



Felicia Parise (1938-2026)

OBITUARY

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Felicia Parise around 1970

Felicia Parise, who made a significant contribution to our knowledge of psi and consciousness, died on January 7th of this year, three days after the death of former JSE editor Stephen E. Braude, who admired her courage and talent and wrote the introductory commentary to the reprint of Charles Honorton's paper on Felicia and my 2013 interview with her. (Braude, 2015)

Parise demonstrated that it was possible for a person with some psi talent to learn to develop and utilize psychokinesis (PK). Unfortunately, it came with a cost.

This attractive, auburn haired young woman worked at Brooklyn's Maimonides Hospital as a medical technician in the Department of Special Hematology in the late 1960s-1970s. At that time the dream telepathy experiments that were to become famous were ongoing (Ullman et al., 1974) and volunteers to act as participants were being sought.

She was not interested but a friend entered Felicia's name. She was tested by Charles (Chuck) Honorton, did very well, and was asked to participate; becoming one of their most talented percipients, not only scoring high on the telepathy tests but at times reporting precognitive dreams.

She was chosen to be one of the two subjects in the celebrated "Grateful Dead" experiment and while she scored only one "direct hit" on the last night's target, it was found, interestingly, that her other three responses suggested that she was displacing her psi in time, both backward and forward (i.e., post- and precognitively). (Ullman et al., 1974, pp. 174-176)

Dr. Montague Ullman who headed up the Dream Telepathy program, returned from Russia in the early 1970s bearing a film of Nina Kulagina demonstrating her ability to move small objects psychokinetically. Felicia, the lone woman in the room, was rather upset at the level of not only skepticism but derision expressed by many of the men. She decided that she would attempt to do what Kulagina did. After all, she thought, she hadn't known that she possessed telepathic talent until recently. She thought she could do it and it was worth a try.

She began practicing with a small plastic pill bottle containing an ounce or so of alcohol in which she stored her false eyelashes at night. She placed it on her kitchen counter and tried at first to be calm and visualize it moving. When that didn't work, she emulated Kulagina, who she remembered looked very intense and excited, so she tried "working up an excitement." (Pilkington, 2015)

One evening after work and a visit with her ailing grandmother, who was a patient in Maimonides, she resumed her attempts to move the little bottle. The breakthrough came when a phone call interrupted her, telling her to come back to the hospital because her

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grandmother was dying. As she reached for the bottle to put it away it moved away from her.

After the funeral, when she was back to her usual routines of work and family she returned to the little bottle, knowing now that she *could* move it. Eventually she succeeded and when she was confident that she could demonstrate her ability she did two wise things: she asked a man, to whom she was introduced at a party and told he was a photographer, to film her moving the vial (as well as deflecting a compass covered by a bell jar) and later called Chuck Honorton to come to her Brooklyn apartment and observe what she could do.

Chuck, skeptical at first, turned pale with shock when he saw the little vial move, but after setting about to find an alternate explanation finally had to concede that she could do as she said *and* that PK was genuine! (Honorton, 1974, 2015)

With Honorton's and Ullman's encouragement Felicia went on to improve her skill at moving objects and deflecting compasses. The experimenters, even though they trusted her implicitly, used their own compasses and would pull her hands away unexpectedly in case minute magnets might be hidden in her fingernails.

She was able to influence Dr. Karlis Osis's random generator instruments at the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) in Manhattan and traveled to FRNM (The Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man, forerunner of the Rhine Center) in North Carolina where she participated in a series of experiments, e.g., affecting anesthetized mice, with Graham and Anita Watkins (Watkins & Watkins, 1974).

The Watkins couple later set up more extensive PK tasks for Felicia. They tested the compass they were to use. It was found to indicate approximate north and to be easily affected by either a small magnet or a steel knife blade. A pack of unexposed film was put under the chair on which the compass and a metal detector rested. Three additional packs of film were put at various distances from it.

When the compass needle began to move, the sound frequency of the metal detector changed "whereupon a total shatter of the tone occurred; this could be artificially simulated only by placing a very large metal mass (a two-pound roll of solder) in the field coil. The compass needle moved westward approximately 15 degrees over a period of about two minutes, with a slow, smooth motion, and remained there.

An exhausted Parise was disconnected from the polygraph and walked to the far corner of the room. But the compass needle stayed at 15 degrees off north and was

totally unaffected by the knife blade or magnet. When it was moved about four feet away from the spot, the needle returned to north and was easily affected by the metal. When it was returned to the original spot on the chair, it moved back to 15 degrees off north and was impervious to the metal's influence.

They repeated this procedure several times with the same results. The needle gradually returned to its normally expected behavior over a period of about 25 minutes.

(This "linger effect" has been noted in other PK experiments with resuscitating anesthetized mice, e.g., and in Geller's metal bending.)

The other effect of note in this experiment was that the pack of film underneath the compass was almost totally exposed and the other three packs were partially exposed, "the amount of exposure decreasing in proportion to the distance between the film and the compass." (p. 134)

Performing these PK tasks however took a physical toll, as Kulagina and others had demonstrated. Honorton (1974) noted that after a successful session, Parise would experience difficulty speaking for a few moments. She would perspire freely during the session,--unusual for her--her eyes and nose would run and she would tremble.

This grueling session took an emotional toll as well. It was the last straw for Felicia. Honorton reported that she became withdrawn, even hostile, and refused to speak to him during most of their stay in Durham. He confesses: "I failed to appreciate what a profound impact the development of this ability had on her. In my eagerness to firmly establish the genuineness of her PK ability, I ignored the increasing indications that it had become too much of a strain for her. ... She had gotten into it ... to satisfy her own curiosity ... Now there were all these incredulous people making demands on her to perform ... The tolerant amusement with which she had earlier greeted skepticism now changed to impatience, frustration, anger, and, finally, to rage." (Honorton, 2015, p. 73)

Felicia was also unhappy because since her PK ability had become known that seemed to be all researchers were interested in, whereas she wanted to do more of the telepathic experiments. However, here too she became frustrated. The targets at that time were always famous, mostly impressionist paintings. Familiarity with much of the target pool led to boredom and what she called "super saturation," likely fostering guessing rather than "just letting it happen." (Pilkington, 2015, pp. 102-103)

And then there was the BBC fiasco: The BBC wanted to make a TV film about the dream experiments. They were

briefed on the procedure but even though they knew little about psi functioning were allowed to choose the target pool of pictures. (The first mistake!) The “sender” was another star percipient, Malcolm Bessant who was in London. Felicia was wired up and asleep in the Maimonides lab in Brooklyn.

Unbeknownst to her, the show’s officials were listening in to her descriptions of her dreams each time she was awakened. When in her first report she mentioned a couple and a child the producer, *who knew what all five target pictures were*, completely contaminating the experiment, declared that he knew of what she was dreaming: a picture of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus!

For the rest of the session, he was concentrating on that photo so it’s no surprise that Felicia chose that one—he had been “feeding it” to her all night! The correct target was of Sonny Bono, Cher and their child, Chastity (another goof, having two pictures with similar themes in the same target pool). Therefore, to the vast TV audience, it was a failure.

Felicia, already a very private person, withdrew from all psi experimentation and concentrated on her valuable medical work.

Of course, her psi abilities were still functioning. In 2001 she decided to sell her Brooklyn house and move to an apartment in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village. The numbers 911 kept appearing in her mind. She couldn’t get it out of her thoughts. “I had the feeling it was something big. Oh, I knew it was something: something was coming up but I couldn’t put my finger on it. I couldn’t get those numbers out of my mind. You know, they would just pop in my head for no reason. I’d be making dinner or something and I’d be thinking about that number.”

When the attack took place a friend reported that her face “got ashen,” but Felicia had had no idea in her waking,

conscious state, of what was going to happen. (Pilkington, 2015, p. 87)

Felicia Parise is remembered fondly by all who knew and worked with her. As Mario Varvoglis wrote when he heard of her passing:

“All of us at Maimonides respected and appreciated Felicia; she was strong, warm, and full of life. Although she mostly stayed out of the limelight, she was one of the few people who helped keep the idea of macro PK alive in the 1970s, and that, with no tricks up her sleeve.” (Personal communication).

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