

Future Vision

Trip to fortune teller reveals palm readers don't all fit stereotype

By Chuck Lovejoy

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

A trip to the fortune teller was not everything I predicted it would be. As many people probably do, when I think of a fortune teller I think of a little old woman with a rain-wrinkled face who speaks in a heavy accent, wears lace-adorned clothing, scarves on her head and gaudy jewelry and smells of heavy, flowery perfume.

But that image does not fit Linda Nicole in any way.

Ms. Nicole, as she calls herself, is a psychic and spiritualist who tells fortunes in her home in Houston. On a recent trip to the city, I stopped at her house to have my fortune told.

Despite the fact Nicole herself may not fit the popular description of a fortune teller — the one portrayed in American movies, literature and folklore — her home does, in part.

Located in the Galleria area on Westheimer, the exterior of Nicole's house is a perfect example of the combination of capitalism and mysticism.

Outside the white structure are large signs bearing painted pictures of palms and crystal balls and words such as "psychic and reader" and "palm and card readings."

I expected the building's interior to be just like all those psychic shops portrayed in the movies: old Victorian furniture covered with lace tablecloths and knickknacks, moth-eaten drapes in the windows, tattered rugs on the floor and beads like those caught at Mardi Gras hanging in the doorway.

Instead, the front door opened onto a simple American-style room with light colored wood furniture and carpet. No plastic beads closed off the passageway to the next room, just a plain old door.

At first I was somewhat disappointed, but I realized it was not a fatal disaster. I had come to learn what I could about Nicole's hobby, and ridding myself of a few myths was the first step.

As a reader, psychic and spiritualist, Nicole possesses three distinctly different gifts.

Nicole says a reader is someone who can tell fortunes from cards, palms and crystal balls. A psychic can read people — their auras, emotions and minds. Spiritualists contact spirits of the dead.

But despite the fact that anyone can have these gifts, she said, the best readings, or fortunes, are told by people who have all three.

"Anyone can read palms and cards — you can learn that from a book," she said. "But those fortunes won't be the same (as if someone with psychic abilities) does it. You have to take into consideration the person's aura and mood and the vibrations in their voice, like I do."

"Someone who only knows how to read what the cards or palms say will make a mistake; the reading won't make sense. You have to interpret what the cards say from the person you are reading."

Nicole, a Cherokee Indian, says

she first noticed her gifts as a child. As she grew older, her gifts became increasingly apparent.

"I knew I could do it," she said. "My mother and grandmother were also psychic, and they helped me to realize and use my gifts."

Nicole says the only requirement for telling fortunes is psychic ability. "You have to know how to tell people what they want to know," she said. "You have to be able to read people to help them."

She says it is sometimes hard to tell a person's future, but usually, the task is simple.

"Sometimes people have a block in their openness, and that makes it difficult," she said. "But usually it is easy — people come to me to be read."

"Any time is a good time for a reading, but the method people use to have their futures told may make a difference, Nicole said.

"It depends on the person and his or her mood at the time of the reading," she said. "It also depends on the mood of the reader — that's why you should have more than one reading if you want to be sure about your future. You should also try the different methods."

Nicole said she realizes that not all fortune tellers are genuine, but she wishes that the public would not judge all psychics by the actions of fraudulent ones.

"Not all are true," she said. "But you just have to keep trying to find a real one, just like you do in anything else."

Throughout our interview, the phone kept ringing. Nicole would answer, finding only a dead line.

"It's probably kids," she said. "This always happens when we pass out a batch of flyers. But it slacks off after the first few days."

Nicole says she isn't particularly annoyed by such juvenile pranks.

"It's only kids," she said. "I don't let it bother me. I just hang up and go on."

Once our interview was over, we moved to the more interesting part — my fortune.

Nicole told me to close \$20 (her fee) in my hand and make a wish. After I complied, she told me to open my hand, removed the \$20, and began the palm reading.

She studied the lines on my hand for a few minutes, then began to speak.

"I don't want to hurt or offend you in any way," she said. "I will merely tell you what I see. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said nervously. Until then, the day had been enjoyable. But when Ms. Nicole began her reading with that statement, I began to get scared.

I wondered what she had seen when she peered into my hand. Visions of fiery plane crashes and the like flashed across my mind. I wondered what she would say next.

She started by analyzing my present situation, and her analysis was pretty close. Of course, she gave only general descriptions, so her statements could have been guesses.

As for my future, she said I would



Photo illustration by Jay Janner

For millenia, people have tried to see the future, to know what harm or good will become them, their friends or their enemies. Using everything from tea leaves to animal entrails, crystal balls to numbers, future-seekers have manipulated the physical world in their quest to reach spiritual realms. Today, many people discredit fortune tellers and their link to the "otherworld." Yet many others remain faithful to their beliefs in the psychic, and some dabble in the occult as a hobby. Here, we examine three common methods of telling the future: palm reading, Ouija board channeling and tarot card reading. Do they work? The decision is best left up to the individual.

receive a promotion in two months and that the things in my life that were bad before would get better.

She predicted a long life for me, which made me feel better after my plane vision, and said I would travel extensively during my lifetime.

She also said I would marry someone in my general field, and together we will have three children —

two boys and a girl or two girls and a boy, she couldn't tell which.

This marriage also will be the only one in my life, she said, although she didn't say if it would last my entire life.

Was she correct? I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

I'll let you know in about 20 years.

O-U-I-J-A B-O-A-R-D-S still hold amazing power, influence after 100 years

By S. Hoehstetter

REVIEWER

It sounds so simple — comprising just a piece of polished wood and a triangle on three legs — yet it has had amazing power and influence on people's lives. The wood has the alphabet, numbers zero through nine and the words "yes" and "no" printed on it. But these seemingly normal configurations that can be seen on any Ouija board have been blamed for some bizarre events.

The Ouija board was invented in 1890 by William Fuld of Baltimore. Its name is the combination of the French and German words for "yes" — "oui" and "ja" respectively.

It was a popular pastime during the turn of the century as people tried to contact the spirit world.

The messages from the spirits are supposedly decoded by the Ouija board on their knees and their fingertips pressed lightly on the triangular message indicator. One person asks questions and the board answers by guiding the indicator over the letters to form words and sometimes sentences.

Some people say spirits move the indicator, but those who are not believers in the board attribute the movement to pressure from the fingers or shaky knees.

The Ouija board has been most popular just before and during wars in the 20th century. The board gained popularity during World War I and continued to be popular throughout the 1920s.

But as with many diversions, some people took the board a bit too seriously. Such was the case with a man in 1920 in New York who consulted his Ouija board about the location of his wife's missing ring.

When the Ouija board answered that the man's friend had stolen the ring he assaulted his friend. Later, when the man testified the facts in court, the judge informed him that a Ouija board is not a reliable witness.

When this case was publicized, the *New York Times* wrote, "It is the duty of all who know facts as to Ouija boards to make them known to others and to denounce the misuse of the thing as a crime against intelligence."

An American Heritage article by historian James P. Johnson describes an even more bizarre case that occurred in Arizona in 1933.

Dorothea Irene Turley was having an affair with "a young cowboy." Her Ouija board instructed her to send her husband, Ernest, digging for buried treasure near their home so she could spend time with her lover.

One day, Dorothea and her 15-year-old daughter, Mattie, were consulting the board. As Mattie later said, "Mother asked the board to decide between father and her cowboy friend. As usual, the board moved

around at first without meaning but suddenly it spelled out that I was to kill father. It was terrible. I shook all over."

"Mother asked the Ouija board if the shooting would be successful, and it said it would," Mattie said. "She asked if he would die outright, and it said no. We asked what should be used in the shooting, and it said a shotgun. We asked if we would have the ranch, and it said yes. We asked about the law, and it said not to fear the law, that everything would turn out all right. We asked how much the insurance would be and it said \$5,000."

"I tried to kill father the next day but I couldn't," she said. "I lost my nerve. A few days later, though, I followed him to the corral. I raised

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the gun and took careful aim between the shoulders, but then I lost my nerve again. But I thought of dear mother and what all this would mean to her. I couldn't fail. My hand was trembling awfully, but I raised the gun and fired."

The Furley women seemed to think all the proper questions one would ask a Ouija board when plotting a murder but they forgot one important fact: Ouija boards are sometimes wrong.

This little miscalculation caused Mattie to spend six years in the Arizona State Industrial School. Her mother was sentenced to 10 to 25 years in prison but was released after three years.

Historically, the Ouija board has been more popular during times of war. Sales of Ouija boards increased noticeably after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and again in the 1960s when the United States began to get involved in Vietnam and while Americans showed a growing interest in the occult. The "magical" wooden boards outsold Monopoly in 1967.

Grechen Ayres, a cashier at Kay-Bee Toy and Hobby Shop, said she sells many Ouija boards to college students.

She said she thinks the board is just a game but knows that many people believe in the power of the board and its ability to communicate with spirits.



Photo by Jay Janner

The Ouija board's history extends back only a century, but tarot cards have been used for divination since the 13th century.

of somber appearance.

Clubs represent people of frank dispositions, and diamonds are associated with the thrifty and the dependable.

Each of the 52 cards has a meaning which must be deciphered by the interpreter.

The most common method of fortune telling with playing cards is known as the wheel of fortune, which uses all 52 cards.

The fortune teller chooses the court card that most resembles the

client. For a married woman of fair complexion, for example, the fortune teller might choose the queen of hearts.

This card is placed face-up in the center of the table and the remainder of the deck is shuffled.

The fortune teller then deals nine stacks of three cards each. These nine stacks surround the center court card.

When this is done, the fortune teller reads the meaning by the way the cards are arranged.

Tarot cards, long used in fortune telling, interpret future of man, world, universe

By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

Cards long have been used in divination and still are used today by many fortune tellers.

The origins of items used in divination, such as tea leaves, generally have been obscured by history. The origin of the tarot cards, known for their colorful illustrations, is no less obscure.

Some believe the cards originated around the 13th or 14th century. According to the book, "Man, Myth and Magic," Gypsies had the first set of the cards and were the only ones who knew their meaning.

The tarot can be used to tell a person's fortune, but many occultists consider that their lowest use. The cards' chief use is in foretelling future events.

Tarot cards come in a deck of 78. A deck contains four suits much like a deck of playing cards of 14 cards and 22 "trumps" that make up what

is called "the Major Arcana."

The four suits are swords, cups, coins and batons. However, the suits tend to vary from one pack of cards to the other.

Some decks, for example, may have wands, cups, swords and pentacles.

Like playing cards, tarot decks contain court cards. Playing cards have kings, queens and jacks for each of the four suits.

A tarot deck, however, has four court cards — king, queen, knight and page — for each suit. The other 10 cards in each suit are numbered ace through 10.

The trumps each have a colorful illustration of a character or symbol. The symbols and characters include the Fool, the Empress, the Lovers, the Hanged Man, the Star, the Devil, and Death.

The characters and symbols, like the four suits, tend to vary from pack to pack.

The trumps of the Major Arcana are numbered zero (The Fool)

through 21 (The World) and each card, according to "the Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology," is said to have a general meaning.

For example, the Lovers card is said to represent man's duality as well as the most powerful of all emotions. The Star card is associated with hope and the glory of the adept; the Devil card, with temptation.

The meaning of each trump vary with interpretation, and there are said to be as many different interpretations of the cards as there are interpreters.

However, for fortune telling, a deck of tarot cards is not essential. A deck of ordinary playing cards will work as well.

In divination, each of the four suits is said to be associated with certain qualities.

Hearts are associated with people of fair complexion and stainless character. The spade is considered the sign of born leaders and people



THE STAR.