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Howard Starkel, radio psychic 'Rock 'n' Roll Psychic' Howard R. Starkel, 52

Author(s): TREVA JONES Staff writer **Date:** April 25, 1992 **Section:** OBIT

RALEIGH -- When friends greeted psychic Howard R. Starkel, it was with a different twist.

"Hey, Howard, how am I doing?" they would ask. And when he attended professional conferences, his cohorts' favorite line was, "Hello. You're fine. How am I?"

Starkel, known in Raleigh as the 'Rock 'n' Roll Psychic' because of his appearances on WRDU-FM, died of heart failure in his sleep Thursday morning. He was 52.

He had recently been hospitalized for a procedure to have his heart knocked back into proper rhythm, "and he never really perked up from that," said his wife, Gloria Starkel. He underwent open-heart surgery in 1985 to replace a damaged heart valve.

Recently Mr. Starkel made monthly appearances on "Pat Patterson's Place," a radio talk show on WDNC-AM in Durham.

"He was a very warm person, very outgoing, and an admitted ham," Mr. Patterson said. "He loved to do it. He also drew, as a rule, the most phone calls of any guest I'd have."

Mr. Patterson said the psychic would tell people something about themselves and what he saw coming in their lives. Most were interested in their jobs or love lives. Mr. Patterson said it seemed that Mr. Starkel was right about 95 percent of the time.

On the air at WRDU, callers also wanted to hear when they were going to come into money or how their love lives was going to work out, program director Bob Walton said.

"He answered them," Mr. Walton said. "He'd listen to their voices. He'd say, 'Talk to me some more, talk to me some more,' and he'd get his feeling and tell them how their job was going to go. He took his craft seriously, but not so seriously he couldn't have fun on the radio."

Starkel had been on hiatus from WRDU since last year to allow himself time to work on other projects, and recently had begun doing shows with Patterson at WDNC. His wasn't paid for his radio appearances.

Mr. Starkel, who moved from Atlanta to Raleigh in 1988, also did radio programs in Greensboro, where he was known as Howard the Drive-Through Psychic. He also did shows in Wilson and High Point, and in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Iowa, Wyoming, and Washington.

Born in Indiana, he was a third-generation psychic whose parents and both sets of grandparents were psychics. At breakfast, Starkel and his siblings discussed their dreams. He gave his first psychic reading when he was 7.

In 1986, the National Park Service newsletter devoted much of its October edition to his discoveries, particularly that of the buried Fort Davy Crockett, a long-lost stockade in Colorado.

In an interview published when he moved to Raleigh, Mr. Starkel said he couldn't convince someone who didn't want to be convinced.

"The common reaction is, 'I don't believe this bull -- but what do you see in it for ME?'" he said.

There were some questions he wouldn't answer, such as whether a spouse was having an affair. And he wouldn't give negative information about death, divorce, failure or health problems.

Mrs. Starkel said her husband never saw death in his readings, "because those could be the deaths of a lot of things. It could be the death of an old personality. But he's never really seen physical death."

Mr. Starkel was cremated and his ashes will be scattered across the ocean by Mrs. Starkel and a friend.

"I guess he felt he belonged everywhere," Mrs. Starkel said.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Sunday at Brown-Wynne Funeral Home on St. Mary's Street in Raleigh.

In addition to his wife, survivors include three children from another marriage, sons Brian Starkel and Bennett Starkel, and a daughter, Mrs. Brenda Nantz, all of Fort Wayne, Ind.; three sisters, Shirley Teeters of Fort Wayne, Betty Winters of Phoenix, Ariz., and Dorothy Dobler of Florida; and a brother, Bob Starkel of Sun City, Ariz.

Liz McGarr contributed to this report.

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