

Seattle Shoe

The Survival Files — Case 1 — ESS = 169.7

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When Maria had her first heart attack she was visiting friends in Seattle, not gathering crops in some field far removed from quality medical assistance. Even migrant workers get lucky now and then. Perhaps just as fortunate as the high-caliber cardiac care afforded Maria at Harborview Medical Center was the compassionate attention she received from the social worker in the coronary care unit. Kimberly Clark, M.S.W., was exceptionally empathic, with a knack for calming and reassuring folks who had every reason to be upset. She soon put Maria's mind at ease about family and finances and Maria came to see her as a trusted friend in a strange place.

This became evident on the fourth day, after Maria went into cardiac arrest for a second time. She was resuscitated by the medical team and seemed to be okay, but upon regaining consciousness later in the day, she became so agitated that the nurse on duty was afraid she would give herself another heart attack. Clark was called and, with considerable effort, managed to calm Maria down sufficiently to hear her story.

Maria said that after her attack that morning she had found herself floating near the ceiling of her room, watching the resuscitation procedures. She described those in the room, the things they did, and the equipment they used. After a while, she claimed, she found herself outside of the hospital building, where she noted the location and design of the emergency entrance.

Even though everything Maria said was accurate, Clark admits that she refused to believe her. "I knew the essential facts Maria was relating — the setting, the sequence of events — were true. But my professional, rational mind told me that Maria was 'confabulating,' that she was unconsciously filling in the blanks of her memory" Clark felt that Maria must have gotten the details right "due to information she had somehow been privy to," although she had no idea how.

Then Maria dropped the bombshell that would reverberate throughout the NDE community for decades to come. She claimed that something on a ledge outside the building had drawn her attention and that then she found herself about three stories above the ground staring at a single shoe. It was a man's dark-blue tennis shoe, well-worn, one lace caught under the heel. The shoe was scuffed, Maria said, on the left side, where the little toe would be. Then Maria looked expectantly at Clark.

"It was clearly up to me," Clark reports, "to look for the shoe." Thinking that it might make Maria feel better to know that someone trusted her, Clark set off on what she was sure would be a "futile search." First she went outside and walked around the entire building. All she gained was an appreciation for the enormity of the Harborview complex. Nothing could be seen on any window ledge. Then, despite it being past quitting time, she felt impelled to do a room-to-room inspection on the third floor. "From the rooms on the east side, I saw nothing," she recalls. "On the north side — nothing. I was four rooms into the west side of the building when I pressed my face against a window pane, peered down on yet another ledge, and felt my heart go *thunk*. There it was."

Clark couldn't see if there was a worn area on the little toe because that side was away from her, but all the other details coincided perfectly with Maria's description. She opened the window and picked up the shoe. Yes, the scuff mark was also as described.

Maria was so excited when she saw the shoe that the monitoring nurse came in to see why her heart rate had jumped so high. Clark and Maria told the nurse what had happened. "By the

next morning.” Clark relates, “every nurse in the CCU knew Maria’s story, and by afternoon, a parade of doctors and nurses and other staff members had dropped in to pay their respects to the humble shoe.”

Discussion

More details and an analysis of this case may be found on pages 15-21 of [The Survival Files](#).

ESS Score

The CS rating is “ee+” CS = 101.

Because Clark was a well known and respected member of the Harborview community, the Witness Reliability rating is “f” (65 pts) plus a bonus (3 pts) for failures of critics to make a case, WR = 68.

The Character/Complexity of Information rating is “q”. IC = 0.7.

Total ESS Score: $101 + 68 + .7 = 169.7$

For Further Information

See [After the Light](#) by Kimberly Clark Sharp, 1995, pages 3-16.

END CASE 1

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