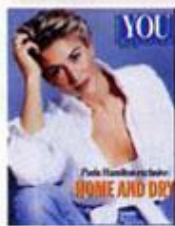


Supernatural Model

Behind the glitz, model Paula Hamilton has known the pain of addiction and loss. Here she tells Sally Morgan how spirituality has been a constant in her life

She's best remembered as the Princess Diana lookalike in the VW Golf advert, who angrily discards her fur coat, pearl necklace and wedding ring but decides to keep the car. But these days, Paula Hamilton lives a life that couldn't be more different from that materialistic image.

As a successful model, Paula jetted around the globe - and became addicted to drink and drugs. But now she's replaced that decadent lifestyle with a more spiritual existence. At 51, she's as stunning as ever, attributing her enviable figure to her organic diet and her pursuit of enlightenment. She talks candidly about a childhood immersed in nature, past lives and ghosts, and how she hopes her work on nutrition will help others become healthy.



Above: Paula was a famous cover girl. Left: the iconic TV ad for Volkswagen that made her name



Was it difficult to mix spirituality with the life of a supermodel?

Yes, it was. As a young model I earned six-figure fees, stayed in the best hotels and partied relentlessly. When I worked in the States, I thought nothing of chartering a Learjet for myself and a group of friends for a short hop to Atlantic City. But the truth is, I can't remember any of it - I was too drunk. I was addicted to alcohol and cocaine, and was in and out of rehab throughout my twenties.

To top it all, in 2006 I was misdiagnosed as bipolar and given medication that made me gain four stone in 12 weeks. A year later, tests revealed I was actually suffering from dyslexia and dyspraxia, a condition that makes it difficult to organise your thoughts and speech. Throughout this confusing time, it helped to meditate.

Is it right that you practise Transcendental Meditation (TM)?

At 24 I was living in New York with a boyfriend who was a film-maker, and he was doing a course in TM, so I did it with him. I'd meditate every morning for 20 minutes, sitting up in bed with a pillow behind my back, and 20 minutes in the late afternoon. TM catches the anxiety that lurks beneath the consciousness, allowing it to melt before it becomes a conscious thought.

Two years after I started doing TM, I astral planed. I never meant to do it - one minute I was leaning against a pillow, and the next I was speeding out of my body faster than anything I could imagine. I couldn't see anything except darkness all around me. All I could feel was the great force of speeding upwards.

I was spooked, so I opened my eyes and immediately I was back in my body. But as soon as I closed my eyes again, I started to speed off, until it slowed down and I was back in my body again.

It's happened a few times since then, and now I just go

with it. Astral planing isn't the reason I meditate, because that would defeat its purpose, which is to let go and not plan anything. I believe that TM works because when the mind and body are totally relaxed and are just allowed to be in the now, they use very little energy, which enables them to repair themselves and rejuvenate.

Have you ever seen a ghost?

I often stay in a haunted house that belongs to a dear friend of mine. It's also home to a female ghost, aged about 11. We call her Fleur, because of the beautiful scent that fills the room when she is present. We believe she was a serving girl who died after being overcome by fumes

I was just sitting there meditating, and the next minute I was speeding out of my body

when the house was set on fire in the 15th century.

I haven't seen her as such, but she appears in the oak-panelled room behind a pair of heavy brocade curtains. She runs her fingers along them, from one end to the other, and then a waft of her floral perfume suddenly bursts past me. I'm not in the least bit afraid of her - to me the paranormal feels perfectly natural.

What are your thoughts on reincarnation? Do you ever feel as though you've been here before?

Yes, many times. I've been regressed many times, and I've experienced past lives in which I was a baker, a sea captain and the daughter of a woman charged with witchcraft.

The details I came up with when I was regressed to my life as a baker were checked out for a TV show called *Back To The*



Present, which was presented by Eamonn Holmes.

In that life in the 1800s my name was Ashley and I emigrated from Liverpool to Dublin, where I married my wife Penny. We worked for a Squire Browning and lived above the bakery, but when I was taken 50 years forward, I was dying from a lung disease caused by working with flour dust for most of my life. Penny had died of pneumonia a few months earlier, and I welcomed death, as I didn't want to live without her. My addresses and the people I named were verified through archives and maps.

To have these details confirmed was reassuring, because to me this is proof that we carry on into a new life. We are all made of energy that's constantly changing. You can't destroy it, because it evolves into different energy.


What impact has being regressed had on you?

In one particular regression, I was chained up in a dungeon because my mother had been accused of being a witch, and now I feel an overpowering desire to fight injustice. If there's someone who's being bullied, I want to help them, and I want to empower people to gain access to their own freedom.

I also feel that the Church should pardon the thousands of women they burned for witchcraft in the name of religion. All these women were doing was using their knowledge of herbs to help heal people. Imagine not being able to help your child who is ill, using plants you know will make them better, in case you're accused of being a witch. This fear permeated society and took power away from genuinely wise women.

When did your spiritual beliefs begin to form?

I was born in Richmond in Surrey, but my family emigrated to South Africa when I was 18 months old because my stepfather had a job with a pharmaceutical company over there. I adored my nanny, and at weekends I would join her family and listen to ancient African stories under the stars.

I learned all about the soil, minerals, herbs and plants and their goodness. At home, we ate what we grew in the 

Profile

garden. My gardening skills stayed with me when we returned to the UK at the age of nine.

It sounds like nature forms the basis of your spiritual beliefs...

If I'm a devotee to anything, it's Mother Nature. She looks after us through the earth and the elements, but then if we don't look after her too, she will slough us off her back and hurt us with disasters. Whatever made us - call it God, Mother Nature, the Power or the

If we don't look after Mother Earth she will slough us off her back and hurt us with disasters!

Force - is asking us to put our faith in a power greater than ourselves, and to forgive. Every religion points to the light, and requests forgiveness and love. We have to look after our earth.

I hear you're writing a book about what we can learn from the diets of indigenous peoples...

For the last 17 years, I've been researching the health-giving properties of plants and herbs that are still eaten by remote villages today. Last September

I spent a month with a Bedouin tribe in North Africa. They have fewer illnesses than us in the West, and tellingly, their diet is the same as it was hundreds of years ago. They didn't need a dentist until 1991, which is when processed foods finally reached them. But in the area where they live I came across a plant they eat that could combat diabetes, so I think we can learn a lot from their diet.

My book's called *Journey Beneath The Skin*, and it's still a work in progress. I've delved back to 5000BC to analyse

diets and muscle tone, and how people sustained their bodies. How did the Roman army survive on the march and in fierce battle? They would chew on nutritious plants that grow everywhere, such as chickweed, fat hen, sorrel, nettles, dandelion and even grass.

Thyme contains more protein per ounce than a steak, and chickweed, which tastes a bit like spinach, is bursting with minerals. In my opinion nettles have more goodness in them than any other food on the planet. I forage for them in the

hedgerows and fields where I live in rural Buckinghamshire, and add them to soups, salads and smoothies.

You've survived the trauma of losing your father and of going through drug rehab. Has this changed the way you see the world?

My outlook and inner being are richer and more profound. The worst trauma was when my father was murdered when I was 15 - he was beaten to death in a brawl. Afterwards, I was sent to school in America, and I kept the grief locked inside me for years. I shut down emotionally, and it was only after I started meditating in my early twenties that I became more spiritually aware. However, the grief gates didn't open properly for me until a year ago. Finally, I was able to feel lost love, the loss of a parent, and to acknowledge that I wished I'd known him better.

Are you a typical Aquarian?

Yes, I love water in all its forms. Like many Aquarians, I see the way ahead and look to the future. In some horoscopes I'm on the cusp of Capricorn, which explains why I feel a deep-rooted connection with the earth and have the stamina to focus on a project for a long time before I reach the summit and achieve it. **SPIRIT-DESTINY**



Paula with her one-time fiancé Henry Cole in 1994



From left: Janice Dickinson, Lisa Snowdon, Abigail Clancy and Paula on *Britain's Next Top Model* in 2006



First boyfriend Simon Cowell



At the BNTM launch party

PHOTOS: THE ADVERTISING ARCHIVES; ALPINA; GETTY IMAGES; PAV BURBISTON; IREX FEATURES; SCOPE FEATURES

FACT FILE



Paula, aged four

BORN 23 January 1961.

STAR SIGN Aquarius.

FAMILY Paula has 11 brothers and sisters, and 18 nephews and nieces. She lives in Buckinghamshire with her dog Huckleberry, a Dachshund-Jack Russell cross.

LOVE LIFE Paula's first boyfriend was *X Factor* guru Simon Cowell, whom she met at school in Slough. She married cameraman

Danny Mindel in 1987, but they split after two and a half years. She survived two broken engagements, to film director Henry Cole and former *Life Guards* captain Sebastian Rhodes Stampa. She is currently single.

CAREER Paula started modelling at the age of 17 in Tokyo. Her career took off four years later, after she was 'discovered' by photographer David Bailey. For 20 years she modelled for the Queen's

couturier, Sir Hardy Amies. She has also featured in campaigns for Burberry, Christian Dior, Gap, Revlon and Clinique, and appeared as a judge on the TV series *Britain's Next Top Model*.

CHARITY Paula supports Claire House, a children's hospice in Merseyside. She donated a photo and other items to a recent charity auction, which raised £65,000. To find out more or to make a donation, visit www.claire-house.org.uk