



Edgar Cayce
A SEER
out of
SEASON







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SEASON

The Life of History's
Greatest Psychic



HARMON HARTZELL BRO, PH.D.



A.R.E. Press • Virginia Beach • Virginia





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by Harmon Hartzell Bro

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To my graduate students, who for nearly half a century have taught me so much with their questions and creations, and to those bold graduate students of the next half century who will try to figure out where seers and open vision belong in our culture.

And to my wife, June.







“The best (including most absorbing) account that has been written about history’s best-documented psychic. William James would have liked this book.”

Huston Smith,
author of *The World’s Religions* and *Forgotten Truth*







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PREFACE

Harmon Hartzell Bro, Ph.D. (1919–1997) was a psychotherapist, an educator, a writer, an ordained minister, and an inspirational lecturer. As a young man, he lived and worked in the Cayce home and witnessed several hundred readings. That experience enabled him to come to know Edgar Cayce better than most individuals who have written about the Cayce legacy. Eventually, Harmon wrote his doctoral dissertation on Cayce’s life and work, as well as several books about the Cayce information, including this one, *Edgar Cayce—A Seer Out of Season*.

Harmon first came to Virginia Beach in 1943 as a young minister, just graduated from Divinity School at the University of Chicago. He came to meet Cayce first-hand, as he was both curious and troubled that his mother, Margueritte Harmon Bro, had become involved with Cayce’s work. However, what Harmon witnessed in Virginia Beach was very different than anything he might have imagined. An October 1943 letter to his wife, June Avis Bro, expressed his enthusiasm for a work that would transform his own life. That letter stated, in part, the following:

Thin tubercular women, crippled boys, cancerous workmen, arthritic grandmothers knotted in pain—they all find healing. But that’s only the beginning—what really happens to them is what has happened to Mr. and Mrs. Cayce, Gladys Davis [Cayce’s secretary] and some others—they find that “there is a river” of God’s love flowing about us all, only waiting to be tapped by humble minds. The real miracles at Virginia Beach are the radiant, transformed lives, the people who go away realizing that they can actually find God and





know Jesus and live like it. They say, “I am my brother’s keeper” and their lives show it. They say, “There is only one God” and all their friends feel it. Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, Catholic, Mennonite, Christian Scientist, Humanist, Presbyterian—it goes on like the “Ballad for Americans”—they all find what they are searching for in the work of the readings and Mr. Cayce . . .

Harmon and June Bro moved to Virginia Beach and became close friends with the Cayce family and worked as members of the Cayce office staff. At the time, there was a tremendous increase in requests for Cayce’s readings as a result of the publication of Cayce’s biography, *There Is a River*, by Thomas Sugrue, which was followed by Margueritte Harmon Bro’s own article in *Coronet* magazine entitled “Miracle Man of Virginia Beach.” Harmon and June listened to hundreds of readings. They had access to all correspondence, and they had the opportunity to repeatedly see how people’s lives were changed by the Cayce work.

Harmon became interested in psychology and decided to continue graduate work. He went on to Harvard and then to the University of Chicago where he did a doctoral dissertation based on a study of the Edgar Cayce readings. For this dissertation, he coined the following phrase for Edgar Cayce: “a seer in a seerless culture.”

Harmon called the story of Edgar Cayce’s life “one of the most challenging and appealing adventure stories of modern times.” He went on to explain that the story was about much more than a psychic—much more than he had ever expected when he first came to Virginia Beach as a young man:

. . . to call him a psychic is to call an opera star an athlete of the vocal cords. For Cayce’s aid was not simply raw data dumped on frantic seekers, but carefully devised counsel as fraught with values



as with information. He spoke not only of organs and tissues and interventions, but of justice and love, and of beauty and holiness, as the context for healing and wholeness. Only a time so impotent for personal and social goodness that it must seize on powers ahead of meaning would be satisfied with labeling him a clairvoyant. To find his visionary yet practical gift, one must remember Judaism's Baal Shem To combining healing with mystical vistas, Melville viewing the world from the bowels of whales, Blake painting fiery creation, Freud finding darkness and light through sexuality, and Jung glimpsing with Plato the starry heavens of archetypes within human deeps.

Cayce was not fascinated with his own prowess, though others often were. Nobody who knew him well could imagine that he went to bed at night and got up in the morning thinking about his trance skills and how to improve them—any more than he focused on his paranormal abilities outside of trance, such as seeing revealing colors (auras) around others, reading minds, conversing with the recently dead, or previewing the future. His concern was not first of all with powers but with relationships. On the one hand he sought to be deeply and helpfully related to the damaged persons that he served. And on the other hand he sought to be related to the divine, which he saw as the ultimate author of his gifts, within the kind of community and tradition that serves such a source. This was a man who lay down and arose with prayer, not as duty or accomplishment, but as a hunger reaching for companionship with God, seeking to be grasped more than to grasp, so that he might create usefully for those who wept with pain.

Harmon's book presents an eyewitness account of



Cayce at work. It draws upon Harmon's personal experiences, as well as upon hundreds of interviews with Cayce's relatives, associates, sufferers seeking aid, and even some disappointed detractors. It presents a story of a man with tremendous gifts, tremendous challenges, and tremendous love for God and the human creation.

When Edgar Cayce died on January 3, 1945, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, he left well over 14,000 documented stenographic records of the telepathic-clairvoyant statements he had given for thousands of people over a period of forty-three years. These documents are referred to as *readings*. In 1931, Cayce founded the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) to research, document, and disseminate his psychic information.

The readings constitute one of the largest and most impressive records of psychic perception ever to emanate from a single individual. Together with their relevant records, correspondence, and reports, they have been cross-indexed under thousands of subject headings and placed at the disposal of psychologists, students, writers, and investigators from around the world.

Today, Edgar Cayce's A.R.E. offers membership benefits and services, a magazine, newsletters, publications, conferences, international tours, an impressive volunteer network, the Cayce/Reilly[®] School of Massotherapy, a Health Center and Spa, a retreat-type camp for children and adults, prison and prayer outreach programs, and A.R.E. contacts around the world. A.R.E. also maintains an affiliation with Atlantic University, which was founded in 1930 by Cayce and some of his closest supporters (AtlanticUniv.edu).

For additional information about the Edgar Cayce work, contact A.R.E., 215 67th Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23451-2061; call (800) 333-4499; or visit the website EdgarCayce.org.

Kevin J. Todeschi
Executive Director & CEO
Edgar Cayce's A.R.E. / Atlantic University



CHAPTER 1

I Don't Do Anything You Can't Do

There was literally a loaded gun on my hip when I began a journey into the scarcely believable life of Edgar Cayce. It was wartime in the mild June of 1945, and I was a graduate student at the University of Chicago, holding a night job as a civilian guard under military command. Between my rounds through the laboratories in a large wooden building (given a deceptive exterior to mislead saboteurs or spies), I perched on a stool under a naked light bulb and read chapters from a biography published the year before, *There Is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce*.¹ Now and again I glanced around and fingered my gun when there were creaking sounds in the woodwork or the dogs barked hoarsely in the animal lab down the hall. There was real danger from enemy agents, according to the supervising Army captain. Recent break-ins had threatened research secrets and cost the life of one guard. Often I wondered, while trudging hourly routes through the night, whether I would hesitate for a critical second before firing to kill a man who sprang from behind a table of chemical re-torts or around the great humming transformers.

Such images of violence, making all too real the daily reports of GIs meeting sudden death on European and Pacific battle fronts, were utterly incongruous with the images in the book before me. There the author, Thomas Sugrue, a respected editor and critic for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, described how an elderly ex-photogra-

¹Sugrue, Thomas. *There Is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce*, 1942.



pher in the oceanfront resort of Virginia Beach, Virginia, regularly entered a quietly creative state so potent that it mocked all the university technology surrounding me. The gun on my hip and the book on my knees represented radically different approaches to power. One stood for the skilled violence we guarded in an advanced and top-secret weapons research project. The other reported valuable knowledge about a staggering array of targets, reached peacefully and swiftly in a calm trance state.

Had I known the full nature of the research in my care, the contrast with Cayce would have been even more stark. The intricate equipment was part of the Manhattan District or Manhattan Project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Of course, we guards tried discreetly to learn what was happening in our cluster of buildings across the rolling, grassy Midway from the main campus. We could not puzzle it out, because some rooms with flasks and bubbling tubes were clearly for chemical research, while others were crowded with electrical apparatus that suggested work in physics. And why did we have live animals, such as dogs, monkeys, and rats? What was the connection between living flesh and the technology we suspected was connected to the university's atomic accelerator across the campus? When I tried to question my friend and neighbor from boyhood, the distinguished physicist Arthur Compton, I got only pleasant generalities.

The well-hidden truth of the Project was known in 1943 only to a score or so of scientists such as Robert Oppenheimer (working at the level of Compton and his Chicago colleagues under Enrico Fermi), selected military chiefs, and President Roosevelt plus a few advisors. Just a few blocks from where I was reading through the night about Cayce, a team of researchers in quarters created under the west stadium grandstands of Stagg Field had achieved the first controlled atomic reaction, which they were now turning into an atom bomb. At the end of the same football field, where I had so often flung my

javelin towards the sky and watched its distant puncture of the soft earth, they had created a new weapon that would make even warships and tanks seem as archaic as javelins. Just months ago, in the cold and blowy Chicago December, they had turned loose a power which in two years would create an agony of screaming in Japan—enough to drown out all the throaty roars of Saturday football fans that I had heard throughout my youth near Stagg Field. In the very playground of the University, these gifted scientists had fashioned an instrument to suddenly kill some ninety thousand human beings at Hiroshima, with an equal number maimed. Nobody would ever know the exact casualties there and at Nagasaki, because so many civilians would be vaporized and incinerated in the August days already destined at our gracious campus.

A Kind of University All by Himself

Power was in the air, in the whirring machines and humming electrical circuits of the laboratory in my keeping. It was our American genius, our gift for know-how which we hoped would win the war. We raised the banner of technique over university campuses and assembly lines alike. This was the Century of Progress celebrated at the World's Fair in Chicago a few short years ago, where I had viewed with awe the sparkling technical displays in the Hall of Science, with my father in charge of the University of Chicago exhibits and programs.

But power of a different sort was the theme of the strange Cayce story. If the facts reported of him were even partly accurate, he had an extraordinary capacity that made him a kind of university all by himself, without technology at all.

Twice a day for decades, he had entered a trance state for up to an hour or more. In that unconscious condition (so unlikely that it had never appeared in any of my

courses in psychology, religion, or the history of cultures) he seemed able to examine and describe whatever was posed to him by someone in genuine need. Most often the unknown goal had been a sick body and the treatments to heal it. But under certain conditions the target could also apparently be a virus, an ancient kingship, a marital conflict, the movement of the stars, the ontological foundations of human existence, the political affairs of nations, or a teenager's heartbreak. His descriptions of these many objectives came in discourses of uneven rhetoric, for he was not educated beyond the eighth grade. He appeared to observers to struggle as he described what he saw as fluid "forces" (to use his word) or fields and flows in intricate dynamics, as structures his listeners could recognize and use. But he was reported to demonstrate stunning accuracy, typically using medical and technical terms not known to him. How could one even begin to think about such skill?

The university employed precision hardware to unlock structures of reality, under the direction of trained minds that formed themselves to secrets of nature and history, supplying power on demand, from engineering to medicine to politics. But Cayce had no tools. He had methods and routines, such as not entering his trance too soon after eating, and praying before he went unconscious. But what were these devices, compared with the university's electron cloud chambers and huge libraries? Cayce's power came without equipment, in quiet. He appeared to empty himself, to hollow out his consciousness as a receptacle, a conduit. Yet in his seemingly artless art he produced flashes of useful knowledge that could leave behind not only unspeakably potent weaponry but perhaps an entire civilization built on tools and technique.

It was not easy to keep an open mind about the story that occupied my June nights. Cayce was triply an affront to learning. First, the untutored Southerner's knowledge was encyclopedic. He could describe and analyze in dozens of fields what only advanced special-

ties should tell him. Second, he accomplished his reports by means that no professor would dare to claim. He did his analyses at a distance from his absent medical subjects and removed by continents or centuries from many other targets. Third, he had no mentors (of the sort that graduate students expect) to chronicle for his developing ideas or achievements. Either the reports about him were fraudulent or deluded, or—if his skills were stable and could be taught to others—he represented a breakthrough of staggering scope.

His own claim was forthright: "I don't do anything you can't do, if you are willing to pay the price."² Evidently he did not mean that others should go into trance twice a day, rather that they could find their own means for connecting with the same helpful sources he had found, in a process he saw as once natural for the human condition but long ago lost. If he were correct that others could do it even to small degree, that should be enough to open up entire continents of the mind and further reality for exploration. Any student of science knew that small phenomena could have large consequences, as Franklin's sparking kite showed.

Yet there were nagging questions, even if one could imagine that Cayce's feats actually happened and might in some measure be replicated. What was the "price" of which he spoke? He had learned that his ability was somehow tied to his character and purposes. He could not use it to exploit others, nor to help others gain advantage over their fellows. It deserted him if he tried. Instead, he had to use it for those with real needs, who would invest themselves and grow personally as they explored and applied his counsel. This predicament seemed out of line with the enterprise of objective, detached science. It suggested a cosmos going somewhere purposefully, with creative demands at its heart.

And what would be the personal costs of trying to

²Cayce, Edgar, *What I Believe*, 1976, p. 25.