

A MAN WITH A VISION

By **Vicki Vass. Special to the Tribune**

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

NOVEMBER 6, 1994

Bill Ward has no explanations for the visions he sees, the scenes that unfold in his mind like a "great cinemascope."

In more than 20 years since the visions began, all he knows is that he has been given the ability to key into the scenes of violent crimes and, in certain cases, to help authorities locate the victims or perpetrators. He works as a psychic police investigator, often for little or no publicity and no fee.

Like many law enforcement officials, Sgt. Bob Kelly of the [Joliet](#) Police Department was skeptical of psychic assistance-until Ward phoned him regarding a case.

According to Kelly, 8-year-old Willie Fox had been playing outside his apartment building with his five brothers and sisters on Oct. 19, 1978. Their mother called them in to go to bed that evening but didn't notice until the next morning that Willie hadn't come in with the others. She called the police, and a witness recalled seeing Willie go off on his bicycle with a man. After an article appeared in the local newspaper, Kelly received a phone call.

"It was Ward. He said he was a psychic and had worked with police," Kelly remembered. "He wanted to pass on what he had `seen.' "

Kelly didn't place much faith in Ward's assertion that Willie Fox would be found in a two-story red building with a small one-story white building either next to or behind it. Around 5 the next morning, however, Kelly said he received a phone call at home from a patrol officer who had located a red two-story building with a white one-story building next door, no more than 10 blocks from where the boy lived. The child was found dead in a closet in the two-story building, along with some evidence that linked the crime to a Dallas resident. The suspect is serving time in Texas on two previous murder convictions and, if ever released, will be brought to trial in Joliet, Kelly said.

"Before that, I'd been thinking, `Who's this idiot?' " Kelly said. "When I pulled up in front of the building, I was startled. Now I call Ward quite a bit."

Ward dates his psychic ability to his tour in Vietnam, where he served 10 months as an Army medic. He believes the violence he saw there triggered it.

. "How do you explain it? People die close to you,

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He returned home in 1967 and was married. An early psychic episode occurred about two years later when his then-9-month-old daughter, Christine, choked on food in the kitchen. Ward was outside washing his car while his wife, Brenda, frantically worked to clear the baby's air passage. Hearing his wife call, Ward rushed inside to her aid.

After Christine was safe, Ward said to his wife, "Thank God I heard you." Brenda Ward replied that she hadn't had time to call for him. Because of this and other similar incidents, Ward's friends advised him to start a log of psychic events (that log would later serve as the basis for a biography of him).

Ward estimates he has worked on more than 550 murder cases, and his walls attest to his service. They're covered with badges from police departments, including Chicago Ridge, LaGrange Park, Maywood and Cicero and the Kankakee County Sheriff's Police.

In a black sweatshirt and blue jeans, the 52-year-old Ward is a quiet and unassuming man. Retired from his job as a printer, Ward lives off his pension and the proceeds from occasional speaking engagements. He usually doesn't even travel to the scene, turning down trips to Las Vegas and Alaska to stay close to home.

"I don't want to go. It's a waste of time," he said. "I see (the flashbacks of the crime) usually within a matter of three minutes (of being called by police)."

Gayle Crnkovic of Joliet met Ward in 1983, when she was writing a Halloween article for a local newspaper. Four years ago, she began researching his biography, tentatively titled "Tour of Duty: The Diaries of Psychic Bill Ward," for which she's seeking a publisher. While writing the book, she spent hours verifying Ward's cases through interviews and library research.

"When I was 11 years old, I read 'Gone With the Wind' and immediately wrote in my diary that one day I wanted to write a book as great as Margaret Mitchell's. Bill Ward's life is more intriguing than any fictional character I could possibly create," Crnkovic said. "I believe in Bill Ward. I've watched him 'work,' helping people accept hardship, handicaps and death. He reinforces their faith in God and in themselves. If this is the only book I am meant to write, my life is complete."

Psychic Ann Vining of Joliet brought Ward in as a guest speaker when she taught a class in parapsychology at Joliet Junior College.

"I felt he was very credible. He has a little more psychic ability (than most psychics) and goes a little farther than others," she said. "We all have psychic ability, but Bill has a special gift."

Kelly said the Joliet department uses Ward's ability as a tool. "I call him quite a bit on things," he said. "I can't say everything he says is accurate, but he gives us another chain of thought."

e Crime Laboratory in Joliet, said he first
adall County Sheriff's Office on Dec. 14, 1980.

Ambrovich remembers being told by police officers to fingerprint several spots, including the lower right-hand corner of a picture frame on the wall. He found a print in that spot. (Authorities would release little information on the case because it is still under investigation.)

"I asked them, 'Who have you been talking to?' " he said, and police told him it was Bill Ward, a psychic. His belief in psychic ability was non-existent, Ambrovich said, but he couldn't get the fingerprint incident out of his mind.

"I had never had any experience with psychics before," he said. "I always thought they were just guessing generalities.

"I'm impressed with him. A good percentage of the time he's right, and what he has said goes beyond guesswork," Ambrovich added. "When he was right on the money, I knew he couldn't be guessing. There was definitely something to it."

When Ambrovich works on a murder investigation, he calls upon Ward. "I have faith in Bill," he said. "He definitely has psychic powers. If he said stay home tomorrow, your life is in danger, I'd stay home. I work at a crime lab where everything is scientific and there's no room for guessing. But there's definitely something to Bill."

During an initial call from a detective, Ward tries to ascertain any suspect's birthdate. Police also will drop off or fax copies of fingerprints. These two clues, Ward said, can tell him the suspect's frame of mind. Knowing the birthdate also helps Ward determine if the suspect uses alcohol or drugs, is likely to be suicidal or is even capable of murder, he said. For this, he uses biorhythms and charts.

Ward studies astrology and medical texts to sharpen his skills. But he said there is not much preparation to be done. "It's a gift," he said. "Only God has the power."

To keep things in perspective, Ward said he keeps "God No. 1" by attending mass every day. "I keep close to God," he said. "I never question, I just accept. God gave me this ability to see, and all I can do is use this gift."

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