

Peel Region Bivy Bk.

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Rediscovering a psychic

Strange thing about publicity. By the mere fact of putting something or someone in print, it can legitimize what's been legitimate all along.

Even those involved in the media tend to accept anything that has already been printed. If as a reporter I exercise my news judgment and decide not to write a story I can be made to look scooped if another writer chooses to use it.

Publication provides an official stamp of approval. Doubting Thomases will often believe a story on someone they once felt leary about even though the story contains no new information.

In a surprising number of cases major stories carried in either of the two local papers can die on the vine but will come under close scrutiny from the big competing media if just one of them plays it up as important news. Even local readers fail to notice that the big story in the Star, The Globe or The Sun may have been carried locally a day, a week or a year ago — the St. Lawrence Cement PCB burning story is a classic example of outraged public response to the retelling of a six month old story that had already been reported in depth.

This is all a rather lengthy way of bringing this piece around to a good friend of mine who

got a boost in the last edition of the Sunday Star.

Featured on the front page of the People section, psychic Rita Burns has since then been deluged with phone calls. The CTV television network's Canada AM morning talk show wants her to be a guest. Several magazines have phoned to ask for interviews.

Rita has been a legitimate psychic for some time. In fact she has already received a large slice of publicity over the past few years, featured in a major Weekend Magazine piece on the use of psychics by archeologists, interviewed on a CHCH TV daytime talk show and credited in the forward with inspiring the authors of the recently released Canadian novel, Bear Walk.

She was scheduled to appear on Peter Gzowski's 90 Minutes Live a year and a half ago but Gzowski's dislike for all things mystical nixed that idea.

For the past several years Rita Burns has put her amazing sensitivity to work on an intermittent basis. Starting with simple \$10 private readings in her Oakville home her fame soon spread by word of mouth.

I can remember on many evenings having a

beer with her husband while a parade of housewives, police officers, lawyers, teachers, school principals and psychologists tramped upstairs for a 20 minute reading. Most came down with a look on their face akin to having met God.

One slim halter topped lady was shocked when Rita told her that she was pregnant but shouldn't marry the man waiting in the car parked outside. The woman hadn't even been in the room for five seconds when Rita came to that conclusion. "I just took one look and I could see it written all over her," is how Rita explains the unexplainable. Of course the lady was indeed pregnant and had come to Rita to ask for marital advice.

But those commercial readings were not pleasant. Selling your sensitivities for ten bucks a throw was both spiritually exhausting and professionally demeaning. At the time she needed the money and readings were a means of getting it without leaving the home.

Those days are gone, however, and she is much more interested in a non-psychic career in public relations and promotional work.

While Rita has worked free of charge with both the University of Toronto and the Royal

Ontario Museum in "psychometrizing" ancient relics and artifacts to determine the story behind them, she actually does not enjoy the use of her special powers. Such heightened sensitivity can make much of life very unpleasant.

Her latest efforts have been in the direction of promoting Tom Peltier's Bear Walk novel. She is involved with an American film production company that hopes to buy the movie rights to the book for a publicized \$250,000.

So now comes the Sunday Star story and voilà, a psychic is discovered all over again.

The attention is great for the ego, she says, particularly in that it helps to convert family members who had always viewed her as a bit wierd.

She also admits that the increased attention the story has brought her will make her promotional work on Peltier's book just a little bit easier.

Who knows, with the Star stamp of approval maybe even Canada's night time dullard, Peter Gzowski, will invite Rita back. If he does I don't think she'll go — as a psychic her sensitivities are easily offended and the original Gzowski turn-off is not likely to be forgotten.