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For Brenda Dunne, Fond Memories and Deep Respect

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In early 1980, I answered a circumspect ad in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* looking for a "cognitive scientist interested in the lesser-known aspects of perception." After some correspondence, I traveled from northern Vermont to Princeton to interview for a job that would, as I learned, touch on truly rarefied aspects of consciousness. By "accident," I encountered Brenda walking down the hallway toward Bob Jahn's office, where I was headed for an interview, recognizing her though we had never met. It was quite a first impression—she was wearing a long flowing green dress and looked magical, and needless to say, obviously memorable. She was then and always a notable presence.

The Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) lab was taking shape in the basement of Princeton University's School of Engineering, and from the beginning it had an unusually human quality because Brenda saw how important being at ease would be for people willing to try our experiments. She made the lab comfortable and home-like, installing the great orange couch with all its stuffed animals in PEAR's living room, and *Comforto the Incredible* chairs to coddle our operators as they attempted improbable tasks like intending that our Random Event Generator (REG) should produce high (or low) numbers on demand, or attempting to add some order (negentropy) to the Random Mechanical Cascade (RMC) or the big and beautiful but randomly arhythmic Native American drum.

More important by far than the furniture was Brenda's presence in the lab. She was warm and genuinely interested in the people who came by, and many of them became long-time friends. Her easy confidence about the phenomena we studied was infectious, and that probably accounted for a large part of the success we had in demonstrating that the improbable could happen, and the impossible, too, though it might take longer.

Brenda was clear that our studies were of phenomena, not people, and she invited the folks we called operators to relax and have fun with the experiments. She set a tone of collaboration, and rather than telling people how to work their will on the REG, she asked what they thought and felt. Some of the lab's most instructive findings come from what they

had to say. Typically, our operators told us it was a matter of developing a relationship with the machine. "I began to feel loving connection." Then the scores would climb.

Princeton University has a thesis requirement for undergraduates, which led a number of students to choose to work in the PEAR lab designing and conducting experiments, helping with analysis, becoming friends of the lab. Again, Brenda's generosity of spirit promoted the best from them, and again they became friends who maintained their connection to PEAR over many years.

An even more striking version of Brenda's mother hen capacity came in the form of 4th grade classes that arranged visits to the PEAR lab. Brenda would give a brilliant, just-right introduction to science and how to learn from experiments, that I suspect those children, now grown, still remember. The kids played with some of our experiments (they especially liked the table top Robot—which they successfully commanded, more than any of our adult operators). Based on their experience, these 10-year-olds went to work designing their own experiments and later brought them in to show us all. It was an amazing episode to watch: Brenda teaching and inspiring young people to feel and understand the combination of creativity and care that is the core of good science.

Her magnetism brought people together, and her leadership led to the creation of the PEAR Tree, a network of people who wanted to keep the PEAR experience alive by networking, maintaining the connection of like minds interested in solving the puzzles of extended human consciousness. Similarly, Brenda and Bob created the International Consciousness Research Laboratories (ICRL) to spread the PEAR attitude and approach beyond the lab and the University. ICRL produced conferences and encouraged researchers from around the world to dig deeper, and to search for ways to understand human consciousness from a striking range of different perspectives. In the last few years a series of "meetup" gatherings has been bringing people together—even during the pandemic—to hear cutting edge work in the fields represented by PEAR and ICRL.

Brenda was one of the founders of the Society for Scientific Exploration, the SSE. She served for many years as the Education Officer. In that capacity she created the Young Investigators branch of SSE, and offered not only help and encouragement to young people (defined to include senior researchers as well as students) but Pizza at the lunchtime meetings during conferences. Those young people are now the mainstay of SSE, and are managing and expanding Brenda's legacy.

As the Laboratory Manager at PEAR, Brenda had a hand in all the research, helping to define the questions we wanted to ask, and contributing insight and energy to the work. She had already defined a new version of remote viewing research that we called Precognitive Remote Perception (PRP) to identify a protocol that had a percipient describing a remote location that would be visited by an agent in the near future. Brenda showed that there was an inverse relationship of the analytical complexity and effect size in PRP data, and she identified gender differences in the databases from most of our experiments. Etc.!

Bob and Brenda worked together on all levels of the PEAR proposition as what they might describe as a complementary pair, bringing the subjective and objective together to achieve deeper insight into theoretical models to help explain the anomalous alterations of probabilities revealed in rigorous experiments. Their book, *Margins of Reality*, presented a rich language of metaphors drawn from physics and philosophy that could credibly accommodate a consciousness linked to and part of the real world. They continued to develop the point that clear understanding of the complexity evident in both mainstream and anomalies research must depend on an integration of subjective and objective aspects.

We have lost a cherished colleague and friend, but the good news is that several things that were important to Brenda came about in the last year or so. She found a home for the PEAR lab at the Broughton Hall Estate in Yorkshire, UK. PEAR's favorite experiments, even the giant "Pinball" machine, are being rebuilt and restored, and the research will go on. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by Unity University. She resolved several private matters. Most importantly, she had received direct and plentiful appreciation from many sources for her contributions and her wisdom. At recent conferences Brenda stepped on stage as a remarkably effective spontaneous speaker able to tell mixed audiences how it all works. A wonderful display of her magic, bringing many life threads to resolution.

Brenda Dunne was an inspirational figure whose passion was to show that consciousness is creative and active, treating chaos and randomness as the raw material for building the world. She was a force of nature, who brought great personal charisma to the tasks she undertook. I think that for Brenda, those tasks all could be mastered by embracing love and connection as the matrix in which anything is possible. Her spirit will remain with us into the future as we continue the work and follow the paths she forged.