

The readings

of Edgar Cayce

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by **Jennifer Willis**

Not far from Richmond is a spiritual center like no other. Founded in 1931, the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) in Virginia Beach was organized to support the principles revealed in the readings of Edgar Cayce, popularly known as "the sleeping prophet."

Cayce, who lived between 1877 and 1945, had the ability to slip into a trancelike state, during which were communicated medical diagnoses and natural treatments for those who were suffering, past life readings, predictions for the future, and lessons about life and love. He claimed no authorship of the information that came through him, as he was acting as a psychic channel.

But what sprang from his work is not a separate religion or spiritual tradition. Rather, many members of A.R.E. throughout the country and the world draw upon the foundations of these readings to enhance and find new meaning within their own religious affiliations. And many who have used the organizations' services have found its people to be diverse but non-judgmental about individual belief systems.

For one Richmond engineer, it was Cayce's devout Christianity that helped him to reconcile his own budding belief in reincarnation with his more traditional faith. Cayce's readings bear a strong Christian slant, and this has attracted many who otherwise would have shied away from such "New Age" concepts.

One woman who has been involved with A.R.E. on and off for a number of years was first attracted to the group when she started a "life search," dealing with questions of "who am I?" and "why am I here?" "I truly do think it's a very



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good place to be sometimes," she says of the Association. "Perhaps even a necessary place to be in order to walk farther along on the path to knowingness."

Richmond is home to approximately 200 A.R.E. members, according to Carol Hicks, who is responsible for the local newsletter. The local affiliate of the foundation sponsors monthly meetings which are free and open to the public. These groups allow individuals to come together in small numbers for detailed discussions. For one woman in a "Search for God" study group, the time together is a means of exploring spiritual attainment through meditation and growth. A Richmond member with strong ties to a local church has found a new dimension added to his life through A.R.E. Working in a highly technical field, he found that his days were filled with "left-brain" activity and thinking. But in his 25 years as a member of A.R.E., he has found a welcome balance in his evenings of reading and studying.

A.R.E. hosts a number of retreats in Virginia Beach and also offers summer camp programs. Its press has published numerous books, and special A.R.E. products offering alternative physical remedies to those who have not had success with traditional medicine are available through some health food stores. People from surrounding areas are attracted to the center by its featured speakers, seminars, and discussions, the A.R.E. bookstore, and the extensive library, which features a quiet and peaceful meditation room overlooking the ocean. ■