

1

00:00:00,834 --> 00:00:07,833

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:07,833 --> 00:00:14,232

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations but not

3

00:00:14,232 --> 00:00:18,031

necessarily the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:18,031 --> 00:00:22,831

For men in war,

5

00:00:22,831 --> 00:00:26,030

death is an ever-present possibility and terror.

6

00:00:30,829 --> 00:00:35,709

The

7

00:00:35,709 --> 00:00:40,428

soldiers who experienced near-death encounters

8

00:00:40,428 --> 00:00:43,828

suggest that death may not be something to be feared.

9

00:00:43,828 --> 00:00:50,626

At what point does life fade

10

00:00:50,626 --> 00:00:55,426

into death? Is it possible to scientifically prove

11

00:00:55,426 --> 00:00:58,425

that there is life after life?

12

00:00:58,425 --> 00:01:14,423

During the 11 long years that America was involved in the Vietnam War,

13

00:01:14,423 --> 00:01:20,422

over 57,000 men died in combat.

14

00:01:20,422 --> 00:01:23,422

There were more than 300,000 wounded.

15

00:01:23,422 --> 00:01:29,421

The line between life and death was for these men very narrow.

16

00:01:36,420 --> 00:01:39,419

In the case of one of those soldiers, Tommy Clack,

17

00:01:39,419 --> 00:01:42,419

Vietnam is more than just a hellish memory.

18

00:01:42,419 --> 00:01:47,418

Tommy, now an administrator at Atlanta's Veterans Hospital,

19

00:01:47,418 --> 00:01:52,417

encountered a life after life experience that remains very real.

20

00:01:52,417 --> 00:01:58,416

I was a captain in the Army. In particular, my job was that of what's called a Ford Observer.

21

00:01:58,416 --> 00:02:03,416

I called in artillery and plane strikes and gunships and was actually the person that

22

00:02:03,416 --> 00:02:08,415

directed us from point A to B by reading the map and coordinates and knowing where we are at all times.

23

00:02:08,415 --> 00:02:15,414

But one particular morning, May 29, 1969, to be exact, we ended up in a big firefight.

24

00:02:22,413 --> 00:02:27,412

The first time I saw a gun, I was like,

25

00:02:27,412 --> 00:02:32,411

I'm going to shoot you.

26

00:02:32,411 --> 00:02:38,410

Through the course of that action, I got hit by one of the incoming rounds we had coming in.

27

00:02:38,410 --> 00:02:45,409

I was conscious the whole time when I got hit.

28

00:02:45,409 --> 00:02:51,408

I remember flying through the air and I remember coming down and I set up and I looked down

29

00:02:51,408 --> 00:02:58,407

and I saw that I was missing. My right arm, my right leg and my left leg was laying off to the side like it was broke.

30

00:02:58,407 --> 00:03:02,407

I had several puncher wounds over my body that I was bleeding from.

31

00:03:02,407 --> 00:03:07,406

I saw everybody running around. I laid back down and from that point forward,

32

00:03:07,406 --> 00:03:14,405

I guess I really started thinking about the fact that my time had come. I really was going to die.

33

00:03:14,405 --> 00:03:20,404

I heard no more battle sound. I didn't feel anything. There was no pain.

34

00:03:20,404 --> 00:03:25,403

I felt this calm come over my body as I was laying there.

35

00:03:30,402 --> 00:03:38,401

But then the battle subsided and they got in a medevac helicopter.

36

00:03:38,401 --> 00:03:44,400

And I remember that I was laying there on the ground. They put this poncho over me.

37

00:03:44,400 --> 00:03:48,400

It was the only time we put ponchos over people were when they were dead.

38

00:03:48,400 --> 00:03:53,399

I guess for the first time and I had no comprehension of what length of time this was,

39

00:03:53,399 --> 00:04:00,398

I realized that I was dead. I wasn't alive. I wasn't functioning as a human being anymore.

40

00:04:00,398 --> 00:04:05,397

All of a sudden I realized that I wasn't visualizing this from the ground.

41

00:04:05,397 --> 00:04:08,397

I was looking down and seeing this go on.

42

00:04:08,397 --> 00:04:15,396

I don't ever remember leaving my body quote. It was really a weird experience because there was no emotions.

43

00:04:15,396 --> 00:04:22,395

There was nothing. It was just total peace and tranquility. I just realized I didn't exist anymore.

44

00:04:24,394 --> 00:04:31,393

Typical field procedure dictated that the mortally wounded be airlifted to the nearest possible field hospital.

45

00:04:32,393 --> 00:04:42,392

Tommy was rushed to the 25th Division Headquarters Hospital near Coochee, some 20 miles from the

battlefield.

46

00:04:44,391 --> 00:04:52,390

One of the things that you learn real fast in Vietnam when you have a lot of casualties is that people have priority over other people depending on your warnings.

47

00:04:52,390 --> 00:04:59,389

Realistically, if I had been in charge somebody in my condition I probably would have given a low priority due to the extent of the injuries.

48

00:04:59,389 --> 00:05:06,388

But for some reason a doctor came over and lifted a potchow up. I saw him do it very clearly.

49

00:05:06,388 --> 00:05:12,387

And all of a sudden I had a group of people on trying to do whatever it is they were trying to do to me.

50

00:05:12,387 --> 00:05:19,386

They lifted me up and took me into the operating room. I saw him cut my clothes off. I saw him start IVs.

51

00:05:19,386 --> 00:05:26,385

I didn't feel any remorse or anything. It was just total peace and nothing for what was laying there that was my body.

52

00:05:27,385 --> 00:05:36,383

But then all of a sudden I left that operating room and it was almost like a blink of the eyes and I was back at the battlefield where I had gotten injured.

53

00:05:36,383 --> 00:05:47,382

And at that particular time I think is when I come to realize I really was dead because everybody in Vietnam that I had put in plastic bags,

54

00:05:47,382 --> 00:05:54,381

when somebody got killed you put them in a plastic bag, were right there with me. They were around me.

55

00:05:55,381 --> 00:06:01,380

Jeff and Mark and all these guys were right there with me and we communicated like we were talking with our minds.

56

00:06:01,380 --> 00:06:10,378

I was above the earth and it was a gigantic brightness that surrounded the whole battlefield. It was just pure peace.

57

00:06:12,378 --> 00:06:19,377

Ten days later I woke up and I was laying in a bed in Coochee, Vietnam. And I did not have to ask what went on.

58

00:06:19,377 --> 00:06:26,376

I remember everything that went on. I knew I was missing the limbs. I didn't realize they had cut my left head off in the operating room.

59

00:06:26,376 --> 00:06:33,375

It was beyond repair. But I told the doctor everything that had gone on, what they had done to me that I had been covered up.

60

00:06:33,375 --> 00:06:40,374

And even a couple of guys that lived through the battle with me stopped by and I told them who had gotten killed that day.

61

00:06:40,374 --> 00:06:47,373

And there was no way for me to know that except that I had been with them wherever we were, whatever that place was, whatever it was.

62

00:06:47,373 --> 00:06:50,372

We were there together because we were all dead.

63

00:06:51,372 --> 00:06:58,371

Was Tommy indeed dead? How can we explain his profound and mysterious experience?

64

00:07:01,371 --> 00:07:06,370

If Tommy Clack had been a soldier during World War II, he probably would have died.

65

00:07:06,370 --> 00:07:13,369

The high level technology of modern medicine saved his life and made it possible for him to recount his out of body experience.

66

00:07:14,369 --> 00:07:25,367

It is ironic, however, that the same sophisticated medical devices which were used to keep Tommy alive also make it more difficult to determine exactly when death occurs.

67

00:07:27,367 --> 00:07:37,365

At the Veterans Hospital in Atlanta, physicians like Dr. Michael Saban continually grapple with pinpointing the precise instant at which a human life ceases.

68

00:07:38,365 --> 00:07:47,364

The definition of death is very nebulous both medically and legally. There is no one generally accepted definition of when the point of death occurs.

69

00:07:48,363 --> 00:08:03,361

I can't give you in ten words or less how we determine how somebody is dead. Sometimes it's obvious from examining the patient that there's no pulse, no heartbeat, and rigor mortis is set in so that the patient is obviously dead.

70

00:08:04,361 --> 00:08:24,358

But when you're talking about lack of vital signs, a cardiac arrhythmia or irregularity of the heartbeat which would not support blood pressure, unconsciousness, all of these types of definitions that have been used in the past can be, there are exceptions to these at the present time.

71

00:08:24,358 --> 00:08:33,357

So it becomes difficult to establish medically, physically, and scientifically when the exact point of physical death occurs.

72

00:08:34,357 --> 00:08:46,355

What is the precise moment that death occurs? Researchers are only now beginning to probe the depths of near death and a person's ability to return from that level of consciousness.

73

00:08:47,355 --> 00:08:53,354

As with most medical research, the investigation begins with laboratory animals.

74

00:08:54,354 --> 00:09:04,352

We bring our experimental animal, rat, to body temperature of about 10 or 5 degrees centigrade which is about 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

75

00:09:05,352 --> 00:09:14,350

Dr. Woziem Popovich of Emory University School of Medicine uses a cooling process in an attempt to define the instant of death.

76

00:09:15,350 --> 00:09:26,349

When the body temperature decreases to such a low body temperature, metabolic processes, heart rate, respiration, everything slows down and eventually stops.

77

00:09:27,349 --> 00:09:33,348

So the animal now looks dead. The animal is clinically dead but it is not biologically dead.

78

00:09:34,347 --> 00:09:40,347

That means all clinical signs of death appear present but the animal is still alive.

79

00:09:41,346 --> 00:09:50,345

After two hours we could still recover that animal by rewarming. After three hours we cannot because we now pass the point of biological death.

80

00:09:51,345 --> 00:09:53,345

The point of biological death is passed and the animal is dead.

81

00:09:55,344 --> 00:10:02,343

With the success that Dr. Popovich has had in freezing and reviving rats, it seems likely that the same could be done to humans.

82

00:10:04,343 --> 00:10:08,342

Some human bodies have been purposely frozen immediately after death.

83

00:10:10,342 --> 00:10:14,341

There has been at least one unsuccessful resuscitation attempt.

84

00:10:15,341 --> 00:10:22,340

An accident in Canada provided researchers with an unusual opportunity to try to revive a frozen boy.

85

00:10:23,340 --> 00:10:29,339

His story begins to unlock the secrets of that special place between life and death.

86

00:10:30,339 --> 00:10:47,336

It was a cold evening in January 1976 in an area near Winnipeg, Canada. The temperature had dropped

from a brisk 32 degrees Fahrenheit to nearly 40 below.

87

00:10:49,336 --> 00:10:54,335

Ted Milligan, then 16, was a member of the St. John Cathedral School.

88

00:10:55,335 --> 00:11:00,334

Part of the curriculum included a 27-mile cross-country snowshoe hike.

89

00:11:02,334 --> 00:11:06,334

Ted set out on his assignment along with a number of his classmates.

90

00:11:09,333 --> 00:11:15,332

Only a few miles from the end of the hike, however, Ted collapsed into unconsciousness.

91

00:11:16,332 --> 00:11:22,331

His colleagues, unable to move him in the intense cold, returned to their school for help.

92

00:11:25,331 --> 00:11:35,329

Dr. James Bristow, an expert on human frostbite, freezing and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, attempted to revive Ted.

93

00:11:36,329 --> 00:11:45,328

The lad was clinically dead. There was no heartbeat. The cardiogram showed a flat line on the cardiophone indicating a systole.

94

00:11:46,328 --> 00:11:50,327

He was, of course, not breathing. And his body temperature was very cold to touch.

95

00:11:50,327 --> 00:11:59,326

And in fact, the temperature as recorded by a low reading thermometer was 25 degrees Celsius, the normal being about 37 degrees.

96

00:12:02,325 --> 00:12:06,325

Ted Milligan's heart had stopped beating for over two and a half hours.

97

00:12:07,324 --> 00:12:10,324

Dr. Bristow worked over Ted's body for nearly another two hours.

98

00:12:11,324 --> 00:12:21,322

Conventional medical textbooks state that without oxygen for more than four and a half minutes, a body will suffer irreparable brain damage and will die.

99

00:12:22,322 --> 00:12:26,322

Yet Ted regained consciousness and was perfectly normal.

100

00:12:29,321 --> 00:12:34,320

Ted Milligan, now a private in the Canadian Armed Forces, recalls his ordeal.

101

00:12:35,320 --> 00:12:44,319

Well, mainly it was just like being asleep, like a total total darkness and waking up out of a sleep that you didn't know that you had gone into.

102

00:12:45,319 --> 00:12:51,318

I'm not afraid of dying. When I die, I'm going to die and I'll probably die with a smile on my face.

103

00:12:52,318 --> 00:13:03,316

Biological death basically means brain death, irreversible brain death as opposed to clinical death with just simply the lack of vital signs, heartbeat and respiration.

104

00:13:04,316 --> 00:13:17,314

These episodes and such as Ted's has focused on and brought more awareness to the fact that there can be a great discrepancy between clinical death and biological death in some instances.

105

00:13:18,314 --> 00:13:33,311

And notably, accidental hypothermia is one of these, where in fact an individual could be written off and could be given up as being clinically dead only to have the brain still intact, the brain still intact and capable of being resuscitated.

106

00:13:34,311 --> 00:13:35,311

That's the same thing.

107

00:13:36,311 --> 00:13:50,309

Ted Milligan's experience seems to indicate that there is no fine line between life and death. Perhaps it's a broad expanse through which a person moves simply and logically from one state to another.

108

00:13:51,309 --> 00:13:58,308

What happens when this process is interrupted by modern medicine and a person who has been gliding toward death is revived.

109

00:13:59,307 --> 00:14:08,306

Fred Schoonmaker, a doctor of cardiology at St. Luke's Hospital in Denver, has had repeated experiences bringing patients back from death-like states.

110

00:14:09,306 --> 00:14:17,305

Their accounts of life after life experiences were so numerous and similar that Dr. Schoonmaker was intrigued by the phenomena.

111

00:14:18,305 --> 00:14:27,303

The first questions that began to come to my mind is that could this in some way be a dream-like state? Could this in some way be hallucination?

112

00:14:28,303 --> 00:14:43,301

If you take a person, an example who is hallucinating, if you take a person who may be in DTs from withdrawal from a drug dependency problem, they're seeing pink elephants, they're seeing white rats, red rats, whatever it may be, but this is a terrifying experience to them.

113

00:14:43,301 --> 00:14:54,299

It was an unreal when they became back into and filtered back into the mainstream of life after being hospitalized over a period of time and rehabilitated.

114

00:14:55,299 --> 00:15:07,297

These kind of vivid expressions that they had either in dream states or hallucinatory states or if they were on any kind of drug medications for decreasing pain or whatever, they knew they were not real.

115

00:15:07,297 --> 00:15:20,295

They were unreal and the word that began to pass through many of these people as we talk back and forth was this was a real experience that I had. I don't know what it was, but it indeed was real.

116

00:15:21,295 --> 00:15:32,293

Schoonmaker discovered that those who have had life after life experiences are profoundly changed. Unlike most of us, they no longer fear death.

117

00:15:32,293 --> 00:15:40,292

I found that people who have not really come to grips with their own feelings about death are not very well equipped to live.

118

00:15:41,292 --> 00:15:45,291

Janet Rainwater's encounter with death occurred in 1952.

119

00:15:46,291 --> 00:15:56,290

The doctor said I had flu, but there was a polio epidemic going on and I became gradually aware that I had polio and finally went for a spinal tap.

120

00:15:56,290 --> 00:16:02,289

And they said, okay, you'd better go to Variety Children's Hospital.

121

00:16:03,289 --> 00:16:15,287

By the time Janet had reached the hospital, she could barely walk. As recreated for in search of, each step jarred her already excruciatingly painful spine.

122

00:16:16,287 --> 00:16:21,286

She lost her ability to swallow and encountered incredible difficulties in breathing.

123

00:16:22,286 --> 00:16:26,285

Finally, her arms and legs became totally paralyzed.

124

00:16:28,285 --> 00:16:33,284

Janet lost consciousness and began drifting between life and death.

125

00:16:40,283 --> 00:16:45,282

Well, the next thing I knew, I was walking across this dry riverbed.

126

00:16:46,282 --> 00:16:50,282

And in the distance, there was this marvelous, marvelous white light.

127

00:16:51,282 --> 00:16:58,280

And I could hardly wait to go into it. It was so peaceful and calm. I was incredibly happy.

128

00:16:59,280 --> 00:17:02,280

And then I became aware of some women.

129

00:17:05,279 --> 00:17:11,279

I felt they were calling to me, but I kind of said, go away, don't bother me, because I really wanted to go into the light.

130

00:17:16,278 --> 00:17:19,277

And then I realized that one of them at least was calling me Mary.

131

00:17:20,277 --> 00:17:24,277

And that startled me because that's a name I was called the first 10 years of my life.

132

00:17:25,276 --> 00:17:28,276

And for 20 years, no one had called me by that name.

133

00:17:29,276 --> 00:17:32,275

So then I paid more attention and I realized it was my grandmother.

134

00:17:34,275 --> 00:17:39,274

She had died two years before and she was someone who I'd loved very, very, very much.

135

00:17:39,274 --> 00:17:44,274

And then I realized if I was there with my grandmother, I must be dead.

136

00:17:45,273 --> 00:17:50,273

And I said to her, Grammy, if we're here together, you're dead, that means I must be dead too.

137

00:17:51,272 --> 00:17:52,272

And she said, that's right.

138

00:17:53,272 --> 00:17:59,271

And then the next thing I knew, it was like I had total knowledge, as if someone had put a computer print out in my brain.

139

00:18:00,271 --> 00:18:05,270

I saw the results of all the actions and inactions I'd ever taken in my life.

140

00:18:05,270 --> 00:18:09,270

And surprisingly, there were no black marks for anything I'd done.

141

00:18:10,270 --> 00:18:13,269

I had lots of black marks for things I hadn't done.

142

00:18:14,269 --> 00:18:17,269

I said to my grandmother, it's too soon.

143

00:18:18,268 --> 00:18:19,268

I can't be dead, I've got to go back.

144

00:18:20,268 --> 00:18:24,268

And she said, well you can go back, but leave right now and don't look at the light anymore.

145

00:18:25,267 --> 00:18:30,267

And I didn't even pause to decide, I just turned around and started back across the riverbed.

146

00:18:31,266 --> 00:18:32,266

And that went very quickly.

147

00:18:36,266 --> 00:18:41,265

But then I came to this practically vertical sand bank.

148

00:18:42,265 --> 00:18:47,264

And I started climbing up it, but I couldn't get really good handholds and I would fall back down.

149

00:18:48,264 --> 00:18:51,263

And I'd work some more and climb some more and I'd fall back down.

150

00:18:52,263 --> 00:18:58,262

But finally I made it up and I just fell back exhausted on the top of this sand dune.

151

00:18:59,262 --> 00:19:07,261

And the next second I woke up, whatever you want to call it, and I was in my own body and I could breathe and I could swallow,

152

00:19:08,261 --> 00:19:11,260

which was incredible because I hadn't swallowed for three or four days.

153

00:19:13,260 --> 00:19:18,259

Someone came in the room almost immediately and I could tell they were really surprised at how well I was doing.

154

00:19:19,259 --> 00:19:20,259

And I said, I can swallow.

155

00:19:21,259 --> 00:19:23,259

And give me some water, I want to prove it.

156

00:19:24,258 --> 00:19:28,258

A little bit later they brought me a bowl of turkey broth.

157

00:19:29,258 --> 00:19:32,257

This was dawn, it was Thanksgiving day.

158

00:19:33,257 --> 00:19:37,256

And Thanksgiving day has always been a very special day for me.

159

00:19:38,256 --> 00:19:40,256

It's Christmas and Easter and everything else rolled into one.

160

00:19:41,256 --> 00:19:48,255

I'm not afraid of death, I know it's a beautiful experience that when it comes to be my time I'm going to really look forward to it.

161

00:19:49,255 --> 00:19:59,253

No one is sure what the near-death experience really is, but the message from those who have encountered it and returned is that death should not be feared.

162

00:20:00,253 --> 00:20:05,252

They suggest that what is to come is simply life after life.

163

00:20:08,252 --> 00:20:14,251

We cannot say for sure that the life after life experience is actually death itself.

164

00:20:15,251 --> 00:20:20,250

Obviously, however, it does alter our perceptions of life and the hereafter.

165

00:20:22,250 --> 00:20:38,247

Based on the experiences that we've heard from those who have had the near-death experience, this has influenced my concept of a God that makes him far greater, far more merciful, far more loving than I'd ever concede of him to be before.

166

00:20:39,247 --> 00:20:50,245

Dr. Lauren Young is an eminent theologian and scholar. His experiences with those who have had life after life encounters have given him new religious insights.

167

00:20:51,245 --> 00:21:03,244

I've been under the influence of the light who have really come into a personal encounter with this image of mercy and love, come back into this world with a totally different attitude.

168

00:21:04,243 --> 00:21:12,242

And to me, this is a solid encounter, an exquisite expression of what it really means to come face to face with God.

169

00:21:14,242 --> 00:21:27,240

If we could remove from society a major fear, there's a tremendous contribution. Death is a major fear. Those who have experienced it are no longer afraid of life or death.

170

00:21:33,239 --> 00:21:38,238

Coming up next, agents hunt down a bank robbery gang on FBI The Untold Stories.

171

00:21:39,238 --> 00:21:46,237

Then, history's crimes and trials investigates the strange case of mass murderer John Wayne Gacy.

172

00:21:47,237 --> 00:21:56,236

And tomorrow night on Danger Central, when oil fields explode into flame, hell fighters go on suicide missions at 10, here on the History Channel.