

Apparent Past-Life Memories in a Recurring Dream of the 1934 Los Angeles New Year's Flood¹

James G. Matlock

Parapsychology Foundation

Abstract: As with memories of the present life, memories of apparent previous lives may appear in dreams, sometimes in nightmarish dreams. This paper presents the case study of a dream of a traumatic event (a death) that transpired 36 years before the birth of the dreamer. The dream recurred several times a month from age 4 until the dreamer was in his 20s. The dream invariably caused waking in distress and in a cold sweat and was recalled after waking. These are characteristics of posttraumatic nightmares, although the trauma here would seem to derive from a former life, not the dreamer's present life. The dreamer continues to recall the event in his 50s and is still severely affected by it. Recurring nightmares are common in past-life memory reports, but this case is unusual in that the dream was detailed enough to permit verification of its main elements as well as the identification of the dream protagonist. The event in question was obscure enough, yet the dreamer's recollection precise enough, that it is unlikely that the dreamer or his family could have learned about it before his dreams began. I consider the possibility that the dreamer acquired the information through anomalous cognition but reject it partly for lack of evidence that emotions of this order can be acquired via psi. Although no single case can provide convincing evidence for reincarnation, this case adds to the growing body of research that makes the possibility worthy of serious consideration.

Keywords: autobiographical memory, dreaming, episodic memory, past-life memory, posttraumatic stress disorder, recurring dreams, recurring nightmares, reincarnation

Highlights

- The substance of Scott Perry's recurring nightmare was carefully investigated and found to reflect an accurate memory of an event including a death that occurred 36 years before his birth.
- Scott's recurring nightmare has the characteristics of a replicative posttraumatic nightmare, with the trauma originating not in his present life but in an apparent previous life.
- This unusual case adds a new dimension to the growing evidence for reincarnation from verified reports of past-life memory.

¹ Address correspondence to James G. Matlock, Ph. D., Parapsychology Foundation, P. O. Box 1562, New York, NY 10021, USA, jgmatlock@yahoo.com

Claimed memories of previous lives have received little attention from memory researchers. However, a good number of people have had what they believe to be involuntary memories of past lives, which show many characteristics of involuntary memories of the present life (Matlock, 2019, pp. 127–129). Many are vivid flashbulb memories and, like present-life memories, may be triggered by association with things seen or heard. Many demonstrate recency effects (memories concentrated on the last days, months, and years of the previous life) or reminiscence bumps (memories from the prime years of the previous life). The only type of memory regularly missing from past-life recollections is what Martin Conway (2005) termed “autobiographical knowledge,” knowledge of the course of our lives that allows us to place fragmentary autobiographical memories in context when they surface in our conscious awareness (Matlock, 2019).

Autobiographical memories regularly make their way into nighttime dreams, although for the most part they stop short of being fully episodic (Fosse et al., 2003; Malinowski & Horton, 2014). Fosse et al. (2003) estimated that episodic memories of the present life appear in only about 1–2% of dream reports. Episodic memories may appear at a higher rate in recurring dreams, especially in recurring nightmares (Schreuder et al., 1998), although this relation has not been well studied. Recurring nightmares are thought to reveal posttraumatic reactions (Spoormaker, 2008).

Given the strong similarities between past-life and present-life memory, it is not surprising to find episodic past-life memories manifesting in dreams. Dreams with apparent past-life-derived content have been reported by children and adults, albeit with differences. With children they often take the form of nightmares (Mills, 1994; Stevenson, 2001), whereas with adults this is less often so (Matlock, 2019). Recurring dreams with past-life imagery may be experienced first in early childhood, then persist

with no or very slight change through adolescence and into adulthood (Stevenson, 2001, pp. 48–51).

Little attention has been paid to the accuracy of episodic memories in general, much less to those incorporated in dreams. Certain memories are accepted as valid, others dismissed as fantasy, depending on how plausible they seem to the researcher. For example, Akhtar et al. (2018) assume that memories reported from before the second birthday are fictional, simply because the brain is not well enough developed to support encoding before that age. This lack of interest in the veracity of memory claims in mainstream research contrasts markedly with parapsychological studies with spontaneous cases, in which assessing the truth or falsity of reports is the principal concern.

The following case study features a recurring dream memory of the massive flood that hit the Los Angeles area early on New Year's Day, 1934, 36 years before the birth of the dreamer. Details of the memory proved accurate and the dream protagonist was identified, making this a *prima facie* case of past-life memory. The dreamer has been troubled by the dream throughout his life, conforming to the pattern of posttraumatic nightmares, although no source for such severe trauma is known from his present life. This is consistent with a carryover of consciousness and memory across lives, as is hypothesized to occur with reincarnation (Matlock, 2019).

Because the identification of the previous person (dream protagonist) was made before the case came to my attention, details of the procedures and findings of the investigation follow an account of the flood, the dream, and the steps by which the previous person was identified. I take up the issue of apparent past-life memory influences on dreams and how best to explain them in the Discussion section.

The Los Angeles New Year's Flood

The San Gabriel Mountains in the northern part of Los Angeles County are cut by numerous canyons. Local historians Art Cobery, Mike Lawler, and Pam Lawler (2012) trace the genesis of the 1934 New Year's Day catastrophe to peculiarities of the region's geology and rainfall patterns. These create a thirty-year cycle of overgrowth, brush fires, and heavy rains over a denuded landscape, resulting in devastating flash floods washing down from the mountains into the valley. By the start of 1934, earlier iterations of this cycle had been forgotten and rural parts of Los Angeles County were being populated by families forced out of urban areas by the Great Depression.

The calamity began to unfold shortly after midnight on New Year's Day, when the San Gabriel Mountains, which normally receive 16 inches of rain annually, were inundated with 8.27 inches in 24 hours. Slopes in at least three locations collapsed under the sudden deluge, sending millions of tons of rocks and mud cascading down the canyons. The plunging debris-laden water departed stream beds and broadened into a scythe of destruction as it descended. The official death toll was only 39, but property damage was extensive: 198 homes were destroyed completely, an additional 401 rendered uninhabitable. Roads, streets, bridges, water pipes, power lines, and other critical systems were ruined. The disaster helped spur much-needed infrastructure improvements that are still in place today.

Scott Perry's Recurring Dream

Scott Perry was born in Troy, Ohio, on March 15, 1970. Following a divorce from his biological father, his mother remarried and when Scott was three and a half the family relocated to Decatur, Illinois. Along the way, they crossed several rivers, upsetting the toddler on each occasion. Shortly after the move to Illinois, Scott began to experience a recurring dream, which he felt to be a memory. He recalled the dream upon waking, but



his parents, especially his step-father, belittled it, and he quickly learned not to talk about it. The dream was made more intense by keeping it to himself, but it did not recede for many years. It would come sometimes several times a month, with little alteration from one time to the next. The following text, from November 6, 2019, emails to Lora Martinolich from the Glendale Public Library and Mike Lawler of the Historical Society of the Crescenta Valley, has been lightly edited to correct errors of capitalization and punctuation, but is otherwise unaltered. It was more heavily edited by Lawler and included in a column he published online in the Crescenta Valley Weekly on April 23, 2020: <https://www.crescentavalleyweekly.com/viewpoints/04/23/2020/treasures-valley-supernatural-mystery/>. As he described it in November, 2019, emails

From the age of 3—and I am able to recall further back memories as far as 18 months—I would have recurrent memories and dreams, but always the same one; it never deviated. My memories always started with my mother coming in, waking me up saying we have to go now! I am wearing a white, light lace nightgown. I occasionally see blonde hair that gets into my face. She grabs me and picks me up; I am half asleep. We run out of the house; my mother tells us to get in the car, which is a 1930s style sedan; I always knew that part. My father gets in the driver's seat and a boy and a girl are already in the car. I know them but don't know who they are. I remember the boy was dressed in blue denim overalls with a white shirt with light stripes on it up and down, a crosshatch type pattern. His shoes were worn, leather soles laced mid ankle, shoes like a work lace up type shoe, but really worn. The girl was similar in age but I could see she was frightened and she tells me it's going to OK. She is wearing a white lace dress with light flower design on it, leather buckle type shoes with white lace socks, not shiny but worn. I can make out the back window very well too. The back seat is not close like today's cars are, but about 2 feet or so farther back, plenty of room for them.

My mother puts me in the middle seat as she gets in the car, then she holds me in her lap. She shifts me to her left shoulder and I am looking over her left shoulder. She yells at my father we need to go faster and he replies the car won't go any faster. My mother is in a near panic state. She has a white or light yellow dress on, I think an old style apron too, worn not new. My father has tan pleated pants on with worn brown leather shoes, not work boots. He has suspenders on and a white long sleeve shirt and a tan, with a black striped band on the hat, 1930's style. I can remember every hard bump the car makes, suspension is almost non-existent compared to today; the whole car feels like an air of panic has set in. I look at the boy and girl and they are scared. I look out the back window and I see a wall of dirty, muddy water like a tidal wave coming at us. I get scared; my mother turns and sees it and yells again to my father to go faster and the car is hit by the water, jarring us good, pushing the car too. The back window is blown out. Water pours in over the boy and girl amid their screams and water spills in the car and then comes in the passenger side and driver side windows.

The shock and force of the water rip me from my mother's arms out the passenger side window and I'm swept outside the car. I vaguely recall mother screaming, trying to hold on to me, arm outstretched, losing grip on my arm. The water takes me under. I can't breathe. (By this point in this life, I am panting and sweating cold sweat! and starting to wake up each and every time. It happens every single time like [this]; I wake up drenched cold and clammy.) I remember drowning, water filling my lungs, but it was very peaceful, not panicked, calming almost. I leave my body and at the top of the water I can see a ball of light shining thru the dark water, pulling me towards it. There is one memory that's hazier though and it only happens occasionally, not every time. As the light takes me up, I see houses with muddy water up to the roof line and trees with water high up them, and it's like you're

speeding past them all very fast and speeding up like you're fast-forwarding a movie, and that's it, that's all I recall.

Identifying the Dream Protagonist

Not only did this dream recur frequently, it was more realistic in visuals and emotion than Scott's regular dreams. Moreover, it did not fade upon waking, as his regular dreams did. He felt intuitively that it depicted a real event, although his family would not accept this.

Scott knew of no similar experiences until April 2004, when he saw an ABC Primetime Thursday documentary about James Leininger. When young, James too suffered from a recurring nightmare, although in addition he had waking memories that allowed the person whose life he recalled to be traced (Leininger et al., 2009; Matlock, 2022; Tucker, 2016. Sudduth, 2021, questioned the legitimacy of the James Leininger case. His arguments were countered by Tucker, 2022, and Matlock, 2022; Sudduth, 2022, responded to Tucker, 2022).

Scott had heard of occasional flooding in southern states such as Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, and assumed that the disaster had transpired in that region. From time to time, he tried to identify it, but never came across an incident that even approximated his dream. This changed when he happened to watch an episode of *Hollywood Graveyard* that had been posted to YouTube in April 2018. The show explored Los Angeles's Woodlawn Cemetery, where among other film stars are buried twin actors Winston and Weston Doty, victims of the 1934 New Year's flood. When he looked up the Doty Twins, Scott discovered they were from Montrose, California.

Scott felt a strong reaction to the name "Montrose," for reasons he could not comprehend, but realized it must hold special significance for him. He went to his computer and searched the Internet for "family of five died in car flood New Year's Day

Montrose California." At the right of the results page was the photograph of what appeared to be a Ford Model B sedan overturned in a trench. The first item in the results list was an article that had been posted on the Internet two years prior. Entitled "15 Striking Photos of the 1934 New Year's Floods in Los Angeles," it presented photographs from the Los Angeles Times in the first days of January 1934. The text began, "In November 1933, wildfires raged through the nearby San Gabriel mountains above the Los Angeles County communities of La Crescenta, La Cañada and Montrose." The caption on the photo of the overturned car read: "Jan. 1, 1934: Five people drowned when this car and Rush Avenue bridge was swept into the Alhambra Wash, near present day Whittier Narrows Recreation Area." The photograph is reproduced as Figure 1.



Figure 1

Car Overturned in Alhambra Wash, Jan. 1, 1934 (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 2, 1934)

Scott felt instinctively that this was the car of his dream. The style of car and five deceased matched his memory and he set about determining who these individuals were. News stories from January 2 and 3, 1934, led him to think that in the front seat were John and Elizabeth Moore and their daughter, June. Early news stories mistakenly gave June's name as Martha, but this was corrected by the time of the family's interment in Roosevelt Memorial Park in Gardena, California, on January 5. On the Find a Grave website, Scott discovered their virtual headstones. The daughter's name appears there as June Edna Moore, and her dates as 1927–1934. He added a "flower" on November 2, 2019:

“June, me and you have come full circle now, I finally found you after all these years. One life leading me to the next and you were bravest little girl. Thank you for this journey and rest in peace.”

Scott determined that the passengers in the back seat were a brother and sister, Sherman and Ethel Mae “Toots” Hubbard, with whom the Moores had been celebrating New Year’s Eve, and on November 6 reached out to Lora Martinolich in hopes of learning more about the Moore family and their deaths. He first called Martinolich and Lawler, then followed up with emails in which he described his recurring dream and identified June Moore as his previous incarnation. He said he hoped that by looking further into the matter, he might obtain relief from the enduring trauma of his memories. James Leininger, he noted, had been much helped by having his memories verified and going back to the place in which he recalled having died.

As Jay Holladay of the Historical Society of the Crescenta Valley and other researchers became involved, the story of that night came into better focus. John Moore, it emerged, was a bus driver, and so enjoyed steady employment in those difficult years. He was 40 years old at his death; June’s mother Elizabeth was 44. They had spent New Year’s Eve celebrating 21-year-old Sherman Hubbard’s honorable discharge from the Marine Corps. With them were Sherman’s 23-year-old sister Ethel and John’s maternal uncle, Earl Greer Denniston. They had been with the Hubbard siblings’ mother and step-father, Bertha and Luther McCasland, in Wilmington, not far from Long Beach, and were returning to the Moore residence in Rosemead. They were planning to attend the Rose Parade on New Year’s Day, but did not make it.

The five were among the few fatalities that night outside the Crescenta Valley. Alhambra Wash is one of several streams running out of the San Gabriel Mountains to the east of the valley. Flows from the Crescenta Valley lead to the Verdugo Wash, a tributary of the Los Angeles River, whereas the Alhambra and other washes to the east join the Rio

Hondo. These latter streams carried debris flows similar to those in the streams leading into the Crescenta Valley, but because their headwaters area had not been subject to the same intense burn-off, the flows remained canalized rather than overtopping banks and fanning out over land.

Although some contemporary news stories stated that the Moores’ car went into the Rubio Wash rather than the Alhambra, a photograph of the destroyed bridge published in Los Angeles Times on January 5, 1934 (Figure 2), makes clear that it was the latter. The Moore’s car was recovered at some unstated distance downstream from the bridge. By some accounts, the bodies were found yet further downstream, June apart from the rest.



Figure 2

Site of Destroyed Alhambra Wash Bridge (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 5, 1934)

If they were returning from Wilmington, the Moores and Hubbards would have crossed the bridge from east to west, intending to turn at San Gabriel Boulevard to reach the Moore residence at 3106 South San Gabriel Boulevard (Figure 3 shows a Google Map of the area in 2022). The debris flow would have hit the car from the right, demolishing the bridge and sending the car tumbling down the wash. If they were near the end of the bridge at the time, June and her mother, looking out of the back window, would have seen the flow coming before the others did, owing to the bend in the channel. The waves of debris that passed through the Crescenta Valley are estimated to have been 20 feet tall; although those coming down the Alhambra Wash must have been much smaller, they

likely were of considerable height, consistent with Scott's dream of being overtaken by a brown tsunami.

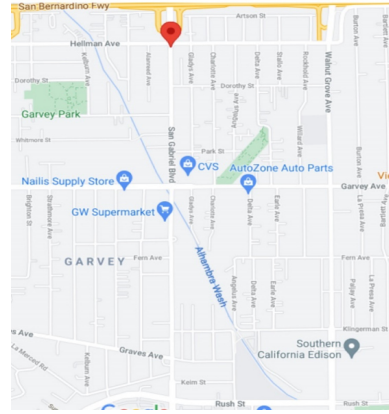


Figure 3

Rosemead, California, in March 2022, per Google Maps

Most contemporary news accounts give June's age as 7, although a few list it as 6. According to the 1930 federal census, she was born "circa 1928," which would indicate that she was most likely 6. Her death certificate (posted on the Find a Grave website) gives her date of birth as June 17, 1927, so she would have been 6.5 years old, aligning with Scott's impression of a young girl. If his memory of being sucked out of the window is correct, June would not have witnessed the fate of her parents and the Hubbard siblings.

A significant element of the story was not known initially, but soon emerged. There had been a sixth passenger that night, Earl Denniston, who hopped into the rumble seat at the rear of the car before it pulled away from the McCasland house. His position meant that when the car tumbled into the wash, he was tossed into the water. Somehow he managed to pull himself to shore. The testimony he provided reporters furnishes much of what is known about the tragedy (see in particular, "Five Drown in Plunge Off Bridge," *Rosemead Review*, January 5, 1934).

Bertha McCasland died in Los Angeles in 1948, Earl Denniston in San Diego in 1972. His son, Earl Wayne Denniston, born in 1940, died there in 2006. Had Scott been able to

communicate the place June died when he started having his dreams, he might have been able to contact relatives of the Moore and Hubbard families. By the time he made the connection, all those who knew June and her parents, as well as most of their first generation descendants, had passed away. Through genealogical research, Jay Holladay managed to trace one, however. He was Bruce Hubbard, whose father was a cousin of the Hubbard siblings. Bruce emailed Scott a photograph of Ethel, which overwhelmed him when he saw it. "Seeing Toots' eyes the other day really shook me to my core! I still remember the look of fear she gave me as the water hit the car! It's one of the things I could never forget about this." He added that he was hoping they would find a picture of June and her family "and if I can get out there and see where it all happened it may finally bring me peace."

Case Investigation

Initial Phase

Scott's case came to my attention through the Signs of Reincarnation Facebook group and an episode of Marilyn Elliott's podcast, *Reincarnation – Past Lives Revisited*, posted to the Internet on August 20, 2020. I made contact with Scott and expressed interest in studying his case. From the start, he has been cooperative, freely supplying materials and sharing his email exchanges with Mike Lawler, Jay Holladay and others. He has never requested or expressed the expectation of compensation of any kind.

Because the case had already been solved (the dream protagonist identified), my first task was to document the dream and the process of identification, then to confirm that the identification was warranted. I did this by going over the materials furnished me, following up hyperlinks, and repeating research that had been done on findagrave.com, in the 1930 census, in genealogical records, and on other sites. I satisfied myself that the story had been properly represented and found nothing to suppose that Scott was not

justified in identifying himself with June Moore. His long search for the source of his memories suggested that the circumstances of June's death were likely a unique event and the correspondences between the dream and reality were striking.

There remained the possibility that Scott had somehow learned of the tragedy and incorporated that into his dream, and I wanted to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of his experience and its effects on him. From what I gathered, his dream had all the hallmarks of a replicative posttraumatic nightmare—it replayed an actual event, was repetitive, invariably led to waking in distress, and was recalled after waking (Levin & Nielsen, 2007; Spoomaker, 2008). Such nightmares may recur for years, even decades (Schreuder et al., 2000). In the clinical literature, they are associated primarily with battlefield experiences or sexual abuse from earlier in the dreamer's life. For Scott, the traumatic event seemingly transpired in a different life. I wondered if his dream might be a psi-derived screen memory masking a repressed trauma from the first years of his own life; there were some steps to go before I would feel confident positing a past-life origin.

Progression of Distress Symptoms

I met Scott in Decatur, Illinois, on the evening of August 22, 2021, and went over the history of his experiences with him. I learned that tests he had completed in grade school had shown him to have an unusually strong memory. When I interviewed his mother, she acknowledged the strength of Scott's memory, in contrast to her own.

Scott began displaying signs of distress even before leaving Ohio as a toddler. In one of his earliest memories, he managed to climb out of his crib and was discovered beneath it, huddled against a wall. He recalls chewing on an extension cord there, something he says his mother confirmed that he did. Scott recalls climbing out of his crib repeatedly during this period. His mother would awake with the feeling that something

was amiss, go into his room, and find him on the floor under the bed. Scott persisted in the habit of hiding under his bed until he was 11 years old, when he grew too big to manage it. He felt safe in this confined space, although he cannot say why. He experienced no imaged memories and is aware of no conscious intent connected with this behavior.

On the drive from Troy, Ohio, to Decatur, Illinois, 3-year-old Scott was fearful whenever they approached a bridge and was disturbed by the thud, thud sound and feeling of the car driving across it. This emotional reaction was not accompanied by conscious impressions or imaged memories. Not long after arriving in Decatur, however, he began to have repetitive dreams in which he saw, from an observer perspective, a young child he identified as himself lying asleep on a Victorian loveseat. A woman he knew to be his mother entered the room and jostled the child awake, at which point the dream shifted to a field perspective and he started experiencing things through the child's eyes. The child's mother said with a sense of urgency that it was time to leave. There was a feeling of panic, a sensation Scott believes was new for him at the time. They departed the house, leaving a heavy-set woman behind a banging screen door. The mother carried the child to a black 1930s Ford sedan and the dream ended, without Scott waking.

When he was 4, Scott began to experience the longer version of his dream, culminating in the child's drowning. He would awaken in a cold sweat, crying. On the first occasion, he got out of bed and his parents found him on the floor, hugging a footpost, "trying to hold on for dear life." He was screaming, "I died! I died!" His mother picked him up, endeavoring to soothe him. His step-father entered the room behind her, "madder than hell." Scott was told that he had had a bad dream and that he should forget it, but the dream repeated a few weeks later and then a few weeks after that. It had a different quality than his regular dreams. Scott felt sure it was a memory, although no one in his family would give credence to that possibility. His mother thought that perhaps he was

being possessed by the child's spirit, but would not countenance the idea of reincarnation and past-life memory.

When Scott was 7, the pastor of the family's Lutheran church read a sermon about how when one died one went to heaven or hell. This irritated Scott, who blurted out, "That's not right!" His step-father tried to quiet him, but he continued: "That's not right, when you die, you have the choice whether or not to come back." This outburst so enraged his step-father that Scott for many years thereafter did not speak of his dream to anyone, in or out of the home. On the first day of school when he was 13 and in the seventh grade, a teacher held him back and informed him that he had "an old soul." Gazing into her eyes, he responded, "You have no idea how old," but did not elaborate. He has since tried to track down this teacher to tell her his story, but has not been able to locate her again.

Scott left home when he completed high school. He had come to realize that he was a girl in his memories, rather than a boy, as he had assumed from early childhood. His nightmares continued to bother him multiple times a month, but when he was 18, they started to come less frequently. Around the same time, he began to experience strange episodes of anxiety and depression that in his early 20s were recognized by the family to have a genetic basis. His maternal grandfather, mother, and maternal uncle suffer from a similar condition. Although genetic factors are known to be involved in major depression (Shadrina et al., 2018), familial depression may also be a product of the rearing environment (Johnson et al., 2001; Kendler et al., 2020), so Scott's depression may have a complex etiology. Scott has not had a recurrence of his nightmares since he was 25. However, by this time the narrative was fully established in his waking awareness; he claims to have "total recall" of the events and is troubled by them to this day.

Scott recounted to me some details not included in his email account. He recalls seeing dust flying up from the dirt road, so he is sure it was not raining that night, and indeed, according to the Los Angeles Times, the rain was confined to the San Gabriel

Mountains and Crescenta Valley; it did not enter the lower Los Angeles basin. The moon was full, providing some light. Scott remembers the car on the wooden bridge and seeing its white-painted guardrails, albeit fleetingly. Part of the trauma is a sense of abandonment when June's mother loses her grip on her arm. Although Scott recognizes that June's mother would have done her best to hold on to her, still he feels this loss keenly. He has the sensation of being hit by sticks as June was pulled under the water, before her consciousness left her body.

Scott never had a fear of water as such, something his mother was unable to comprehend, assuming his dream represented a genuine memory. He did however have a phobia of dark, murky water, and whenever his family went swimming in a lake near their home, refused to enter the water past his knees. It was the same with the ocean, although not swimming pools. He continues to feel fearful approaching bridges but has no other reactions that can be related to June's death.

Scott never displayed gender-nonconforming behavior or experienced gender dysphoria, common in reincarnation cases with a change of sex between lives (Pehlivanova et al., 2018), perhaps because June was young when she died. Such responses appear less often when deaths occur before sexual maturity or in old age (Stevenson, 2001, p. 124).

Although I probed for it, I could not identify an event in Scott's earliest years that might account for his nightmares. His mother's first marriage was difficult; Scott's father was often absent during that period. I could understand how this might have contributed to the stress reflected in his climbing out of his crib and seeking comfort beneath it, but such a trauma did not seem sufficient to explain his nightmares, which began after the move to Illinois. Scott's step-father was emotionally and sometimes physically abusive, but the worst of this occurred after the onset of his dreams. Scott had a mild phobic reaction to the bridges the family crossed on the way to Illinois and it seems possible that

the bridges acted as a reminder of June's death and precipitated an incubation process that led to his first dream memories, then at age 4, to the full dream sequence. This delayed reaction is consistent with posttraumatic stress, which often compromises memory retrieval (Samuelson, 2011).

Steps Toward Validation

It was many years before Scott began to receive validation for what from age 4 he felt were memories of a previous life. From 1999 to 2003, he lived with his sister and her family. Scott's nephew became interested in reincarnation through reading and his mother suggested he ask Scott about his memories. This surprised Scott because he could not recall having discussed his memories with his sister previously, but since she was five years his senior, she could have observed his tearful awakening at age 4 and heard his assertion that he had died. Scott related his dream, the first time he can recall having described it in full to anyone, feeling relief that finally he was able to do so, and for some months he and his nephew had many discussions about it.

At his sister's suggestion he try to substantiate his dream online, Scott went to his computer and entered various terms into the AOL search engine bar, but nothing of relevance came up. He could find no information about a family of five who had died in a car in a flood. Although Scott attempted other searches later, he was unsuccessful until he saw the episode of Hollywood Graveyard on YouTube in February 2019. The mention of the Los Angeles New Year's Flood led to his locating the photograph of the Moores' overturned car and unravelling the story of what befell them. Scott had been in counseling for anxiety and depression for some years, but had not told his therapists about his recurring nightmare. He now shared it for the first time, explaining the confirmation he had just discovered. Initially skeptical of a reincarnation interpretation,

over the next few weeks his therapist came around and encouraged him to persevere in his efforts to get at the source of his trauma.

As he became more confident that his dream would be taken seriously, Scott sought out reincarnation groups on Facebook. One of those he joined was Signs of Reincarnation. He commented there on June 30, 2019, in what appears to be the first public statement of his experience: "Since I was 3 having the same dream 2 to 4 times a month and it was the same thing every time and always ending up with my waking up in a cold sweat. . . . Never felt like dreams, more like memories, you can tell the difference, finally around my early 20's they stopped."

By the start of November 2019, Scott had managed to identify June Moore as his previous incarnation and left his flower by her headstone on the Find a Grave site. A few days later, he made contact with Mike Lawler and Lora Martinolich and the pace of verification accelerated. The story had very largely been pieced together by the time Scott spoke to Marilyn Elliott for her podcast, posted to the web in August 2020. My going over the documentation carefully in the summer of 2021 increased Scott's confidence in the identification of June as his previous incarnation, but at the time of our interview he had not made peace with his apparent memories.

Although he had not been troubled by his nightmares for two and half decades, Scott still recalled their substance clearly, still remembered waking from them, and still felt traumatized by them. In a follow-up telephone interview, he told me that flashes of June's death continue to enter his awareness 20 to 30 times per day. Even when not consciously aware of the images, he senses the scenes replaying like a film in the back of his mind. It is something he does not know how to get away from but has learned to live with, although he feels that the memories have adversely affected every department of his life. He continues to think that perhaps if he went back to the Rush Avenue bridge and



visited the cemetery where June is buried, he might at last achieve closure, but so much has changed in the interim he is not sure that even that would suffice. He is much concerned that he might himself die and June's story be lost with him. His therapist told him that it was her impression that he was dealing with PTSD stemming from both his present and previous lives; that certainly is one way of understanding Scott's situation, perhaps the most satisfactory one.

Happy Memories of June Moore

Scott has two additional recurring dreams of a young girl he presumes is June, with a more positive emotional valence than his traumatic recollection of her death. He began to have these dreams when he was about 5 years old, the year after he first experienced his nightmare to its conclusion. Although there is no way to assess their accuracy, both dreams have the quality of memories as opposed to creative fantasies. Both are perceived through June's eyes, a field perspective. Neither is as common as the dreams of her death. As is true of many reported dreams with apparent past-life content, they were clearer than regular dreams and were recalled upon waking.

In one of the dreams, June is wearing a white, sleeveless dress with a deep cut, holding a Raggedy Ann doll she adores. She is sitting on the second step leading to the door to their house, watching her mother hang clothes on a line. It is early on a summer evening and there is a breeze in the air. June's mother has her hair tied up in a bun in back and pulled tight in front, but a strand comes loose and the wind blows it into her eye. She takes hold of the strand and tucks it back in, smiling at June. Scott has the feeling that he is an only child and is much loved.

In the other dream, June's mother takes her into a drug store to make a purchase. Scott has the feeling that they have been there before and that they have a close acquaintance with a man, whom he understands to be the proprietor, and his wife. June

tugs at her mother's sleeve and asks if she may have a piece of candy. The man says, "You want a piece of candy?" and leads her to another counter where there are large glass jars with metal lids, full of confections. He directs her attention to a separate metal stand, a few feet high, and says, "I just got this in. Have you ever had a Hershey bar?" June has no idea what a Hershey bar is. She selects a large bar and the man smiles at her, saying she has made a good choice. She returns to her mother and asks if she may eat it then. Her mother says teasingly, "I don't know," asks if she might have a piece, and the memory abruptly ends.

The Problem of Corroboration

Scott is well aware of the need to have his recollections confirmed by others. His step-father is now deceased, but he put me in touch with his mother, with whom I spoke on the telephone. Although she said nothing to cast doubt on Scott's memories, she stated that she had retained no memories of her own regarding any of the matters I inquired about. She referred me to Scott's sister, who she said, remembered some things, but despite her and Scott's efforts to arrange an interview with the sister, she has not been receptive to this. Scott tried to put me in touch with his therapist, but even though he could supply a written release she fell back on client privilege and declined to speak with me.

Scott's nephew has been more forthcoming. He confirms that during the period that Scott was living with his family he became interested in reincarnation. "I asked my mom some questions and she told me to talk to Scott." Scott then told him "about driving in the car and a wave of water washing it away and seeing himself as a girl in a dress. He's always had good attention to detail in that matter. He always talked about having the same dream over and over." No one else in the family believed Scott was recalling a past life. The nephew, now in his 30s, is too young to have direct knowledge of the conditions of Scott's upbringing and so cannot vouch for what Scott told me about his early years,

but he believes that Scott's struggles to make sense of his experiences played into his anxiety and depression. Finally learning about June Moore has brought understanding and helped improve his emotional state to a fair degree:

I would say the effects of him finding truth to his dreams has affected him in a positive way. He went from being confused not understanding what he was seeing to finally shedding some light on the truth after all these years. Before he found the information about it I feel like he was struggling to make since [sic] of it all which could of course cause anxiety depression and the overwhelming feeling of finding your place in life.

Mike Lawler and Marilyn Elliott, both of whom have had close contact with Scott, share my assessment of the case, but both also became involved after Scott had made the connection to June. Although I have gone back over Scott's research and confirmed it, he was the one to make the identification. With this acknowledgement, it must be said that Scott's narrative has been consistent from the start. He has described the same events repeatedly, to different people, in different contexts, and the outline of his story is confirmed by his nephew. Scott has favorably impressed Mike Lawler, Marion Elliott, and me as being forthright and candid. With no reason to doubt it, I think we may accept his account at face value, even in the absence of more extensive corroboration.

Discussion

It would seem that Scott's dreams are accurate in the details that can be verified and, where they are unverifiable, they are consistent with established facts. How can his dreams be understood, if not as manifestations of past-life memory?

Subjective Illusion of Significance

The first possibility to consider is that Scott's identification with June Moore and the Los Angeles New Year's flood is due to what Leonard Angel (2015) called the "subjective illusion of significance." How many similar groups of five people died in a 1930s sedan during a flood? Scott was unable to locate any, but he might have missed some in his desultory searching.

Estimations of the likelihood that Scott's memories fit June Moore by chance are themselves bound to be subjective, but those who prefer this interpretation must explain what caused Scott to develop his recurring dreams and associated reactions. Assertions of an unreported trauma from the present life are unsatisfying without substantiation. Scott might have been disturbed by his birth parents' marital difficulties and separation or by his troubled relationship with his step-father, but it is unclear why either would have resulted in his nightmares beginning at age 4.

Imposition of Identity

If the correspondences between Scott's dream and the Moore tragedy are not coincidental, Scott could have learned about the tragedy and incorporated it in his dreams. A family member might have been aware of the story, conveyed this knowledge to Scott, and without realizing it, encouraged him to identify with June. Jay Holladay wondered whether there were genealogical connections between Scott's family and the Moore or Hubbard families that would support such a scenario, but was unable to find any.

As far as Scott knows, no one in his family or social circle had heard of the 1934 flood before he learned about it from Hollywood Graveyard. Woody Guthrie commemorated the tragedy in a 1962 song (https://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/Los_Angles_New_Years_Flood.htm). Scott cannot recall anyone talking about this

song, but even had his family been familiar with it, it is hard to see how it could have been a model for Scott's nightmare, because the event it depicts is distinctly different from the Crescenta Valley flood the song describes. Rosemead, where the Moore house was, is 16.6 miles from Montrose, the epicenter of the devastation; Wilmington, whence the Moores left that night, is 32 miles from Montrose on today's roads. The Moore tragedy was a side issue to what happened in the Crescenta Valley so obscure that Mike Lawler believes it would not have been known outside the Los Angeles area at the time. Moreover, Scott's family was so opposed to the idea of reincarnation it is difficult to understand why they would have suggested or imposed a past-life identity on him, even unconsciously.

Living Agent Superpsi

Could Scott have acquired information about the Moore tragedy via anomalous cognition, absorbed it, identified with it, and dramatized it in his nightmares? Several philosophers (e.g., Almeder, 1992; Griffin, 1997; Lund, 2009; Paterson, 1995) have rejected this explanation of apparent past-life memory as implausible because they do not see how even the most extensive psi of the contours presented in spontaneous cases and established in laboratory tests could account for the range of behavioral, emotional, and physical features involved in reincarnation cases. Griffin (1997) considered a theory of retrocognitive psi he called "retroprehensive inclusion" that would permit the retrieval of behaviors and emotions, as well as episodic memories, from a person premortem, but ultimately rejected this idea because, like other forms of superpsi, it would allow past-life information to be accessed by multiple people, an outcome not attested in the reincarnation case literature (1997, p. 205). Greyson (2021) wrote that there are cases of this sort, but this apparently is due to a misunderstanding. All multiple identifications are based on dreams and perceived behavioral or physical traits alone; none include multiple people remembering the same past life, see Matlock, 2019, pp. 266–267.)

The principal promoters of the psi-acquisition interpretation of apparent past-life memory are Stephen Braude (e.g., 2003) and Michael Sudduth (e.g., 2019). Braude recognizes no limits to living agent psi or superpsi, which he believes could be employed unconsciously like a "magic wand" to achieve any effect, no matter how extreme. Braude is not troubled by the unfalsifiability of this notion, because, he says, "we frequently find ourselves weighing rival, but strictly unfalsifiable, hypotheses" (Braude, 2016). But credibility issues remain. How realistic is it to imagine that Scott for unknown reasons reached out to some source or sources for information about June and her family and mobilized this in his dreams?

Braude (1995, 2003) makes much of the psi-conducive nature of dissociative states, urging this as evidence for the psi-basis of apparent past-life memory. Although identification with a deceased person may be regarded as ipso facto dissociative, dissociative episodes related to past-life recall in children are rare (Matlock, 2019, p. 207). However, Sri Lankan children with past-life memories score high on dissociation scales, perhaps thanks to the unusually high incidence of memories of violent death in Sri Lanka (Haraldsson et al., 2000), and dissociation is a factor in the past-life memories of adults (Matlock, 2019, pp. 207–208, 211–213). It would seem unwise to attribute apparent past-life memory to psi simply because dissociative states are psi-conducive. Dissociative states and the capacity to dissociate have been linked to PTSD (Schivone et al., 2018) and to nightmares (Maraldi, 2018; Watson, 2001), factors in Scott's case, and it could be that dissociative tendencies helped memories of June rise into his conscious awareness.

Reincarnation and Past-Life Memory

One of the biggest obstacles to the acceptance of reincarnation and past-life memory is the absence of an adequate theory to explain them. In *Signs of Reincarnation* (Matlock, 2019), I proposed that that what survives death is a stream of consciousness, or conscious experience, continuous with embodied life. I conceive of consciousness as

duplex, including a subconscious stratum along with conscious awareness. The subconscious, I hypothesize, is the repository of memories, emotions, personality traits, behavioral dispositions and other facets of personal identity. A person's consciousness stream persists intact through death until it possesses a new body in reincarnation. Memories of previous lives are retained in the subconscious mind after reincarnation, and from the subconscious may rise into conscious awareness or influence the newly embodied person behaviorally.

My model accounts for Scott's experience in a straightforward manner and in that respect has an advantage over living agent superpsi, which often must presume the integration of disparate types of information from multiple sources, combined with psychokinetic actions. For many skeptics, survival and reincarnation are ruled out by commitment to a materialist philosophy, but that philosophy is being challenged on various fronts and its hold on Western science appears to be weakening (Kelly et al., 2015; Kelly & Marshall, 2021). The same thinkers who have objected to superpsi have questioned the physicalist assumption that consciousness is produced by the brain and are open to dualist (Almeder, Lund, Paterson) or idealist (Griffin) alternatives that view consciousness as independent of the brain, yet interactive with it. Griffin (1997) came down in favor of a process metaphysics conception of survival and reincarnation similar to my (Matlock, 2019) processual soul theory.

Nightmares and Past-Life Memory

In *Signs of Reincarnation* (Matlock, 2019, pp. 135–136) I observed that while past-life memory is very similar to present-life memory, it bears little resemblance to anomalous cognition. Past-life memory is personal and limited in perspective, whereas psi spreads its net widely. Moreover, percipients do not confuse psi-acquired information with memory. This suggests that it might be helpful to examine Scott's nightmare within

theoretical frameworks developed for the study and treatment of replicative nightmares with references to present-life experience.

Levin and Nielsen (2007) and Spoomaker (2008) outline cognitive-behavioral approaches to nightmares. Levin and Nielsen note that in general nightmares are most common in the young, their severity and frequency declining with age. Posttraumatic nightmares, which follow a particularly distressful event, are an exception. Replicative posttraumatic nightmares carry the heaviest affect load and tend to be the most repetitive, because awakening prevents the subconscious psyche from processing the trauma, which is thus perpetuated. Spoomaker emphasizes that nightmares tend to follow a script and, similarly, suggests that the best way to treat them is to alter the script to assist the integration of the traumatic event with autobiographical memory at the conscious level. Terr (2003) observed this process in children's posttraumatic play and art, similar to what is reported with James Leininger (Matlock, 2022).

The replicative nightmare script is not necessarily a fully accurate replaying of events (Levin & Nielsen, 2007, pp. 500–501; Spoomaker, 2008, p. 16). In a questionnaire study with an instrument devised for the purpose (although without an attempt to verify memories directly), Esposito et al. (1999) discovered distortions in 79% of Vietnam veterans' posttraumatic nightmares. Moreover, the nightmare script may vary slightly from one occurrence to the next (Spoomaker, 2008, p. 16). It is therefore not surprising to hear Scott report minor variations in his dream, despite consistency in its overall trend. Nor is it surprising that in certain respects, Scott's dream appears not to be a faithful reproduction of the Moores' experience.

Despite key details that match reality (the type of car involved, the character of its occupants, being hit by a wall of muddy water), other elements of the nightmare are more dream-like. The most obvious is the time compression. The McCasland house was more than a half hour drive from the Moore house, but the dream presents the tragedy as



coming soon after the Moores left the McCaslands. The tense atmosphere Scott describes also is suspect. I doubt that the Moores knew what was happening in the Crescenta Valley at the time (in 1934 there was not the 24-hour news coverage we enjoy today) and since it was not raining in their immediate area, they would have had no reason for concern. I think the nightmare's emotional tone is most likely a projection of the panicked final seconds back over the entire event; perhaps, however, as Mike Lawler (personal communication, August 9, 2021) has observed, there was a sense of urgency to get home for a few hours' sleep before leaving for the Rose Parade, and this was misinterpreted by June.

Nightmares with past-life scripts have received little attention from researchers (exceptions are Mills, 1994, and Stevenson, 2001, pp. 49–52). However, judging by the number of reports of such experiences in the Signs of Reincarnation Facebook group and elsewhere on social media, they are a good deal more common than generally realized. Typically, these nightmares are said to recur and to include an array of distress symptoms, including awakenings. Rarely can they be related to specific events, but the absence of verification does not seem to alter their effect on the dreamers. Some persons who recount these nightmares say they have been in therapy to deal with them, but this has not been successful. Part of the reason may be that few clinicians are aware that PTSD may conceivably derive from past-life as well as present-life trauma; because they do not acknowledge the apparent memories as possibly valid, they cannot encourage the cognitive work required for their clients to process the material consciously. The many parallels between past-life memory and present-life memory suggest that the same therapeutic techniques proposed for posttraumatic nightmares deriving from present life experience would be effective with those stemming from past-life experience. Indeed, there is some evidence for this (Bowman, 2010; Mills, 1994; Peres, 2012), although clearly more research is required in this area.

Reincarnation is the most forthright and in many respects the most satisfying way to explain Scott's nightmare and traumatic experiences. The possibility of reincarnation continues to meet resistance, due to the conviction that past-life memories and related phenomena can be explained as superpsi acquisitions, if not adherence to physicalist assumptions about the brain's production of consciousness that render postmortem survival inconceivable. Scott's case is not especially strong evidentially. Additionally, its weak corroboration means that evaluations must remain tentative. The evidence for reincarnation collected since Stevenson began systematic investigations in 1961 (Matlock, 2019; Mills & Tucker, 2015; Stevenson, 2001) is a great deal more extensive and of higher caliber than generally appreciated, however. Although no single case can hope to provide conclusive evidence for reincarnation, Scott's case introduces important new dimensions and should be considered within the larger research context in reaching a conclusion regarding its best interpretation.

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Scheinbare Erinnerungen an frühere Leben in einem wiederkehrenden Traum über die Neujahrsüberschwemmung von 1934 in Los Angeles

James G. Matlock

Zusammenfassung: Wie Erinnerungen an das gegenwärtige Leben können auch Erinnerungen an scheinbare frühere Leben in Träumen auftauchen, manchmal in alptraumhaften Träumen. In diesem Beitrag wird die Fallstudie eines Traums von einem traumatischen Ereignis (einem Todesfall) vorgestellt, das 36 Jahre vor der Geburt des Träumers stattgefunden hat. Der Traum wiederholte sich mehrmals im Monat vom Alter von 4 Jahren bis in die 20er Jahre. Der Träumer wachte stets in Angst und schweißgebadet auf und erinnerte den Traum. Dies sind Merkmale posttraumatischer Alpträume, obwohl das Trauma hier aus einem früheren Leben zu stammen scheint und nicht aus dem gegenwärtigen Leben des Träumers. Noch in seinen 50ern erinnert sich der Träumer an das Ereignis und ist immer noch stark davon betroffen. Wiederkehrende Alpträume sind bei Berichten über Erinnerungen an frühere Leben verbreitet, aber dieser Fall ist insofern ungewöhnlich, als der Traum genug Einzelheiten enthielt, um seine Hauptelemente zu verifizieren und den Protagonisten des Traums zu identifizieren. Das fragliche Ereignis war so undurchsichtig, die Erinnerung des Träumers jedoch so präzise, dass es unwahrscheinlich ist, dass der Träumer oder seine Familie vor Beginn der Träume davon erfahren haben könnte. Ich habe die Möglichkeit in Betracht gezogen, dass der Träumer die Informationen durch anomale Wahrnehmung erlangt hat, habe sie jedoch verworfen zum Teil aus mangelnden Beweisen dafür, dass Emotionen dieser Stärke durch Psi erlangt werden können. Obwohl kein Fall für sich genommen einen überzeugenden Beweis für Reinkarnation liefern kann, trägt dieser Fall zu dem wachsenden Forschungsstand bei, der diese Möglichkeit ernsthaft in Betracht zieht.

Eberhard Bauer

Alegadas Memórias de Vidas Passadas em um Sonho Recorrente Sobre a Enchente de Los Angeles no Ano Novo de 1934

James G. Matlock

Resumo: Assim como lembranças da vida atual, memórias de supostas vidas passadas podem aparecer em sonhos, por vezes em sonhos apavorantes. Este artigo apresenta o estudo de caso acerca de um sonho sobre um evento traumático (uma morte) que ocorreu 36 anos antes do nascimento do sonhador. O sonho se repetia várias vezes por mês a partir dos 4 anos de idade até o sonhador chegar na casa dos seus 20 anos. O sonho invariavelmente levava-o a acordar em aflição e suando frio e era recordado após o despertar. Estas são características de pesadelos pós-traumáticos, embora o trauma aqui pareça derivar de uma vida anterior, não da vida atual do sonhador. O sonhador continua a se lembrar do evento em seus 50 anos e ainda é severamente afetado por ele. Pesadelos recorrentes são comuns em relatos de memórias de vidas passadas, mas este caso é incomum, pois o sonho era suficientemente detalhado para permitir a verificação de seus principais elementos, bem como a identificação do protagonista do sonho. O evento em questão era suficientemente obscuro, embora a lembrança do sonhador fosse suficientemente precisa, tornando improvável que o sonhador ou sua família pudessem ter aprendido sobre ele antes do início de seus sonhos. Considerei a possibilidade de o sonhador ter adquirido as informações através de uma cognição anômala, mas a rejeitei em parte por falta de provas de que emoções desta ordem possam ser adquiridas via psi. Embora nenhum caso isolado possa fornecer provas convincentes da reencarnação, este caso se soma ao crescente corpo de pesquisa que torna esta possibilidade digna de séria consideração.

Antônio Lima

Recuerdos aparentes de vidas pasadas en un sueño recurrente de la Inundación de Año Nuevo de 1934 en Los Ángeles

James G. Matlock

Resumen: Al igual que los recuerdos de la vida presente, los recuerdos de aparentes vidas anteriores pueden aparecer en los sueños, a veces en pesadillas. Este artículo presenta el estudio de un caso de un sueño de un evento traumático (una muerte) que ocurrió 36 años antes del nacimiento del soñador. El sueño se repitió varias veces al mes desde los 4 años hasta que el soñador tenía 20 años. El sueño provocaba invariablemente un despertar angustiado y con sudor frío, y se recordaba después de despertar. Estas son las características de las pesadillas postraumáticas, aunque en este caso el trauma parece derivar de una vida anterior, no de la vida actual del soñador. El soñador sigue recordando el suceso a sus 50 años y sigue estando muy afectado por él. Las pesadillas recurrentes son comunes en los informes de recuerdos de vidas pasadas, pero este caso es inusual porque el sueño fue lo suficientemente detallado como para permitir la verificación de sus elementos principales, así como la identificación del protagonista del sueño. El acontecimiento en cuestión era tan oscuro y el recuerdo del soñador tan preciso como para que sea poco probable que el soñador o su familia pudieran haberse enterado de él antes de que comenzaran sus sueños. Considero la posibilidad de que el soñador adquiriera la información a través de una cognición anómala, pero la rechazó en parte por la falta de pruebas de que emociones de este orden puedan adquirirse a través de psi. Aunque ningún caso aislado puede aportar pruebas convincentes de la reencarnación, este caso se suma al creciente conjunto de investigaciones que hacen que la posibilidad merezca ser considerada seriamente.

Etzel Cardeña