

Remembering Neala Haze 1947-2004

by Tina Stromsted



Neala Haze at her 45th birthday party, 1992; photographed by Tina Stromsted

Neala Haze, MA, ADTR, REAT, Co-founder and Director of the Authentic Movement Institute, passed away of cancer on June 6, 2004. A gifted teacher and remarkable soul, she will be missed by all who knew her.

Neala held Masters Degrees in Dance and Counseling Psychology. She studied Authentic Movement with Mary Whitehouse and later trained with Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow. A movement therapist for three decades, she integrated Eastern thought, humanistic psychology, body-based and creative arts therapy approaches into her teaching and private practice. As the former Co-coordinator and Internship Supervisor of the Graduate

Program in Dance Movement Therapy at California State University Hayward, she produced two teaching videos based on Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen's developmental theory. She was also Adjunct Faculty in the Expressive Arts Therapy Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies, and had a private practice in Somatic Therapy. Her writings on Authentic Movement have been published in the proceedings for the American Dance Therapy Association and in *Authentic Movement: Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow* and the forthcoming second volume, *Authentic Movement: Moving the Body, Moving the Self: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Patrizia Pallaro. Her students are currently completing her video about Authentic Movement as a resource for dance performance. Neala also taught Authentic Movement in Spain in intensive summer programs with pioneering psychotherapist, Claudio Naranjo.

Born, September 27, 1947 in Missouri, Neala spent her childhood and adolescent years in Denver, Colorado. Her mother, Garnet, was a librarian who instilled in her a love of learning and a passion for democracy and liberal politics. Her father, a lover of nature, died during Neala's adolescence. She is survived by her older half-brother, James, who lives in Kansas and by her stepson by her first marriage, Christopher. Bill Weintraub, her devoted husband who shared her spiritual values, commitment to healing and sense of humor, lives in their home in Richmond, California.

Neala was a beloved friend and colleague of nearly twenty-five years. A gifted teacher, loving woman and deep soul she was a passionate explorer of the creative and healing potentials of dance -- the union of body, psyche and spirit. Having graduated from Mills College in 1973 with a Master's degree in Dance with an emphasis in dance/movement therapy, Neala went on to study with Mary Starks Whitehouse in the mid 1970's, a background that prepared her to become one of the early dance therapists in California. For several years she worked with developmentally delayed children at Clauson House in the East Bay, supervising many dance/movement therapy interns who remember her for her high level of integrity, compassion, wisdom and humor in guiding them through their novice journeys.

Later, Neala's teaching extended to JFK University, the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and the California Institute of Integral Studies. From 1981-1992 she was the co-coordinator of the graduate program in Dance Movement Therapy at California State University Hayward. There she taught a wide variety of both dance and dance/movement therapy courses. This included a creative dance class for children involving a practicum in which children came to the campus for classes prepared and taught by CSUH students. She was also responsible for the placement and supervision of dance/movement therapy interns, a supervisory relationship in which strong bonds of mutual respect and trust were formed. Co-coordinator, Cynthia Berrol, Ph.D., ADTR, remembers Neala's qualities as "integrity, generosity, commitment, vision, humor, warmth, caring, and a profound spiritual core and inner strength."

In 1985, dance therapist Janet Adler moved to California and offered training groups in Authentic Movement. Neala and I trained intensively with her for nine years and then

began assisting her in groups in California and abroad. This practice interwove the somatic, spiritual, creative and psychological dimensions of life in a way that was grounded in human relationship and had a profound impact on us both. Neala began to integrate the practice into her coursework at CSU Hayward and I in my teaching in the Somatics and Women's Spirituality programs at the California Institute of Integral Studies. In 1992 the dance/movement therapy department at Hayward was closed due to a statewide budget crisis. Neala began looking for a new home in which dance/movement therapy could thrive.

Throughout the 1980's, Neala and I had taught workshops and pre-conference intensives together and then co-chaired the American Dance Therapy Association's National conference in San Francisco in 1991. A wonderful experience, the planning and carry through for this conference engaged the spirit and resources of many dance therapists in the Bay area community. Opening night brought us together with nearly six hundred dance therapists who came from around the country and abroad to share their passions and insights in the work, culminating in a spirited dance to World music on the last evening!

Emerging from this experience with a strong bond and many shared questions and passions, we then co-founded the Authentic Movement Institute in Berkeley, California in 1993. Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow joined us as advisors and founding faculty, bringing further theoretical and experiential depth to the offerings at the school in what was to be many years of rich, collegial collaboration.

A tall, beautiful woman with wavy ash blonde hair, warm eyes and a sparkling smile Neala had a depth of feeling for the sacred dimension in life. During her college years she developed a deep relationship with a spiritual teacher in India and traveled there often to practice in his community. Throughout her years as a teacher she often wore colored scarves that brought a deep feminine feeling and sense of India into the dance studio. The scent of roses from her garden often accompanied the ever-burning candle on our altar.

Neala also had a terrific sense of humor and loved to tell provocative jokes and touching anecdotes. Though seemingly simple, these came into full bloom in teaching stories that illustrated people in ordinary daily situations that had extraordinary spiritual meaning and impact. Her depth of experience, intuition, creativity, and care were palpable. Students often reported feeling safe, seen and heard by her, in an atmosphere of acceptance that enabled them to descend into working with unconscious material, bringing it toward consciousness in the presence of a caring, non-judgmental witness.

Neala could also be forceful, spunky and direct as exemplified by an experience I witnessed in her last days in the hospital when, under sedation, her leg kicked up involuntarily in response to a nurse's statement that he didn't believe in alternative medicine. Jumping back, he said, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Haze, you can believe in whatever you want!" He then asked me who she was, confiding softly that in his many years of working there he'd never seen such a constant flow of loving visitors.

Neala profoundly influenced the lives of many students, colleagues and friends. An international student described her as “loving and generous; a wise teacher and mentor with exquisite human qualities and an amazing ability to hold the therapeutic space of the work.”

Shortly before she died I sent Neala a singing prayer. As I sang I saw a vision of Neala, first in the hospital bed, then standing on a grassy point in Martin Luther King Park in the Berkeley Marina where we had once held an Authentic Movement gathering on ecology and community (co-facilitated by guests Sox Sperry and Lisa Tsetse). Neala was standing upright, her face beaming in the afternoon sunlight, with the glimmering Bay behind her. Concentric circles of witnesses surrounded her: family, friends, colleagues and students who loved her. The outer circle was of angels. Had they come for her, I wondered? Had she called them, or had they been there all along? The next morning she died, her breath peaceful. A friend and mentor to many over the years, she leaves a deep legacy for movement that arises from a spirited source, and will be greatly missed.

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Published in *The American Dance Therapy Journal*, Fall/Winter 2004, Vol. 26, No. 2;
Co-Editors, ADTA Journal, c/o ADTA, 2000 Century Plaze, Columbia, MD 21044