To the Editor:

I am writing in reference to Ken Vincent's Letter to the Editor that appeared in the Winter 2004 issue of the Journal. Vincent would have "mystical religious experiences" included in the Journal. I, for one, would be deeply distressed if that were to happen. Why? Because near-death experiences (NDEs) do not seem to me to be "mystical" nor "religious," as I understand those concepts.

My wife and were married in 1977, when all the books describing NDEs began to be published. I have a master's degree in psychology and she had a doctoral degree in anthropology. We soon realized something amazing was taking place with near-death research. We continued to read all the books, and I joined the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) as soon as it was initiated. I lost my wife to cancer in the year 2000 but we communicated well during her terminal months and she felt quite sure we would be seeing each other, in some fashion, again. Since that time, I have met several persons who have had NDEs, and am fairly convinced of the indications to which they seem to point.

However, I do not like the words "mystical" and "religious" used to refer to NDEs. What NDErs describe is nothing like the religion that is preached each Sunday in ordinary churches. And as for "mystical experiences," I am aware of such, as my wife and I continued on a spiritual path while we were together and studied Eastern teachings. But that does not seem to be the direction IANDS needs
to go, and I do not feel that "mystical experience" is the word to use, as we research what "experiencers" are relating to us.

What the NDErs describe allows me to rest assured that there is as good a chance as not that they are describing true experiences. I am 81 years of age and have no concern or fear of leaving this body, just as my wife had to do, four years ago.

References


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