



The man IN THE MIRROR



Love and loss have been great teachers to me

When I lost the love of my life, little did I realise it was the start of an amazing journey with Spirit. By Janis Heaphy Durham

and stroked mine. We both stared at the handprint, speechless.

Other strange incidents had been happening since Max died. The battery-operated clock stopped at 12.44pm, the exact time of his death. Then three days later, it started going again. Light bulbs suddenly burned out, and doors slammed when there had been no wind. There were intermittent, strange, unexplained knocks on walls, like someone was hammering nails, and the bathroom wall pulsed as I watched it move in a wavelike motion for five minutes...

'You're imagining things,' I'd told myself sternly. 'You're just tired.'

But the weird incidents just kept on happening.

Three weeks after Max died, I awoke in the middle of the night to find myself floating horizontally

in mid-air down the hallway, detached from my body. It was exhilarating. I was light and airy. I drifted past our Persian rug on the hardwood floor, then navigated down the hall, past the library and into the kitchen.

No!

Standing next to the fridge with his back to me, there was Max, in all the fullness of his healthy self. He was wearing a grey jumper, olive cords and brown loafers, his silver hair neatly combed. I reached out to touch him on the shoulder, but my hand went right through him. Then he faded into thin air and I floated back to bed.

Six months after Max's death, I woke in the middle of the night to find him standing next to the bed staring down at me. He



Happy times with Tanner and Max



At work on The Sacramento Bee



A mystery handprint appeared on the bathroom mirror



With Tanner in Portofino, on our trip to Italy in honour of Max



We spotted his name on the yacht in the photo

Peering closer at the bathroom mirror, I froze. There on the glass was a large handprint, and no ordinary one – it was my late husband Max's hand. I recognised the masculine shape of the fingers and wide base of the palm. Squinting, I leaned closer. Made of a soft, powdery, white substance, the print showed all the fine bone structure as if it were an X-ray. And it appeared out of nowhere. It hadn't been there a couple of hours earlier when I'd combed my hair in front of that mirror.

It was the first anniversary of Max's death. He had died on 8 May 2004, in the living room of our home in Sacramento, California, surrounded by family and friends.

We'd been married for four years when he was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer, at the age of 56. Six months later he was gone. Me and my 14-year-old son, Tanner, were devastated.

But now I was confused. 'Tanner!' I yelled.

He pounded into the bathroom. 'Did you do this?' I shrieked.

I grabbed his hand and held it up to the print, but it was way too small.

How could I forget what my husband's hand had looked like? The wide palm, long, narrow fingers... the same hand that had held, caressed

looked strong, like he was before he had cancer. Our eyes locked, and in my mind's eye, I heard his familiar voice. 'I love you. I'm not suffering.'

With that, the light faded in his eyes and he evaporated, leaving me with a mixed feeling of comfort and sadness.

Then one day in March 2005, 10 months after Max's death, I was

what was happening to me, or what prompted these threads, but I watched them until they disappeared.

Despite these mysterious occurrences, I remained quiet about what was happening. Friends and family would think I'd gone off my rocker.

I worked in the hard-edged world of newspapers. I was the publisher and president of *The Sacramento Bee* in California. If I didn't come across as rational, they'd think I'd lost it.

This phenomenon I was experiencing certainly didn't fit with the traditions I'd been schooled in when I was growing up. Although my dad was a Presbyterian minister, deeply devoted to his faith, he hadn't given me a neat answer for understanding how a mysterious handprint related to an afterlife. But

'Glistening golden threads appeared, a foot from my eyes'

reading in the bath when glistening golden threads appeared, floating a foot from my eyes.

Puzzled, I took my glasses off to see if they were smudged. Nope.

I rubbed my eyes as a handful of silky golden threads about 10 inches long sailed in front of my face. It was as though they were transporting me to an ethereal place. I had no idea

Max had told me and my housekeeper, Helen. 'I'll find a way after I die to let you know if there's something out there.'

I shivered. Even if Max was communicating with me, I saw no reason to keep the handprint on the mirror. The image had already burned an indelible print on my mind. I reached for a cloth and cleaning liquid.

In July 2005, I took Tanner on a 12-day holiday to Italy. We'd planned it when Max was alive, because he was knowledgeable about Italy's painters, sculptors, poets and musicians, and was a fan of museums and art collections.

'Let's take the trip in Max's honour,' I said to Tanner.

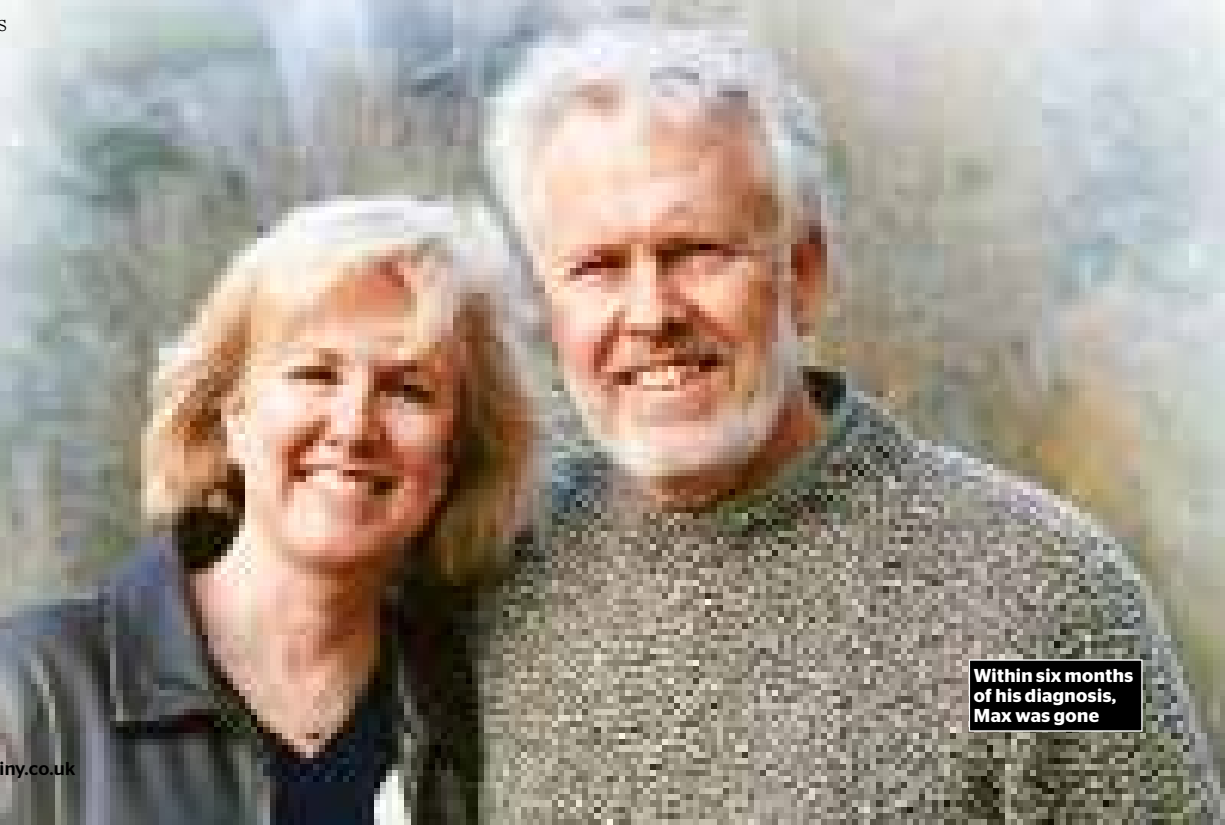
In Rome, I slowly unwound as we explored the Pantheon, climbed

what Dad had given me was a firm belief that there's no compromising when it comes to the truth.

'Question and examine, my love, and form your own opinions,' he'd often tell me.

Had a part of Max remained in our home after he died? Was he visiting to let me know there was a life after death?

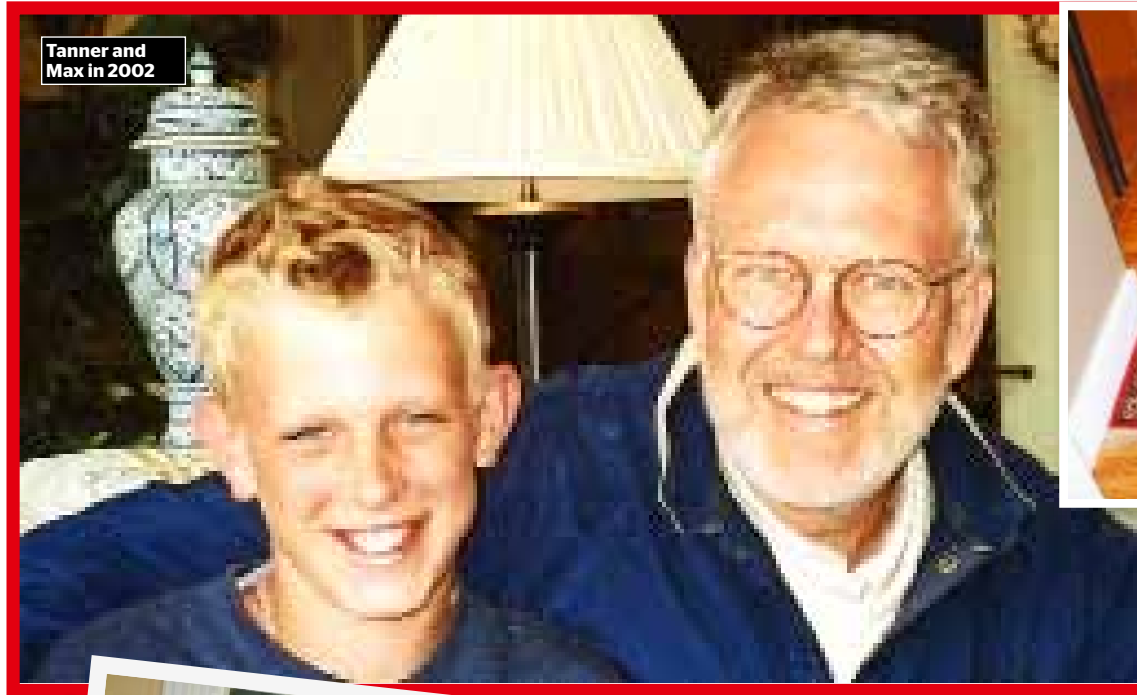
Now I glanced at the handprint on the mirror and remembered what



Within six months of his diagnosis, Max was gone



One day, angelic images appeared on the mirror



Tanner and Max in 2002



When the rug kept moving, I was sure it was Max again

the steps of the Colosseum and walked through St Peter's Basilica.

Instead of denying what had happened, I could feel myself opening up. Curiosity replaced fear.

Then we travelled to the coast. One day, just before sunset, we were strolling through the beautiful village of Portofino when I pulled out the camera and asked a passer-by to take a picture of me and my son together. The afternoon sun cast a magical glow on the turquoise water, with magnificent yachts next to humble fishing boats, and I knew it was an enchanted moment.

When we arrived back home, I developed the photos. But as I

'The three letters on the side of the yacht spelled MAX'

looked at the one in Portofino, I gasped. Between my shoulder and Tanner's, exactly where Max would have stood if he'd made the trip with us, were three simple letters on the side of a yacht. MAX.

Was this an extraordinary coincidence? The odds of it happening were astronomical – the letters were so perfectly placed.

Whatever the reason, I could no longer ignore these signs. I needed to apply the research and investigation skills I'd learnt in the newspaper business to the spiritual world.

My first stop was the local New Age shop near my home. I decided to

go in disguise – after all, as the publisher of the local newspaper, I might be recognised.

I pulled a baseball cap down low over my eyes, which were hidden behind huge glasses, and roamed the aisles, gazing at the different sections. Astrology, spirituality, meditation, religion, psychology...

Grabbing a few books, I slid up to the counter. Back home, I devoured them – all of them talked about another spiritual realm, and some expounded the theory that a strong love could prevent a spirit from leaving the person they love and moving forward to the light.

Then I remembered Dr Robin Van Doren, a spiritual teacher I'd met through the newspaper, who held workshops on honing your intuition. Maybe she could shed some light on my experiences.

At her home at the end of July, Robin confirmed that I didn't need to fear the events that had followed Max's death.

'What you are experiencing is some aspect of him. Some part of him may have got stuck and can't find the path to move on.'

I was comforted by Robin for expanding my thinking on it all, but concerned that Max could be trapped and unable to move on.

On the second anniversary of his death, 8 May 2006, I returned home from work with a heavy heart.

I entered the house through the garage and passed the bathroom

where Tanner and I had seen the handprint a year earlier.

I pushed open the door and froze. There, on the mirror, was another powdery image. I grabbed my camera and took a picture. The large figure on the right looked like an angel with perfectly formed wings, and in the middle was a baby angel.

I showed Helen the image before I rubbed it off the mirror. 'Something miraculous is happening,' I confided to her.

I soldiered on for nearly a year. Then one morning in April 2007, I got into my car in the garage, ready to leave for work, and saw the windscreen covered with the same golden threads I'd seen in the bath.

There must have been 50 of them. And just as before, when I touched them, they disappeared.

Then two days before the third anniversary of Max's death, I went into the bathroom and stared in disbelief. On the mirror was the



On the third anniversary of Max's death, another handprint appeared

handprint of a left hand. This time the palm was heftier, with the fingers tapering to a point as if energy flowed out of the tips.

If this was Max, was he changing form? Along with this image, there were also what appeared to be fragments of wings, similar to the images of angels in 2006, all made of the same powdery substance. I was

stunned, but less frightened than before, and more accepting.

I took some photos and called Robin. She continued to believe that it was Max leaving the images, and he couldn't move on.

'Try smudging,' she said. She explained it was a Native American tradition of burning sage to cleanse an area and that it would help him to move on.

She also suggested cleansing the environment by walking around the perimeter of the house ringing a bell and saying out loud to Max: 'You will be happy in the spirit world.'

And sure enough, after I did that

'I was stunned, but less frightened than before, and more accepting'

in the summer of 2007, no more images appeared, no more lights flickered, and no more clocks stopped intermittently at 12.44pm.

When I retired from my job in April 2008, I vowed to dedicate myself full-time to finding a way to make sense of the phenomena that had occurred since Max died.

One day I was in the living room when I saw four golden threads, about 18 inches long, floating above a large globe.

I reached out to touch one, but instead of disappearing, it formed a small rectangle on my finger like a jewel. I stared at it, mesmerised, for

five minutes, then it disappeared.

Over the next few days I did some research on golden threads and came across information about the symbolic image of Indra's Net. The original story is from the Vedas, which are ancient

Hindu texts. It refers to a net that the god Indra cast over his palace to illustrate that everything in the universe is related to everything else, nothing dies, and everything is infinite. The pictures looked similar to my golden threads.

Then, in June 2008, the rug in the kitchen moved six inches – and every time I put it back, it moved again. Intuitively, I felt that Max was trying to get my attention again. He wanted me to know that he was still around and still active, just in a different form.

It was becoming more apparent to me that there's no way our lives end when we die. Exploring spirituality became my priority.

In June 2010, I met an energy healer and shamanic practitioner called Traci Ireland, who was speaking at a local mind body spirit festival. On impulse,

I booked a private session with her for three weeks later.

'I feel Max is preparing to move on,' she smiled. 'He will cross the bridge to the other side.'

She asked me to focus with her on helping his spirit pass over.

A month later, I was meditating when I noticed a large footprint on the arm of a chair that definitely wasn't my son's or mine.

'I've seen it all now,' I thought, rolling my eyes. It was almost comical, but God only knew what the footprint meant.

Over the next two years I continued to practise helping Max move on

this through meditation and prayer.

But I was still really frustrated by the lack of answers as to what was happening to me. Maybe a parapsychologist could make some sense of it – or at least tell me if I was going nuts.

A friend recommended Dr Dean Radin, so I called and booked an appointment in July 2012.

'Sceptics will say that somebody made those prints, and the rug and other events were imagined, or you were hallucinating or suffering from grief,' he warned. 'But what you thought of as extraordinary was in fact ordinary.'

I stared in disbelief.

'The paranormal is normal,' he said. 'People are afraid to admit what they have experienced for fear of being judged.'

And you know what? That truth rumbled loudly in my belly.

How much better would it be if we all understood that there's nothing wrong with feeling, hearing or seeing a communication from a loved one

who's died? It was time for me to talk openly about my experiences without shame.

So I wrote my book, *The Hand On The Mirror*. In it, I shared what Max had taught me – that the spirits of the departed are close, it is possible to connect from beyond the grave, and that love trumps geography, time and space.

I still get messages from Max, but not so many of them. The number 12.44 still shows up at significant times, and lights flicker with no obvious cause – I like to think it's Max winking at me.

But more than that, death has taught me about life. I live in the present, paying attention to all dimensions.

The hand on the mirror that was revealed to me has changed my life for ever. ■

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? Janis's book, *The Hand On The Mirror: A True Story Of Life Beyond Death* (£14.99, *Yellow Kite Books*), is out now.



A footprint appeared on the arm of a chair