

Traces mystic roots to Russia

Bathsheba's a born psychic

By KATIE KERWIN

Jacqueline Bathsheba Markovitz' Troy living room looks like most suburban homes — thick carpeting, comfortable furniture, subdued tones, with paintings on the walls and a crystal ball on the coffee table.

The crystal ball belongs to Bathsheba, a plump, smiling woman with curly blond hair and a soft British accent. She wears a flowing Indian sari and a necklace of wildcat teeth. The necklace was a gift from an African client whose fortune she told.

"He was so pleased with what I told him," she said, fingering the small tusks.

The atmosphere is upper middle class, with shelves of books lending a literary air. But when a friend or customer comes over for a "reading," ceremonial candles, Tarot cards and a black velvet table covering transform the mood.

Crystal ball gazing, astrology, dream interpretation, palmistry and reading tea leaves are the more popular — and easily understood — of her interests. But religious mysticism is her primary interest, Bathsheba said.

MYSTICISM, she explained, is religion in an ancient sense. "The Hebrews were one of the first peoples to be astrologers," she said, adding that synagogues as far back as the ninth century have zodiac signs carved on their walls. "Most people believe that Tarot was exclusive to the Egyptians," Bathsheba added. "But Abraham used to use tablets with figures carved on them. It was the most ancient form of fortune-telling."

She is planning a pilgrimage to Israel next spring. The visit will include Safed, where "the Cabala," an ancient mystical interpretation of the Bible as the Tree of Life, was founded, she said.

Bathsheba said her mystic roots go back to Czarist Russia. Her grandparents fled to England during the Russian Revolution. Growing up in London — "the misty British Isles, home of Stonehenge and the New Forest," as she prefers to say — Bathsheba was entranced by her grandparents' stories of Rasputin, the czars and mysticism.

"It was just in me," she said, at a loss to explain where her fascination with psychic phenomena comes from. "It was the stories they told me."

She said she thinks her grandfather may have possessed psychic qualities. Bathsheba tells of an encounter between her grandfather's hand of soldiers and a wolfpack in a snowy Russian forest.

"The leader of the pack came near my grandfather. Then the wolf started to lick his hand," she said. "Then they

left — the wolves disbanded."

While young Bathsheba said she realized she has psychic powers of her own. The "inner warnings" began in childhood.

"We lived in London during the war. I used to get feelings when there would be a blitz and when there wouldn't," Bathsheba said. The bombs would fall without any warning.

One day, she made her mother leave the apartment to go to the bomb shelter, although no sirens had yet sounded. "It's a miracle we did, because when we came back, the house was badly damaged. The bed where I slept had a big hole in the back of it from a piece of shrapnel."

Bathsheba read about and studied mysticism as her interest grew. "I read a lot of books, and the Bible, of course." Eventually, she met her Czech husband, Paul. They married and moved to the United States. Bathsheba studied with Gundella, the Garden City witch. Her classes with Gundella, she stresses, were "psychic science classes, not witchcraft classes."

"My work has nothing to do with witchcraft," she said. "I have my religion and it's not witchcraft."

BATHSHEBA PUBLISHED her first book, "Poetry of the Zodiac." She is working on a second, "The Magical, Mystical Male," about exciting Biblical figures.

She was former owner of Bathsheba Boutique in Ferndale. The shop was a financial failure, closing after a year, she said. The boutique specialized in Tarot cards, crystal balls, astrological jewelry, candles, Ouija boards and Indian-style clothing. Customers also came to have their fortune revealed by Tarot, tea or crystal ball.

"People have all sorts of reasons for coming. They believe or want help, or maybe they're worried," she said. She added, though, that she has trouble seeing into her own future.

"I go to a spiritual reader for myself." But all the methods are implements for discovering the truth, she said.

"Deep down, I find, the help comes from God. He's the main source of everything."

Bathsheba said psychic sensitivity is a natural gift that can be nurtured, but not artificially created.

"I think it has to be born within you. But I think it can be helped to grow stronger." Her skills in dream interpretation, palmistry, Tarot and crystal ball gazing developed from her native ability, she said.

"I didn't learn — it just came to me.

It was there." Bathsheba waves her hand toward the shelves lined with psychic volumes. "I have all kinds of books about it — I don't really need them, but I read them anyway."

Crystal ball gazing is one of the more time-consuming methods of predicting the future. Bathsheba prefers to scan the crystal in a darkened room lit by candles, with the client sitting opposite.

"It takes about half an hour before I see anything usually," she said. "I get sort of a heady feeling, sometimes almost a dizzy feeling."

She uses a crystal ball imported from Italy, with a smaller sphere trapped at the center. But financially-strapped viewers can make do with a bowl of water, Bathsheba said.

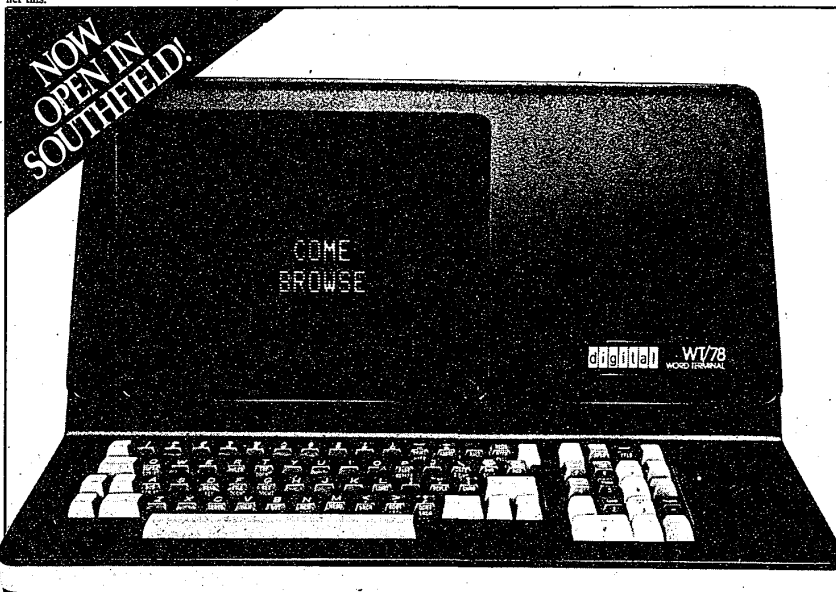
THE GIFT CAN be something of a curse, too, though, she said. Readings can reveal unpleasant future developments.

"Sometimes it's really hard, especially if it's a friend," she recalled seeing an impending divorce in a friend's hand during a palm reading once.

"I didn't know what to say. I sort of stopped," she said. "I didn't want to tell her this."



Bathsheba, also known as Jacqueline Markovitz of Troy, says psychic sensitivity is a natural gift that can be nurtured, but not artificially created. (Photo by Santa Fabio)



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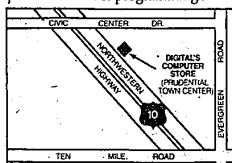
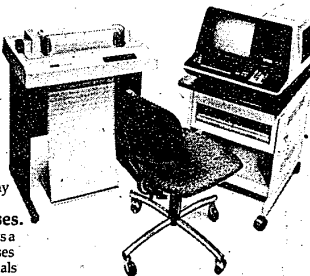
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