

Reprint from *Return of the Revolutionaries:  
The Case for Reincarnation and Soul Groups Reunited*  
by Walter Semkiw, MD, Hampton Roads 2003

## Chapter 6: The Three Lives of Penney Peirce & The Intuitive Way

In 1999, I joined an email discussion group called Inpresence, which is made up of published authors whose works focus on the development of intuition and related topics. I had previously written a book that touched upon intuitive knowledge, which explains my affiliation with Inpresence, but my passion at the time was reincarnation research. At one point, I sent an e-mail describing criteria that I was using to make past-life matches and asked if anyone in the Inpresence group knew of other reincarnation cases that I could study. One person who responded was Penney Peirce, who related that she had a past-life story.

Peirce is a professional intuitive, counselor, perceptual skills trainer, and lecturer who works throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan. She is the author of *The Intuitive Way: A Guide to Living from Inner Wisdom*, *The Present Moment: A Daybook of Clarity and Intuition*, and *Dreams for Dummies*. I met with Peirce in her Novato, California home, north of San Francisco, to learn more about her case. Let me share with you her story.

Peirce moved all over the country growing up, with much time spent in the Midwest and some on the East Coast. She moved from New York City to California in the early 1970s. There, she worked as a corporate art director and graphic designer, but pursued meditation and clairvoyance development in her spare time, in California's then burgeoning self-help movement. During that period, a medium, whom I will call Bobby Jo, regularly visited the San Francisco Bay area. In her work as a medium, Bobby Jo let non-physical spiritual beings speak through her to provide clients with information about past lives. Bobby Jo, who remained in a meditative state during this process, would have no memory of the information conveyed. Past-life information was reportedly accessed from the Akashic Records, a set of memory banks or a library of the planet's history, found in the spirit realm. Peirce describes Bobby Jo as a dramatic character, with a jovial nature and a naive faith. Bobby Jo knew nothing about Peirce when they met, nor did Peirce reveal information about herself at the time of their private session.

Given this background, Peirce was shocked when Bobby Jo started to rattle off facts regarding a past lifetime as if she were reading out of an encyclopedia. Bobby Jo related that in a past era, Peirce's name was Charles H. Parkhurst, that he had been born on April 17, 1842, in Framingham, Massachusetts, had lived on a farm, and then had become a prominent minister. Parkhurst enjoyed mountain climbing and used the pulpit to fight crime.

Parkhurst had written many books, among them: *The Sunny Side of Christianity*; *A Little Lower than the Angels*; *Analysis of the Latin Verb Illustrated by the Sanskrit*; *What Would the World Be Without Religion?*; *The Blind Man's Creed and Other Sermons*; *The Pattern in the Mount*; *The Pulpit and the Pew*; *Talks to Young Men*; *Talks to Young Women*; and *My Forty Years in New York*. Bobby Jo told Peirce that Parkhurst had died on September 8, 1933, at the age of 91, and Bobby Jo then exclaimed in a drawl, "And honey, you died sleepwalking off a roof!"

Given this degree of specific information, after the session was over, Peirce sped off to the nearest library to see if she could verify the past life detailed by Bobby Jo. In her investigation, Peirce struck gold. She found that there was a record of Charles Parkhurst and that Bobby Jo's description of him was accurate in every detail, including the long list of books Parkhurst had written. She realized that there were many similar personality attributes between Parkhurst and herself, and that there was even a physical resemblance. In assessing this proposed past-life match, Peirce reflected that there was no way that Bobby Jo could have memorized all that data on Parkhurst. Further, in Parkhurst, Bobby Jo had identified an individual with character features that matched closely with Peirce's personality, even though Bobby Jo knew next to nothing about her. Eventually, as Peirce studied the life of Parkhurst, she came to the conclusion that the past-life match was accurate.

Let us review some of the similarities between Charles Parkhurst and Penney Peirce. First of all, Parkhurst and Peirce share the distinction of being published authors. Peirce, as a writer, demonstrated talent at an early age, winning a National Scholastic Magazine award for a short story. Peirce has had three books published and in addition, has contributed to a number of other titles, such as *The Celestine Prophecy* and *Tenth Insight Experiential Guides* by Carol Adrienne and James Redfield; *The Purpose of Your Life* by Carol Adrienne; *Intuiting the Future* by William Kautz; and *Channeling: The Intuitive Connection*, also by Kautz. In addition to his scholarly works, Parkhurst also wrote for young people. Similarly, Peirce has been writing children's books since college and recently has been incorporating spiritual themes into these stories.

Parkhurst and Peirce have shared an interest in spirituality and providing service through the ministry. Parkhurst earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Amherst College, then studied theology in Halle, Leipzig, and Bonn. He returned to teach at Williston Seminary, in Massachusetts, and went on to become a congregational minister in Lenox, Massachusetts, where he spent six years. He then became the pastor at Madison Square Presbyterian Church in New York City, and earned a Ph.D. and a doctorate in divinity (D.D.) from New York University and Columbia. Penney Peirce also has had a lifelong affinity for spiritual studies. Ever since she can remember, Peirce says that "why" was the word that motivated her behavior, and she voraciously read books on world religions, psychic phenomena, and philosophy. Peirce was in search of the core truths contained in all religions, and became a licensed minister as a result of this interest. She has even served as a substitute minister at a Unity Church.

Like Parkhurst, Peirce has had a natural affinity for ancient languages. Parkhurst taught Greek and Latin and wrote a book called *Analysis of the Latin Verb Illustrated by the Sanskrit*. Peirce took advanced Latin in high school and scored highly in a state Latin competition. She has also had a fascination with the Sanskrit language and Egyptian hieroglyphs. Peirce relates that she once had a series of dreams that featured ancient Greek words, words that she had no knowledge of in her waking consciousness.

Charles Parkhurst used his pulpit to right social and spiritual wrongs. Parkhurst lived in New York City at a time when political corruption was a major issue. Tammany Hall, the political regime that held power in the late 1800s, was in collusion with crime bosses. Tammany Hall police officials routinely took bribes, while the general populace stuck their heads in the sand and said nothing. Parkhurst, who served as President of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, preached perhaps one of the most famous sermons in American history in which he denounced the corruption.

Parkhurst described New York City as "hell with the lid off" and challenged the public to do something about it. A roving reporter happened to be in the audience and the story made the news, arousing much public excitement and a vehement backlash from officials. Parkhurst

was attacked and challenged to prove his accusations. He launched his own investigation and soon appeared before the grand jury with facts in hand. As a result, there ensued the Lexow Investigation and the election of a reform government, the Strong Administration. The appointment of Teddy Roosevelt as the new Police Commissioner followed.

Like Parkhurst, Peirce also has the inclination to act as a whistle-blower and reformer. In her college newspaper, Penney published articles protesting departmental and curriculum changes that she thought were to the detriment of students. When she worked for a large corporation, she launched a letter-writing campaign to warn of unethical practices she observed taking place in her department.

Charles Parkhurst and Penney Peirce both grew up on farms and have shared a love for agriculture. Parkhurst, in his autobiography, wrote: "Agriculture is the physical basis of all civilization. It stands to civilization as the body stands to the soul." Parkhurst went on to say that, "working the soil is the great original art." Peirce began keeping a journal at age seven and much of her inspiration stemmed from nature and the farm. Further, the National Scholastic Magazine award she won was for a short story about the wheat fields of Kansas. Peirce has also loved "working the soil" and has planted a vegetable garden every year since she was twenty.

Parkhurst and Peirce also have shared a love of climbing. Parkhurst was an avid mountaineer, who vacationed annually in the Alps, climbing the Matterhorn, Weisshorn, and other great peaks. Peirce demonstrated an early affinity for climbing also. At the age of three, she climbed a cedar tree adjacent to her home and peered into the family's second-story bathroom, where her mother was applying makeup. When Penney's mother looked outside and witnessed her three-year old daughter waving to her from a tree, she almost had a stroke!

In a tragic, though amusing, incident, Parkhurst's demise was associated with his love of heights. At the age of ninety-one, Parkhurst had an episode of sleepwalking during which he strode off the roof of his porch, falling to his death. In what appears to be a residual effect of this traumatic event, Penney Peirce relates that for years she experienced recurring nightmares of driving off cliffs, falling in elevators, and falling out of trees. At the end of every dream, when she realized that she would die, she would wake agitatedly.

When Peirce had her session with Bobby Jo and learned that Parkhurst had died by falling off a roof, her nightmares abated. She had one last dream in which she fell out of a tree in "super-slow motion," consciously reviewing the stages one goes through in dying from a fall. After that dream, the nightmares stopped entirely.

Peirce believes she had these nocturnal images of falling because Parkhurst was asleep and confused when he died, and that the experience had never been processed in a conscious manner. Peirce also feels that Parkhurst's death by sleepwalking out a window and off a roof might be related to her own subliminal desire to leap off high places and fly like a bird. Perhaps Parkhurst had the same urge and found a way to let himself fly. Peirce notes that to this day she still has an attraction, rather than an aversion, to elevated locations. Fortunately, in this lifetime Peirce lives in a one-story, ranch-style house.

In her session with the medium, Peirce was told about an even earlier incarnation. Bobby Jo conveyed that Penney's name, in that lifetime, was Alice Cary, that she was born on a farm near Cincinnati, Ohio, on April 26, 1820, and that she died on February 12, 1871. As in the Parkhurst case, Bobby Jo rattled off a series of books that Alice Cary had written, which included the following titles: Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary; Clovernook: Recollections of Our Neighborhood in the West; Hagar: A Story for Today; Lyra and Other Poems; Clovernook Children; Married, Not Mated; Adopted Daughter, and Other Tales; The Josephine Gallery;

Pictures of Country Life, Ballads, Lyrics, and Hymns; The Bishop's Son, A Lover's Diary; The Born Thrall; Snow-Berries: A Book for Young Folks; and Ballads for Little Folks. Once again, Bobby Jo appeared to have access to an incredible amount of detailed information on an extemporary basis. Bobby Jo also told Peirce that Alice Cary had been inseparable from her younger sister Phoebe in that lifetime. Bobby Jo noted that Phoebe was Peirce's younger sister, Paula, today.

Parallels between Penney Peirce, Alice Cary, and Charles Parkhurst are apparent from this list of book titles alone. Obviously, all three are accomplished writers and all three have written children's books. Like Alice Cary, Peirce is a prolific poet as well as a writer of nonfiction. In an interesting synchronicity, Alice Cary wrote under the pen name Patty Lee, which corresponds to Peirce's first and middle names, Penney Lee.

There are also geographical correspondences between the three lives. Past-life regression therapists have noted that souls often like to retrace their steps from one lifetime to another. It is almost as if the soul is nostalgic for familiar places and settings of past lives. The soul then appears to engineer a life path that will take it to these familiar haunts. As an example, Peirce went to college at the University of Cincinnati, only a few miles from where Alice was born. Here, like Cary, Peirce began writing poetry in earnest. Also in college, Peirce had a boyfriend who wrote poems to and drew portraits of a fictitious woman. Her boyfriend referred to this woman as his muse and he called her "Alice." Interestingly, Alice Cary had been jilted by a boyfriend when living in Ohio, which prompted her to suddenly move to New York City. Peirce wonders whether her college boyfriend might have been the same man who jilted Cary.

After Cary moved to New York, her sister Phoebe soon followed. The women had moved to the city with the intention of making their living from literature—a very adventurous thing to do. Together, they wrote and published many books of poetry and fiction. In New York, Alice and Phoebe Cary were fondly known as "The Sisters of the West," as Ohio was still considered the western edge of adolescent America at that time.

The Cary sisters became beloved by the intelligentsia as they hosted a popular literary salon in their home for more than fifteen years. Attendees included thinkers, philosophers, early feminists, writers, and prominent personalities of the time, such as Horace Greeley, Edgar Allen Poe, John Greenleaf Whittier, and P. T. Barnum.

In what appears to be a parallel path, Peirce also left Ohio abruptly, before graduating from college, and moved to New York City. In New York, Peirce, like Alice Cary, soon became involved with a group of feminist writers and other authors. In another geographic coincidence, Peirce's job was situated near Gramercy Park, only blocks from where Alice and Phoebe Cary had lived. In New York, the life of Charles Parkhurst also becomes intertwined with theirs.

Peirce's apartment on West 80th Street was only blocks from where Charles Parkhurst resided on West 74th. She attended night school at NYU and Columbia, which Parkhurst also attended. In time, Peirce moved to Park Slope, Brooklyn, close to where Alice and Phoebe are buried in Greenwood Cemetery. In another odd parallel, Parkhurst, late in life, traveled from New York to Los Angeles to marry a second time. Similarly, Peirce left New York City for Los Angeles to complete her design degree at the California Institute of the Arts. She also notes that in the year after her reading with Bobby Jo, her parents moved near Framingham, the birthplace and childhood home of Charles Parkhurst. In visits to her parents, Penney has been able to survey Parkhurst's old stomping grounds.

Like Penney Peirce and Charles Parkhurst, Alice Cary had an early quest for knowledge, even reading at night by the light of burning lard when candles were not available to her. Cary loved nature and wrote prolifically about scenes from rural life. Peirce has a love for nature, as did Cary and Parkhurst, and she lives in a setting of rolling farmland. As mentioned previously, Penney began keeping a journal at age seven, and much of her inspiration stemmed from nature, animals, and the farm. Like Alice Cary, Penney published articles and poems in her teens. The National Scholastic Magazine award she won, we recall, was for a short story about Kansas wheat fields.

In an interesting coincidence, John Greenleaf Whittier wrote a poem for Alice called "The Singer," which ends with a reference to wheat. Whittier wrote of Alice: "Her modest lips were sweet with song/A memory haunted all her words/Of clover-fields and singing birds/Her dark, dilating eyes expressed/The broad horizons of the west/Her speech dropped prairie flowers; the gold/Of harvest wheat about her rolled."

In addition to her literary pursuits, Alice Cary was a social activist, like Parkhurst and Peirce. Alice was a firm believer in the abolition of slavery and a proponent of women's rights. She became the first president of the first women's club in America, the Sorority of Sisters (Sorosis), and was friends with Jane Croly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. In a similar way, Penney became involved with the feminist movement in New York and California, and became the art director for a feminist magazine. Alice Cary hated human repression or coercion in any form. Penney Peirce started a nonprofit organization in college to study the harmful brainwashing affects of the mass media and advertising on the general public.

In spiritual matters, Alice was attached to the Universalist Church and accepted its doctrines, including the belief in reincarnation and that spirits of the deceased could communicate with the living. She wrote: "Laugh, you who never had/Your dead come back; but do not take from me/. . . my foolish dream:/That these our mortal eyes,/Which outwardly reflect the earth and skies,/Do introvert upon eternity." Cary's biographer notes that Alice also had an interest in prophecy. Alice's sister and friends related that she would "tell us each our fortune anew, casting our horoscope afresh in her teacup each morning." Similarly, Peirce pursued parapsychology and clairvoyance development very early in her career.

Peirce has noticed many parallels between her own writings and those of Alice Cary and Charles Parkhurst. As an example, all three focused on the need to demonstrate spiritual values in everyday life, in intention and through small actions, and that the practice, the process, and the experience itself is more important than just talking about lofty goals. Peirce has selected the following quotes from their books to illustrate this point.

Cary: "True worth is in being, not seeming—in doing, each day that goes by, some little good."

Parkhurst: "Character is the impulse reined down into steady continuance."

Peirce: "The process, not necessarily the answers, is the sacred thing."

In another example, all three write about truth. Parkhurst wrote: "Truth, of course, is from everlasting and has its existence in the being of God, while an idea is only an attempt at truth and comes and goes with the mind that develops it." Peirce wrote in her journal: "Information is of the mind. Knowledge is truth, the result of the direct experience of being or Soul. Information is facts, the mere description of knowledge." Alice wrote: "For sometimes, keen, and cold, and pitiless truth,/In spite of us, will press to open light/The naked angularities of things,/And from the steep ideal the soul drop/In wild and sorrowful beauty, like a star/From the blue heights of heaven into the sea."

And, about gratitude, Parkhurst wrote: "We have enough to make us all happy and thankful if we will be quiet long enough to take an affectionate inventory of our commonplace mercies, and let our hearts feel of them and mix themselves with them till we become saturated with their comfort and awaken into a loving sense of the patient goodness of their Giver." Peirce wrote: "Slow down enough to describe in simple terms the things you feel, as though you're taking inventory. By noticing things, you connect with your world. The 'feminine mind' brings you into a sense of beneficence and providence, and as you experience this fully, you may weep, or overflow with praises, or beam with feelings of ecstasy." Alice Cary wrote, "When I think of the gifts that have honored Love's shrine—/Heart, hope, soul, and body, all the mortal can give—/For the sake of a passion superbly divine,/I am glad, nay, and more, I am proud that I live!"

Peirce notes that she seems to be an interesting link between the masculine, more intellectual minister, Charles Parkhurst, and the emotional, feminine poet, Alice Cary. In her writings, Peirce combines elements of both. It is interesting to observe that in Penney's case, though the styles of rhetoric may vary with changes in gender and era, core ideas stay the same.

Another interesting parallel in these cases is the possible carryover from previous lives of physical infirmity and injury. In Ian Stevenson's research of children who spontaneously remember past lives, he observed that when an individual perishes from a traumatic injury, such as a knife or bullet wound, a birthmark is found at the location of the traumatic wound in the subsequent lifetime. Peirce poses the hypothesis that a similar carryover may occur with chronic illnesses. Alice Cary died of tuberculosis, which she courageously suffered for many years. Penney Peirce was born with severe lung problems, which manifested as chronic bronchitis and pneumonia for about the first fifteen years of her life. Peirce also notes that when Charles Parkhurst died of injuries sustained in his fall, one of his injuries was a broken left leg. Peirce notes that she has received many injuries to her left leg, including a cracked ankle. The question of whether residual illnesses and injuries from one lifetime can be carried through in another is a subject for further study.

The case of Alice Cary/Penney Peirce features a karmic relationship that seems to have persisted from one lifetime to another. Recall that Bobby Jo told Peirce that Alice Cary had a sister named Phoebe, and that in the current lifetime, Phoebe is Paula, Penney's sister. It appears that Bobby Jo's statement is valid, as Paula has facial features consistent with those of Phoebe Cary. There are also similarities in personality traits. Phoebe was considered to be one of the wittiest women in America, known for her ability to see the ludicrous in the glamorous, and for her great gift for parody. Peirce has observed that these traits are consistent with Paula, who is described as witty, like Phoebe. Peirce once wrote that Paula is characterized by a "dry wit and cheerful, diplomatic disposition." In a more mundane similarity, Phoebe was known to have an aversion to housework. In this lifetime, Paula has the same aversion. Paula sets money aside, so that she can hire a maid service, rather than do housework herself.

Another significant parallel is observed in the relationships between the sisters, Alice and Phoebe, and Penney and Paula. Both sets of sisters are approximately the same number of years apart in age, and both have had incredibly close relationships with each other. Regarding Alice and Phoebe Cary, a biographer wrote: "The connection between the sisters, who had always treated one another with the utmost consideration and delicacy, was one of the most charming things about their unique dwelling." The emotional bond between the sisters was so great, in fact, that they practically died together. After Alice succumbed to tuberculosis, Phoebe was so drained with grief that she passed away six months later. This close connection between the sisters persists in contemporary times. Penney has noted, "Throughout my life, my younger sister Paula has been my best friend."

The bond between the sisters was rekindled early, as Penney recalls that when Paula was

born, she had no feelings of jealousy or sibling rivalry; rather, Penney wanted to be close to her little sister. Later in life, Penney seems to have unconsciously intuited the past-life identity of her sister. Penney relates that as a young woman, she fantasized about a list of names that she would give to her children someday. Interestingly, her favorite name was Phoebe, which she learned meant "shining and bright."

The case of Alice Cary/Charles Parkhurst/Penney Peirce, if it is accepted as valid, demonstrates an interesting phenomenon, that a soul can animate two different bodies or personalities at the same time. Alice Cary, the earliest incarnation in this series of lives, was born in 1820 and died in 1871. Charles Parkhurst was born in 1842, at a time when Alice Cary was twenty-two years old. Alice Cary died in 1871 at the age of fifty, at time when Parkhurst was twenty-eight years old. Parkhurst died fifty-two years after the death of Alice Cary, in 1933. Penney Peirce was born sixteen years after Parkhurst's death, in 1949, fifty miles from the location where Parkhurst died. In reviewing this chronology, we observe that there is an overlap of twenty-eight years between Parkhurst's birth in 1842 and Cary's death in 1871, during which it appears that the same soul was animating two bodies.

It is of interest to wonder if Alice Cary and Charles Parkhurst ever crossed paths. Though there is no evidence to support that Cary and Parkhurst ever met, it appears that they did come in close proximity to each other. In 1850, Alice, at thirty years of age, journeyed from Ohio to visit John Greenleaf Whittier at his Massachusetts home, not far from where Parkhurst was living on his family's farm in Framingham, as an eight-year-old boy. Alice subsequently moved to New York later that same year. The two people had another episode of geographic proximity twenty years later, in the summer of 1870, when Alice Cary made her last foray out of New York to visit friends in Northampton, Massachusetts. Parkhurst was living nearby at the time, and only months later, in November, Charles Parkhurst married his first wife in Northampton. Parkhurst moved to New York in 1880, nine years after Cary died. Though it appears that the two never met, it is likely that Parkhurst knew of Cary. When Parkhurst was a young man, Cary was in her prime as an author, contributing to many popular magazines of the time. It is possible that Parkhurst read articles written by his alter ego, Alice Cary.

In sum, the case of Alice Cary/Charles Parkhurst/Penney Peirce demonstrates how facial architecture, personality traits, and even geographical locations can remain consistent over three lifetimes. In addition, the relationship between Alice and Phoebe in one era, and that of Penney and Paula in another, shows how karmic and emotional bonds are maintained from one incarnation to another. The twenty-nine year period when Alice Cary and Charles Parkhurst were both incarnate simultaneously appears to demonstrate that a soul can animate two bodies at the same time. This phenomenon might help explain why there are so many more people on the planet at this time than there have been in ages past.

See [www.penneypeirce.com/booksRev.htm/](http://www.penneypeirce.com/booksRev.htm/) for a photo comparison of Penney and her past lives, as well as of her sister Paula and Phoebe Cary.

