. The reason that he treated for 2-1/2 minutes and then took one to two minutes' rest and then worked again was because he found that working longer than that made him feel uncomfortable.

Two things stood out with these bananas. First of all, our studies showed that bananas normally lose anywhere from 2 to 3 grams of weight every day. George's handling of them accelerated this process at least to double the rate of weight loss so that the next day, one would immediately see a striking drop in weight in the bananas that he had handled. Another feature we noted was that the treated bananas became darker more quickly than the controls. Sometimes they went from the green stage to the black stage, barely passing through the yellow one. But the most striking feature that became apparent as we proceeded with the experiment was that after three to four weeks' time, many of his bananas hardened in a way

that looked like a kind of mummification was taking place. The pulp of the banana became much more like wood. and have remained the same for years.

This was in marked contrast with the controls, which would normally rot to a mush, with the skin splitting open, and drying until there was no pulp left and all that remained, essentially, was the dry skin of the banana.

IJHC: What were the relative time frames to the endpoint of complete drying?

DR. GRAD: Control green bananas lost 2 to 3 grams per day early in the experiment and progressively less in the following weeks, so that by the third and fourth week they were losing only a few tenths of a gram each day. Experimental bananas lost weight at about twice the control rate but by the fourth week they also lost very little weight. However, there was a striking difference in appearance between the controls and experimental bananas a month into the experiment. The control bananas lost all their pulp and only the dried skin remained. On the other hand, the pulp of the experimental bananas had hardened into a wooden consistency, were covered with a blackened skin and still retained the distinctive banana shape, whereas the controls did not. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1.
Normal banana and dehydrated banana



Now, we did many experiments. First we treated the bananas in a single session of seven treatments per day for the first three or four days. Later, we found we could still obtain significant effects on weight loss with one single session on the first day of the experiment. That is, it was not necessary to treat the bananas during the entire three weeks or month of the experiment or even for the first three or four days.

IJHC: So one session proved to be enough?

DR. GRAD: That's right. In other words, I often compared the procedure to pushing a toboggan down a snowy hill. All it needed was a push and the thing then took off on its own.

Each session consisted of seven 2.5 minute treatments with 1-2 minutes of rest between treatments. There was a dose-response relationship between the number of 2.5 minute treatments on the one hand, and the subsequent weight lost by the bananas. It was shown experimentally that one treatment caused less weight loss than three, which caused less

weight loss than five, and which in turn caused less weight loss than seven treatments. That is, the bananas were quite sensitive to being handled by George.

We determined, for example, the weight loss using a balance that was sensitive to a tenth of a gram. We measured the weight loss per treatment. When he held a banana, there would be a greater weight loss during treatment than there was during the couple of minutes of rest between treatments, and you could see it for each treatment interval. And the amount of weight loss per treatment was not always exactly the same. There were some mini-treatments that were yielding higher results than others.

Now, there was a certain environment that he felt most comfortable in. For example, I told a colleague of mine about these experiments, and he suggested that this healer put his hands in cold water in the interval between treatments. Of course, it completely disrupted George, who certainly wasn't able to perform under those conditions.

I think the ideal condition for this fellow was that he had to be in charge. For example, the treatment times and the intervals were measured on a clock which rang a bell. George normally liked to control that time. If somebody else, as occurred once, said "I'll control the time," that put him off.

There was another thing. There was another fellow always around the lab, who may in fact have been a healer, but he wanted to do this particular thing that George was doing with the bananas. So he participated in the experiment at the same time serving as another treatment control. And while George was doing it, I noticed that George was teasing the heck out of him. And at first, it annoyed me but then I said no, this fellow may need to do this in order to get this effect. The other fellow was willing to submit to it, so we let him do it. George had to feel that he was more effective, and he was, as a rule.

IJHC: Was the other fellow ever successful?

DR. GRAD: Once, when he was in charge of an untrained group of people, not with George around and not in any consistent fashion.

I would say the necessary condition for doing it is to be in a party mood. If you had a Christmas party and you wanted to play this game, you might conceivably get one or two people to have an effect. We used to usually have four bananas per group and four control bananas. In general, we tried a lot of people and they couldn't get it. Even when there was an effect, the weight losses were smaller than George's.

IJHC: So you have not known of other people who can do this regularly.

DR. GRAD: Although I had not known of other people who could mummify bananas on any consistent basis, I read of a woman in France who, early in the 20th century, mummified fish. Others were also able to do it but they kept this ability to themselves because of superstitious attitudes in France and Italy. This naturally hindered scientific studies.

IJHC: What problems would he be successful in healing?

DR. GRAD: Well, the thing is, he never did any healing on people in my presence, but I think we tried a small experiment with wound healing and he was able to help a mouse that was quite sick normally that he made spontaneously well. He did try to heal some people in the States. One I think was even a physician who had some serious problem and he was able to help her. When he came into my lab, he hadn't done any healing prior to working on the

bananas, and he asked me to teach him to do healing. I told him, "George, if you want to do healing, go and do healing. Don't ask me to teach you. If you really want to do it, you can do it." The thing is, I didn't want to give him a technique which I felt was not applicable to him. See, he was a person who when he healed didn't like to be disturbed. I mean, if he was in charge, he could do it. He generally liked it to be quiet. Of course, if he could lord it over somebody else treating at the same time, he didn't mind doing it. But generally, he liked to be quiet. Some of the other healers didn't care. You could engage them in conversation at the same time. Each healer may have his own style.

IJHC: Did George have any other unusual abilities?

DR. GRAD: Yes, We did lots of experiments. One of the strange things that we did with him, I forget for what reason, we had him put his hands in several liters of water and I noticed that when he took his hands out, the water was cloudy. So I asked another healer that I had in the lab to do the same, and he did it and the water was not cloudy.

I then took the cloudy water and put it under the microscope and I saw what looked like cells, by the thousands and I thought it may have been skin cells and that this was a kind of desquamation. That struck me as quite unusual. I tried several people and they couldn't do it. I then centrifuged out these cells. (I wasn't sure they were skin cells). I mean, it struck me as really quite unique. I concentrated these so-called skin cells and I applied them to the banana and they didn't do the job. So, I don't know what it was.

Now, he has some other peculiarities which he admitted to me. He said that during the middle of the night, several times a week, he will wake up with a feeling of burning heat and the only way that he can get rid of it was to go in the bathroom and wet a shower towel in cold water and wrap it around himself until he cooled down. And he did that, he says, on a regular basis.

He has mummified other fruits and vegetables, including potatoes. When these potatoes would mummify and take odd forms. Being a sculptor, he would mark them, and I don't remember if he did it before or after they were "woodenified," to produce interesting distorted facial expressions. He was a sculptor by profession originally and he would sculpt artifacts that were related to Egyptian mythology. He claimed that he didn't believe in a divine source but did believe in the Egyptian gods. He sculpted objects reminiscent of the Egyptian religion.

IJHC: Did you ever ask him if this could have been how the Egyptians did their mummifying?

DR. GRAD: Yes, he thought that aristocrats were mummified by people passing their hands in a certain direction over the body. People of lower caste mummified by chemical means.

IJHC: What was his background?

Dr. Grad: He was a Hungarian, and during the Hungarian occupation by Russia was taken at about 12 years old from Hungary to the Soviet Union, and educated there. At 17 was in the Russian air force and during the Korean War, fought on the North Korean side. Because of his favorable service, he was released back to Hungary when he was still young. Then, when the Hungarian Revolution occurred, he came to Canada and here he married a woman of American-Indian origin, of the Abenakis tribe. They lived in Montreal for a number of years and then she went back to her reservation and he went to live with her there. It is about two hours from Montreal in a place called Odenac, Quebec.

IJHC: How did he discover his abilities to do this dessication?

DR. GRAD: He used to do a lot of the cooking and he noticed that when he was cooking that some of the food items were hard.

IJHC: You had said it was tiredness that made him stop frequently during the studies. Why would tiredness come on like that?

DR. GRAD: Because the procedure involved an expenditure of energy. It's just like running up the stairs, you know, it's an effort.

IJHC: And this heat he felt at night. Was that only after this ability developed or was this before also?

DR. GRAD: I don't know.

IJHC: And was the heat at night associated with any other mental state or anything you or he could identify?

DR. GRAD: No, apparently not. I wondered if his wife complained.

I do know of healers who had problems sleeping in bed with their wives. I mean, there were at least two of them who told me they didn't sleep in their beds with their wives. They slept separately.

IJHC: Because?

DR. GRAD: Because the wife found them too warm, too hot, in the bed. In two cases I know it was so. Another one was a young woman who claimed to be a healer and she was living in a common law relationship with a man who was doctor, a surgeon, and he wouldn't acknowledge that she had any special abilities. And he would regularly get out of bed and open the window because, as he claimed, it was too warm in the room.

Now, she claimed to have some clairvoyant abilities and one morning at breakfast she told him, "Don't operate on this woman that you're doing today."

He said, "You're crazy." So he went and operated and she died.

When he came home, he said, "I don't want you ever to tell me that sort of thing again." So he would deny that she had any special gifts.

I know that Olga and Ambrose Worrall were quite happy together, and I know other couples where both were healers, and that was no problem. And there may be healers where it doesn't apply. I'm not trying to say this is a universal thing, it's just that this also happened in these few that I knew. George mentioned he experienced heat of this kind and he didn't claim that he had problems with regard to it. He did say that he regularly had to get out of bed and wrap himself in a bath towel soaked in cold water and sit there until he cooled down.

George worked with me for several years until 1985, when I retired. He kept in contact for many years. Now I hear that the phone number he left me is no longer functioning and who knows what happened to him.

IJHC: Is there any way to know if a healer has this woodenifying ability?

DR. GRAD: They simply have to try. Usually when I bring the banana and show it to an audience, it always makes an impression, usually positive. On occasion, though, I have had people express the feeling that they did not want to touch the banana.

IJHC: Thank you Bernie, for sharing this report on a healer's unusual abilities.

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