

JOHN RUSSELL

RIDING
WITH GHOSTS,
ANGELS,
AND THE
SPIRITS
OF THE DEAD

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Riding with Ghosts, Angels, and the Spirits of the Dead
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Dedication

TO ALL OF my guys on the Other Side: those spirits, angels, beings, and guides who have painstakingly watched over me, guided me, helped me, rescued me, and yes, who have literally saved my life many times. Thank you!

To the Old Black Ghost: I hope you found your way. Message received, and hopefully, delivered.

To my family.

To my dad, who came in spirit to view my painting.

To my old buddy Bill Nunn, who sometimes visits me in dreams from the Other Side. To Jim Cogan; he's the one who knows. To Lee Williams; ride on, Cowboy! To William "Smituska" Smith; confidant and drinking buddy.

To Eric Huber, the best riding buddy a guy ever had.

To Jim Mullen, my friend and my TV producer. Thanks, old chum.

To all of my friends who have been a blessing to my life over the years.

To all of the fur babies who have graced my life with their love, especially Skeeex and Buggy.

To my sweet Melissa, for the 113,000+ miles of adventures (and counting).

To Julie, whose bark is not nearly as bad as her bite.

And to Marjorie, for choosing to love me and to rescue me and to enjoy with me: Life, both seen and unseen.

Introduction

I'VE BEEN A professional psychic for over 45 years; and a biker for over 50. After several decades of life as a psychic and paranormal investigator, and with many miles spent in the saddles of my motorcycles, my psychic gift—along with my penchant for attracting bizarre otherworldly encounters—and my love of motorcycling merged and the result is these stories of psychic and paranormal adventures that are truly unique in the realm of spiritual literature.

This collection of supernatural experiences from the road are necessarily episodic: you can't make an appointment with a UFO; the paranormal is by nature seemingly fickle and most of the time you take what you can get, when you can get it. There's not a continuum to be found but rather we learn that the Other Side presents itself to us in a peek-a-boo manner: most paranormal experiences are isolated episodes that stand alone with a distinct lesson to learn from each individual event. Consider my book as a collection of true ghost stories, each with its own merit and food for thought.

The common bond—or story arc, if you will—is my motorcycle; think: *Then Came Bronson* meets the supernatural.

Come along with me and enjoy the ride.

John Russell

Funereal Aethereal

WHILE MY WIFE and I were enjoying life in upstate New York I was contacted by multiple award-winning producer Jim Mullen—who at the time was working for Atlas Media in New York City—to shoot a TV pilot for The History Channel.

The pilot episode focused on my psychic investigation into the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and the subsequent search for his notorious killer, John Wilkes Booth.

While all of us—me, Jim, and the crew—considered the pilot to be a smashing success, there was one thing that I couldn't satisfactorily obtain either psychically or through normal channels: the knowledge of the whereabouts of Lincoln's funeral hearse. It became an *obsession* with me, and I couldn't figure out why.

I asked Jim about the hearse; he didn't know. I think I may have asked a few other people; they didn't know either. At the time that frustrated me immensely: For some oddball reason finding out the then current whereabouts of Lincoln's funeral hearse became a pre-occupation with me. Over the years I've learned that most of the time when I begin to experience something like that I eventually realize, at some point, that I'm obsessing about something because the Other Side *wants* me to: the obsession, if properly followed up on and explored, will lead to further revelations or information that is useful either for me, my clients, or both. But while filming the pilot I ran up

against a dead end regarding the hearse and as time went by I began to think less and less about it, although it would periodically reenter my mind. Psychically, for me, it remained a loose end. I had *wanted* to find that hearse! I had wanted to stand before it and allow its energies to flow into me, to receive the impressions from Lincoln's funeral procession. For me it felt like it would have been a *vital* part of my psychic investigation, one more piece of the puzzle falling into place. But alas it was not to be; we wrapped up filming without ever learning the whereabouts of the hearse.

Well, maybe some things aren't meant to be.

Years later, a thousand miles away, and one new motorcycle

Buy American. (I agree.) Buy a Harley. Even though they have become increasingly metric and even though many of their parts are farmed out for overseas manufacture now, for the most part I can agree.

Although I bought a Honda. People love to bash Hondas: they're Japanese, and those damn Japs attacked us without provocation at Pearl Harbor. True, and true. But not every Japanese person hated, or hates, America, and I'm sure many of them were against the war.

And at the time I bought my Honda they had a manufacturing plant here in the good old U.S. of A, providing Americans with jobs.

I first went to a Harley-Davidson dealership to buy a Harley. After standing around for a good bit of time drooling over the machines while every sales person ignored me like the plague I went and bought myself a new Honda instead.

Black. Purty. 1300cc engine; 80 cubic inches. Plenty of power to haul me and my gear around the highways. Not a mile on her. She told me her name was Melissa. I fell in love.

To date we've ridden over 113,500 miles together; we've gotten to know each other pretty well, and we've had some fabulous adventures. But a funny thing began to happen on some of our rides: the Other Side begin to provide some pretty astonishing supernatural

manifestations, and I don't believe that I would have experienced these things in quite the ways that I would have if I had been covering the same miles in a car.

There's something about being on a bike that connects you with the road, the air, the countryside, the weather, the sunshine and clouds and rain, the heat and the cold, and even the spiritual realm like nothing else does. The feeling produced borders on the ecstatic. Throw in some spooky stuff courtesy of the Other Side and you've got some real adventures, my friend! Such as my journey to Tallahassee...

For a few days now I've been having psychic impulses to ride to Tallahassee, Florida's state capital. I periodically feel a sense of urgency to get on the road, with the particular destination being Tallahassee.

I don't know why I'm receiving these psychic prompts, but they're increasing in frequency and intensity, and while the Other Side urges me to ride to Tallahassee they don't tell me why, but I know that there has got to be a particular reason and I hope that I can discover it easily when I arrive there.

Do you ever feel like you're supposed to do a certain thing, perform a certain action, or travel to a certain place or destination, but you're not quite sure why? Yeah, me too. And sometimes the purpose of a trip will smack me in the face as soon as I get to my destination, and then at other times I have to do a bit of psychic detective work before things finally fall into place and begin to make sense for me.

I'm hoping that the Other Side will reveal why it is that they're urging me to ride to Tallahassee, but so far they have not, so today, as my urgings have peaked in intensity, I have scheduled myself a day off from giving psychic readings for my worldwide clientele. I have woken up early as is my custom and I unfold and check my map: I'm to take I-10 west. Tallahassee is within easy striking distance for a day's roundtrip ride of between 450-500 miles, a distance that I'm used to covering comfortably in a day on my motorcycle.

The weather forecast promises blue skies and sunshine and lots of

Florida's infamous heat, so I fill my new Thermos bottle with cold water and stash it in one of my saddlebags, and on the Interstates there are plenty of good rest stops with water and soda available, so I don't worry about staying hydrated.

My throttle hand is always itching: ever since my first ride on a motorcycle at a young age I have relished each and every trip I've ever made on a bike, whether it was a short hop of a few blocks to pick up a few items at the grocery store or an all-day ride of hundreds of miles or, even better, an overnight journey.

So I finish packing a few additional items onto Melissa, my faithful bike, check her fluids and tire pressures, and make sure that all of her lights and signals are in good working order, and I hit the road, eager not only to discover the purpose and meaning of this paranormal nudge to ride to Tallahassee but I'm also delighted to be able to once again put this many miles on my faithful iron horse. Ever since I was a kid, motion—movement—has been important to me: it's both an escape and a therapy, and I used to beg my parents to take me for rides in their car. I couldn't wait until I was old enough to be able to venture out on my own, and I spent many happy days in my youth driving my own car and riding my motorcycles on highways and byways for hours and hours at a time, a true nomad at heart.

And now that I'm able to roam about as I please I take full advantage of it: it's not unusual for me to rise before 6 a.m., fire up the bike, ride from Florida to Savannah, Georgia, see a few sights, stop and eat a hamburger, and then ride back home, covering between 450-500 plus miles in the process. So Tallahassee? Ha...no step for a stepper.

And what a gorgeous day for my journey: blue skies, sunshine, and the sweet song of Melissa's powerful motor humming as we fly down the highway, knowing only our destination but not our purpose. What a grand adventure!

My trip on I-10 west is so far pleasurable and uneventful...until I hit a traffic jam; a *large* traffic jam that sits dead still. I put my kickstand down, turn off my bike and dismount, and I walk over to the median so that I can look far down the straight, flat highway and try

to determine why we're stuck. Up ahead I can see a major wreck and both I-10 east and I-10 west are closed. *Damn.*

Not only do I have concerns for those involved in the accident, but the thought crosses my mind that my trip to our state's capital will have to be postponed and that I will probably have to turn around and take a different ride today, and I wonder if I do so if I will lose contact with the particular purpose that the Other Side has in sending me to Tallahassee this day? What if the future timing is wrong and this particular psychic urge never returns, or what if it does but I'm somehow out of sync with things when I arrive and then I never can figure out why the Powers That Be are prompting me to take this ride? It's frustrating to me to have these thoughts, and a little unsettling to think that I might be forced to miss out on something important.

But then I have a sudden feeling that I should take out my handheld CB radio and see if those who are close to the wreck can tell me what's going on and approximately how long our delay will be. Maybe I will be able to fulfill my destiny today after all.

I turn on my CB and *Sweet merciful crap*, as Homer Simpson would say!

I used to use CB radio with some regularity when I was in my mid to late teens and early 20s but I haven't been on the air for over 30 years now and when I switch on channel 19 to try and get some information from either the truckers who are close to the accident or anyone else up there who might have a CB, I'm astonished: the barrage of juvenile cursing, filthy chatter, and off-color remarks takes even me aback, and that's saying something.

I'm far from being a prude, and my old lady says that sailors should come to me to learn how to curse, but what I'm hearing is something else...silly mindless filth and sexual slurs that are so juvenile and vile that they don't even deserve the lofty connotation of ribaldry, and all of this mindless chatter is driven with an energy of pure aggression and absolutely no compassion.

I had expected to tune into the CB airwaves of my youth and to be greeted by polite chatter and then to be able to obtain some

useful information that will help me to make an informed decision about whether or not to continue my trip, but this obviously ain't my daddy's CB radio anymore. I am literally repulsed.

The useless chatter pouring forth from my CB radio (One trucker: "See that woman standing by the blue car? Maybe the wind will blow her dress up and I'll at least have a good view of something while I'm sitting here waiting.") is so incessant that I can't even get a word in edgewise to ask for a "break" and then try to find out what's going on.

I continue to listen and in amongst the ruthless nonstop chatter I manage to hear someone who is right on top of the scene of the accident say that a Life Flight helicopter is coming to evacuate one of the victims of the wreck; that can't be good. I say a silent prayer for the poor person who is to be evacuated by helicopter and I continue to listen to the chatter.

One of the truckers makes the heartless remark that he wishes they'd hurry up and get the person out of the way then so that he could get back on the road! I wonder what he would feel in his heart if that was his wife lying there waiting to be evacuated by helicopter to a hospital where they would try and save her life and he overheard others saying that they wish to hell they'd get on with it then and get her out of the way so that they could continue on their trip. Whatever happened to common courtesy? Is this who we've become? Have compassion and empathy become so meaningless in our lives? My feelings are hurt by this barrage of self-centered claptrap.

I see the Life Flight helicopter arrive, and then after a long interval it takes off again and I hear someone on the CB say that they're about to reopen I-10 west so I repack my CB, put my helmet back on and remount my bike, and soon we're moving once again. I hope, among all of my other fellow travelers, that I'm not the only one that has said a prayer for the accident victims.

And I'm still shocked and dismayed by the drivel that has poured out of my CB radio, and for the next several miles of my trip I mull over man's inhumanity to man, aware that the questions that I have are those that men wiser than I am have wrestled with since time

began, and we seem to be no closer to meaningful solutions. I feel a little sad in spite of having these miles and miles to cover, which for me is normally one of the most pleasurable sensations that I know.

But then—so typical of we easily distracted human beings (Is it any wonder we have difficulties achieving spiritual enlightenment?)—farther down the road I cross the famed Suwannee River and now for the next several miles I can't get the song lyrics out of my head.

*Way down upon the Swanee River,
Far, far away.
That's where my heart is yearning ever,
Home where the old folks stay.*

The lyrics and the melody won't go away and so I begin to sing them to myself over and over in my mind, and at one point I actually burst out loud into song, filling my helmet with my voice's reverberations and then I begin to laugh out loud at myself.

At least I'm not thinking about the drivel from my CB radio anymore.

Seems like we have to spend a lot of our time distracting ourselves from the ugliness of life, doesn't it? Like I've done just now. That's why we attend plays, go to movies, read books, watch TV...and ride motorcycles: to connect with something that reveals some of the beauty of life and reminds us of what it could be like if we would all focus on these pleasurable joys instead of thinking up more creative ways to torture and harm and kill each other.

After many more, thankfully, uneventful miles turned pleasurable again I'm getting close to my destination of our state's capital when I see a sign advertising the Tallahassee Automobile Museum, and I get that peculiar but familiar blip on my psychic radar screen that suddenly lets me know that *this museum* is my destination today, and not Tallahassee proper. Hmm. This I don't understand *at all*: I'm a bike guy, not a car guy, although I do have an appreciation for hot rods and antique automobiles. But an *auto museum*? The Other Side

has prompted me to ride all these many miles to bring me to an auto museum? What happened to Tallahassee? Have I misunderstood the guidance I've received from the Other Side? This makes no sense to me whatsoever but over the years I've learned to trust and obey my psychic promptings and so I pull into the parking lot.

I turn Melissa off and dismount, taking in the lay of the land as I pull off my gloves and my helmet. There's some beautiful landscaping here, and the place has a good energy, a good feel to it. The day's still bright and beautiful and sunny and my good mood has returned in full force, although I'm still confused as to why the Other Side has led me to this auto museum instead of having me continue my journey into Tallahassee proper.

I straighten up and stretch and I glance around at the earth and the sky and I'm filled with admiration for the beauty of nature that I'm allowed to experience this day. And then, just as I finish locking up my bike, a pair of geese flies close by me on a long, low, level flight; they're only a few feet off the ground. I believe that they're the first geese I've seen since I've moved to Florida. I feel a brief pang in my heart: I suddenly miss New York.

I *loved* living there, upstate in the mountains, where one of my favorite things to do was to watch the geese flying, the scene reminiscent of the paintings that graced the pages of the West Texas drug store calendars I used to gaze on when I was a boy, and I used to wonder way back then if such sentimental sights really existed somewhere, or were they just the figment of some artist's imagination?

Once while living in New York I remember I was outside working in my yard and it was chilly and the sky was overcast. I heard one faint, distant, almost plaintive honk and looked up to see a large v-formation of geese flying high overhead and as I watched them they literally flew into the clouds and disappeared from view.

The sight made such an impression on me that my heart actually leapt when I saw it. For all of the despair and ugliness in this old world, it sure contains a lot of grace and beauty too, doesn't it? It's one of those strange dichotomies of Life that we all have to wrestle

with and try to somehow make sense out of, either by developing a theology of our own to explain it, or adopting someone else's.

And now, today, standing in this faraway parking lot in Florida beside my beloved Melissa the incongruity of these geese blasting by me in the heat of this sunshiny day forcibly brings that autumnal memory back to me and I'm suddenly in a *New York State of Mind*, if you please, Mr. Joel.

And then I get another feeling; a psychic feeling: these geese seem to be a portent. But of what are they an omen? I feel like something significant is just on the horizon, but what? And whatever it is it must surely occur elsewhere on this day's journey, because what could possibly happen that's of any great psychic portent at an automotive museum?

As I walk across the parking lot for no reason I suddenly start thinking about filming my psychic investigation of Lincoln's assassination and now all of a sudden, out of the blue, those memories come flooding back to me too as I enter the museum. What a strange day this is turning out to be!

I pay my admission fee and then I begin to look around. It is an automobile museum alright, as advertised, and here on the main floor there are lots of hot rods and antique cars, but the museum has two floors and there are also tons of other neat things to look at and enjoy: sports memorabilia; old ornate slot machines; a collection of outboard boat motors; a huge collection of pocket knives, and much, much more. What a wonderful and fascinating place. I'm happy to be here; I'm enjoying the visit so far, but I'm still confused as to why I was led here in the first place.

But it doesn't take me but a moment longer to find out. Before I've even begun to browse the whole first floor of this museum, much less make it up to the second floor, there is a vehicle that catches my eye from across the room. My psychic senses immediately go on full alert and without even reading the sign that describes it I know what this vehicle is, and I know it's why the Other Side has led me here today.

But I don't hurry to make my way to it. Instead I *savor* the discovery,

and I occasionally allow myself to glance in its direction as I look at the other treasures in the museum while I continue to walk toward it.

And then I'm standing before it. It's an old, horse drawn hearse. The sign says that it's *the funeral hearse that hauled President Abraham Lincoln's body*. Man, I've got goose bumps! My feet are frozen to the spot, and I have to consciously check to make sure that my mouth isn't agape. When I can gather my wits I actually look around the museum to see if the ghost of Mr. Lincoln is standing somewhere and staring at me, and smiling. If he is, I don't see him, and for some reason that makes me feel a little wistful. I wish that I knew that he was here to celebrate this powerful moment with me.

I'm so powerfully overawed to be experiencing this physical evidence that across the years and across the miles something, someone, has guided me to this place and to this hearse, which was the object of my obsession when I was a thousand miles and many years away from here.

I give my thanks to the Other Side, and to the spirit of President Lincoln, and after standing before this delightful object a few reverential moments longer I allow myself to enjoy exploring the rest of the museum. But before I leave I make sure that I come and stand before Lincoln's hearse and pay tribute one more time to his memory, and to give thanks to the Powers That Be that were able to influence me to make this trip in order that I could experience this sweet closure and to find out the answer to my question with which I was so obsessed so many years ago in Washington, DC: "Does anybody know the whereabouts of the funeral hearse that carried Lincoln's body?"

Well, yes...*someone* knew; they knew it all along. It just took a few years and a move across the country and this ride today of a little over 200 miles to connect me to it. The time had to be right. All of the conditions had to come together to make, for me, this to be one of the most delightful and memorable psychic experiences I've ever had.

It also, for me, makes a wonderful closure to that paranormal investigation of years ago, and satisfies me in ways that are hard to even try to explain.

Think how astonishing this experience is, and the powerful life lessons we can learn from it.

Why, so long ago and so many miles away in our nation's capital, as I psychically investigated Lincoln's assassination, did powerful spiritual forces influence me to become obsessed with finding Lincoln's funeral hearse?

I believe that the reason was so that I could have reinforced for me in a powerfully dramatic way a lesson that I already knew: In truth there are powerful, unseen forces that are aware of even the most minute details of what goes on in our earthly lives, and they can guide us to revelations, understandings, and solutions...even if it takes a journey of many years and a thousand miles to do so. And so that I could share this truth, and this journey, this moment...with you. I hope it inspires you as it has me.

Does this mean that every inquiry or request that we make of the Other Side will be met with an answer, or an understanding, or an eventual resolution or solution? No.

Why not? I don't know why, and I believe that anyone who tells you that they do know or that they have the answers is self-deluded and lying to you, because Life *is* a mystery, a Great Unknown for which theologians and metaphysicians and wise men and dreamers and artists and scholars have all sought out solutions and answers and reasons why. And have most times been sorely disappointed.

It seems like this Life is set up that way—for whatever reasons—and that sometimes we are blessed to find the answers that we seek, and yet at other times we stumble onward while cursing the darkness and our little candle burns away without shining nearly enough light into the gloom—literal and metaphorical—that surrounds us.

I mentioned to you earlier that I've had over 800 paranormal experiences in my life so far. These are real experiences that have actually occurred on the physical plane, not things that I have dreamed, saw in a vision of some sort, or hallucinated, and many times I, and others, have caught them on film or video, or recorded them on audio, or others have witnessed them with their own eyes. I have been

blessed to interact with the Other Side since I was a small child, and these experiences have taught me much; they have also left me scratching my head and wondering, *why?*

And perhaps that's the true meaning of Faith, in the most absolute sense of the word: that we are to walk in whatever amount of light that we're given in spite of the questions and worries and fears that we have, and in spite of the unanswered prayers and incomplete answers that we continue to seek more light, and enlightenment, while nonetheless continuing to hold fast to a resolve to do good unto others for goodness own sake, and hoping and believing that will be its own reward...and ours.

And realizing that every now and then the Other Side throws us a pretty large bone. And that an expression of gratitude is in order when we receive such a precious gift.

We won't understand it all, but we can understand some of it, and in the process we can do all of the good that we can for ourselves and for others, and maybe, just maybe, we'll gain more understanding when we get to whatever the Other Side is.

In the meantime experiences such as this one are pretty powerful and eye-opening, and are to be treasured and mulled over. I think that there may be many more lessons to be gleaned from this one dramatic experience; what do you think? What insights can you gain into your own life from my experience? Does it cause you to question and reevaluate your own beliefs and choices? Or perhaps it reinforces for you, in a comforting way, that we are indeed looked out for and watched over, although in ways that may seem to us to be incomplete or imperfect at the time. What are your thoughts?

I hope you've enjoyed riding along with me on this fascinating journey. But our time here at this intriguing place is over. Let's saddle up...we have hundreds more miles to cover and some more incredibly amazing things to experience. Life is full of wonder if we'll just take the time to look and listen. Let's go see what else we can find!

Epilogue

For the next several weeks I find an *abnormal* amount of Lincoln pennies *everywhere*; I see the name "Lincoln" frequently, excessively; and there is an abundance of Abraham Lincoln memorabilia and related items that I encounter at every turn and in the most unlikely of places. It refreshes my memories of what was surely one of the most unique paranormal investigations I've ever conducted. As well as one of the most unique rides I've ever taken. And it lets me know that the Other Side continues to watch over me and to communicate with me, and to be considerate of things that I hold to be important.

And...that I'm not supposed to forget this tremendous experience. Neither are you, yours.