

‘We found our spiritual destiny’

It takes courage and commitment to take the path less travelled in life. *Spirit & Destiny* meets three women who gave up everything to follow their true calling



Animal communicator Jackie with Misty



Jackie helped her rescue dog Sally overcome trauma

‘I talk to animals and help them heal’

For many years Jackie Weaver, 48, an animal communicator, worked as a veterinary nurse, but after beating cancer she gained a special spiritual gift. She lives in Shropshire with her husband Bob, 60, who's an equine dentist.

Until I was diagnosed with cancer in 2005 when I was 41 (it was stage four and in my liver, spleen, bones and stomach), I'd never heard of animal communication. But when I was on the road to recovery the following year, out of curiosity, Bob and

I decided to book an animal communicator – or pet psychic – to talk to our rescue dog, Sally. Back then we also had two horses, Misty and Monty, plus two cats.

The pet psychic chatted to Sally and relayed what our dog told her: ‘I trust Jackie

and Bob 99 per cent,’ said Sally, which was amazing, given that she was a rescue animal.

Later the animal communicator said to me, ‘The minute I walked through the door I knew you had this gift.’ Then she gave me a crash course on how to talk to animals and trust the voice in my head, my intuition.

I was gobsmacked and unsure what to do. I didn't try to make contact with my own animals because it seemed impossible.

But a few months later, six months after finishing chemotherapy, I was standing in a stable yard with my ex-racehorse, Monty, and my friend Sarah. She was giving Monty Equine Touch, a hands-on muscle treatment for horses. I had my back turned to her when I heard Monty say, ‘Oh, this feels nice. She's moving on to my hindquarters now.’ Monty

then gave me a running commentary on the treatment he was receiving.

Keeping my back turned, I relayed to Sarah what Monty was saying and she'd reply, ‘I don't believe this, but you're spot on.’ I was blown away because I was picking up the physical sensations of Sarah's treatment and could feel parts of my body being soothed as she worked on my horse.

I rushed across the yard to tell Bob, and his jaw dropped as I explained what had happened. Sarah confirmed it all and was delighted because it validated her treatment. From then on, I was easily able to talk to animals telepathically by tuning in to them.

A few months later, I was stroking Sally when suddenly I had images of her being pulled around by children, inside a house and outside. Sally, now five, had been with us a year, but I hadn't known what the scars were on her tummy and face. Having seen her in distress, I told her, ‘I love you and you're safe now. You'll never go back there.’

I tell all rescue animals they're secure with their new owners, to boost their confidence. When I told Sally she was going to live with me and Bob, she replied, ‘I only want to be loved – that's it,’ which made me cry. It's often an emotional experience.

I always start by saying telepathically to the animal, ‘Hello, I'm Jackie and I'm an animal communicator. Your owner asked

me to talk to you. This is your chance to say whatever you want.’

I ask questions and they reply. Some communicate quickly and others are shy, like humans, but they chat and affirm our conversation with details like their health histories and nicknames. The first thing one horse, a seven-year-old Welsh cob, told me was, ‘I make my owner laugh by prancing about and she says, “You silly boy!”’ When I told the owner, she roared with laughter and admitted, ‘I do! That's so true.’

Another horse described his favourite place to ride so well I drew a picture of it. When the owner saw my sketch she showed me a photo of a landscape that looked identical. I was shocked at the accuracy.

I believe there's a universal language, and Spirit translates animals' thoughts so that I understand them, and vice versa. I know this gift wasn't caused by a drug or chemical reaction in my brain from the chemotherapy. It didn't appear until six months after I finished my treatment.

When I finally accepted I could talk to animals I wanted to help other pets, and within three months, through word of mouth and Bob's more

open-minded clients, I was working flat out. Sometimes people want to find out what their animal is thinking but often it's to help it with a health problem or psychological issue. Horses have told me about their phobias, illnesses and bad experiences.

One four-year-old chestnut had a fear of the local farrier and anyone picking up his hooves. The horse said, ‘When I was young, the first time someone picked up my hoof I fell over. I'm terrified it will happen again.’ He asked that his owner stand with him while he was having his hooves done and say to him, ‘It's OK, you're safe,’ which she did. The horse has been fine ever since.

Another horse, Camilla, said, ‘I don't think it's the best name for a horse, do you?’ Her owner, Sheena, agreed and we asked Camilla what she wanted to be called. She replied, ‘Gem, as in “gem of a horse”.’

Later that day Sheena visited her in-laws, and on the kitchen table was a silver dog tag with the name Gem on it. When Sheena asked where it had come from, her in-laws

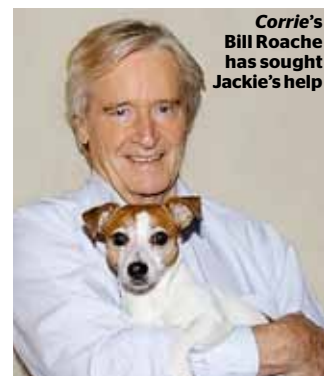
‘I know I'm blessed. I'm convinced my life was spared to give the animals a voice’

didn't know, so she took the mystery tag and it now adorns the newly named Gem's bridle.

Today, even celebrities ask me to speak to their pets. I've spoken to dogs belonging to actors Stephanie Beacham and Bill Roache.

My own animals' love helped me during my cancer battle. In April 2010, five years after my diagnosis, a consultant gave me the all-clear and admitted that when they'd first seen me they privately gave me four weeks to live. The doctor added, ‘You have no idea how lucky you've been.’ But I know I'm blessed. I'm convinced my life was spared to give the animals a voice.

•For information on Jackie Weaver, visit www.animaltalking.co.uk. Jackie's latest book, *Celebrity Pet Talking: With The Animal Psychic (£10.99, Upfront)* is out now.



Corrie's Bill Roache has sought Jackie's help

Inspiring lives



Yoga has enriched Alison's life

‘Sting turned me on to yoga’

Alison Francis, 49, is known by her spiritual name, Anandi. She's a yoga teacher and ‘sleep guru’ who lives in Italy



My spiritual journey began in the most unusual and surreal way. About 12 years ago, I was a beauty therapist and used to go to Trudie Styler and Sting's home in Wiltshire to do treatments for Trudie.

After 10 years of doing Trudie's waxing, manicures and pedicures, chatting all the while, we'd become quite close. She was very generous, and when I announced I was getting married, she got out a bottle of champagne and gave me a beautiful silver picture frame. I was really touched.

Trudie is very open and grounded. She'd chat about her family and how doing ashtanga yoga had wrecked her toenails! She'd express her interest in organic food and farming, and her concern about toxins in food, which was something I was also worried about. She really cares about the environment – it's a big passion for her and Sting – and she would voice her worries about our world being left

TEXT MONICA CAFFEY PHOTOS ROBIN PALMER

without trees and about the work she did for rainforest charities. Trudie is an uplifting, spiritual person and we'd chat about the universe and Spirit. I hadn't really started my spiritual journey then, but talking to Trudie always inspired me.

Sting was often around, listening to music, being quite quiet and unassuming. He'd sometimes come into the room to ask her a question and they'd hold hands while talking.

By contrast, my life was quite stressful. I'd been with my husband for four years before we married, but the relationship was going through a rocky patch. On top of that, my beauty salon was struggling.

One day, when I was visiting Trudie, Sting asked for a foot massage. It was the first time he'd requested a treatment. We started talking about our shared love of Italy – I'd always wanted a house there and they have a home in Tuscany. I was quite nervous – after all, this was *Sting!*

So I couldn't believe it when he said, 'I'm going to Italy in a few weeks. Why don't you and your husband come over?'

It was September and, as it happened, we were going to be in Italy the same weekend, so I said yes. The decision was to change my life.

It felt strange pulling up to their Tuscan house, with Sting meeting us at the gate in his wellies with the dog and inviting us for tea on the terrace. He hasn't got a big ego, and is happiest when he's with his dog on a hill in Italy. They have a beautiful 16th-century house, which is luxurious

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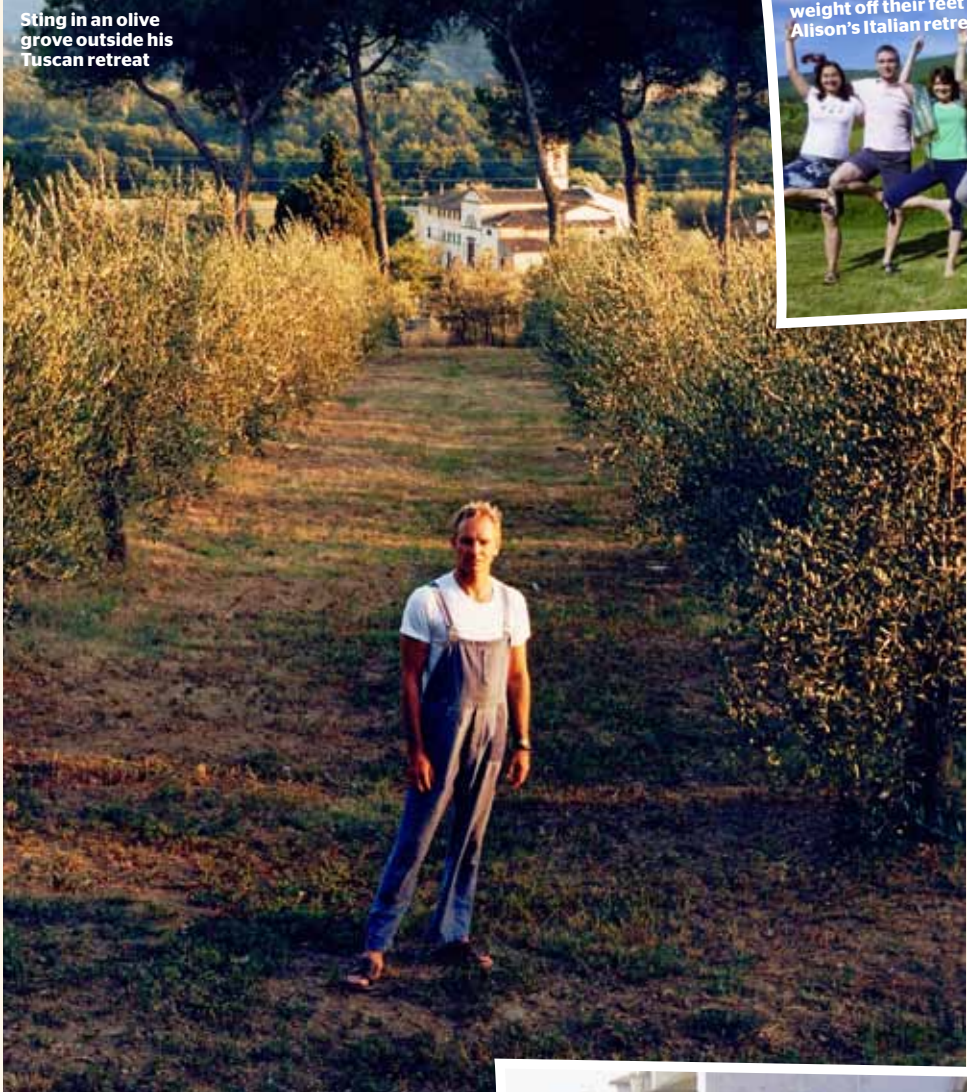
but tasteful, with views over their vineyard and olive grove. Our bedroom was huge. Apparently Madonna had once slept in the same bed.

Before dinner that night we met Sting's other guests, including an Italian musician. Sting asked if we'd like to hear his friend play the flute in his underground chapel, which was gorgeous, with candlelight dancing off the frescoes on the walls and ceiling.

Dinner was delicious but not what I'd expected – turkey and all the trimmings, a healthier version of Christmas dinner – cooked by Sting's chef, Joe Sponzo, who wrote *The Lake House Cookbook* with Trudie.

I sat next to Sting's yoga guru, Jules Paxton, who sadly passed away last year, but was then a yoga teacher to the stars, including Barbra Streisand. He'd spend up to three months at a time with Sting.

Afterwards we all sat around the fire, my husband playing chess with Sting, while I chatted to



Sting in an olive grove outside his Tuscan retreat



Participants take the weight off their feet at Alison's Italian retreat



With the Indian guru who named her Anandi, meaning 'in bliss'

and that yoga poses open and stimulate the chakras. I felt like my chakras had burst open, and it left me feeling amazing for weeks.

Sting had taken my husband for a walk to show him a treehouse that overlooks the lake, where he likes to meditate. He asked me how the yoga session had gone. But I was still quite nervous around him, and I was floating from the session, so all I could manage to say was, 'Good'. I think I told him that Jules was an amazing human being, and he agreed.

After I got back to the UK, my marriage sadly fell apart. I realised I wanted to grow but my husband didn't. I'd been fighting an intuitive voice that things weren't right for a long time – and now it was time to listen to it.

Even though it meant I had money troubles, I started exploring what I wanted in life. I did lots of studying and learning, including going to an ashram in India where I found my guru who gave me my spiritual name, Anandi, meaning 'in bliss'.

I changed my beauty business by specialising in a few treatments and it thrived (it now ticks along as a sideline), while I retrained as a yoga teacher in India.

In 2003 I bought my house in Italy and now I mainly live there. I teach yoga in a studio attached to the house and run retreats for people suffering from exhaustion or insomnia, which incorporates yoga nidra (yogic sleep), with the power of breath and nutrition advice. I've got my first UK Sleep Retreat coming up in London in September.

One of the best things about all these changes has been helping others alter their own lives. The only thing you need to believe when practising yoga is that you can transform yourself. For instance, a friend of mine had been very stressed for a long time – she couldn't hold down a relationship and had money worries and low self-esteem. We did some sessions together and she said they changed her life. She now sleeps well, feels more alive and has more confidence in herself. And she's married with two children.

I'm not really in contact with Trudie and Sting any more, as we've all moved on. But my life has been enriched beyond belief by having a yogic lifestyle, and I feel extremely grateful to them.

•For information about Alison's retreats and workshops, visit www.anandi.co.uk



Alison with Jules Paxton, Sting's yoga teacher

Jules, who asked if I fancied doing some yoga with him in the morning.

I knew nothing about yoga. I was a fitness instructor and aerobics teacher as well as a beautician – I liked to work up a sweat during exercise, and thought yoga was for older people. Trudie had often talked about yoga and I could see the benefits just by looking at her and Sting.

The next morning I met Jules in the chapel. We started with some chanting and he said, 'You can trust me.' I thought this sounded a bit odd, but decided to just go with it.

I lay on the mat and Jules began stretching me, pulling my legs and arms. Then he lay on his back with his legs in the air and I lay over his feet, arching my body backwards, so the soles of his feet were buried in my back. With my head lolling and my arms dangling, Jules started to move and it felt like I was flying. The experience was surreal – gazing at the frescoes as I 'flew' in Sting's underground chapel.

Then, after all this, I began to wail. I don't know where it

came from, but it was an uncontrollable emotion that felt like blissful release.

After about 40 minutes the crying subsided and I felt brand new and as light as a feather. But what had just happened?

Jules said, 'We're born with a shiny diamond inside us that's our soul. As we go through life, we throw dirt at it. When we become adults, we paint on a shiny exterior – the face we show others. But the dirt's still there. We've taken the dirt off your diamond and polished it up.'

He explained that all the body's chakras, or energy centres, have specific pressure points,



Sally felt compelled to offer healing to those most in need

‘I use a healing gift in my orphanage’

Unfulfilled by her career as a high-flying businesswoman, Sally Forrest, 47, quit her job, became a holistic guru and opened a children's home in Thailand



Pushing the bamboo door of the shack open, I squinted into the darkness and glimpsed something moving on the mud floor. A snake? Then I saw him – a tiny baby, dressed in a dirty piece of cloth. As I stepped outside with the child in my arms, I realised he was covered in an army of biting ants. There were sores all over his body and the whites of his eyes were green with infection, yet he didn't cry.

The neighbour, who had often heard the baby

screaming, told us his poverty-stricken 16-year-old mother didn't know how to take care of him and often left him alone. Holding the baby close, I climbed into the waiting pick-up truck and drove 30 bumpy miles to the nearest hospital.

There the doctor pushed an antibiotic injection into his infected skin. 'It's a miracle he's still alive, so expect the worst. He will die in days,' he predicted.

I left with some antibiotics and took the frail boy back

to the orphanage I'd set up a year before. I named him Ben and vowed not to give up trying to save him. I was filled with hope as I clutched him to my chest, willing him to survive, and let the healing power of reiki flow through my hands.

Over the past couple of years, life had taken a more dramatic turn than I'd ever expected. I'd spent much of my life thriving on all things logical, excelling at maths and science. I'd qualified as a pharmacist and worked