

# Former COW student founded parapsy

By Dottie Sines

In a darkened room in Boston in 1926, Joseph Banks Rhine was among those gathered around a table watching Mina Crandon attempt to contact the dead. The famed medium was conducting a séance, and Rhine was observing as research. He later reported, in the "Journal of Abnormal Psychology," that Crandon had used trickery. His claim was attacked by some including Arthur Conan Doyle, who ran newspaper ads claiming simply "J.B. Rhine is an Ass."

Rhine eventually founded parapsychology — the branch of psychology dealing with psychic phenomena — and the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University. He also once lived in Marshallville and studied at The College of Wooster.

Although Rhine labeled that Boston medium a fraud, he was quite interested in the paranormal. As a University of Chicago student in 1922, Rhine had attended a lecture by Doyle, the British medical doctor best known for authoring the Sherlock Holmes books. Doyle was touring the country to proclaim proof of communication with the dead. Rhine later wrote, "This mere possibility was the most exhilarating thought I had had in years."

Rhine was born in 1895 in a Waterloo, Pennsylvania log cabin to a farmer/schoolteacher/merchant and his wife. A studious, strong-willed child, he decided early on to become a minister. The family moved to Marshallville in 1911 to farm as tenants of the Weckessers, whose daughter Louisa later wrote in her diary, "I was surprised to find a farm boy who read books."

In 1916 Rhine began studying philosophy at The College of Wooster, but the science courses he took led him to question his faith and abandon his plan for the ministry.



Submitted

Joseph Banks Rhine

With World War I underway, Rhine left college to enlist in the Marines. After serving for two years, he returned to Marshallville, where he married his longtime sweetheart, Louisa Weckesser.

After earning a Ph.D. in botany at Chicago, Rhine taught in the field for two years in New York and West Virginia but couldn't shake his fascination with Doyle's claim. So he undertook psychology studies at Harvard before moving on to Duke University. It was there he introduced the term parapsychology and began his research, believing "good groundwork should be laid in the lab so that the scientific community might take parapsychology seriously." He also began teaching psychology and philosophy at Duke.

Rhine's initial research was in postmortem survival, the notion that the mind and personality survive the death of the body because, he said, many documented cases of "apparitions of the dying coincided with actual death to a degree significantly beyond chance expectation." But he soon shifted his research to telepathy (communication of thoughts by means other than the known senses) and clairvoyance (the ability to see persons and events that are distant in time or space), believing these had to first be understood. Much of his initial research involved scientifically and mathematically analyzing

card guessing and dice tossing.

His work led him to found the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke, launch the "Journal of Parapsychology" and coin the term extrasensory perception or ESP (acquiring information without the use of the known five senses). In 1934 he reported in "Extra-Sensory Perception" the conclusions of his experiments, primarily that "extrasensory perception is an actual and demonstrable occurrence."

The book drew worldwide scholarly attention and created a public sensation. He gave worldwide lectures, participated in national radio broadcasts and began contributing the first of countless articles and papers to popular magazines and scholarly journals over the next several decades.

Predictably, his work also was met with skepticism, with some labeling Rhine a publicity seeker, criticizing his methods and ridiculing the notion of a psychologist studying psychic phenomena. Nevertheless, Rhine continued his research, moving into additional directions including precognition (predicting events) and psychokinesis (moving or affecting objects with the mind).

In 1940 Rhine co-authored with Joseph Gaither Pratt on "Extra-Sensory Perception After Sixty Years," a comprehensive review of ESP research. The professional response was positive, and the book was assigned as required reading for introductory psychology classes at Harvard.

Rhine subsequently wrote eight additional books, three co-authored. In 1957 he founded the Parapsychological Association. He retired from Duke at age 70 but turned around and established the Institute for Parapsychology, later called the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man.

What sort of person



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J.B. Rhine, left, conducts a test while a professor at Duke University. It was at Duke the Marshallville native introduced term parapsychology and began his research, believing "good groundwork should be laid in the lab so that the scientific community might take parapsychology seriously."

makes his life's work researching the incomprehensible? Sally Feather, one of Rhine's four children, wrote that her father was a kind man and their home life was exciting, with students and col-

leagues always visiting, traditional. She recalled father saying, "If you unconventional in one of your life, you had to try to be conventional in other areas."

True to the nature

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