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HEADLINE: PEOPLE: PSYCHIC LECTURER OPENS DOORS OF SKEPTICISM AS WELL AS PERCEPTION

BYLINE: By Herbert J. Vida

BODY:

Dianne Morrissey says she died at age 28. But for the last 10 years, she has been talking about ghosts, near death, reincarnation, past life and clairvoyance at Orange Coast, Saddleback, Coastline and Fullerton community colleges, among others.

Morrissey, 39, teaches a four-session class called "Journey Into Consciousness."

She admits that not everyone believes she was electrocuted while repairing a fish tank at home, then came back to life.

She says a house guest called paramedics "who worked on me for 20 minutes, but couldn't raise a heartbeat."

For some unexplained reason, "My heart started again by itself," she adds, "and while I was unconscious, I somehow knew I had died."

"I was skeptical about all this before (the accident) and still am. People in my classes are glad that the person who is teaching them feels that way. I think good, healthy skepticism is positive."

When she regained consciousness, Morrissey says, "I saw auras, and everything was glowing, and I feel I awoke with special psychic powers."

She describes those abilities in her classes, which cost about \$45 a person.

"I've had 13,780 students who have (taken) my class," she says. "And there still are people who are negative about a psychic."

On the other hand, she says, 10% of her students have told her they have had an out-of-body experience, and about 2% have had a near-death episode and feel better knowing they are not alone.

Morrissey defines a near-death experience as a time when the spirit and life force leave the body. It is usually accompanied by a temporary heart stoppage.

In the out-of-body experience, she says, the life force leaves the body in a similar fashion, except there is no threat of death.

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"This is the most entertaining thing I've ever been through," says Morrissey, whose 4-week class at Orange Coast College will end Nov. 17. "I consider myself a teacher who provides people with knowledge they didn't have before they came."

Morrissey says she has a doctorate in hypnotherapy and sometimes uses hypnosis "to pull up something from the past or to change a phobia or a fear."

She also teaches parapsychology and has an office in her Santa Fe Springs home.

She is the Southern California coordinator for the International Assn. for Near Death Studies based at the University of Connecticut, with 20 chapters in the United States. She says new chapters are forming in Europe.

It has taken her 10 years to learn how to present her program properly, Morrissey says. She has developed her classes "by listening to criticism and paying attention."

There are occasions, she says, when people ask her to investigate haunted houses.

"Lots of times I feel what is there and how to get rid of it to make those people more comfortable," she says, noting that she does not charge for the service.

Santiago High School football coach Mike Barron believes that a football team that eats together plays better together.

So when the Garden Grove Elks Lodge offered to provide free pre-game steak dinners for each of the Garden Grove high school team's games, he jumped at the offer.

"Having the pre-game meal in this atmosphere of no distractions and quietness gives them the opportunity to concentrate only on that evening's game," Barron said.

Besides, coaches are invited too. He said the food is terrific.

They held a mock election at Crescent Primary School in Anaheim. Third-grader Bryan Johnson won by a landslide after he promised a national building drive for amusement parks.

His classmate opponent, Steven Apodaca, made an offer of better school supplies and more money for schools.

Bryan, who took the role of President-elect George Bush, collected 20 votes.

Steven represented Gov. Michael S. Dukakis of Massachusetts, Bush's Democratic opponent, and gathered 8 votes.

Both young candidates agreed there was a need to crack down on drug traffickers, reduce unemployment and seek early arms negotiations with the Soviet Union.

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Acknowledgments -- Clairee and John Tynes, who met and married while both were students at the University of Southern Mississippi, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a gathering of friends at Placentia's historic Bradford House. He is the mayor of Placentia.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Dianne Morrissey at home with slide of tombstone and apparition.
ROBERT GABRIEL / Los Angeles Times

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