

USE OF PSYCHICS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

During the past year, numerous articles have appeared in national and local newspapers and magazines describing the use of psychics in police investigations. Even though they are being consulted by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, psychics are not commonly used in investigations.

The media articles and lack of exposure by most investigators to psychics leads to two interesting questions. Have psychics successfully aided investigators in cases? What should an investigator expect if he chooses to involve a psychic in a case?

Telephone contact was made with officers at eleven police agencies which had reportedly used psychics with some success. (All but one of the agencies contacted had been mentioned in newspaper accounts.) The newspaper articles referenced cases throughout the United States and concentrated on the work of four psychics.

All of the police officers stated that they had used a psychic in a case as described in the newspaper articles. Eight of the officers said that the psychic provided them with otherwise unknown information which was helpful to the case. In three of these cases, missing bodies were discovered in areas described by the psychic.

Two officers reported that accurate information was provided by the psychic, but it was too general to be of assistance in the case. One officer said he had little success and would not use a psychic again.

It does appear that some psychics have provided valuable assistance to law enforcement on specific cases. This is the only conclusion that should be drawn from such a limited survey. Another indication to the overall success rate that might be expected from psychics will soon be forthcoming. The Los Angeles Police Department has been conducting studies to determine whether or not psychics can be of assistance to law enforcement. The results of the first study will be published in the March issue of the Journal of Police Sciences and Administration.

If an investigator is considering the use of a psychic, how would he select one? How do they work? What do they charge? Answers to these questions comprise the remainder of this article.

When to Contact a Psychic

The opinions of investigators differ on the appropriate time to call a psychic into a case. A few believe that you should wait until all possible leads have been exhausted. The majority, however, felt that a psychic should be called early in an unusual or difficult case. They give the following reasons:

The investigator might develop a theory about the case and ignore important clues that could be highlighted by a psychic.

In cases with a large number of suspects, the psychic could help the investigator concentrate on more likely suspects early in the investigation.

Selection

This could be the most difficult and important step in using a psychic. It is difficult because there are no established criteria to assist you in this choice. It is important because a bad choice might be more of a hindrance than a help.

In many instances, especially in missing persons cases, the family of the victim has contacted a psychic. The investigating officer can talk with the psychic and determine if she¹ can be helpful to the case.

If the psychic has not been selected by a parent or associate of the victim, the best selection criteria are personal recommendations. Contact an investigator who has successfully used a psychic. He can probably refer you to other agencies that have also used her. Talk to a number of agencies before making a selection.

Names might also be obtained from universities or private research foundations who conduct tests in psychic ability. However, a person whose psychic ability is demonstrated in laboratory conditions does not necessarily mean that the same person would perform well in a criminal case.

Beware of psychics who are more interested in notoriety or money than in solving the case. Many psychics who are primarily interested in using their ability to help others wish to remain anonymous.

Often a psychic will provide information over the phone. With very little information (e.g., type of case, name of victim, birthdate of victim) she may provide some details of the case. These details should be other than those which have been publicized. The volume and accuracy of these details is an indicator on how helpful the psychic might be to your case.

Working Conditions

Certain conditions should exist to facilitate a beneficial working relationship with the psychic you have selected. Try to be objective, whether or not you believe in psychic ability. If you cannot be objective, work through an intermediary. Whenever possible, tape record what the psychics say. Their impressions might come very rapidly. If they are asked to stop and repeat they could lose their thoughts. The tape also serves as a record that can be checked for words or phrases that could prove helpful.

¹Three of the four psychics discussed with the eleven law enforcement officers were women.

How They Work

Each psychic has her own particular method. The following examples are situations that you might encounter.

As previously mentioned, initial contact will probably be by telephone. The psychic will ask for some information about the case. You need not go into great detail.

If the psychic asks for feedback to determine if she is picking up relevant impressions, a simple response is best.

In some cases, the investigator and psychic will never meet personally. All conversations will be conducted by telephone. In other cases, the psychic may wish to visit the crime scene or drive around the crime area.

A psychic might ask to see a picture of the victim or touch an article of the victim's clothes. The investigator must be careful to protect any item that might be introduced as evidence in court.

The talent of the psychics vary. Some will provide exact names and locations. More often, the information will be general in nature. Here are two examples:

Description of Suspect - "I see a blond headed man...a singer, I believe. He is associated with a nightclub in this area which was burglarized in the past three months."

Description of Location - "There is a lot of tall grass near the body. It is in a field with cattle nearby. Off to my right is a building with the initials PS painted on the wall."

Both clues require further investigation.

Individual words might need interpretation. The following examples are taken from actual cases.

Psychic - "I see a windmill."

Interpretation - A sign near the body stated Windmill Estates.

Psychic - "The words 'two guys' are important."

Interpretation - The Two Guys Department Store was associated with the case.

The investigator must be aware from what viewpoint the psychic is speaking. The psychic might be describing the crime scene from the victim's viewpoint then switch to the criminal's viewpoint.

It must be reemphasized that the psychic does not replace the sound investigative techniques but functions as an investigative tool. Courts do not recognize psychic testimony. Cases solved with the assistance of a psychic must be reconstructed using established police procedures before presentation in court.

The eleven police officers contacted in the survey said that none of the psychics they use charge a consultant fee. They do ask for travel and meal expenses when they travel from their hometown. When all work is conducted over the telephone, the psychic might suggest a donation. The psychics used by the agencies were working for altruistic motives. However, they should be paid for personal expenses incurred while working on your case.

Conclusion

Based upon this survey, it would appear that a talented psychic can assist you by helping to:

- locate a geographic area of a missing person,
- narrow the number of leads to be concentrated on,
- highlight information that has been overlooked, or
- provide information previously unknown to the investigator.

Even talented psychics cannot be accurate 100 per cent of the time. Not all the information provided by a psychic may be pertinent to your case. The key to good results is careful selection.

The Research and Analysis Section would like law enforcement personnel who have used a psychic in an investigation to contact them. The information would be the basis for a future article on this topic. All names will be confidential and will not be given out without prior permission.

Agencies should contact Stu Gluckman, Research and Analysis Section, OCCIB, Department of Justice, P. O. Box 13357, Sacramento, CA 95813, (916) 322-6401.