

*Heiner Steckel*

## Memorial Note about Frank Hladky



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# Memorial Note about Frank Hladky

In Memoriam Dr. Frank Hladky † (1923–2012)

*Heiner Steckel*

Dear Frank,

On May 25, this year, you fell peacefully asleep with a book in your hand, at the age of 88 – two months prior to your 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. You passed away like you had always wanted.

On the weekend before, you had completed a new DVD documentary of your bio-energetic work and in the afternoon, you gave the last of 4 hours of therapy that day. I arrived two days before and we had an appointment for lunch the next day, that sadly did not happen. Your son Peter and other friends said that you had perhaps “waited” for us. Andrea – my wife – was already there, so we found you, together with two patients, in the morning, when you didn’t appear for the first therapy session scheduled.

In the middle of the night you had woken up again and as so often had started reading and listening to music. I have been asked by many, what the last CD was, you listened to. It was the late piano sonatas of Beethoven: “The Tempest”, “Waldstein” and “Les Adieux”.

It only remains for me now to express my deep gratitude one last time with these lines: personally for all that I have experienced with your help, in numerous hours of therapy, learned from you as your student and deepened later in a friendly – collegial relationship in the faculty and countless private meetings.

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Frank Hladky comes from a family of Czech origin, his father was a music professor at Oklahoma State University. Frank himself began to play the violin at the age of 4 and originally wanted to become a musician. He found his technical skills not sufficient for a professional career and then decided to study medicine, with the aim to

become a psychiatrist. However, music has remained one of his great passions all his life, as well as reading (especially HD Lawrence) and the work on his farms, where he raised cattle.

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Frank Hladky graduated in 1946 from medical school and soon he worked for a few years as a young psychiatrist in an American military hospital in Munich. During his stay in Munich he began his first psychoanalysis with Fritz Riemann – a three-year classical Freudian analysis, 3 times a week. After returning to the United States, he had his psychoanalytic training at the Karen Horney Institute, another three-years of personal neo-Freudian training analysis and additional studies with Eric Erikson, who had a strong impact on his work. From 1963 to 1978 he was the medical director of the Tulsa Psychiatric Foundation.

In the mid-sixties, he became aware of the importance of the body in psychotherapy through his participation in gestalt workshops. When he wanted to deepen this interest, Alexander Lowen was recommended, with whom he made contact and invited him to give a workshop at his clinic in Tulsa. After that a training program at his clinic in Tulsa was designed. Al Lowen, John Pierrakos, Karl Kirsch, Miki Frank and Jack McIntyre were the trainers, who then came annually to Tulsa.

Frank participated in the program himself and he started using bioenergetic analysis increasingly as a primary treatment with his patients. Due to the bioenergetic training of the hospital staff, he established a unique model of integrated clinical bioenergetic work, which influenced the occupational therapy, physiotherapy, as well as the psychotherapeutic and medical treatment in the psychiatric center.

In this way, Frank Hladky became a student of Alexander Lowen and was in individual therapy with John Pierrakos during his bioenergetic training. In 1976 he became a member of the IIBA faculty. With Lowen, he developed a collegial relationship and friendship. For more than 15 years they led an annual workshop together, first in the IIBA loft in New York and later in Pawling.

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I first met you in the loft in New York in early 1978, when you led a 5-day workshop together with Al Lowen. There I invited you to Germany and asked you to be one the trainers for our 1<sup>st</sup> bioenergetic training group at the North German Institute.

Once you have accepted our invitation, you worked with us for nearly 20 years as a bioenergetic teacher. In this function, and thanks to your great willingness and

generous availability, you have assisted us in many questions and issues, with which we were confronted in setting up a training institute, as you did in many other places in the world. Many of my colleagues in Germany and in Brazil, with whom I work together today, started with you and remember you with love and deep gratitude.

In an early very critical moment of our Institute's history, where the two founding fathers ended up fighting each other, you were the one who immediately agreed to secure the existence of the local institute, together with Ed Svasta, Eleanor Greenlee and Virginia Wink. Through your support we could continue, by taking over the administration of the local institute as trainees.

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Frank Hladky was an international trainer for more than 35 years. He trained groups in Canada, the United States, South America and Europe. Both at his ranch in Truchas, New Mexico, as well as later in Coweta, Oklahoma, he offered small-group workshops and group and individual therapy retreats. In old age, when he didn't feel like travelling any longer, he devoted himself to this work, and especially working with long-term therapy guests.

In bioenergetics I consider him one of the seniors and pioneers, especially of the bioenergetic work with psychiatric patients. Frank will be remembered by many patients, students and colleagues as an unforgettable therapist and master.

Based on talks and discussions and received letters from people who have worked with Frank, I want to summarize something in a few words like this: His warm eyes, his firm hold, his being there mediating the feeling of "being seen and understood without words"; his human presence; his back, where one could rub one's own back against and where one could rest; and his fully accepting and encouraging trustful attitude, especially towards one's own bodily impulses. These became felt cornerstones, basic components in the self-finding grounding process of many.

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You never were a friend of great theoretical explanations and, as my colleague Susanne Winkler put it so aptly, "gifted with a tremendous intuition that often can hardly be explained by those who have it." So you consistently avoided supporting head-driven explanations, where it was not yet felt and you documented all the time your great confidence in the leadership role of the body in the therapeutic process. Frank Hladky has not written much. I recall his 1993 article: Hladky, Frank (1993): Reconnecting with the body: Bioenergetic treatment for abuse. in: Bioenergetic

Analysis, Vol. 5, No. 2, 30–36). The happier we can be then, that his work in old age is documented on DVD. For information about this go to: <http://riolibravisions.com>

In many hours of therapy and as your student, you often were the father I did not have – and then my mentor, supporting and encouraging me on my way to become a teacher. Through all the facets of our relationship, you always remained a fatherly friend.

Thanks

*Heiner*

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Frank leaves behind his son Peter, a brother, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and nephews. The death of his two wives, Jane and Denny, both of whose wedding rings he wore, and the loss of his daughter and his grandson were heavy blows of fate, that did not change his fundamentally appreciative and affirmative attitude towards life and the living, with all the shattering it also may bring.