

REMEMBERING ARTHUR HASTINGS (1935–2014)

Genie Palmer, Ph.D.
Palo Alto, CA

The field of transpersonal psychology and Sofia University lost a remarkable person this past April. It will come as no surprise to those who knew Arthur Hastings well to learn how he carefully crafted his own obituary several months before his death. In fact, he wrote several obituaries—his thoughtful way of making sure the story of his life went to the important places and valued people in his life. What follows immediately is Arthur’s obituary, as he wrote it.

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Dr. Arthur Claude Hastings, professor at Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) in Palo Alto, CA, passed away peacefully 13 April 2014 at his home. He was 79 and the cause of death was acute leukemia.

Dr. Hastings was a faculty member at Sofia from its beginning in 1975 and over the years held most of the top positions in the school. Earlier in his academic career, he held faculty appointments at Stanford University, San Jose State University, and the University of Nevada.

He was one of the founders and a leader in the field of transpersonal psychology. He specialized in transpersonal theory, altered states of consciousness, and research methodology. He was book review editor for the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* and former president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology. At Sofia University, he directed the William James Center for Consciousness Studies and was doing research on the psychomanteum technique, an innovative approach to healing bereavement.

He was well known as a parapsychologist for his research on psychic phenomena. He consulted at SRI International on remote viewing projects and published articles on this successful research. He investigated poltergeist phenomena using his knowledge of conjuring techniques to identify several cases of deception or misinterpretation. He wrote critiques of Israeli psychic Uri Geller and of deceptive psychic practitioners.

One of his hobbies was magic, and he often entertained at school events with magic illustrating psychological concepts and stories. He was a member of three magic organizations and used his magical knowledge to investigate apparent cases of poltergeists and other parapsychological phenomena.

Email: genie.palmer@sofia.edu

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He was on the board of the Northern California Society for Clinical Hypnosis and used hypnosis to assist people in performance skills, personal issues, and preparation for medical treatment.

His book, *With the Tongues of Men and Angels*, is considered the standard reference on channeling. He edited *Health for the Whole Person*, one of the first books on holistic medicine. In high school and college, he coached teams to national debate championships and later co-authored a standard text in debate, *Argumentation and Advocacy*.

He was born 23 May 1935 in Neosho, MO and grew up there. He did his undergraduate work at Tulane University and received a Ph.D. from Northwestern University in public address and small group communication.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy, son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Adrienne Hastings, and grandchildren Mason, Ava, and Ethan Hastings.

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Shining a light on a few unique aspects of Arthur's life might serve to reveal the inner person of Arthur Hastings, and not only the outer person of great achievement and accomplishment that he surely became. The inner person Arthur is the one I spent time with during those last months and days of his illness leading up to his death. Having spent such time with him, I suspect it is the inner person that Arthur would want his friends and readers to most remember.

The Bell. I first met Arthur in the fall of 1992 at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP) before it became known as Sofia University. As a new student on the first day of orientation, I eagerly introduced myself to faculty members, Arthur being among the group. He began his orientation presentation to the new students by gently ringing a very large Tibetan bowl, fondly referred to as the bell, that reverberated throughout the room and went deep into the very bones of my body. Thereafter, the ringing of the bell became synonymous with Arthur, especially after I had immersed myself in his Tibetan Buddhism class where he occasionally would bring a whole set of Tibetan bowls (bells), maybe eight or so of different tones and ring each one very slowly, as a sacred gesture. Sometimes, he would run the wooden mallet around the rim of the bowl causing a continuous singing sound and the overtones would resound throughout the room. It was a glorious sound! He rang the bell to begin a short meditation, prior to the start of every class, which was and continues to be typical for many of the classes at the school. The sound of the bell created a sense of peace and stillness. Arthur would also comment on the healing qualities of listening to the resonance of the bell. When Arthur became very ill, he brought out all of his bells and lined them up on a shelf top in his living room where he would often play one after the other. He would gently breathe in the sounding energy and healing vibes of the bells he loved so much and that had brought healing and stillness to so many of his students.

The Teacher. On May 19, 2008, the ITP community, celebrated Arthur's fifty years of teaching with a special plaque and a community wide celebration in honor of this gifted teacher, researcher, and healer. Teaching was the love of his life. As a recognized pioneer and scholar in the field of transpersonal psychology, Arthur was at home teaching a class or in the William James Center doing research. A lesser known fact about Arthur was his love for magic; he was a semi-professional magician and he performed his magic at the school's yearly commencement ceremony, and occasionally for students in his class. Also, lesser known was his long time work as a practitioner of hypnosis. He produced hypnosis tapes to support students working on their dissertations, graduates studying for exams, and dentistry and medical procedure relaxation tapes for faculty, friends, and clients. Colleagues, friends and family have described Arthur as "always the scholar, a very deep thinker, and fifty years of magic and healing."

The Celebration. In January 2014, the Sofia Community held an event to celebrate the life of Arthur Hastings, following the news from his oncologist that his health condition was rapidly deteriorating, and he was not expected to live much longer. To make the event more palatable, we called it, "An Afternoon Tea and Biscotti with Arthur" because one of his favorite things to do after being confined to home was inviting close friends over to his house for an afternoon visit where he would graciously serve a pot of specially brewed hot tea, along with a delicious biscotti. Over a hundred of Arthur's friends, colleagues, and current and past students arrived to celebrate and honor his life.

Because of Arthur's low energy at the time of the celebration, his family decided beforehand that people would gather and have snacks, then we would welcome in Arthur, then the school president would honor him with a special plaque for his years of service, and allow a few people to speak to Arthur and share memories. We anticipated about forty-five minutes worth of celebration would be all he could tolerate. Three hours later, and many warm remembrances shared from numerous guests, a smiling and rejuvenated Arthur reluctantly went home with his family. He joyfully talked about this event for months. The power of love and healing energy became visible, almost tangible, as his energy level soared to new heights and his illness went into apparent, temporary remission. Arthur remarked, half jokingly, in mid-march that he hadn't died yet as expected and hinted it might be time for another celebration.

The Research. During his years of teaching and research at ITP/Sofia, Arthur began studying the uses of the ancient Greek mirror gazing technique that Raymond Moody named the "Psychomanteum" in his classic book, *Life After Life*. (1975). In 2000, with a team of student researchers, Arthur studied the effects of the psychomanteum process initially for bereavement, eventually extending his studies to include unresolved feelings, creativity and self-awareness. His research has demonstrated the psychomanteum process to be an effective approach for addressing bereavement issues and can lead to transformative and spiritual experiences. Additionally, the psychomanteum

process has also been used to address other feelings of loss, to inspire creativity and insight, and to mitigate culture shock.

The Remembrance. The Sofia Community celebrated Arthur Hastings at a Memorial service, held on the school's campus, the evening of April 23, 2014. With his family present, many community members and outside friends and relatives had the opportunity to express what knowing Arthur had meant to them and how he touched their lives. The outpouring of expressions of fond memories and of deep love for Arthur filled the crowded auditorium to overflowing.

I spent as much time as possible with Arthur and his wife, Sandy, during the last year of Arthur's life. For the last 22 years, as teacher, mentor, guide, colleagues, and dear friend, Arthur had taught me how to live; in the last couple of years since the onset of his illness, he has shown me how to die—gracefully and courageously on both counts. One evening during his last week of his life, he turned to Sandy and said, “this [the dying process] takes courage.” And anyone who knew Arthur, knew of his quiet courage.

Highly influenced by the philosopher and psychologist, William James, Arthur had great appreciation and fascination for the subtle realm and the subtlest aspects of life. He was a lover of magic, of mystery, and of the mystical realm, thus he studied and researched in the areas paranormal, transpersonal and exceptional human experiences. With the subtle realm in mind, I noted a number of auspicious events around the time of Arthur's passing, which would most surely have peaked his awareness and curiosity. Arthur would likely smile modestly as he usually did, but with a twinkle in his eye, at my sharing of these subtleties as way of remembering yet another facet of this extraordinary person.

- Two years ago, William Braud died, another bright star in the field of transpersonal psychology. Those of us who remember William, know that he and Arthur were best collegial friends who had very similar interests and worked very closely on developing transpersonal research and the dissertation process at ITP, in addition to their parapsychology research. William had a light box for his research project and when he moved to his home town in Texas, after leaving the residential program to join the global program, he gave the light box to Arthur. The light box became a cherished possession that sat on a filing cabinet in his Sofia office. When he became ill, he brought the light box home, and during the last weeks of his life, had the light box on continuously, right near his bed. He felt William's presence and energy as he watched the multi-colored lights softly flash in various designs. Towards the end, Sandy and I would remind Arthur of William's love and presence, and that William would be there waiting for him when he died. Arthur would smile with a very peaceful look on his face. Coincidentally or not, William died on a Sunday afternoon, May 13, 2012. Arthur died on a Sunday evening, April 13, 2014.

- Arthur died at 12:45 P.M. Right next to his bed hung a beautiful chiming clock that chimed the hours. Serendipitously, the next time the clock chimed, shortly after his death, it chimed one time, on the hour at 1:00 A.M. The word “one” represents wholeness and unity, possibly the unity Arthur had been seeking in those last days and hours when he quietly said “I’m ready to go home now.”
- Arthur died the day before the important Jewish holiday of Passover. His memorial was one day after the important Christian holy day of Easter. Both holy days represent freedom, liberation, and are joyous occasions. While Arthur did not belong to any religious tradition, he had great appreciation and respect for most, and those who knew him well, found him very knowledgeable and curious across most traditions. It seemed only fitting that two important holy days would surround his passing.
- Arthur had a great love for the night sky, and we’d often go outside and watch the stars or the full moon, or anything unusual happening in the sky. Arthur and I had talked about the coming full moon on Tuesday, April 16th and how fascinating that this full moon was the first of four lunar eclipses of the year; seemingly rare occurrences because after this year, we will not see such an eclipse until the year 2032. A lunar eclipse, a rare occurrence; Arthur Hastings, a rare soul passing through the night sky.

Two lines of a favorite poem by poet, Sara Williams (1936) titled, *An Old Astronomer to his Pupil* best describe Arthur’s final days and attitude toward dying:

“Though my soul may set in darkness, it will rise in perfect light; I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night” (p. 614).

One week before he died, Arthur made his usual trip to Sofia University on Friday afternoon to attend the regular psychomanteum team meeting, a meeting that he religiously attended and facilitated for years prior to his declining health. We rang the meditation bell as usual for a moment of silence and centering. This meeting was like no other. On this day, Arthur quietly announced to the group that this would be his last meeting as he knew he was about to die. We took a few more moments of silence to honor his presence with us one more time. He smiled when we assured him his research would continue on and that the psychomanteum process would continue to bring the gift of healing that he spent years creating and refining. In jest and somewhat seriously, we asked Arthur if he could consider coming back in some form to provide us with his wisdom and guidance as we moved forward. In his typical quiet and pensive manner, putting his hand to his head in a gesture to ponder the question more deeply, he replied, “Well, I don’t know if I know how to do that yet!”

Let the singing bowl sound one more time in honor of Arthur Hastings, beloved teacher, researcher, healer, colleague, and most of all, dear friend.

If you would like more information on The Arthur Hastings Psychomanteum at Sofia University or the Arthur Hastings Fellowship Fund, please contact Genie Palmer, Ph.D. at genie.palmer@sofia.edu

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The Author

Genie Palmer, Ph.D., is an associate professor and executive core faculty member at Sofia University where she teaches courses in transpersonal research skills and methods. She is the Director of the Writing & Research Center and the Dissertation Director for Residential and Global doctoral students. In addition, she currently supervises students with the psychomanteum research. Her main areas of research and writing include aftereffects of exceptional human experiences (EHEs), and exploration of various states of consciousness (epiphany, peak, and mystical experiences).