A Case of Reincarnation: The Story of James Leininger

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The reincarnation case of James Leininger has been quite widely reported in the Western media. It is one of the best documented cases of reincarnation. It has also been reported in the medical literature.[1] However few local doctors seem to know about the case.

The Leininger family lived in Lafayette, Louisiana, USA. The father, Bruce, was a senior executive with an oil company. The mother, Andrea, was a ballet instructor. The story started in mid-2000 when James had just turned 2 years old.

James suffered from very frequent nightmares when he would be kicking and struggling, frightened, distressed and inconsolable. A few months on, as he started to learn to talk, he was heard to be saying, repeatedly, amidst his struggling and kicking: "Airplane crash on fire, little man can't get out."[1] On 11 August 2000, he said, while awake: "The little man [in the plane] is me; the Japanese shot the plane." On 27 August 2000, he talked in bed, before he went to sleep: "The name of the boat that I took off was Natoma. I flew a Corsair." On 5 October 2000, while awake, he said the name of the pilot was James. When asked who else was there, he replied: "Jack Larson." Then, at Thanksgiving, Bruce bought a book on the Second World War as a gift for a relative. As Bruce turned to a page on Iwo Jima, James pointed at the picture and said: "Daddy, that is where I died."

James also exhibited other behaviours that seemed unusual and inexplicable. When he was brought to visit the flight museum, he would stare at the war planes for hours and refused to leave. On another occasion, when he was allowed to get close to a fighter plane, he went over and examined the different parts in a ritualistic manner, as a pilot would before take-off. On one occasion, he saw a toy fighter airplane, and Andrea said: "See, there are bombs attached under the wings." James replied: "That's not a bomb, Mommy. That's a drop tank." It took Andrea some time to find out what a drop tank was — a disposable tank for carrying extra fuel (Figure 1). It did not have the tail fin of a bomb. Nobody in the family had ever mentioned this to James.

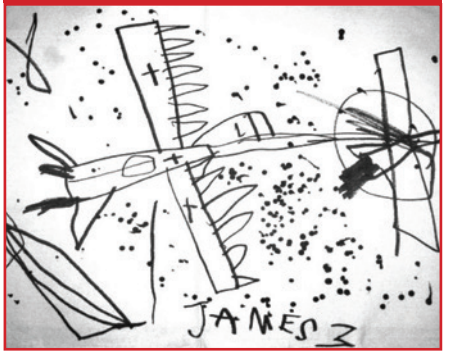
James also knew the various models of war planes used by the US and Japan in the war. James said that the pilot seat of a Corsair was high and that the plane tended to veer to the left on landing. The tyres tended to burst easily. These facts were verified by experts. When James played, it was always toy planes engaged in air battle. His drawings consisted of fierce air combats, and he would always sign as "James 3" (Figure 2). At Halloween, he insisted on turning a pumpkin into a fighter plane. He would not play with other toys.

All these were enough to set James' parents on a course to investigate further. Bruce searched for "Natoma" on the internet and found about 300 links. After much effort, he found an aircraft carrier called USS Natoma Bay (Figure 3), which operated in the Pacific arena during World War II and participated in the Battle of Iwo Jima. Then he searched "Jack Larson" but could not get anywhere because there were far too many results and none appeared to match. Working exhausting days and nights, Bruce eventually found the site of the Escort Carriers Sailors' and Airmen's Association. He started to cold call the names that he could find. Eventually, he was able to talk to a man called Leo Pyatt, who was the president of the Natoma Bay Association, an alumni association of crew members of the USS Natoma Bay. Bruce asked whether Leo

Figure 1. Drop tanks (see arrow) under the wings of an A1-H Skyraider.

Source: Balon Greyjoy (public domain), arrow added

Figure 2. James Leininger's drawing, signed 'James 3'.



Source: Matlock JG, 2022.[2]

Figure 3. The USS Natoma Bay in 1944.

Source: US Navy (public domain).

Figure 4. US Marines hoist an American flag atop Mount Suribatchi, Iwo Jima volcano, after battling the Japanese to the top of the crater.

Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain).

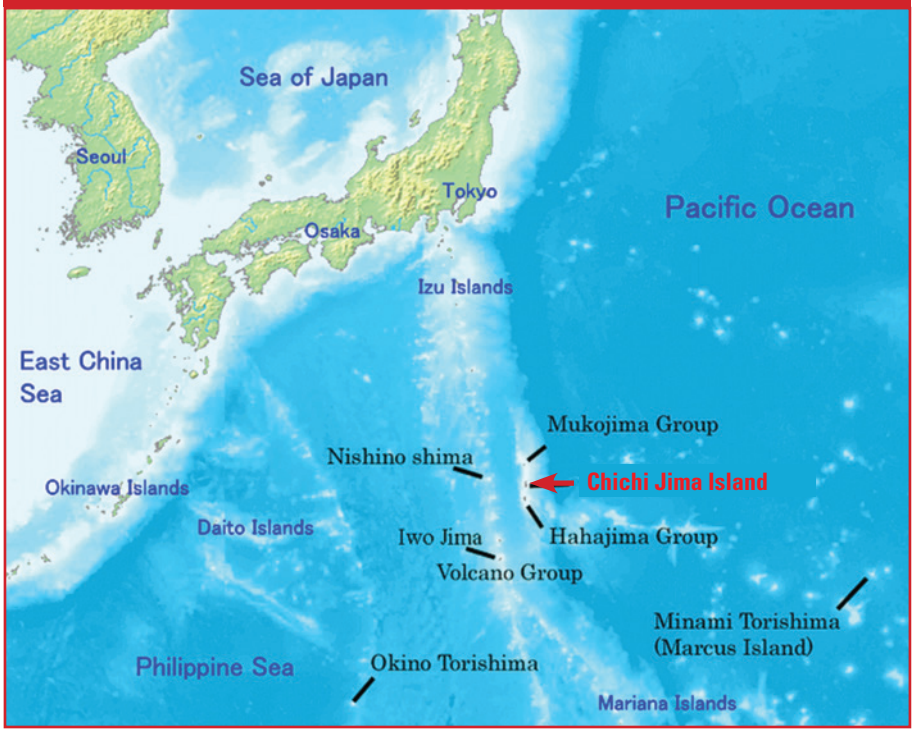
knew a pilot named Jack Larson. Without hesitation Leo Pyatt said Jack Larson was on the boat; he joined for a short time and was transferred elsewhere. Leo invited Bruce to join the next Natoma Bay Association reunion in September 2002 in San Diego, California.

Little happened between the end of 2000 and September 2002.

Bruce attended the reunion. He met John Dewitt, who was the ship's historian and Honorary Secretary of the association. They went through the files and records and found that Jack was on the association list but seldom came to the reunions. He lived in Springdale, Arkansas. They also discovered that James Huston Jr, fighter pilot, was the only man assumed dead (missing in action) in the Battle of Iwo Jima (Figure 4) . Other people at the reunion also known James Huston Jr.

Shortly after the reunion, Bruce met Jack Larson at his home in Springdale.

Figure 5. Chichi Jima Island (父島列島).



Adapted from: Wikimedia Commons (public domain).

Jack confirmed that on 3 March 1945, a group of eight fighter planes went on a bombing mission at Futami Bay, Chichi Jima, an island 200 miles to the north of Iwo Jima (Figures 5–7), which acted as a depot for ammunition and supplies. Huston's plane did not return to the ship. However, nobody saw the actual hit, as Huston's plane was last in the formation. By the time his plane was hit, the others had left the area.

By now, it was clear that the man they were looking for was James Huston Jr, killed at the age of 21 (Figure 8).[1]

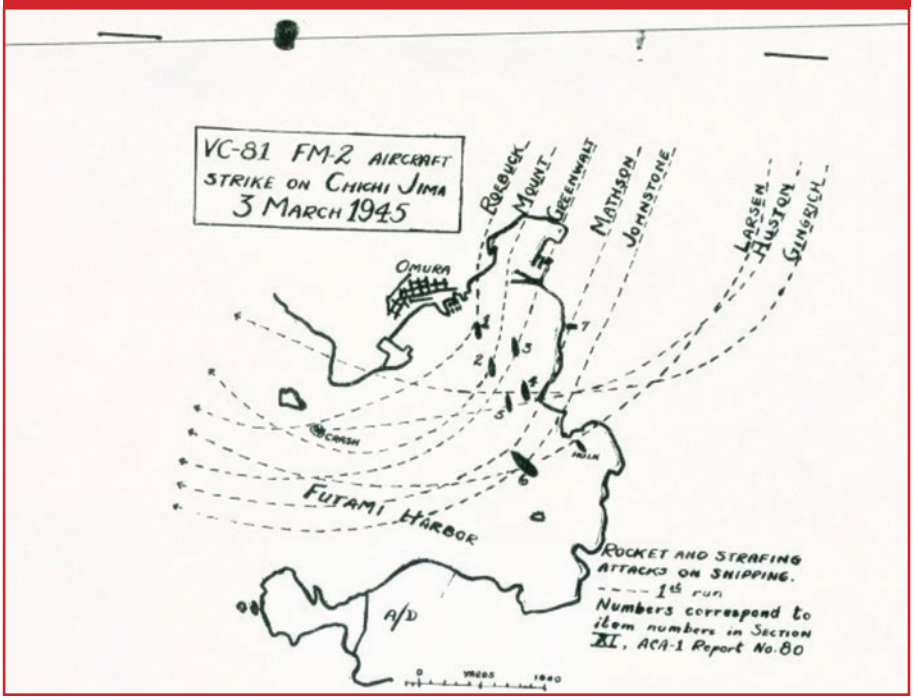
The next breakthrough was made by Andrea. She went through census records and found the older James Huston (father of James Huston Jr), his wife Daryl, daughters Ruth and Anne, and son James Jr. After much toil and sweat, Andrea managed to contact Ann, now aged 84 and living in Los Gatos, California. The other family members had died. It did not take long for James Leininger to connect with Ann. James knew about incidents in the Huston family that he had no access to before. He

Figure 6. Futami Bay at Chichi Jima.

Source: Map data © 2023 Google.

knew that James Huston Sr was an alcoholic and had to go to a sanatorium for rehabilitation. He asked for a picture that Daryl painted for Ann, which had been up in the attic for some 70 years and nobody else knew about. Ann later sent the picture to James Leininger. In another parcel Ann forwarded were, among other things, photos of James Huston Jr in front of a Corsair fighter plane (Figure 9). It turned out that James was a test pilot for the Corsair before he joined the USS Natoma Bay crew as a Wildcat (FM 2) fighter pilot.

Figure 7. Attack route, 3 March 1945. James Huston Jr's route is marked by the second line from the upper-right.



Source: Matlock JG, 2022.[2]

In June 2003, a man named Jack Durham replied to a post on the web from Bruce asking for information on Chichi Jima. Durham was a radioman and gunner in a group of eight bombers that followed the assault from Huston's group of fighter planes, coming off the USS Sargent Bay. Durham had seen Huston's plane sustain a direct hit on the nose and dive into the sea near the entrance of the bay. Durham introduced Bruce to John Richardson, who lived in Nacogdoches, Texas. Bruce went to visit him. Richardson talked about how he saw Huston face-to-face, because their two planes were flying very close to each other, and how Huston's plane had been hit.

At the USS Sargent Bay reunion in San Diego in September 2003, Bruce met with other bomber pilots in the squadron – Ralph Clarbour, John Provost and Bob Skelton – who all witnessed the incident.

It now seemed clear that James Leininger's statements were true: James Huston Jr's plane was hit in the nose by Japanese anti-aircraft guns, the plane caught fire and dived into the ocean. The pilot could not escape and did not survive.[1]

As James Huston Jr was the second James, James Leininger was the third.[1]

In September 2004, the Leininger family attended the Natoma Bay Association reunion. James Leininger met for the first time Jack Larson and Ann. They seemed like old buddies and close relatives.

In 2006, the Leininger family visited Futami Bay in Chichi Jima. They felt that it was time for closure. James Leininger offered some flowers at the crash site, wept and said goodbye to James Huston Jr.

James Leininger was at peace afterwards. His drawings were no longer planes in air battles, but were peaceful and happy (Figure 10). He became a normal happy boy. His past life memories faded, but he still wanted to join the Marines as a fighter pilot when he grew up.

References

1. Tucker JB. The case of James Leininger: an American case of the reincarnation type. Explore (NY) 2016;12:200-207.
2. Matlock JG. Supporting Documents for "Clarifying Muddied Waters, Part I: A Secure Timeline for the James Leininger Case." Psi Open Data website. Available at: https://open-data.spr.ac.uk/dataset/supporting-documents-clarifying-muddied-waters-part-i-secure-timeline-james-leininger-case. Accessed 3 November 2023.

Figure 8. James Huston Jr.

Source: HonorStates.org.

Figure 9. James Huston Jr standing by a Corsair fighter plane.

Source: Matlock JG, 2022.[2]

Figure 10. James Leininger's drawing upon returning from Chichi Jima in mid-September 2006.

Source: Matlock JG, 2022.[2]