

American Children with Past-Life Memories

It is more common than generally realized for people to have what they feel are memories of previous lives. In the better cases of this nature, memories can be confirmed and the previous incarnations identified. This article presents a series of cases of children's past-life memories from the Americas and compares them to cases from Europe and elsewhere in the world. American cases are similar to European cases in having relatively long intermissions between lives. This may help to explain why there are relatively few Western cases and why most of those that are known are less well developed than those reported from Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

The belief in some form of rebirth or [reincarnation](#) is ancient and widespread. Reincarnation beliefs typically are supported by apparent past-life memories and other signs, which are of interest to psychical research as evidence for reincarnation. Systematic [research on reincarnation cases](#) began in the 1960s with the investigations of [Ian Stevenson](#). Stevenson did most of his work in Asia and the Middle East, but looked into European and American cases also.

Reincarnation Cases in the Americas

Overview

This article describes American children whose memories of previous lives have been documented in print. Three of these cases were reported before 1960, the rest by Stevenson and other researchers after that date. The focus is on the spontaneous memories of children. The [past-life memories of adults](#) are the subject of a different article. Memories arising in [past life regression](#), also, are the topic of another piece.

The adjective 'American' is employed broadly, to include not only the United States but also Canada and Cuba (unless otherwise noted, cases are from the United States). [Brazilian cases](#) are treated separately. All cases listed here derive from the European cultures of the Americas. For reincarnation beliefs and cases of indigenous peoples, see [Native North American Children Who Recall Previous Lives](#).

The 39 American cases summarized below are organized according to the relationship between the case subject and the person whose life is recalled – family, acquaintance, or stranger, with one case of uncertain classification. Fifteen cases have family relationships, three have acquaintance relationships, and twelve have stranger relationships (no connection between the lives can be discerned). In one case the identification is uncertain, and eight other cases are 'unsolved', meaning that it has not been possible to trace the person of the remembered earlier life.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Reincarnation cases share many [common features and patterns](#). The common features include [dreams announcing rebirth](#); [birthmarks and other congenital physical traits](#); [behavioural traits](#); and [past-life memories](#). There may also be [memories of the intermission period](#) between lives, during which the parents may be chosen. Some children recall being [a member of the opposite sex](#). The previous lives generally passed in the same region, ethnic and religious group as the present life; only occasionally were they in another country (see here for a list of [international cases](#)).

Also, most of the recalled lives ended not long before the present life began. Stevenson reported a median of only fifteen months in a series of 616 child cases, predominantly from Asian and Middle Eastern countries.¹ However, there are cultural differences on some variables, particularly on the length of the intermission and the relative frequency of different types of relationship (family, acquaintance or stranger) between the case subject and the person whose life is recalled.

The strongest contrasts are between [European cases](#) and [Asian cases](#). Most European cases are weaker phenomenologically and evidentially than are Asian cases and the intermissions tend to be longer. The median length of 26 solved European cases for which information is available is 24 months, longer than the global median of cases in Stevenson's collection.² The American cases are similar to the European cases in this respect. For the sixteen solved American cases for which reliable information on the intermission is available, the median interval is 9.5 years.

Another pattern that European and American cases have in common is that intermission lengths are notably shorter in family and acquaintance cases than in stranger cases. In the European cases, the median intermission for family cases is fifteen months, whereas for stranger cases it is thirteen years (156 months).³ In the American cases, the median intermission in family cases is three years, whereas for stranger cases it is forty years. This pattern is not as evident in Asian cases, perhaps because the intermission in all cases is comparatively brief and there are fewer cases with family and acquaintance connections.⁴

With unsolved cases, the intermission length cannot be calculated precisely, but unsolved European cases often give the impression of having a past life many years before the present. The apparent median intermission in these cases is about 100 years.⁵ The apparent median intermission in unsolved American cases is roughly thirty to fifty years, similar to the median intermission of solved stranger cases. In accordance to the general pattern, there are few American and European international cases. Of 46 European cases, two were international;⁶ of the 35 American cases, three have an international connection.

Reincarnation researcher [James Matlock](#) speculates that longer intermissions in Western cases would allow spirits of the deceased to meet loved ones at their deaths, a Western expectation not shared by the rest of the world. Longer intermissions mean greater differences between present and previous lives, presenting fewer cues to recall, which may help explain why European and American cases are relatively impoverished.⁷

American Cases with Family Relationships

Bobby Hodges / Sam

Bobby Hodges's case is unusual, in that Bobby had no past-life memories other than being a miscarried foetus, but his memories of that as well as of events from the intermission period, the new intrauterine period, and birth, were veridical (their accuracy was confirmed). The case was independently investigated by [Jim B Tucker](#) and Carol Bowman, who called Bobby by different names in writing about him. Their reports⁸ are merged in the following summary, which uses the name Tucker adopted.

Bobby's first word was 'cousin' and he talked frequently about wanting to live with his cousins. The significance of this began to emerge when he was four years old. One night after his bath he asked his mother if she remembered when he and his younger brother Donald had been in her tummy together. She replied that they had not been in her tummy together, but he insisted that they had, although they had not been born. Gradually it became clear the he was referring to a miscarriage his aunt had suffered when she was carrying twins, seven years before his birth.

Bobby said that he had tried to return to his aunt, but found her womb already occupied; indeed, she had become pregnant shortly after the miscarriage with one of Bobby's cousins. Bobby accused Donald of causing the miscarriage and demanded to know why, at which Donald took his dummy out of his mouth and yelled, 'I wanted Daddy!' Bobby also correctly described his parents' wedding, which had occurred while his mother was pregnant with him. He wanted to know why he had been born by Caesarean section. His mother explained that it was because he had been in a face-up occiput-posterior position. Had he turned over, he could have been born normally. 'Oh, I didn't know that,' said Bobby. 'I would have turned over, but I thought they were trying to push me back in.'

Chad Luke / PM / Patrick Christenson

This is another case that was independently investigated by Carol Bowman and Jim Tucker, along with Ian Stevenson. Bowman refers to the subject as Chad Luke; Tucker and Stevenson use the initials 'PM'; and Tucker has written about him in two books under the name Patrick Christenson.⁹ The case has multiple physical and behavioural features as well as past-life memories that identified Chad as the reincarnation of his half-brother James, who had succumbed to complications of neuroblastoma twelve years before his birth.

James had been in good health until at eighteen months his cancer took hold. He began to have trouble walking and fell, fracturing his tibia, and afterwards walked with a limp. The neuroblastoma was confirmed by an autopsy taken from a swelling in his scalp above his right ear. His left eye protruded and was thought to have bled slightly. Because he was having trouble eating, doctors placed an intravenous tube in his throat, leaving a linear scar across the right side of his neck. By the time of his death seven months later, James was blind in his left eye and his facial features were distorted.

Chad was born blind in the left eye and his face was asymmetrical. He had a linear birthmark resembling a surgical scar across his neck. He also had a cyst on the right side of his head, behind his ear, in the place the biopsy had been performed on James. When Chad began to walk, it was with a limp, although no physical reason could be found for it. Starting when he was about four and a half years old, he related many memories of James. He gave an accurate description of the flat in which he had lived as James and wanted to return there to play with James's toys. He accurately described the biopsy on James's scalp and recalled not being able to drink without vomiting. He identified a picture of James as one of himself. His mother and others who knew James noticed that Chad had a personality similar to James. His mother followed Bowman's advice to acknowledge his link to James, after which Chad developed some sight in his left eye. At age six he began to talk less about his memories of James.

Craig Mitchell (Canada)

This case was investigated by James Matlock and reported at a conference and later in a book.¹⁰ It concerns a high-functioning autistic boy (Craig is not his real name) who gave evidence of having been his mother's father, who had abused her sexually when she was a teenager. He died a mere ten days before the boy was conceived.

At the time of his death, Craig's mother was estranged from her father; she did not learn about his passing until after Craig was conceived. She and her same-sex partner wished to have children, so they arranged for a man of their acquaintance to impregnate them. Both Craig and his brother were diagnosed as on the autism spectrum, which suggests that their affliction may be hereditary; certainly it is not specific to Craig. When he was three years and eight months old, he was present when his mother was undergoing an emotional release therapy session in an effort to deal with her feelings towards her father, which still troubled her. Witnessing this, Craig started putting his hands on her, more demonstrative than usual. He told her over and over, 'It's OK,' and exclaimed, 'I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!' Then he added, 'I never said so.'

This is the only thing Craig said that related to his grandfather, but his mother noticed several behavioural traits that matched the man. Like his grandfather, an engineer by trade, Craig is mechanically inclined and enjoys doing things with his hands, but at the same time is multi-talented and possesses strong musical and artistic abilities. He enjoys colour-coordinating his wardrobe, something in which his grandfather took pride. His grandfather died of lung cancer after decades of heavy smoking; Craig is adamantly opposed to smoking. Craig's mother has come to accept that Craig is her father reborn and their relationship has allowed for her finally to heal the emotional wounds from the past.

Dee Klepper

Carol Bowman investigated this return of a woman as her great-granddaughter, seven years after her death. Dee's mother and her grandmother had a contentious relationship. After her grandmother's death, Dee's mother dreamed several times of her grandmother, but each time the woman was going away from her. Then when she became pregnant with Dee, she began to dream of the woman coming towards

her. When she was about seven months into her pregnancy, she started to sense her presence. She considered the possibility of reincarnation but had read that there was invariably a lengthy period between lives and so dismissed it.

When she first held Dee, she was overwhelmed with a feeling of familiarity. Still, reincarnation was so far from her expectation that she did not credit the sensation for long. But when Dee reached two years of age, she began to behave more and more like her great-grandmother and to recognize places and people her great-grandmother had known. When a friend gave her three cats, she named them Jenny, Leila and Lester, which her mother later found on a family genealogy: Jenny Leila was Dee's great-grandmother's sister and Lester was her brother. At this point, Dee's mother could no longer doubt that Dee was her great-grandmother come back.[11](#)

Dylan

This case is unusual, because the subject, Dylan, never spoke about his great-grandfather, Pop-Pop. He was identified as Pop-Pop's reincarnation on the basis of several striking behaviours which were characteristic of Pop-Pop, yet out-of-place in his own family. His family were non-smokers, but as a toddler Dylan mimed holding a cigarette and said he carried his 'smokes' in the front pocket of his trousers. He would play at gambling and after he was given a toy gun, carried it with him everywhere.

Pop-Pop, who had worked as a policeman and security guard, always had a gun with him. He had also been a lifelong chain-smoker, who developed emphysema and heart disease. When his wife discovered his pistol under a sofa cushion rather than in the place he normally kept it, she feared he planned to kill himself and threw the gun into a river. This infuriated Pop-Pop and he never got over it. Dylan's obsession with his gun abated after hearing his parents talk about this. Although he never related any memories of Pop-Pop, he may have had some. When he started school, he was asked to tell about his favourite vacation and wrote a detailed and vivid description of a visit to the Grand Canyon, a place that had made a great impression on Pop-Pop, but to which Dylan himself had never been.[12](#)

Jesse Kornik

Jesse Kornik recalled being his step-brother, Brent, who had died in a car crash three years before his birth. Brent's head had hit the top of the steering wheel, the impact knocking him unconscious. From time to time after his death, their mother had felt his presence around her. When she was seven months pregnant, she dreamed of him. They were in a big open space and Brent was walking towards her along with a young boy. As they got close to her, Brent pointed to the boy and said, 'Mom, this is for you.' Then Brent was gone and she woke up.

Jesse was born by Caesarean section with a large strawberry birthmark covering most of his forehead. He looked exactly like Brent at the same age, although their fathers were different and bore no physical resemblance to each other. When Jesse started talking, the identification with Brent became even clearer. He pointed to a picture of Brent and declared, 'Me, me!' When he was eighteen months old, he did

something highly characteristic of Brent: Brent had disliked his grandmother's smoking and would blow out her matches; Jesse blew out her cigarette lighter. Jesse knew the way through their neighbourhood and led his mother back to the flat in which she and Brent had lived. Like Brent, he loved playing with balls and wearing hats and he recalled a frightening incident from Brent's life, when his younger brother had almost started a fire in their flat.[13](#)

Joseph

Joseph habitually addressed his grandmother as 'Mom' and called his mother by her first name. When he was a toddler, he related several memories of an uncle who had died in a tractor mishap twenty years earlier. He recalled what places had looked like in his uncle's day, remarking, amongst other things, on a time he had spilled red paint on himself while painting a roof that had since been repainted green. When a new pair of shoes was purchased for him, he insisted they be in his uncle's size, even though they were much too large for his small feet. Ian Stevenson investigated this case and on one of his trips to visit Joseph and his family took along *Washington Post* journalist Tom Shroder, who wrote about it in his book, *Old Souls*.[14](#)

Kari Mott

Kari Mott was a surprise baby. Her mother had been told that her Fallopian tubes were blocked and that she could not get pregnant again after a miscarriage. Nevertheless, she did, and gave birth to Kari 'quickly' after the death of her mother, Artise. The family noticed that Kari behaved like Artise and jokingly said she was Artise come back to them. As Kari matured, the identification became undeniable. Once Kari sang all stanzas of 'Chattanooga Choo Choo', a song which had been a favourite of Artise but which she, Kari, had never heard, much less had the opportunity to learn. When she began dance classes at age four, she astonished her instructor by instinctively knowing dance moves. She picked out items that had belonged to Artise and informed her mother about the origins of items she did not know.[15](#)

Katie (Canada)

Katie's mother's mother was an alcoholic and abusive to her children, but before her sudden death, she and Katie made up and became close. She then appeared in Katie's mother's dreams, but these dreams ceased when Katie's mother became pregnant. Unfortunately, the baby's father was not her husband, and she decided to have an abortion. Before she could carry out this plan, however, an incident occurred that dissuaded her from it. A man named Tom, a co-worker of the baby's father, had been kept up all night by the sound of a baby crying. It had disturbed him because he thought it meant that a baby, somewhere, was in distress. Katie's mother and her partner were quick to make the connection. Katie's mother did not terminate the pregnancy; she divorced her husband and married the baby's father.

As soon as Katie could form full sentences, she would ask her mother, 'Remember when I was your mommy?' At first her mother did not take this seriously, but when Katie repeated it shortly before her third birthday, she decided to play along and

asked Katie what her name had been. 'They used to call me Blondie,' she said. This had been her grandmother's nickname when she was small, but she had not been called that for many years before her death. Katie told her mother several things that suggested that she was aware of the difficulties they had experienced when their mother-daughter relationship was reversed, but what her mother found most astonishing is that she referred to Tom by name and told her, in a hushed tone, 'He saved my life once.'[16](#)

Miles

This is another case of an abusive parent reincarnating to one of his children, permitting healing in the relationship between them. Miles never identified verbally with the grandmother who died two years before her birth, but she was remarkably like her in behaviour. She also loved collecting elephant crafts, as her grandmother had done. She insisted that her mother purchase an art print of an elephant that her grandfather later identified as by her grandmother's favourite illustrator.[17](#)

Nellie Horster

This is the oldest case in this list. It was first reported to a newspaper, the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, on 25 September 1892, and summarised by Ralph Shirley in his book, *The Problem of Rebirth*.[18](#)

Nellie's father wrote to the newspaper to tell of his daughter Nellie, who insisted that she be called Maria, the name of another daughter, whom he had lost in early childhood, three years prior to Nellie's birth. When Maria was alive, the family had resided in Effingham, Illinois, from which they had since moved. When Nellie was nine, her father needed to return to Effingham, and took her along with him. In Effingham, Nellie recognized the house in which Maria had lived and also several people known to Maria. She asked her father to take her to the school she used to attend. Once there, she walked without hesitation up to the desk that had been Maria's, saying 'This is where I used to sit.'

Peter

Twenty years before Peter was born, his family suffered a major tragedy. One night their dog awoke them with wild barking, and they found that their house was on fire. All the family except one young boy, Gary, were able to escape. Their father went back into the house to rescue Gary but the pair were trapped and perished in the flames. This event was so traumatic that it was never spoken about in the family until Peter came along, but he had clear memories of it, expressed both in night terrors and stories he told his mother. His mother, who was Gary's youngest sister, had been too small at the time of the fire to remember many of the details Peter related but she confirmed these with her mother and older siblings. Peter formed a strong attachment to his grandmother and over time came to share more of his memories with her than with his mother. When shown a picture of the family, he correctly picked out Gary. He had a strong fear of fire and anything, such as lit matches, with which a fire might be ignited.[19](#)

Sam Taylor

Sam Taylor was born a year and a half after his paternal grandfather died. When he was eighteen months old, he told his father that when he was his age, and his father a baby, he had changed his nappies. Subsequently Sam said many things that revealed his identification with his grandfather and uncanny knowledge of his life. He was unusually good at answering his mother's questions about his memories. When she asked him what his grandmother had made daily for him to drink, he correctly answered that it was milkshakes, produced in a food processor rather than in a blender, and pointed the machine out to his mother. In reply to his mother's question about whether he had brothers or sisters before, he said, 'Yeah, I had a sister. She turned into a fish.' Sam's grandfather's sister had been killed sixty years before and her body dumped in a nearby bay. Sam talked about having seen his Uncle Phil in Heaven, remarking that that in his previous life he had made Uncle Phil's feet hot. This corresponded to a prank his grandfather had played on his Uncle Phil, warming his shoes before he put them on.[20](#)

Susan Eastland

About six months after six-year-old Winnie Eastland was struck by a car and killed, her elder sister dreamed that she would be returning to the family. Two years on, when her mother became pregnant again, she too dreamed of Winnie. Then, in the delivery room when she was born, her father heard her voice say distinctly, 'Daddy, I'm coming home.' Her family thus were prepared to have her relate memories of Winnie, which she began to do when she was two years old. She talked about playing on swings at school, as Winnie had enjoyed doing. She was unafraid of horses and recalled that she had once walked under a horse, as was true of Winnie. When her mother asked if she remembered a boy named Gregory, she replied, 'Yes, I remember Gregggy,' using his nickname before she had heard it used by others. Susan also identified photographs of Winnie as photographs of herself.[21](#)

William / DG

Jim Tucker, who investigated this case, wrote about it twice, first in a journal paper with initials for the subject's name and then in a book, under the name 'William'.[22](#) The latter is employed in the following summary.

William recalled having been his maternal grandfather, John, who had a career with the police force. After an injury forced his retirement, he was hired as a security officer at a bank. Following work one day, he went to an electronics shop, where he discovered a burglary underway. He drew his revolver on a robber at the cash register but was unaware that he had accomplices elsewhere in the building. John was shot six times in the back, the bullets penetrating his lungs and heart. He was rushed to hospital, but did not survive.

William was born five years later to one of John's daughters. He had extensive congenital problems with his heart and lungs consistent with John's injuries. Amongst his several birthmarks was one on his neck below his left ear, in the area of bruising on John's neck cited in his autopsy report. As William grew older, his family noticed personality traits reminiscent of John. William shared John's

fondness for reading and when he visited his grandmother's house, would spend hours looking at books in John's study. He was good at assembling items, as John had been, and like John was a nonstop talker. He often spoke about how John had died, correctly describing the event. Once he asked his mother about the name of one of John's cats. 'You mean Maniac?' she asked. 'No, not that one,' he said. 'The white one.' 'Boston,' she told him. 'I used to call him Boss, right?' William enquired, employing the nickname that John, but no other member of the family, had used for the cat. In response to a picture of his pregnant mother when pregnant with him, he observed that she would hold her abdomen while running up the stairs of their home. When she asked him how he knew this, he said he had been watching her.

American Cases with Acquaintance Relationships

Cruz Moscinski

Cruz Moscinski was an infant when his case was investigated and not of an age that he could talk about any memories he had. Nevertheless, his case has remarkable physical and behavioural features that suggest that he is the reincarnation of his father's best friend, who had killed himself four months before his birth. Cruz has a cleft chin, like his father's friend had, although no other members of the Moscinski family have cleft chins. Cruz appeared to recognize the family and friends of his father's friend. On two occasions, when he saw urns that held that man's ashes, he reacted to them as if he knew that they held the remains of his own late body. Once he kept pointing to an urn, and when allowed to hold it, kissed it, and handed it back.[23](#)

Derek

This case has both family and acquaintance connections, but the acquaintance factor likely was more important in determining where the reincarnation transpired. The date of birth is not given, so the length of the intermission is not clear, but it must have been circa eighteen years.

When Derek was two years old, he started talking about his 'other mother', whom he called Dorsey. He had a brother, Matt, and a sister whose name he did not recall. He talked about his other family for months before his mother chanced to drive him through a neighbourhood he had not visited before and he excitedly pointed out what he said was his other house. Derek's mother knew nothing about this place, but her mother recognized it as the house in which her cousin Ted had lived with his mother Doris, brother Matt, and sister Becky. Shortly after Ted was killed in a car crash, his best friend married Derek's mother – so if Derek was Ted's reincarnation, Ted returned as his best friend's son as well as his cousin's grandson.[24](#)

Michael Wright

In this case, a youth killed in a car crash was reborn the child of his sweetheart and the man who had been his rival for her hand. A little more than a year after his death, his mother dreamed that he appeared to her, saying he was not as dead as people believed and that he would be returning to draw pictures for her. Michael's

mother assumed that he would be returning as someone else's child and so did not expect him to narrate memories of her boyfriend. Michael however described the accident and surrounding events in detail. He also talked about some of her late boyfriend's other friends and their homes. [25](#)

American Cases with Stranger Relationships

Ann / Little Ann

The story of Ann (sometimes Little Ann) was first published by her elder sister RA in *The American Magazine* for July 1915, when it won first place in a contest for 'The Most Extraordinary Coincidence I Know Of'. It became a standard of early twentieth century works on reincarnation, so although it is a very slight case, it merits inclusion here.

As a four-year-old child, Ann claimed to remember having lived many lives, some as men and some as women. In one she was a Canadian soldier called 'Lishus Faber' who 'took the gates'. After prolonged search through Canadian history texts, her sister located a book (unnamed) in which it was said that a lieutenant in a company of Canadian soldiers, by the name Aloysius Le Febre, 'took the gates' of a small walled city. Although RA supplies no further details, this might have occurred during the Seven Years' War (known in the United States as the French and Indian War) that culminated in the surrender of New France to Great Britain in 1763. As Karl Müller noted, this would mean that the intermission between lives was about 150 years. [26](#)

Braden

When he was 3, Braden would tell his stay-at-home mother that he was a firefighter who had responded to the attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. He described planes flying into buildings and people jumping from windows because they would not wait until he got there to help them. He went on extensively about fire trucks and how it felt to come down from up from high in the air, riding in a bucket.

[Jeffery Keene](#), an American firefighter who has reported his own past-life memories, learned about Braden on Carol Bowman's [Reincarnation Forum](#) and interviewed his mother about Braden's memories. The new details allowed Keene to identify to man whose life Braden was recalling and to confirm many details of Braden's recollections of that day through his obituary, newspaper articles, and other written sources. [27](#)

Eduardo Esplugus-Carbrera (Cuba)

This 1917 case is one of the three oldest in this collection. It was first reported in a Puerto Rican paper, but concerned a Spanish family resident in Cuba. Their four-year-old son claimed to remember having lived before at a certain address elsewhere in Havana. He gave the name of his parents and two brothers. His own name had been Pancho, he said. He used to purchase medicines at an American chemist not far from his house. Eduardo described his memories in such detail that

his parents decided to test him by taking him to the address he cited. He appeared to recognize the building and went in, then returned crestfallen to his family. The flat he recalled was now occupied by people he did not recognize. Upon inquiry, his father learned that a family of the complexion and names given by Eduardo had resided there until February 1903, when their youngest son, Pancho, had died. An American druggist shop still stood nearby.[28](#)

Grant

Grant is the name given by Jim Tucker to a midwestern boy, who from 'a very early age' would tell his mother that she was not his only mummy. When he was five, he asked his parents if remembered when he was 'in the war'. Upon questioning, he clarified that he meant the Vietnam War. He was in the army, he said, and he recalled being on the beach and in the jungle. He had died in an explosion when he was 21, in 1969. He told his parents the name of his home state and his unusual surname. Grant's mother looked at the Vietnam Memorial website and discovered that a 21-year-old with the name Grant gave, from the state he specified, was listed as having been killed in action in 1969. She showed Grant pictures from the web site and when they got to this boy's, Grant said, 'Oh, that's me.' At this point his mother contacted Jim Tucker's office to inform him about the case.

Before meeting Grant and his family, Tucker retrieved the obituary of the soldier from an online archive. This supplied details about his life and also included his family's address. Tucker obtained photographs of places and people from the earlier life and had them presented to Grant in sets, along with decoy photographs. Of eight sets of pictures, Grant was uncertain about two; of the six about which he felt confident, he selected all correctly.[29](#)

Hunter

Hunter is another sports prodigy with a claim to have been a famous person. He played constantly with a set of plastic golf clubs he was given for his second birthday. He took them everywhere, even to the beach, which he referred to as the 'sand trap'. His parents presented him a set of real clubs for Christmas that year and enrolled him in classes. The usual starting age was five, but when the staff saw his swing, they accepted him before he had turned three. It was not long before Hunter was playing on the junior golf circuit. By the age of seven, he had won 41 of 50 tournaments, 21 of them in a row.

One day when he was two, Hunter's father was running through cable television channels and happened to pass the Golf Channel. Hunter noticed this and asked to return to it; thereafter, he wanted to watch nothing else. When he saw an infomercial about 1920s golfer Bobby Jones, whose name is employed in a line of commercial products, he announced that he had been Jones when he was big. Thereafter he wanted to be called Bobby and when asked his name, said it was 'Bobby Jones'. When his father showed him photographs of six different golfers, he pointed to Jones and said 'This me'. He correctly identified another player by name. He also correctly identified Jones's house as 'Home'. Hunter did not say much about Jones's life beyond this, but he enjoyed using blankets to create golf courses. His favourite real golf course was the Augusta National Golf Club, which Jones founded

and helped design. Several older golfers at the club remarked that Hunter's stance and swing reminded them of Bobby Jones.[30](#)

James Leininger

James Leininger is the subject of what may be the most famous American child reincarnation case. His parents documented his memories and their successful efforts to verify them in a book, *Soul Survivor*. The case was investigated by Jim Tucker and the story featured in several documentaries.[31](#) No doubt in part because James's memories were verified, the case has received much attention from sceptics, most recently philosopher Michael Sudduth.[32](#)

When he was 22 months old, James's father Bruce took him to an aircraft museum in Houston, Texas, where they resided. Not long thereafter, James corrected his mother about the nature of an appendage on the bottom of a toy aeroplane: She remarked that it was a bomb but he said no, it was a 'dwop tank', a drop tank being an external fuel tank. Two months later he began to have nightmares, during which he would cry, 'Plane on fire! Little man can't get out!' Gradually he began to talk about his memories of dying when his Corsair came under fire. He said he had flown off a boat named 'Natoma'. He drew pictures of boats and planes, signing them 'James 3'. He named GI Joe dolls Billy, Walter and Leon, 'because that's who met me when I got to heaven'. James was so insistent about his apparent memories, Bruce set about their verification. To his surprise, he was able to trace them to a flyer named James Huston Jr who had died when his plane, flown off the *Natoma Bay* during World War II, had been downed by Japanese fire off the island of Iwo Jima. Three squadron-mates who pre-deceased Huston were named Leon Conner, Walter Devlin and Billie Peeler.

The sceptical interpretation starts with the suggestion that James' memories were prompted by a Corsair he saw at the flight museum.[33](#) However, there was no Corsair on display at the time of James's and Bruce's visit; the museum's Corsair had been lost in an air show six months prior to their visit and replaced only after it, as Tucker learned when he rang the museum. The plane in which Huston died actually was not a Corsair, although Huston had flown Corsairs in training. This sort of confusion sometimes appears in past-life memories, according to James Matlock; in any event, the error cannot be attributed to a plane he did not see. Nor would the museum visit account for the many details James related correctly, such as his past-life name, the name of the aircraft carrier, and the names of Huston's squadron-mates.[34](#)

Kendra Carter

When Kendra Carter, aged four and a half years, went for her first swimming lesson, she appeared to recognize the instructor, Ginger. She leapt into Ginger's lap and acted lovingly towards her. Soon she began to talk about Ginger regularly. She told her mother that Ginger had had a baby who had died before it was born. When her mother asked how she knew this, Kendra said that she had been the baby. Ginger had allowed 'a bad man' to pull her out of Ginger's tummy; she had tried to hang on, but could not. Ginger subsequently confirmed that she had had an abortion nine years before Kendra's birth. At the time, she had been unmarried, ill, and

struggling with the eating disorder anorexia nervosa. Kendra and Ginger began to spend time together outside the swimming lessons. Ginger set up a room for Kendra in her home, where she stayed three nights a week. Unfortunately, Ginger and Kendra's mother had a falling out and Kendra could no longer visit Ginger. She did not speak for four and a half months, resuming only after a two-hour meeting with Ginger. Ginger began ringing Kendra again but Kendra no longer wanted to spend nights with her. However, she started talking again and participating in other activities.[35](#)

Lee

This is another case with memories of being a famous person. Lee began talking about his memories when he was two and a half years old. He said that his middle name was Coe, which was also his other mother's name. He had a daughter named Jennifer. He insisted that his birthday was 26 June rather than 21 June. He developed an obsessive fascination with Hollywood and wanted to return there to go to work, he said, although he had another house elsewhere. He had a tractor at his other house, but his people had not taken care of it. He was 48 when he died.

When Lee's parents asked if he had acted in the movies, he replied that he had written them. In response to a list of titles, he identified *Gone With the Wind* as one of his screenplays. His parents determined that this had been written by Sydney Coe Howard, whose birthday was 26 June. Coe was Howard's mother's maiden name. His eldest daughter was named Jennifer. Howard had died at age 48 in a tractor accident on his Massachusetts farm. A hired hand had left the tractor in gear and when Howard was trying to start it with a crank on the front, it lurched forward and crushed him against the stone foundation of the garage. This helped to explain Lee's fear of tractors and his aversion to having anything tight round his body; he even disliked being hugged tightly. When he was a toddler, he often had nightmares. Sometimes he awoke crying and when his mother asked him what was wrong, he said his arms were broken. Jim Tucker, who investigated this case, arranged for Lee to meet Howard's daughter Jennifer on the farm where he had died, but by the time this happened, Lee was almost five. He was no longer talking about Howard and showed no signs of recognizing either Jennifer or the farm.[36](#)

Rand Jameson Shields

When Rand Jameson Shields was 6, he came close to drowning in a community swimming pool, felt his spirit leave his body, and had a near-death experience (NDE). During his NDE, he perceived angelic spirit guides he felt the urge to join, but who sent him back to his body. Although he had had no inkling of a previous life before his NDE, about a month after, Shields began to have out-of-body experiences (OBEs) triggered by stroking his eyebrow in a certain way during classroom lectures he found boring. These OBEs were somehow connected to his angel guides, but also led into visions of bygone times. Over the remainder of his school year, Shields had 68 visions, 34 of them related to what appeared to be the same past life. Eventually, he was able to relate these visions to a resident of Steubenville, Ohio, who had died 28 months before his birth, "solving" his own case.<fn>Shields (2013).</fn>

Ryan Hammons

This extraordinary case was featured in an episode of the television show *The Unexplained* entitled *A Life in the Movies*. It has been written up several times, originally by Jim Tucker in *Return to Life*. James Matlock later added important details and Ryan's mother, Cyndi Hammons, contributed her own account.³⁷ Information from all these sources is merged in the following summary. A longer account is given in [another article](#) in the *Psi Encyclopedia*.

For his first years, Ryan suffered from enlarged adenoids which affected his ability to hear and consequently was late talking. He did not begin to speak in full sentences until after his adenoids were removed when he was four years old, but he then began to say he wanted to go home to Hollywood. He pleaded with Cyndi to take him there so that he could visit his 'other' family, including his three adopted sons. He would tell stories about Hollywood and would play at directing movies. He said he had worked for an 'agency' at which people changed their names. It turned out that he was recalling the life of Marty Martyn, who had owned a Hollywood talent agency, and died forty years before he was born. Ryan recognized several people, including Martyn, in photographs. He was never able to meet Martyn's adoptive sons, but he did visit the buildings that had been Martyn's home and talent agency, both of which fit the descriptions he had given of them years earlier. The trip to Hollywood brought some closure and after returning home he talked less about his memories.

Cyndi Hammons began to keep a record of Ryan's past-life memories when he was five, before Martyn was identified, and by the time he was twelve had a list of 230 items, more than for any other reincarnation case subject. The majority of Ryan's memories could not be determined to be right or wrong but 24% have been found to be correct and only 6.5% incorrect. The strength of his memories may be due to Ryan's late talking, which allowed them to remain in his mind with minimal competition from present life activities.

Rylann O'Bannion

This is another extraordinary case, investigated by James Matlock and reported in *Signs of Reincarnation* in 2019. Rylann appeared in an episode of the television programme *Ghost Inside My Child (GIMC)* in 2014, when she was six, but Matlock interviewed her four years later and covers more recent developments. This case, also, includes a written record of statements and behaviours before Jennifer Schultz was identified as Rylann's previous incarnation. Rylann's mother had been in email contact with the *GIMC* producers for months before Rylann related the memories that led to the case being solved. Because it is treated in [another article](#) in the *Psi Encyclopedia*, it will be covered only briefly here.

Before she began talking about the previous life, Rylann showed signs of extreme emotional distress. She sleepwalked most nights and complained that her shirts hurt her neck, shoulders and back. She said it felt as if her skin was burning. Her family could not understand what was wrong; nothing in her short life could account for these reactions. In her interview with Matlock when she was ten, Rylann said that she thought that Jennifer had been electrocuted while talking on

the telephone, sitting on a swing in her home's carport. Unable to confirm this through information available online, Matlock went to Kenner, Louisiana, where Jennifer had lived, and talked with some of her friends. He determined not only that many of Rylann's memories were accurate, her personality and habits also matched Jennifer's. Matlock obtained Jennifer's autopsy report, which stated that her body had been recovered from the floor of the carport. There was no soot in her trachea and no discoloration of her blood, which indicated she was dead before the fire that engulfed her house after the crash reached her. Jennifer might indeed have died from electrocution, as Rylann asserted, although since the fire left her body completely burned, this could not be confirmed.[38](#)

Scott Perry

Scott Perry's case is unusual because his memories came to him in recurring dreams rather than in the waking state. Past-life memories are known to surface [in dreams](#), although most of the time, these the memories cannot be verified, as Scott's were.

Scott's primary recurring dream was of dying in a flash flood in the Los Angeles area, just after midnight on New Year's Day, 1934. His family were caught on a bridge at the wrong moment, when a tsunami of destruction tore the girl from her mother's arms. Scott experienced this dream first when he was four years old. From then until his early twenties, it recurred several times a month, which time it had become established in his waking consciousness. He was in his fifties when interviewed by Matlock, but was continuing to trouble him. Matlock points out that it has all the hallmarks of a replicative post-traumatic nightmare, of the sort most often seen following present-life crises – it replayed a real event, invariably caused waking in distress, and was recalled after waking – but in Scott's case, the precipitating event occurred in a previous life rather than the present life.[39](#)

American Cases with Uncertain Identifications

Christian Haupt

Christian Haupt may have been the baseball player Lou Gehrig, for whom Lou Gehrig's Disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS), is named, but like all claims to have been famous people, this identification is controversial. Christian's mother, Cathy Byrd, told his story first in an article for her local newspaper and then in a book,[40](#) but reincarnation researcher KM Wehrstein has pointed out discrepancies in these accounts.[41](#) Jim Tucker visited the family and briefly interviewed Christian, but was not impressed enough to carry out a full investigation.[42](#) Nonetheless, the case includes behavioural features along with memories that suggest that if Christian was not Lou Gehrig, he was another Major League Baseball player who knew Gehrig well and the Gehrig identification cannot be ruled out conclusively. If it is valid, the intermission would be 67 years.

Without doubt, Christian was a prodigy at baseball. He loved the sport and from an early age had an incessant drive to practice his skills. At the age of two, he was given a cameo role in the Adam Sandler movie *That's My Boy*. In September 2012, three weeks after his fourth birthday, he had the honour of throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at a Los Angeles Dodgers game. On a nightly basis, he shared

with his family his memories of having been 'a tall baseball player'. He said he had played for the New York Yankees (Gehrig's team) and that his favourite position was first base (Gehrig's position). He said that he travelled between cities on trains and stayed in hotels. He expressed a strong disdain for Babe Ruth, another famous Yankees player with whom Gehrig did not get along. However, none of these details are exclusive to Gehrig; they would apply to other baseball players as well.

The principal controversy is over whether Christian self-identified as Gehrig or whether the identification was imposed by his mother. In her book, Cathy Byrd says that when she showed him a team picture with Gehrig in it, he picked out Gehrig and said, 'That's me,' but she does not mention this in her earlier newspaper article. Instead, she says there that Christian responded to a picture of Gehrig and Ruth with comments disparaging Ruth. In fact, it would appear that on that occasion, he avoided identifying Gehrig as himself.[43](#)

Unsolved American Cases

Blake Hocken

Carol Bowman collected this story of a three year old who remembered having been struck and run over by a lorry. The boy complained of phantom physical pains, became depressed, and developed a compulsion to run out into the street in order to bring about the same result. He did not recall sufficient details to permit an attempt at identifying who he was before, or how long before his birth the accident occurred, although it cannot have been long in the past. After talking with Bowman, his mother explained to him that he was recalling a previous life, but was safe now, and gradually his symptoms diminished and he reverted to the carefree personality he had displayed before the onset of his memories.[44](#)

Cristina Matlock

When she was three years old, James Matlock's daughter Cristina talked about her memories of living in a pink farmhouse. This matched a farm Matlock and his wife had seen from the interstate motorway eighteen months before her birth. Not only the farmhouse but the wooden perimeter fence was pink. The farm had made a great impression and they had talked about it for weeks. When Matlock drove along the same route after Cristina's birth, the farm was no longer pink, but it is not known whether the change of colour was associated with a change of ownership. From a young age, Cristina showed a strong interest in art and talent for drawing and painting. One of her memories was of standing at an easel before a window in the farmhouse, suggesting that her artistic talent might have carried over from the previous life. Cristina retained her memories until she was twelve but her artistic talents have not faded, perhaps because she has continued to develop them into adulthood.[45](#)

Erin Jackson

When she was three years old, Erin talked about having been a boy called John and described a life with a stepmother and a brother James, who preferred to dress in black. The family had a black dog and a white cat. Although she did not give many

identifying details, the life apparently was in the distant past, because she would say things like, 'It was a lot better when we had horses. These cars are awful. They have ruined everything.' Erin sometimes said she wished she were a boy and when she was small, insisted on dressing as a boy. This extended to swimwear. She would only wear bikini bottoms, so her mother learned to buy her one piece costumes. As she grew older, she would wear dresses, albeit rarely. She enjoyed swimming, fishing and climbing trees, and drawing, reading or building with toy blocks. She did not enjoy playing with dolls and if given a doll would transfer its clothing to an animal figurine. She shared her memories at ages three and four, then stopped. Her masculine behaviour persisted for three or four years after the memories subsided.[46](#)

Liia

When two-year old Liia was crossing a bridge over a steep ravine, she said to her mother, 'Mommy, this is just like where I died!' She explained that she had been driving when her car ran off a bridge and plunged into the water below. She had not been wearing her seat belt and fell out of the car. 'I was lying on the rocks,' she told her mother. 'I could feel the rocks on my head. I could see the bubbles going up and the sun on the bridge through the water.' Over the next eighteen months, she related this memory often, always with the same details. Her mother reasoned that this explained why Liia had always been fanatic about wearing seat belts. Even before she could talk, she made sure her seat belt was fastened when she got into a car. As soon as she was old enough, she insisted that everyone in the car also have their seat belts fastened.[47](#)

Nicole

When Nicole was only thirteen months old, her parents, who knew nothing about riding, placed her on the back of a horse. She took the saddle horn in her left hand and the reins in her right hand, sat up straight, and began to kick. At seventeen months, she began making the clicking sound that riders use to signal their horses to walk. At 22 months, she 'verbalized a series of equestrian commands that she could not have learned from her parents', wrote Jim Tucker. Before she was 24 months old, Nicole started talking about a life she recalled in Virginia City, Nevada, including a fire that swept through that locality in 1875. She did not succumb to the fire, however; she recalled having become a doctor and when she saw an old Victrola record player from the 1930s, said she had had one like it in her previous life. Tucker followed up the clues in Nicole's memories as he could but was unable to relate them to any specific person.[48](#) Tucker does not give Nicole's date of birth, but if the person whose life she recalled died in the 1930s, the intermission would be seventy to eighty years.

Roberta Morgan

Roberta Morgan began relating her memories of a previous life when she was between 24 and 30 months old, but her mother dismissed them as fantasies and did not take them seriously until after Roberta had ceased speaking about them. Roberta, however, appears to have had extensive memories of a life lived in the

same general area her family then lived. She talked often about her previous family, comparing the meals her mother prepared to the food she had consumed in the earlier life. Although she never said she had been a boy, she complained about being a girl and preferred to dress as a boy. The person whose life she recalled evidently died young, perhaps of some illness, because Roberta repeatedly said that she had promised the previous family she would return to them. Her mother's religious beliefs did not permit her to accept the possibility of reincarnation, and she began to spank her whenever she mentioned it. As a result, Roberta talked about her memories less and eventually not at all. Subsequently, her mother came to accept the reality of reincarnation; she became obsessed in helping Roberta locate her previous family, but by then it was too late to do so.[49](#)

Stephen Stein

Shortly before she became pregnant with Stephen, his mother dreamed about a boy with Latino features, very different from her family's American stock. During her pregnancy, she had a craving for hot, spicy foods, particularly traditional Mexican dishes. Stephen had the appearance of the boy in his mother's dream and, as it turned out, was fond of Mexican cuisine. On his first visit to a Mexican restaurant, he stood for a long period before a map that decorated the back wall, then pointed to a town and said that was where he was from. He made no more mention of the previous life, though, until he watched a television documentary about the siege of the Alamo, in which the Mexican army had defeated American settlers in 1836. He pointed to a spot in front of the compound as the spot where he had been shot and killed. Around this time, he began to experience chronic retinal migraines. At thirty, Stephen had a drop seizure and lost all motor function in the lower part of his body for several hours. He is the only member of his family to suffer from retinal migraines, the only one with poor vision and the only one to have suffered a seizure. If the Mexican soldier was shot in the head, this might be the origin of Stephen's symptoms, for which no physical cause has been found.[50](#)

Susan

Susan's family is White but from early childhood she has had recurrent dreams and waking memories of being an African American girl of seven or eight years walking down a dirt road somewhere in the south-eastern United States. It is a hot, sunny day. She looks at her hands and thinks they look 'ashy', a common African American term for grey-looking dry skin. A 1940s automobile with two young White men in their twenties or thirties draws up alongside her. She is pulled into the car; she has a clear impression of the bench seat, the lines of the upholstery, the dusty floorboard. She is raped and murdered in the car. Sometimes in her memories she relives the experience from within, whereas at other times she views it from above, in what is known as observer perspective.[51](#)

James G Matlock

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Endnotes

Footnotes

- 1. Stevenson (2001), 120.
- 2. See https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/european-children-who-recall-previous-lives#Cross-Cultural_Comparisons.
- 3. See https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/european-children-who-recall-previous-lives#Cross-Cultural_Comparisons.
- 4. See Matlock (2019), 180-81, for tables of intermission lengths and relationships in 15 countries or cultures.
- 5. See https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/european-children-who-recall-previous-lives#Cross-Cultural_Comparisons.
- 6. See https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/european-children-who-recall-previous-lives#Cross-Cultural_Comparisons.
- 7. Matlock (2019), 187.
- 8. Bowman (2001), 169-90; Tucker (2005), 164-68, 178.
- 9. Bowman (2001), 22-48, 75-80 [Chad Luke]. Tucker and Stevenson's report appears in Pasricha, Keil, Tucker, & Stevenson (2005), 366-68 [PM]. See also

Tucker (2005), 10, 52-54, 170, 172, and Tucker (2013), 1-17 [Patrick Christenson].

- [10. Matlock \(2015\)](#); Haraldsson & Matlock, 2016, 209-14.
- [11. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 102-11
- [12. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 1-13.
- [13. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 220-40.
- [14. Shroder \(1999\)](#), 220-23.
- [15. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 93-102.
- [16. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 120-28.
- [17. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 113-20.
- [18. Shirley \(1936\)](#), 67.
- [19. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 13-21.
- [20. Tucker \(2005\)](#), 141-43, 172.
- [21. Stevenson \(2001\)](#), 79-85.
- [22. Pasricha, Keil, Tucker, & Stevenson \(2005\)](#), 379-81 [DG]; Tucker (2005), 1-3, 75-76 [William].
- [23. Haraldsson & Matlock \(2016\)](#), 248-52.
- [24. Bowman \(2001\)](#), 254-60.
- [25. Stevenson \(2001\)](#), 83-87.
- [26. R. \(1915\)](#); Muller (1970), 61-62.
- [27. Keene \(2021\)](#), 265-335.
- [28. Shirley \(1936\)](#), 65-67.
- [29. Tucker \(2021\)](#), xi-xiii.
- [30. Tucker \(2013\)](#), 130-37. See also Wehrstein ([2017a](#)).
- [31. James Leininger's parents' book is Leininger & Leininger, with Gross \(2009\). Tucker wrote about the case in *Return to Life* \(2013, 63-87\) and in a journal article \(\[2016\]\(#\)\). Documentaries include <http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/Technology/story?id=894217&page=1>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWCUjx4nI98&t=75s>, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9u2EpK35PY>.](#)
- [32. Sudduth \(2021\)](#). See also the responses from Tucker (2022) and Matlock (2022).
- [33. See, for instance, Shermer \(2018\)](#), 105.
- [34. Matlock \(2019\)](#), 134-35. For a fuller account of this case, see Tucker (2013) and Matlock (2022b). See also the Psi Encyclopedia entry, <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/james-leininger-reincarnatio...>.
- [35. Tucker \(2005\)](#), 114-16.
- [36. Tucker \(2013\)](#), 122-30. See also Wehrstein ([2017a](#)).
- [37. Tucker \(2013\)](#), 88-119; Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 214-18; Hammons (2017).
- [38. Matlock \(2019\)](#), 1-33. See also [Rylann O'Bannion](#).
- [39. Matlock \(2022a\)](#).
- [40. Byrd \(2014, 2017\)](#).
- [41. Wehrstein \(2017a\)](#).
- [42. Byrd \(2017\)](#), 109-18.
- [43. See \[here\]\(#\)](#). Christian said that Cathy was the reincarnation of his mother. If that is so, then a past-life connection would convert this from a case with a stranger relationship to one with a family relationship. This would be true if

he were recalling the life of another player, however, and so provides no support for the Gehrig identification.

- [44.](#) Bowman (1997), 167-74.
- [45.](#) Matlock (2019), 125-28, 195-96.
- [46.](#) Stevenson (2001), 87-89; Tucker (2005), 126.
- [47.](#) Bowman (1997), 165-67.
- [48.](#) Tucker (2013), 151-64.
- [49.](#) Stevenson (2001), 76-79.
- [50.](#) Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 240-44; Matlock (2019), 156.
- [51.](#) Tucker (2013), 139-41.