

# **Chapter 9 Tom died. Or did he?**

**From  
The Natural Soul  
By  
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Often referred to as the “Dean of NDE researchers,” Kenneth Ring, PhD, is my friend and colleague. Ken is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut and co-founder and past president of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS). In his classic book *Heading Toward Omega* and recently in his *Lessons from the Light: What We can Learn from the Near-Death Experience*, he tells my story, including my life review. Ken also wrote extensively about Tom Sawyer (no relationship to Mark Twain’s character) another Near-Death Experiencer (NDER), who had a life review that was similar to mine in the respect that it changed him as much as it changed me and in the same ways.

I wrote Ken recently asking him for an endorsement for this book. He answered, telling me about a new article he just finished for the *Journal of Near-Death Studies* about Tom, which I will cite further below. I met Tom at Bruce and Jenny Greyson’s house when Bruce was still at the University of Michigan in the early 1980s. I drove up from where I was living in Florida and Tom drove in from up-state New York. We stayed up all that first night and talked. On the next morning, Bruce had invited three or four other NDErs from the area and anyone who wanted to come from his department. Several administrative people and a few psych residents showed up. (This meeting is depicted in my book *Full Circle*).

On that first night, Tom and I had dinner with the Greysons and then, when they went to sleep and it was just the two of us — this was the first time I was alone with another NDEr — we both opened up in a way that we NDErs crave. It’s a wonderment that we share and at the same time experience a deep subtle sadness or yearning, because we sort of lost “it”. It is ineffable; it can’t be explained so much in words but in the looks in our eyes. It’s about a feeling of love that is hard to feel here but is everywhere on the other side of the veil. Tom and I shared that. As Tom repeatedly apologized for tearing up as he told his Near-Death Experience, he told me that he was actually *reliving it* — all the overwhelming feelings that had originally marked his encounter with death. As I recounted my life review, I too could see and feel everything all over again. We both were in the same space together, even though

we were in separate bodies sitting across from one another. We agreed that this was one of the big lessons of our life reviews. It's an illusion that we are separate. We really are all One! Then we told each other everything we understood in part about quantum physics explaining all this. We both were reading physics for the pure pleasure of getting closer to the Mystery. Often the tears turned into laughter as we tripped over the quantum concepts.

The meeting with the other NDErs the next day was just as "personal," with that longing for "home" hanging in the air. The others who sat behind us in an outer circle felt it. It was a powerful meeting that went on all morning.

Tom was a refreshing person. He knew he didn't have the education that put him with the "intellectuals" we were often surrounded by, but he also knew he had something to say so nothing was going to stop him. He held his own with everyone, even though his manner and choice of words were reminiscent of a character in one of Mark Twain's books. They were not as pronounced of course, but still distinct. There was a boyish charm about him that was candid and straightforward. And, if I didn't jump in that night we sat up and talked, Tom could have talked nonstop for hours! I again visited with Tom in Connecticut at the Greysons' a few years later.

### **Tom Died. Or did he?**

Tom died in April 2007 — too young. He had developed pulmonary fibrosis and knew he was going to die.

Carol Madec Scoville, a dear friend and associate of Tom's, shared a dream with me: "Recently, I dreamed that Tom walked up to me looking totally healthy. I said to him, 'I thought you were dead.' He laughed and said, 'Well, the nurse at hospice thought I was dead and she told everyone. Then, she came back into the room and discovered I was still alive. Believing that I would die within a couple of days anyway, the hospital staff decided not to say anything to confuse family and friends, so they didn't tell anyone. But I didn't die. I just got better and better. And here I am! I'm back!'"

Dreams like this one may be symbolic. They could also be psychic or Spiritual in a prophetic sense. The stories that follow seem to point in the same direction as Carol Madec Scoville's dream.

### **Ken Ring's article.**

Just before I sent this manuscript to my publisher, Ken Ring emailed me about his new article that was to be published in the *Journal of Near-Death Studies* about Tom. It's called "The Death and Posthumous Life of Tom Sawyer: A Case Study of Apparent After-death Communication." After reading Ken's article, I knew I wanted to include this story of what Tom is up to now because Tom is giving us living proof that his consciousness is still alive and intact. His body may have needed to die, but Tom is experientially showing us that he is alive and well. And, he is

doing this by talking to many people here — from the dimension in which he now exists. He even told Lynda, the woman you will read about below, to tell me he wants more room in this book than I think he needs! This kind of insistent sharing about the other side is just like the Tom I remember before he died.

Tom's communication with us demonstrates several cardinal characteristics of the Soul. These include: 1) The Soul is *separate from the body*, 2) The Soul *does not die*, 3) The Soul is *intelligent*, 4) The Soul is *creative*, including its ability to *extend love*, and 5) It is our *consciousness*, the intelligent energy in us that continues after our body and ego dies.

## **Tom's Life after Death**

In Ken Ring's article he writes that when Tom was driven to a hospice for his final day on Earth, he chatted with one of the paramedics attending him, Lynda Cummings, mentioned earlier. She had never known about life-after-death communication and she had no other contact with Tom. He died the next day. So when Tom started communicating with her a little while after his death, asking her to give his wife and sons messages, she thought she was losing her mind. Finally, after having the courage to contact Tom's wife Elaine and talk with her, Lynda was able to realize that she was not in fact losing her mind. Elaine explained to her that Tom was no ordinary man and everything Lynda was telling Elaine rang true to her because Tom manifested to her now, after death, with all of his old earthly personality quirks and mannerisms intact. He is, then, still recognizably Tom to anyone who knew him.

Tom's communication through Lynda makes perfect sense to all the others he has asked her to contact. She reports that the frequency of his presence is slowing down and that she has gotten used to it. Later, it started up again in the form of messages to me about this book. Lynda explained that there are three ways she "hears" from Tom. First, there are detailed accounts that she wrote for Ken Ring and Sidney Saylor Farr (the author of two books about Tom). She is usually in the middle of her everyday, crazy, busy life when Tom interrupts her. (She works as a paramedic and has 5 kids, a husband and a house to run). Each of those accounts was several pages. The second way she hears him is if she tries to focus on him while writing an email to one of his friends. She says she feels "hijacked" because he "insinuates" himself into the conversation. She explained, "I am aware of him there and what he's trying to send and I can ask, "Is that right? Is this what you meant?" When I am feeling brave I share Tom's comments and often they make sense to those who I am writing to.

The third way Lynda hears from Tom is through symbolism and synchronicities. Lynda recently emailed a message to Tom's friends that ended: "He wants people to know he was a regular guy who had a big impact, and you can have a big impact and show others how *they* can have a big impact. Start by telling his stories where the door opens for one to be told. So don't hesitate. Even the smallest of stories can have an impact." At the end of Ken Ring's article, Tom conveyed this thought through Lynda: "You don't just stop because you are dead; your Soul continues

to love. Tom not contacting, loving and caring for his loved ones in life would be unnatural. He wouldn't ever just stop caring for loved ones. He'd never just stop. So his not contacting, touching, loving, and watching out for his loved ones NOW would also be unnatural. Some can feel it, some cannot, but he is there."

From all that I know about Tom's communications, he is telling us that *what is really important is love. All the other stuff we focus on has nothing to do with the real meaning of life: to love.*

## **Tom and Ken**

The more I pondered Ken Ring's article, the more curious I became about Ken's involvement in all this because I know Tom loved Ken. We all love Ken, and Tom specifically told me that evening how much he loved Ken. We talked about Ken a lot because we both knew we were appearing in Ken's book *Heading Toward Omega* (Ring, 1984), and we trusted him with our deepest interpretations of what happened to us. We had to love him to trust him that much with our stories, which were so deeply personal and Spiritual. So I wrote Ken and asked if he had any contact from Tom. Ken told me he decided to keep a journal about Tom after the following encounter.

Ken received an unexpected call from his dear French friend, Andre, who informed Ken that he was in town and wanted to get together for lunch. Andre was traveling on professional business having to do with his organization, which Ken is serving on as a board member. Andre was traveling with Bob, a former board member of IANDS. Ken had originally met him a few years ago at a professional conference. Ken wrote this in his journal.

"When we met for lunch at a local café, most of our conversation, naturally, was about our board activities and related professional matters, but as we were winding down, Andre kindly asked me what was doing in my life these days. On the spur of a possibly regrettable impulse, I decided to tell him (and Bob) about my recent experiences with Tom, and what that had stirred up in me, so I first gave a brief account of Lynda's story. After that, I asked both these guys what they personally thought about this story and the possibility of life after death. And here, very unexpectedly, things turned interesting.

"When it was Bob's turn to speak, he shared that, actually, some years back he happened to find himself at a Spiritualist church in the Detroit area (where he lives). Being Jewish, he felt quite ill at ease there, but someone had told him he should develop his mediumistic gifts, and he wound up taking a ten-week course on mediumship and found that, lo and behold, he had a certain knack for it. He had some experiences during that time with discarnate Spirits that convinced him that he could at least at times have authentic contact with such beings because he was able to adduce information that turned out to be accurate, which he could not have known by normal means. Bob is a Ph.D., in some field of science, I believe (possibly physics), and he certainly doesn't practice or represent himself as a medium, but he can use these

talents he's developed when he wants to.

"In any case, he told us that while we were talking about Tom, he could split his consciousness and a part of him was all this time tuning into Tom. (He later explained that when a Spirit who is still in touch with the earthly world is being talked about, it's 'as if' his line rings, as it were, and the Spirit can decide to "answer the phone." And, as it happened, Tom was "home" today and picked up. That is, joking aside, he was able to eavesdrop on our conversation and through Bob then communicate). Bob said that sometimes the information, which comes mainly through imagery, as I understood it, comes so fast that he can't grasp it all, and it's as if he has to do a kind of simultaneous translation. But the gist of what Tom communicated is that he wants it to be known that he still exists (Bob says that his personality is still intact, which fits Lynda's sense of him) and that there is life after death. This is the message he wants to communicate. Bob said that he had the sense that Tom wasn't necessarily asking me personally to be the messenger. In fact, I gather Tom doesn't care who or how many people deliver the message so long as it is conveyed. Bob also said that he picked up that Tom loved me very much and remembered fondly his days of visiting me and my family in Connecticut. (I have fond memories of those days as well). So Tom wasn't 'pushing me' specifically to do this, but I had the impression from what Bob said that Tom would be pleased if I did."

Bob also explained that in the "space" where Tom was, he seemed to be standing in a vast plain. Metaphorically speaking, if he faced the earth in an effort to communicate with human beings here, that was one thing. On the other hand, if he "turned away" to face the vast horizon, he would come into contact with much more "cosmic" things. Presumably Tom might do this some of the time, because he doesn't always seem to be "facing earth," as it were (for example, he is only intermittently present to Lynda).

Finally, Bob remarked that if Ken would like to cultivate direct contact with Tom, he could invite him into his dreams. Ken at that moment didn't believe or really know if he was all that sensitive to these realms so he just shrugged that off as believing he is too obtuse. He continues writing in his journal: "Thus far, I've had no sense of Tom after his death — I'm just too obtuse, I guess! But I suppose it wouldn't hurt to try." And then Ken left this thought: If he was supposed to do something with all this there would be "signs" from the universe. He finished his journal entry with, "I'm still going to take a wait-and-see attitude. Not to sound grandiose or pompous, although I'm afraid this will seem both, but if 'the universe' wants me to do something, it will let me know; there will be signs."

Ken started hearing from unrelated people that Tom wanted Ken to tell his story.

Finally Lynda, in an email message, told Ken that Tom had something for him, but she didn't know what that meant. That night, Ken had this dream:

“Last night, fairly early in my sleep cycle, sometime after midnight, I awoke from a very strange experience and remember thinking, ‘that’s weird.’ I’ve lost some of the details now, but as I remember, I dreamed that after having got out of my shower at home, I discovered that several things, such as stuff on my desk and computer table, had obviously been moved. But since I was alone, I could not figure out — in the dream, I mean — how this had happened. I then found myself fiddling with an old cassette player, trying to dislodge a tape of the kind I had used to record Tom — although I wasn’t thinking then either of Tom or his tape. But suddenly I heard Tom’s voice — distinctly — speaking to me, and as I recall, with some sense of humor. I don’t recall what he was saying, but when I heard his voice, I immediately woke up with a start, which is what prompted me to say ‘that’s weird.’”

With that, Ken decided to write the article for *The Journal of Near-Death Studies* that is described above. In an email to Ken, Lynda expressed Tom’s gratitude for starting the ball rolling and he expressed that this would lead to something else, which would then lead to something else. I believe this chapter is the first “something else,” and then something else will follow from this because that’s the way Tom wants it. Tom may have died, but it appears that he is still running the show!

I asked a good friend of Tom’s, Kim Wise, what she thinks about all this. She calmly told me: “Sometimes I feel like he [Tom] is collaborating with me — like we are collaborators for something. He sort of moves in from the side as an impulse. And from these moments I believe he is coming in to help me or someone around me, if we are open to receiving his help. He helped us when he was alive and he is still helping us now. And if we are closed off he can’t come through.”

## **Coincidence or Synchronicity**

Twenty five years ago, Tom and I sat up all night and talked about our yearning to return to that place we visited when we “died.” He’s there now. I am here. We are seemingly separated by a “veil” of sorts. Even though I was there for a few minutes out of linear time, I no longer yearn to be there. But I do yearn to explain “there” to us here so we can bring the realization of our Souls here. That’s what this book is about — living from our Souls. We were and are our Souls when we die. That’s what we yearn for now. Not a place in another dimension, but who we experienced ourselves as in that dimension. This book is an experiential description of being our Soul now. This is not only our destination, but we can live it *now* as we journey through life, as well as when we journey through death. I am grateful to Tom for continuing our conversation — 25 years later. His presence through Lynda and yes, I can feel him around me occasionally — has helped us considerably to understand what I am conveying in this book.

Some may believe that emailing Ken Ring for the first time in several months was a simple coincidence that put me in touch with Tom’s new story. Ken just happened to have finished the article on Tom and asked if I’d like to read it.

I believe that Tom's story and Tom's words needed to be in this book. Something was going on to make that happen that can't be explained by our logical mind.

During the two week period of writing this chapter, the coincidences were happening fast. When a coincidence takes on special meaning for us, we call such a coincidence a synchronicity, which I address further in the next chapter.

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