

THE STORY OF DEBBIE

by Robert F. Otto, C.Ht.

It was in late April of 1991 that I had my first hypnotic encounter with a lovely young woman from Arkansas by the name of Debbie. As I would later learn, Debbie was soon to be one of the most memorable hypnotic subjects I have ever had the opportunity to work with. (Either directly or indirectly.)



Debbie was an employee of a national hotel chain of which I frequented nearly a half dozen times per year for a number of years. She was a bright, friendly, robust, well-dressed woman and in what I would guess to be her early thirties. Her outgoing personality and friendly smile made it easy to develop an instant liking to her. Because she was the manager on duty working the evening shift, it was not uncommon for our paths to cross each time I visited the hotel. Subsequently, each time we met we would exchange pleasantries, talking about the weather, and things of that nature. In general our conversations were always lighthearted and kept on a professional level. But somehow during the course of our exchanged dialogue of pleasantries our conversations would always end up shifting towards hypnosis, her interest and curiosity about the subject, and whether or not she could use it successfully in losing weight.

While conversing with her on the basic elements of hypnosis, I could actually see her professional profile diminish and transform almost instantly into what I perceived as the nervous stature and chatter of a child. Because of her childlike demeanor and endless list of questions on the subject, I was finally compelled one evening to invite her into my workshop free of charge. My reasoning was threefold. The first reason was to offer her admittance as a professional courtesy because she was an employee of the hotel. Secondly, for the sake of removing some of the fears and misconceptions she had on the subject of hypnosis. And thirdly to help aid her in her desire to lose some unwanted weight. Unfortunately her staff was working short handed that evening and with a tearful eye and an apologetic pout, she had to renege on the invitation until another time.

To further explain the phenomenon that occurred, let me describe to you the room accommodations that were available to me for my workshop that evening. As many of you know, it is not uncommon for most full service hotels to have the flexibility and seating capacity to accommodate anywhere from one hundred to one thousand people for any given event. One way they accomplish this is by simply adding or removing portable walls as the event necessitates. And that evening my room was no exception.

As was my custom, just prior to my workshop, I took it upon myself to make a complete and thorough inspection of the room and it's surroundings. I could see that the staff had meticulously placed the chairs to my exact specifications. The room was neat and clean. The registration table was neatly draped and skirted, water pitchers

filled, and wall dividers pulled snugly into place. All seemed to be in perfect order for my function. Except for one significant detail.

As luck would have it there seemed to be another event taking place during the same time frame that evening. The other event was orderly yet a bit too noisy for my liking. My preference for a meeting room has always been one that is conducive to hypnosis, and quiet enough so as not to cause too much of a distraction to the people in attendance. Because of this, I found myself requesting the staff to erect two walls between my room and the other room that was to be occupied that evening. This request would result in an empty room between the two functions. The empty room would act almost as a sound barrier between the two occupied rooms. It was my belief that this was in the best interest of both parties and the hotel staff quickly obliged.

The time arrived for my workshop to begin and as scheduled, I took my place in front of the audience. As was my custom I quickly put the audience at ease and gave an effective yet simplified pre-talk on hypnosis. As the pre-talk ended, I took my place in the back of the room to begin the induction, and went through the habitual motions I had grown so accustomed to.

After the session had ended and I dismissed the group, I took my place in the back of the room, and made myself available for one-on-one chats with those who felt the need to do so. Because I make myself available for personal discussion after a session, it is not uncommon for me to leave an event much later than anticipated. My philosophy is now and always has been to incorporate a humanistic approach to all of my lectures. Success breeds success and it is my sincere desire that all who are in attendance leave the workshop feeling completely satisfied and well on their way to success. Success with not only the hypnotic segment of the workshop, but with my delivery and explanation as well, of the phenomenon we call hypnosis.

Needless to say I left the hotel that evening much later than expected and did not have the opportunity to bid farewell to my friend Debbie.

As the weeks passed between visits I never again gave thought to Debbie or her desire to attend a session on weight loss until my next scheduled workshop at the hotel. That day, as I approached the front desk, I was unnerved by the way the once cheerful employees greeted me. They all seemed nervous and ill at ease. Not wanting to look me directly in the eye, fidgeting and distant in their mannerisms towards me. (Very similar to the way people have the misconception that by looking a hypnotist in the eye they would go into instant trance!) I knew something was awry yet couldn't put my finger on it until from behind the back room, Debbie appeared. Much to my surprise her appearance was strikingly different. She had lost at least 25 pounds since I had last seen her. Cheerfully she greeted me. Suddenly the expression on her face quickly changed from a cheerful smile to a puzzled and perplexed expression. She asked if she could speak with me at the other end of the hotel lobby. Of course I obliged. What happened next would leave an indelible impression on my mind that would surely remain with me for the rest of my life.

Waiting until we were out of ear shot of the other employees, (but definitely not out of ear shot of other guests in the hotel lobby) and without any warning, Debbie suddenly blurted out, "Did you DO me?" Shocked at the implications that could be construed by these four little words, my mind was reeling as I barely uttered a response. "Excuse me?" I muttered. Again, she asked the same accusing question only in a much higher, more accusing tone, "Did you DO me?" Looking around I could see the demeanor of the other professional businessmen in the lobby as they tried to pretend to be going about their business and hadn't just overheard Debbie's abrupt words. But their body language spoke volumes! Their sly glances and jutting eyes were a clear indication that they were definitely interested in the rest of our conversation. In order to quickly clear myself of any wrongdoing I asked Debbie to explain to me exactly what she was referring to by that statement. Her revelation to me that day should be a lesson to all in the power of our subconscious acting, fertile, suggestible minds.

"Mr. Otto." she began, "Do you remember the last time you were here and you were kind enough to invite me to attend your workshop as your guest?" "Yes, go on" I stammered slowly. "Well, I couldn't attend the entire workshop that evening because we were understaffed, but I did have the opportunity to sneak away a little later. Not wanting to disturb you after you had already started your lecture, yet ready to see how hypnosis could help me with losing weight, I slipped quietly into the empty room next door, grabbed a chair, and sat quietly in the darkness on the other side of the dividing wall with my ear pressed firmly against the divider and listened very carefully to everything you were saying. (She joined us during the beginning of the hypnotic segment of the workshop.) As I sat there quietly, I think I must have fallen asleep because I didn't hear a word you said after the first few minutes! But here it is, now nearly two months later and I've lost almost twenty-five pounds with no effort at all on my part. It's just been slowly melting away. The only thing I can conclude is that you must have 'done' me."

Although the words Debbie used to explain her success with hypnosis could have been a little more selective, she certainly was a walking, talking testimonial to everyone she encountered on the effectiveness of hypnosis. I wish I could take the credit for Debbie's success. However I really must place the success where it rightfully belongs, in Debbie's mind. Like the old saying goes. The formula for hypnosis is nothing more than expectation, belief and imagination coupled with suggestion. And that evening Debbie's mind was certainly like a laboratory vial. Perfectly containing, mixing and blending in that vial all the appropriate elements to produce the formula we call hypnosis.