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Seeing things

By JIM DAY
THE GUARDIAN

While it is tempting to blurt right out that Rev. Barry King sees dead people, the core of this multi-faceted interfaith minister is in his celebration of eternal life.

"I know we live forever," he said. "I don't even have to question it."

King's calm conviction is captivating.

Upon entering his unique home that doubles as a place of worship, counselling and spirit connection, I found my hardened skepticism washing away, not in one fell swoop, mind you, but in wave after significant wave.

I set out earlier this week to visit the 54-year-old King in his Charlotte home, which houses the Interfaith Centre, most keenly to ask him questions about his professed ability to see spirits.

We sat in King's 'reading' room, where he typically sits across from clients to get down to business in his service as a physical medium.

He was dressed in a suspender-draped plaid shirt, gray corduroys, brown slippers and light gray wool socks. He would later change into a crisp light blue dress shirt and dark blue blazer when time came to get photographed.

King sank into a cushioned chair for the lengthy interview about his life and to offer his compelling

WEEKEND REPORT

V.I.P.

VERY INTERESTING PERSON

thoughts on eternal life.

Large plants engulfed the room to such a dramatic extent that I half expected a parrot to land on my shoulder at some point in the interview.

The room was overwhelmed with what King calls positive symbols: small Buddha replicas, angels - lots of them, a prayer rug and a Tibetan singing bowl were among the many items competing for space.

Surprisingly, the small room felt cozy, not confining.

Much of that sense of ease, perhaps, could be attributed to King's soft tone and gregarious manner. He is disarming.

He is not about flash. He forgoes all props, like Tarot cards. He makes no attempt to create an atmosphere of dramatics or the mysterious.

He views each session as an

opportunity to receive messages and guidance from the heaven world and from loved ones in spirit.

And it's not about the money. In fact, he used to do readings for free, but realized the service should have some monetary value attached. His fee has inched up to \$60 per session, which usually runs 45 minutes to an hour.

King is far removed from the \$4.99/minute telephone psychics who make their living holding callers on the line.

He won't do readings for the same person on a regular basis. He prefers clients wait at least a couple years before making a return visit.

King assumes he could make a good living solely as a psychic. That would be selling short a man who has shared his love of life with others through his diverse work as a naturalist, an artist, educator, a museum professional, writer, counsellor, an intuitive and an interfaith minister.

He did not choose his intuitive power; he says it chose him.

He calls his ability to see spirits a

See Seeing, A2

Seeing ... continued from A1

natural thing that is part of being human.

"It comes to me real easy and it's a wonderful gift to be able to share with people," he said.

The gift was present early in King, the oldest of five children, as he grew up in Halifax.

Eight-year-old Barry King was visited by his grandmother in a spirit form to say goodbye, he recalled. She died the next day.

"I was always sensitive to people," he said. "I knew what they were thinking. I knew what they were feeling."

He believes he is providing a meaningful service in his upwards of 500 readings a year. He hopes each person receives an important message, like the grieving mother who learned that her dead son did not want his room kept intact as a grim memorial.

King said he can walk into a room with 100 people and he can give every single one of them a message from beyond. He is never overwhelmed by his own power, having learned what to process and what to ignore.

King always asks permission to share information, like the memorable time he sat down in a Chinese restaurant and was unable to shake the spirit of a small girl.

The spirit kept at him, he

said, each time a particular waitress emerged. The spirit kept telling him to tell the waitress that the girl was here and doing fine. Finally, King told the waitress he was an intuitive and that he had something to share if she wanted to listen.

The waitress agreed and broke into tears upon hearing of King's encounter with the young spirit. The waitress said she had just had a miscarriage.

King then told her that the girl said she was planning on returning. He told the waitress that he wouldn't be surprised if she became pregnant again in the next six months. A year later, King came across the waitress again in the restaurant only to learn she had given birth to a girl. He teaches people the gift of seeing auras, spiritual healing, discerning spirits, getting messages and sharing positive messages.

Anyone can do it, he said.

"It's a soul gift. We are spirits, pure and simple... So if we connect to our soul gifts, then we are intuitive, we are healer."

He and his wife, Rev. Sandi King, established the Prince Edward Island Interfaith Ministry, in part, to provide a vehicle through which people of all faiths could gather together to celebrate God and the gifts of spirit.

King describes the ministry as a community, not a religion. The ministry is neither a sect nor a cult, nor part of a particular world religion.

At any meeting or

service, Christian priests, Jewish Rabbis, Hindu Swamis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Lamas, Native medicine men and Spiritualist ministers could be sharing the platform among others.

"To really get a glimpse of an infinite God, it's necessary to have an understanding of the different faces of God through the traditions," he said.

Remarkably, to a great extent King's ministry and spirit readings are a sideline.

He holds a full-time job as executive director of the Community Museum Association of P.E.I. The association helps with training and support services to all of the 30-plus museums in the province.

King has been involved in museums in a professional capacity for just under 40 years, dating back to his teen years when he worked summers as well as weekends and evenings during school in the Nova Scotia Museum in Halifax.

While he has devoted much of his life to preserving the past, he never loses sight of the future.

"The future always fascinates me because the past you learn from, the present you live in, and the future you make," he said.

"So if I have a choice of what I'm going to do, it's to make a future. And if we make it with principles that reflect an inclusive, celebratory, joyful society, than I'm all for that. And I'll do my part to make that happen."

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JUST THE FACTS

Here is a snapshot of Rev. Barry King:

Well Written: King has written four books, including one on the Malpeque oyster; another a philosophical affirmation of the Spirit called *Many Paths, One Truth*; one on art education and one on meditation. He and his wife, Rev. Sandi King, also publish *The Heritage P.E.I. Explorer's Guide*, which highlights the natural and cultural heritage on P.E.I. The couple also formerly published *The Intuitive Times*, which looked at spirituality and natural wellness as alternative therapy.

Wedded Bliss: Rev. Barry King performed the first legal gay marriage on P.E.I. in 2005. Gay unions account for about 25 per cent of the approximately 80 marriages both King and his wife perform each year.



King

Lots of Faith: King estimates his Interfaith Ministry touches about 700 people regularly, coming from all walks of faith. "I think we should all be interfaith — multi-faith by nature," he said. "That doesn't mean we all have to worship in any particular faith. What it means is that we have to accept that there are many ways to the truth."

Sharing insight: The Kings count African witch doctors, Buddhist priests and Tibetan monks among their acquaintances. "And they have different ways of looking at the world," said Rev. Barry King.

Magic is gone: The Kings had a short run in P.E.I. — about two years — with a store called *A Touch of Magic*. Some people stood in front of the store praying the store would fail because they wrongly thought that the Kings were devil worshippers.

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