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First prepared in October 2006 by the Survival Research Institute of Canada (Debra Barr and Walter Meyer zu Erpen). Capitalization of any name or subject in the text below indicates that you will find an entry on that topic in the forthcoming third edition of Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (October 2007).

Spraggett, Allen (1932-)

Journalist, author, broadcaster, psychical researcher and consultant, ordained Evangelical and later Spiritual Sciences Minister. Allen Frederick Spraggett was born at Toronto, Ontario, on 26 March 1932, the son of Henry Spraggett and Gertrude Lena Brown. In 1954, he married Marion Martin; the couple has five children.

Ordained by the Open Door Evangelical Churches in 1954, Spraggett was pastor of several Ontario congregations (Collingwood, Hamilton, Elk Lake, and Frankville) over a period of eight years. He completed his education at Queen's University and Queen's Theological College, Kingston, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) in 1962. A fellow of the Montreal-based College of Human Sciences since 1976, he was reordained as a Spiritual Science minister and granted a DMin degree by the International College of Spiritual and Psychic Sciences in 1986.

As a journalist, Spraggett worked for the *Toronto Star* as religion editor (1962-69) and daily columnist (1969-71). His weekly column *The Unexplained* (1972-77) was widely syndicated in Canada and the United States. During this period, he lectured at colleges and universities about parapsychology, including a course that he taught on behalf of the Toronto Society for Psychical Research at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.

During the 1970s, Spraggett was a popular broadcaster of radio and television programs about the paranormal. His radio show *The Unexplained* was broadcast nationally within Canada, and he was the writer and host of the Montreal CBS television series *The Occult*. In 1977, Spraggett developed the panel show *Beyond Reason* as a psychic parallel to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's very successful *Front Page Challenge*. For several seasons, Spraggett was the show's psychic expert and adjudicator. *Beyond Reason* was aired between 1977 and 1980; co-host Allen Spraggett left the show in its last incarnation.

At his most innovative, Spraggett arranged and moderated a September 1967 televised séance involving the blindfolded medium ARTHUR AUGUSTUS FORD and Episcopal BISHOP JAMES A. PIKE that attracted international media attention. During the séance, broadcast on Canadian Independent Television,

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Ford purportedly conveyed spirit messages from Pike's dead son. Spraggett knew Ford well, and later was a member of the executive council of the SPIRITUAL FRONTIERS FELLOWSHIP (1975-78).

As the founding President of the Toronto Society for Psychical Research (1970-81), Spraggett collaborated with parapsychologists A.R.G. OWEN and IRIS M. OWEN. Their work together included a live performance of the PHILIP table-tilting group on his television program.

Spraggett is the author of eight popular titles on aspects of the paranormal that offer evidence for belief in EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION, psychic healing, REINCARNATION, and the AFTERLIFE. His first book *The Unexplained* (1967) included a foreword by his friend James Pike; in three sequels, he continued the general theme of unexplained phenomena: *Probing the Unexplained* (1971); *The World of the Unexplained* (1974); and *New Worlds of the Unexplained* (1976). He also wrote several books of a biographical nature, including: *The Bishop Pike Story* (1970) about the psychic experiences and controversy surrounding Pike's disappearance and death in the Judean desert in 1969; *Kathryn Kuhlman* (1970) about the Christian faithhealer; and *Ross Peterson* (1977) who in trance was somehow able, like Edgar Cayce, to apply "untapped resources of the human mind" in order to reach out thousands of miles to individuals he had never met. In *The Case for Immortality* (1974), he argued for belief in life after death. Several years earlier, when he wrote the introduction to a revised edition of Scottish-born medium James H.P. Wilkie's *The Gift Within: Experiences of a Spiritual Medium* (1971), Spraggett had had already sittings with more than 50 mediums in several countries and was convinced of SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH and spirit communication.

Spraggett's more critical work is found in books on which he collaborated with others. With Episcopal priest Reverend Canon William V. Rauscher, he wrote: *Arthur Ford: The Man Who Talked with the Dead* (1973); and *The Spiritual Frontier: A Priest Explores the Psychic World* (1975). In their biography of Ford, Spraggett and Rauscher, who was Ford's literary executor, claim to have discovered evidence of cheating among his private papers, notably copies of newspaper obituaries that he was in the habit of clipping. Their confidence in Ford was shattered by the discovery, but they concluded, on the basis of "hard evidence", that he was a psychically gifted medium who had at times resorted to cheating. Their book called into question the value of the survival evidence that Ford claimed to have produced at his two most famous séances, the January 1929 sitting with HARRY HOUDINI's widow Beatrice, and the 1967 televised broadcast with Bishop James Pike.

In *The Psychic Mafia* (1976) as told to Spraggett, Lamar Keene described how he and other fraudulent mediums had conned hundreds of people into believing

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in their powers while working in one of America's largest SPIRITUALIST CAMPS. In his expose of fraud, Keene took care to highlight what he called "true-believer syndrome," or the need to continue an irrational belief in an unexplained phenomenon even after presentation of evidence that it was fraudulently staged. Notwithstanding the shocking nature of the confessions, both Keene and Spraggett, as well as Rauscher who wrote the introduction, made clear that they still believed in life after death, ESP and genuine psychic phenomena, despite sometimes fraudulent activities perpetrated under the guise of Spiritualism.

Spraggett has also authored many articles on "religion, parapsychology and other exotica" and is a contributor to the *New York Times* and the *Psychoanalytic Review*. In 1978 and 1995, the Ontario Supreme Court recognized him as an expert witness on the subjects of voodoo and parapsychology. More recently Spraggett assisted Rauscher with his limited edition book *The Houdini Code Mystery: A Spirit Secret Solved* (2000).

During the 1970s, Spraggett's books, weekly columns, and appearances on radio and television did much to popularize the occult within Canada and the United States. The scholarly *Psychoanalytic Review* described Spraggett as "Canada's foremost authority on ESP." His innovative broadcast programs made information about psychic phenomena, including the arguments in favour of belief in life after death, accessible to the general public.

Further Reading:

Keene, Lamar, as told to Allen Spraggett. *The Psychic Mafia: True and Shocking Confessions of a Famous Medium*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976.

Spraggett, Allen, with William V. Rauscher. *Arthur Ford: The Man Who Talked with the Dead*. New York: New American Library (Times Mirror), 1973.

Spraggett, Allen. *The Bishop Pike Story: The Extraordinary Life, Psychic Experiences and Death of the Most Controversial Churchman of our Times*. New York: New American Library, 1970.

Spraggett, Allen. *The Case for Immortality: The Story of Life After Death*. New York: Signet / New American Library, 1974.

Spraggett, Allen, with a foreword by James A. Pike. *The Unexplained: The Startling Discoveries of an Expert in Extrasensory Perception and the Occult*. New York: Signet Book / The New American Library, 1967.

Canadian Who's Who, Allen Spraggett is first included in volume 19 (1984).