

# One More Mission

— Case 65 —

**D**r. Ian Stevenson, Dr. Jim Tucker, Carol Bowman and other researchers have uncovered hundreds of cases of children who inexplicably can recall living and dying as other people. The most impressive and thoroughly documented case yet, however, was brought to light not by the efforts of believers or even open-minded, objective scientists, but by a no-nonsense businessman, a stringent Christian, whose upbringing had hardened his mind against the idea of reincarnation.

Bruce Leininger reveled in research, a trait which served him well as a human-resource executive, handling personnel crises and developing corporate compensation and insurance packages. When James, his two-year-old son, started screaming and thrashing about in the middle of the night, Bruce dismissed it as no more than a nightmare, likely triggered by the unfamiliarity of his son's bedroom in their new home. James had been moved before; just after his birth (on April 10<sup>th</sup> 1998) the Leininger family had relocated from the San Francisco area to Dallas, Texas, but he was too young to remember that. Then, two months previously, they had followed Bruce's job to Lafayette, Louisiana. Some sort of reaction could be expected. The screams were nothing to worry about, except that Bruce needed his sleep.

Andrea Leininger, being expected to supply motherly comfort and, therefore, an eyewitness to her toddler's nocturnal hysterics, could not so easily write them off as a normal childhood nightmare. Up until that night, James had been an unusually happy and contented child who rarely cried or even fussed. The next morning, she shared her concern with her husband, describing James' piercing shrieks and violent kicking and flailing at the covers, but Bruce was indifferent.

His lack of concern would, no doubt, have been proper if James' performance hadn't been repeated "with terrifying regularity and increasing

frenzy."<sup>1</sup> They didn't happen every night – sometimes a night or two would be skipped – but when one's sleep is disturbed four or five nights out of seven, the expectation of a reoccurrence can ruin one's rest as well as the event itself. Andrea called her pediatrician, who told her the nightmares were normal night terrors and would soon diminish. She talked with friends; they agreed with her pediatrician. She conferred with her sisters, who echoed her friends and her pediatrician. Perhaps surprisingly, at least in retrospect, two months passed before Andrea realized that James was doing more than shrieking and thrashing about, he was also screaming words. When she caught the gist of what he was yelling, she ran down the hall and got her husband.

Bruce's annoyance at being dragged from bed evaporated quickly once he heard the words: "Airplane crash! Plane on fire! Little man can't get out!" These phrases were repeated over and over as little James flung his head back and forth and kicked upward wildly. Kicking, Andrea suddenly realized, just like a fighter pilot trying to kick his way out of a cockpit. Both mother and father were stunned; neither had any explanation.

Life went on as before.

The next bewildering incident occurred when Andrea gave James a toy airplane to distract him while she was shopping. "There's even a bomb on the bottom," she pointed out. "That's not a bomb, Mommy. That's a drop tank."<sup>2</sup> Andrea didn't know what a drop tank was. Bruce did. Neither had any idea how their toddler in diapers could identify one, even though he couldn't pronounce it properly.

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, after a long day playing with a friend from his pre-kindergarten class, James was being read a bedtime story when he casually said, "Mama, little man's airplane crash on fire." The Leiningers, having been told not to interrupt James' nightmares, had been waiting for an opportunity to question him while he was

awake. Now, Andrea hurried to bring Bruce into the room.

Andrea asked, "Who is the little man?" James replied, "Me." Andrea asked, "Do you remember the little man's name?" James replied, "James." Thinking this was fruitless, Bruce tried a different tack, "Do you remember what kind of airplane the little man flew?" His son immediately replied, in the same conversational tone, "A Corsair." And from where did your plane take off? "A boat."

Now, perhaps James had seen a television program about Corsairs and aircraft carriers; although his mother claims he never watched anything but shows for little kids. And who's to say that James hadn't seen a drop tank when he and his dad visited an airplane museum back in Dallas? Of course, even if he had taken notice of such an unobtrusive thing, he couldn't read signs, so he wouldn't have known what it was called. Nevertheless, all of this has been suggestive at best; not really proof of anything ... so far.

Skeptics and debunkers should only proceed to read further at peril of their preconceptions.

Bruce asked his drowsy toddler the name of the boat he flew from. "Natoma," James replied. Bruce thought that sounded like a Japanese name and said so. Little James grew indignant and said no, it was American! Bruce, a bit taken aback that he had been challenged by someone who wasn't even potty trained, went to the Internet and discovered, to his amazement, that an American aircraft carrier called Natoma Bay had battled the Japanese in the Pacific.

An FM-2 Wildcat over the Western Pacific in 1944.

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy.

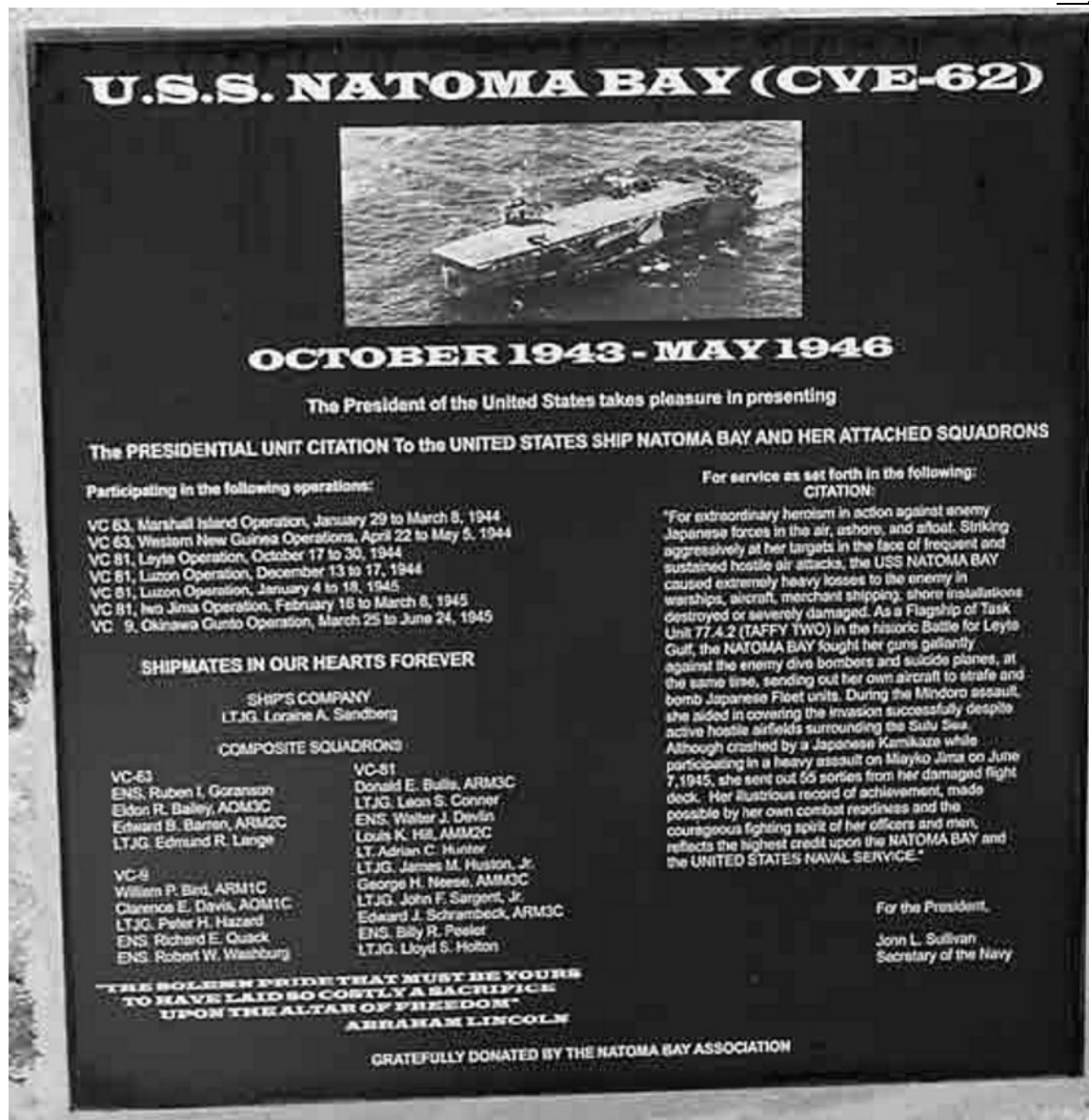


Feeling that his religious beliefs and his role in the family were under fire, Bruce began a campaign to reaffirm both. He used the tool he knew best – tenacious research. Over the next few years, as little James revealed more and more about James the pilot, Bruce filled his dining room with letters, books, and boxes of documents about the war in the Pacific Theater. He traveled thousands of miles by car and plane and spent many hours on long-distance calls. Using the pretense of writing a book, he infiltrated the reunions of veterans of the Natoma Bay and its sister ships. He interviewed scores of old sailors and their family members. He was almost desperate to uncover some rational explanation for his son's memories – anything but the heresy of reincarnation. Andrea, although more accepting of reincarnation as an explanation, nevertheless spent considerable time helping to track down facts and people.

The following is a summary of some of what was said by the child and what his parents ultimately discovered.

Stated By James M. Leininger	Discovered By Research
The child said that the pilot's name was James, just like his. He often drew battle scenes with propeller-driven planes; he signed them "James 3" and explained, "Because I am the third James."	The only pilot on the USS Natoma Bay whose first name was James, was James M. Huston, Jr. [The second James?]
He said the American planes in his pictures were Wildcats and Corsairs.	Both were names of U.S. aircraft on carriers in WWII. The Wildcat was the plane Huston was piloting when he died.
He drew red suns on some planes to identify them as Japanese.	The rising sun, depicted as a red circle, was the symbol of Imperial Japan.
He said the American sailors called Japanese fighters by boy names (such as Zekes) and bombers by girl names (such as Bettys).	Correct.
He said he had a friend named Jack Larsen onboard the USS Natoma Bay.	Jack Larsen served on the USS Natoma Bay and was a friend of James Huston.
He said Jack was also a pilot.	Correct.
Unprompted, James pointed to a picture of Iwo Jima in a book and said that was where his plane was shot down.	James Huston's plane was the only one from the USS Natoma Bay that was shot down during the battle for Iwo Jima. [Huston was supposed to ship home the following day. He was not scheduled to make that run; he volunteered for one last mission when another pilot couldn't fly.]
He said Corsair planes had two defects: they often got flat tires and they wanted to turn left when they took off.	The Corsair's poor sight lines and heavy engines made for unusually rough landings on carrier decks, which blew an inordinate number of tires. The exceptional torque from their single front-mounted prop caused a drift to the left on takeoff. James Huston had served as a test pilot for Corsairs.
He said three men, named Billy, Walter, and Leon, met him when he arrived in heaven. (He gave these names to his G.I. Joe action figures.)	In addition to James M. Huston, Jr., the names Billy Peeler, Walter Devlin, and Leon Conner were on the official list of men killed from the VC-81 Squadron aboard the USS Natoma Bay. Huston died on March 3, 1945. The others all died shortly prior to that, in late 1944.
He said his plane had been hit in the engine. As soon as he could after receiving a new toy airplane he would crash it into the coffee table or some other hard surface and break off the propellers.	An eyewitness to the crash of James Huston's plane said that the anti-aircraft fire blew away his propeller and his engine exploded as it went down.

Stated By James M. Leininger	Discovered By Research
While touring the Nimitz Museum, he saw a 5-inch cannon and announced that it was just like the gun on the fantail of the Natoma Bay.	The USS Natoma Bay had a 5-inch cannon on its fantail (the area of the hanger deck at the stern).
In 2004, while watching a television program about Corsairs, James corrected the narrator by pointing out that the Japanese plane seen being shot down was a Tony, not a Zero. He explained that the Tony was a Japanese fighter that was smaller than a Zero.	True.
<p>During his first telephone conversation with James Huston's sister, Anne Barron, who was 86 at the time, the 5-year-old James:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Called her Annie, even though his mom thought that disrespectful.</li> <li>2. Said she had a sister "Roof" who was 4 years older than she.</li> <li>3. Said her brother James was 4 years her junior.</li> <li>4. Talked intimately and at length about the senior Huston's alcoholism and the devastating effects it had on the family.</li> <li>5. Asked her what had happened to a picture of her that had been painted by their mother.</li> </ol>	Only her long-dead brother, James Huston, Jr., ever called Anne Barron "Annie." She did have a sister (now deceased) named Ruth who was 4 years her senior. The painting, which no one else knew about, was in her attic. In short, everything little James said over the phone was correct and Anne Barron came to accept that the child was truly her brother born again.



Natoma Bay Plaque and Roster of Lost.

Photo contributed to NavSource Online by Bruce Leininger.

As little James Leininger was encouraged to talk about his memories, the nightmares decreased in frequency, but continued sporadically for several years.

If you want to know more of this story, read the Leininger's book, *Soul Survivor*, it tells an entertaining and enthralling story. You might also wish to take a look at the various videos available on YouTube (search for soul survivor leininger) where you can find some fascinating tidbits. For instance, when James was explaining that Billy,

Leon, and Walter had met him in heaven, his mother asked him if God was male or female, and the 4-year-old explained that God was neither, but was "whatever you needed Him to be."

The evidence presented here should be more than enough to convince any open-minded person. The juxtaposition of "Natoma Bay" and "Jack Larsen" in the mind of a 2-year-old is, by itself, inexplicable by any other means than reincarnation or possession, either of which require Survival of the human memory and personality.

I will wrap this up by relating one more incident that may be the most intriguing of all. One day in October of 2002, in response to a hug from his father, James commented, "When I found you and Mommy, I knew you would be good to me." (Note that this statement indicates that souls are independent, conscious beings prior to being born on earth, and so, on its own, is strongly suggestive of reincarnation.) "Where did you find us?" asked his father. "In Hawaii," James replied, "at the big pink hotel." Then he added that he had found them one night when they were eating dinner on the beach.<sup>3</sup>

Five weeks before Andrea became pregnant with James, she and Bruce had celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary at the Royal Hawaiian, a landmark hotel easily recognized by its bright pink facade. On their last night there, they had eaten a dinner by moonlight on Waikiki Beach.



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<sup>1</sup> Leininger, Bruce and Andrea Leininger with Ken Gross, *Soul Survivor: The Reincarnation of a World War II Fighter Pilot*, Grand Central Publishing, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> A drop tank is an extra fuel tank that can be jettisoned when empty.

<sup>3</sup> Leininger, pp. 153-154.