

## A Good Question

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How do you thank someone for providing the adventure of a lifetime?

After a long career of keeping a careful distance from the press, Ian Stevenson invited me to come along with him on two of his last journeys in search of children who talked about previous lives. Without caveat or precondition, he met me in Paris for a flight to Beirut, where we spent a month being driven at high speeds on narrow twisting roads in the Druze-inhabited hills that arced around the city. Half a year later, we flew into the blinding chaos of Delhi, then by train, plane, and Maruti microbus we criss-crossed half the continent. Together we endured 14-hour days bouncing down rutted farm roads into the outback, a broken axle away from serious trouble. We confronted undisguised hostility, and humbling hospitality. We went hungry, and we feasted. We pursued dead ends, and stumbled into gold mines of first-hand testimony.

In his 80th year, twice my age, he out-walked, out-talked, and generally outlasted me. There was never a question of starting late or stopping early – or sometimes even for lunch. At the end of grueling days when I only wanted to unfold myself from the car and crawl into bed, Ian emerged ramrod straight and declined the elevator.

“I’ll think I’ll walk up the stairs instead.”

He never once complained of fatigue, hunger, or physical discomfort of any kind, even after nights where I heard him up half the night with the deep hacking cough of someone who’d battled respiratory disease his entire life.

After nearly 40 years and countless field trips far more difficult than these, he approached his work with the same methodical deliberation he’d shown from the start, his briefcase filling steadily with notes and forms that would wind up in the cabinets of his Charlottesville office, along with the hundreds of thousands of pages that documented his life’s work, work that would earn him a measure of fame in certain circles, but skepticism and scorn from many of his scientific colleagues.

While I worried about out-of-control drivers swerving around water buffalo into our path, bandits, angry villagers, contaminated food, Ian was fearless, except for one thing.

“Why do mainstream scientists refuse to accept the evidence we have for reincarnation?” he asked me late one night after a particularly long journey into the hinterlands.

Here’s what I believe: Neither self-delusion, intentional fraud, peer pressure,

nor coincidence could explain how the children Ian investigated could have known all that they knew about strangers who'd died before they were born. But neither Ian nor anyone else had a shred of evidence for some process that *could* explain it.

Maybe in ten years, maybe in a hundred, some data stream from a super collider will reveal the secret connection between consciousness and quantum reality, or the fallacy of the arrow of time. Maybe the testimonies of Ian's children are the leading edge of a new paradigm, points of light peeking from the firmament of a new dimension.

But whatever the truth turns out to be, Ian's work, those countless files filled to overflowing with the passionate precision of his research . . . well, they are something. They are really something.