**Steve Prefontaine: Getting His Ghost**

By Susan G. Hauser

Portland, Ore.

This just in from beyond the pale: The late Steve Prefontaine gives two thumbs up to both movies recently made about him. How do I know this? A little psychic told me.

Mr. Prefontaine, a spectacular runner who died at the age of 24 in a 1975 auto accident, was internationally known and certainly the biggest star ever to circle the track at the University of Oregon. I never met him—while he was alive—but I know Mary Marckx, the woman who was his college sweetheart. Recently, Ms. Marckx invited me to join her and a psychic so I could pose some questions to the ghost of Steve Prefontaine. The psychic was Sue Bialostosky, dean of the Portland branch of the Church of the Divine Man, a 21-year-old Christian church whose emphasis is on spiritual awareness and communication.

In a small room at the church, Ms. Marckx and Ms. Bialostosky sat facing each other in folding chairs. I took a seat next to the psychic. Another member of the church staff, Maureen Humbert, stood behind us, acting as sort of a psychic traffic cop, to make sure only friendly ghosts entered there.

My first question to the ghost of Steve Prefontaine, addressed to the psychic via Ms. Marckx, was "How do you feel about having two films made about you?"

Ms. Bialostosky closed her eyes and looked within. She entered a light trance, and I could see the psychic was "just like Steve." What a perfect medium. She said he communicated that he liked "Pre" best because it offered a more complete view of himself, whereas "Prefontaine" was concerned mainly with his track triumphs.

"It's not that he didn't like the hero part," reported Ms. Bialostosky, "but he had a need to present more of who he was as a person, vs. a person." A direct quote, not ghostspeak.

We were at a disadvantage because unlike Mr. Prefontaine, none of us had seen Mr. Prefontaine's manner of speaking, and echoing concerns he shared with her during their relationship.

Just like a man, it took something really serious to wake him up. Since his death he's been entirely faithful, keeping Ms. Marckx company during her waking and sleeping hours. Ms. Marckx said she had been aware of a ghostly presence since a few years after Mr. Prefontaine's death. Not until she received a psychic reading at the church, however, was she certain that it was her old boyfriend. She said various psychics at the church delivered reports from the beyond that were "dead on," almost perfectly replicating Mr. Prefontaine's manner of speaking, and echoing concerns he shared with her during their relationship.

Now she is writing a book that she calls "Pre Destiny." By describing their five-year romance and their continuing spiritual connection, she hopes she'll liberate Mr. Prefontaine's spirit, and get a good night's sleep for a change.

The two films have also helped in this postmortem healing. Ms. Bialostosky reported that after he spiritually supervised the production of both films, Mr. Prefontaine felt a sense of completion. His message to the living, she said, has been delivered.

"His message," said Ms. Bialostosky, "is that people can do what they want to do, that there really are no limits if you have enough determination, enough wanting, and that you'll accomplish whatever you want." This is ghostspale for "Just do it."

Ms. Marckx had some questions of her own about the manner of Pre's death. It happened after he left a party in Eugene, Ore., when his MGB sportscar flipped on a steep turn and crushed him. For all these years, people have wondered if another car ran him off the road.

The answer he delivered was "no." The accident was entirely his fault.

Ms. Marckx's eyes glistened when she asked, "What were your last thoughts?"

I held my breath, waiting for this dramatic revelation.

Ms. Bialostosky closed her eyes. Then she looked directly at Ms. Marckx and said, "Ouch!"

We all laughed and laughed. Ms. Marckx said that was "just like Steve." What a card.

Then the psychic said she had a personal message he wanted her to deliver to Ms. Marckx.

"Ah," said Ms. Marckx, "my g-mail! My ghost mail."

"He wants to reassure you of his love. Love is eternal. It doesn't die with the body."

Now all our eyes were glistening. But Mr. Prefontaine had had enough of this mushy stuff. He communicated that the interview was over. But he left us with a parting thought.

"He's laughing," reported Ms. Bialostosky. "He says, 'This is my first after-death interview!'"

Mine too.