



John Edward: "...a vulgar and fast-talking emotional parasite."

The dead say the darndest things The living will believe almost anything

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Dazed Glowing Looks

John Edward came to Omaha, NE on Nov. 3rd 2002 before a crowd of approximately 2500, with people traveling from as far away as Kentucky to see "the man who speaks for the dead." The setting had the feeling of a revival meeting but instead of Bibles, Edward devotees, about 5 to 1 or 10 to 1 women over men, clutched copies of his best seller, *One Last Time*. Since there was no reserved seating, there was chaos as the crowd poured in. Outside the scene was equally chaotic. The group REASON, Rationalists, Empiricists and Skeptics of Nebraska, were protesting and handing out "consumer watchdog" flyers to educate the crowd as to Edward's tricks and tactics. They were not received kindly by the believers, who walked with a dazed glowing look on their faces... It's the kind of look you see on the face of a special Olympian when they meet a minor and former celebrity like the actor who played "the Professor" on Gilligan's Island. Jesus freaks were also doing their part, urging those present to seek the dead elsewhere. During the approximately 60-70 minutes before the show started, faces who later became clear as Edward's security staff and stage crew milled about and mingled anonymously with the crowd. Edward's security kept any obvious trouble makers outside as this skeptic was warned he could not enter with any of the flyers from REASON. When one of the co-authors hid some REASON flyers in her purse, she was detained at the door until the flyers were surrendered. Edward's men, with in-ear headphones and in-sleeve microphones, wanted the show to come off with no hitches and to maximize their control of the scene. Other individuals were taking Polaroid and or digital "mug shots" of the crowd and a technician filmed during the show from the back of the auditorium. Obviously this information could have been used to identify individuals or distinguishing clothing or personal items.

Trained Seals

We were told the seminar was not being taped for TV broadcast as it was advertised as a "seminar," an opportunity for question-and-answer from the crowd and readings from beyond for the remainder of our time together. When the star emerged, the applause was thunderous by fans clapping like trained seals. This must be what it is like for Rush Limbaugh and his "dittoheads" or what Oprah experiences at the start of her shows. Before taking any questions Edward told the audience that he wanted people to know the true purpose of, in his words, "his mission" which ironically is that people don't need mediums except as a last resort. And Edward refers to himself as a medium. The intent of this statement was to reassure people that they don't need to rush out and hire a medium to be told what they hope to hear from lost loved ones else they be taken for a ride. Edward made reference to the fact "that he won't tell people just what they want to hear as that would be unethical." The phrase "honor among thieves" came to mind when Edward talked about his ethics.

One of the first questions that Edward took from the audience was something to the effect, "Are the dead always with us?" His answer was reassuringly vague in that the dead have a very different conception of "always" than we do and they're not with us "always." We wouldn't want them to be, considering some of things we might be caught doing, which brought a very big laugh from his devotees. This came across as a poor man's psychotherapy akin to Dr. Phil or Dr. Laura but Edward beat them easily. He offered the possibility of resolving guilt and other "issues" with a loved one who will always except your overtures of love and pleas for forgiveness and put the past in the past. One might as well talk to a cemetery headstone if you want to whine to a departed love who will just patiently listen and let you imagine kind, loving words coming from their mouth. Another questioner asked if he ever received any hatred or animosity from beyond to convey to the living. No, he never did as the dead would never want to say such things to us. Edward blended conventional Christianity with new age beliefs, dispensing traditional love and forgiveness from beyond without any annoying guilt or regret. Those on "the other side" must also speak perfect or at least reasonable English. In this performance and on his TV broadcasts, you never will find Edward unable to speak for the passed without receiving their messages in our tongue. Oddly enough, Harry Houdini's mother, who died without learning English, always spoke in English through the mediums of Houdini's day. Or maybe those who have "crossed over" use a Star Trek-type "Universal Translator." Edward also referred to seeing the words and sounds of those who have passed. Perhaps he is a synesthete and doesn't know it!

At one point, Edward made the rather childish analogy that the body is just the vehicle and the soul is the driver; after the vehicle is wrecked and finished the driver can go on. The souls of the dead are now, however, on a very different frequency, whatever that means. Maybe Edward will start selling genuine quartz crystals from Atlantis to better receive such vibrations!

A few terms seem to be key to understanding Edward-speak. For a starting point, no one was ever said to have passed away. The dearly missed have merely "passed" or "passed over" as if death were just another phase of life. Secondly, Edward did not reveal as much as he "validated." He always tried to "validate the love from beyond." Anyone who has browsed in what is offered as a self-help or psychology section of a major bookstore will no doubt recognize this happy sounding psychobabble aimed at those who insist they need therapy the most.

An Old Angle(r)

Edward appeared to be relying largely if not exclusively on cold reading techniques or fishing for clues especially when he tried to do readings for people on the upper levels as the people seated there were probably very difficult to see, given the lighting. After just a few more questions, Edward attempted to read for the audience on the upper level balcony; here Edward truly went on a fishing expedition. "I'm getting a Joe, Joseph, Jack, or a J word and this is from a father, father-in-law, or a father figure to someone up there. I am also seeing this in connection with a maimed arm or possibly amputated arm from being caught in some type of machinery, possibly farm machinery. It could also be that the arm was run over by a tire." When the audience member he

focused on couldn't make a connection, he repeatedly asked "Who is near you? Who else is with you?", looking for the connection. The audience in that section were no doubt desperately trying to come up with some of relevant connection to please Mr. Edward. One person volunteered that they had a grandfather who had a finger amputated but no, that was not what he was seeing. After three or four audience members couldn't make a connection, he jokingly threatened, "Don't make me come up there..." Or he rationalized, maybe it was his thick "New Yawk" accent that prevented the audience from seeing what he was referring to...He finally told the section to go home and think about it to see if the name and father connection didn't become apparent to them. It could also be in their future of course. The audience tried to play the part of Herr Von Osten to Edward's playing of Clever Hans to "validate" what the star was seeing for them. If an educated aristocrat of 19th century Germany could attribute human intelligence to a horse, one can clearly see these ordinary citizens attributing the information and feedback they gave to Edward to the "other side."

Edward explained more than once that he didn't see differences between a son, a son-in-law, daughter or daughter-in-law and so forth. Blood relations could not be distinguished from legal relations as long as the relationship was a loving relation it seemed, which is very convenient for someone who wants to speak in generalities. Also talking to someone in the upper balcony, Edward went on another fishing expedition: "I'm getting a name that sounds like Blackie, blocky, or Biloxi or just a b-l-k sounding name directed at several people in a section of the audience; no one seemed to connect with it. He again tried for this connection with several individuals sitting together in another section but without success. More than once Edward told an audience member he was getting a message from their mother who had passed only to be told the loved one was still in the land of the living. For one audience member, Edward revealed, "I see your dead son or son-in-law," unnamed, until the audience member revealed the name of her son who had passed. "I see that your son died from some event that had an impact upon his body" to which the audience member revealed that her son had shot himself. "Oh, that must be the impact that I saw..." Rationalization, generalization and after the fact reasoning are wonderful things to fall back on...

At another point when Edward was targeting the audience directly in front of him: "I'm getting a flag image or a flag. Did somebody bring a flag with them? No sir, its not you, referring to an audience member wearing an American flag sweatshirt. Do you have a flag with you, pointing to a lady nearby. Yes, on the front of her purse a flag was clearly visible. Now, how many of us have seen more flags on a daily basis since September 11, 2001?? Edward then said he was getting a Laurie, Linda or an L-word name in connection with this audience member. Yes, her name was Linda. For Linda, Edward said he was getting older man, a father or father-like figure who died of liver damage or cirrhosis of the liver. I am seeing that this person who has passed lived their life to the fullest and wouldn't change a thing. Linda replied that it could be her uncle who had passed. "Linda, what's the card trick or poker trick? Do you know any card tricks or did the person who passed love to play cards?" "Yes." "Would he have been the type to possibly cheat at cards?" "Yes, he could have." "I'm getting the message that he was called an SOB or a bastard, but in a playful way and he would say that back to you in return also in a playful way..." Linda again validated Edward's messages from beyond to the believers. But anybody who couldn't see the logical connection between those generalities doesn't know much about human behavior. Edward then pointedly asked "Linda, what is wrong with your left leg?" To which Linda again validated, "Its my knee, it sometimes hurts me." Given that Linda was middle aged or past, a shot in the dark about a specific sounding complaint that is very common was not such a long shot. And since Linda was seated in the center section, not too far from the stage, her manner of walking with her distinct purse could have been an easy target; any of Edward's cronies could have made these needed observations for such a seemingly direct "hit."

"I See Dead People!"

The little boy in the movie "The Sixth Sense" had it easy compared to Edward who told stories of seeing the dead so clearly he confused them with the living. In one of his prior employments at a hospital, Edward revealed he had become a friendly acquaintance with the son of a woman who was slowly dying, as the two

men nodded at each other in a simple daily hello and goodbye exchange. When the woman passed, Edward waited patiently outside her room for the son to pay his final respects. When a coworker told him the room was empty and no such "son" had ever been to visit, Edward was shocked! But Edward couldn't distinguish blood relations from otherwise; oh, maybe he can do so with "materializations" of those who have passed.

According to Edward, those who have passed could also be captured on film in the form of amorphous "orbs" which most readers should recognize as a current buzzword among ghostbusters. So when you see those odd little blobs of colored light in your pictures, don't cut it out, ENLARGE it, frame it, and put it along side your other family photographs or in your family Christmas photocard. It might be your Uncle Fred!

To the believers who were present, Edward was clearly batting a thousand and no price would have been too much to pay. To anyone who actually tried to keep score of his hits and misses, well, he wouldn't make it, even in Little League baseball. Since Edward will ask questions in rapid succession and not wait for an answer to each, he is difficult to score. But in this unedited performance, his misses far outnumbered his hits, by about 20:1. The believers who were present saw and heard what they wanted; nothing was going to change their beliefs. To the few skeptics present, Edward came across as nothing more than a vulgar and fast-talking emotional parasite.

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