

Leslie Lackman

Funeral Service

Saturday, June 11, 2011

Minister's Introduction

We are here to celebrate the life of our beloved friend Leslie Lackman, and to express our gratitude for the privilege of having shared our lives with her.

Her family joins us; Leslie's Mother Triss and other family members; we welcome you.

Every student shapes the School; through their presence, through their being, through a lifetime dedicated to effort, and ultimately, through the example of their death.

Let us stand and honor Leslie with our silent presence.

Thank-you.

At her death, now we see Leslie's life as a whole; her history, her friends and loved ones, the things her hands touched. Yet this is the shadow of external things, while there is another measure of her life; at death, her quiet, invisible and internal efforts –the accumulated moments of presence– become manifest.

The Teacher said, "When C Influence enters our lives, we are given the task to live forever." The days and works of our hands; the efforts we take upon ourselves; the people we touch and who touch us; these fade from what we truly are. Our plays are written so that we may become immortal. Leslie played her part to perfection, and she can say; *'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, I am no more in the world.'*

Leslie returns to the divine source, and we follow the same path. Death is not the end of life. At death, life begins in another phase, the phase of the soul.

Reading: Helaine Feivelson

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Death Experience*:

We know just nothing of this going hence

That so excludes us....

When, though, you went, there broke upon this scene

a shining segment of realities

in at the crack you disappeared through:

real sunshine, real trees, green

of real green.

Music: Marina Swales, Anicca Bat-Adam

Eulogy: Pauline Stuart

Leslie Lackman, 1952-2011

Leslie transformed her play through courage, humor, intelligence and beauty. Although at times she felt alone, towards the end of her life she realized how many people loved her. The thoughts that follow are from some of her friends who supported and cared for her over the last few months.

Leslie joined the Fellowship in 1976 in Palo Alto. During her 35 years in the school, she lived in New York, Paris, and California. She was a resident of Apollo since 1989. She enjoyed living in

France and her natural artistic temperament flourished there. Her love of art, music and poetry was nourished during these early years in the school.

Leslie was very sensitive to impressions and brought beauty to everything she did. The flower arrangements she created for years at the Galleria brought wonderful states of presence to many students. And the incredible Halloween pumpkins that evoked the child in us during October were also her creations.

A week before she passed away, Leslie wished to make a bouquet alone. It took a long time as she had to rest between each movement, but she wanted to do it. Several friends and relatives watched in silence. She smiled at the end. They said it was a magical moment.

Her contributions to the arts at Apollo included music and art. She was a member of the chorus and Orpheo and sang beautifully last Christmas. One of the results of her illness was that it clarified what she wanted. She said she was no longer afraid to sing. Leslie was also a talented artist and worked with oil painting and figure drawings. Some of her drawings adorned the walls of her beautiful apartment. Many of us still have pieces of the whimsical ceramics she created.

While in the New York Center, a friend reported that Leslie helped her pack for a move to Apollo by throwing out all the practical clothes, and advising her to take only silk garments. On arriving the student was totally unprepared for the harsh physical environment she encountered here, though she was absolutely ready for dinners and concerts!

This is an excerpt from a letter Leslie received from a student in the last month:

Do you remember when you were in the San Salvador Center? The students there immediately fell in love with you because of your beautiful energy. For me you were a teacher. I remember when you taught me the magic of colors. You did it when you painted the teaching house, combining all these shades on the walls and painting beautiful designs above the doors. I remember when you taught us how to make flower arrangements. Do you remember when you told me that behind the arrangement we had to put some flowers just for the Gods? Since then, in the San Salvador Center, we always have flowers the way you taught us.

Leslie was a talented writer and for several years made a living as a technical writer. As she once said, she knew how to put words together. But her real love was poetry and she was a gifted poet. A number of her poems appeared in the publication Lyra. They range from playful to sublime, the public expressions of a very private nature.

Leslie was always interested in the world around her. She had a sharp, enquiring mind and studied science and medicine in addition to the arts. She cared about the state of the world and it affected her deeply. She was always hopeful that the world could be improved if people could only be told the Truth.

For years Leslie studied the art of placement, or Feng Shui. She truly cared about helping her friends achieve their best possible environment, and she tried to create the perfect space for her own emotional, physical and spiritual growth. She related that according to Chinese wisdom,

Feng Shui is only one of the factors influencing our lives, the others being character and fate. At the end she understood that with C Influence we have the best possible fate.

Leslie studied many healing arts in the last few years of her life. She shared what she learned with many of us, especially her study of the emotional freedom technique. She worked with this for years and gained a deeper understanding of her own life experiences and her work in the school.

Leslie was a wonderful example of a student who worked on her attitudes. She was very open to diverse ideas about the world and the work, and in conversation could surprise one with the most unusual points of view. It was enlightening to see how she transformed her thoughts and feelings over the last months to support her efforts to be present. One of her most memorable angles was: "Basically we're trying to get from here to here."

After surgery in March, Leslie knew she was expected to die within a few months, but she was hopeful there was a way that she could go on living. She said there were many things she still wanted to accomplish. Just a month before she died, Leslie attended a 10-day healing workshop in Petaluma. She was very positive about the opportunity and made supreme efforts at a time when she was having difficulty moving and even breathing. Her fellow participants came to care for her in this short time, and commented on what a special person she was. But when she returned from this workshop, the cancer quickly asserted itself.

Throughout her illness Leslie's strong essence and light playful energy were foremost. She did not exhibit any self pity, though she had every reason to experience it. She was very simple and positive in her interactions, and continued to express interest in her friends' daily experiences. Looking out of her huge brown eyes, she watched and transformed the end of her play with simplicity and courage. While helping to change Leslie's dressing, one of her friends commented on the tumor saying, "It looks like your heart is growing out of you like a flower." Leslie said, "My false heart is growing out and my real heart is growing now."

Two days before her death, Leslie received a visit from our beloved Teacher. A student who was present wrote this letter to Robert after the visit:

Thank you for the invitation to be present when you visited Leslie. Your love for all of your students takes many forms and this one is particularly touching and beautiful.

Her physical state did not allow her to respond at first.

When she did awaken and see you from so near death's door, what followed made all that was physical irrelevant. Pure presence and love from a student to her teacher. Pure presence and love from a teacher to his student. No more, no less, everything and nothing.

I never saw Leslie look as good as she did in that moment.

On the day before she died, a beautiful pink peony appeared by Leslie's bedside. This was from a bush she had planted years before. The morning of her death, one of the five flowers of an orchid above her bed came out in full bloom. The flowers that Leslie loved attended her transformation to another realm.

Music: Orpheo Ensemble

Mozart's Laudate.

Reading: Jean Chapman

Edward Carpenter, *So Thin a Veil*:

So thin a veil divides

Us from such joy; passing words,

Walking in daily life – the business of the hour, each
detail seen to:

Yet carried, rapt away, on what sweet floods of other Being:

Swift streams of music flowing, light far back through

all Creation shining,

Loved faces looking –

Ah! from the true, the immortal self

So thin a veil divides!

Minister's Conclusion:

Every death diminishes us. Yet, although less remains in the visible world, more is allowed in the Invisible. We become fewer, fewer in number or fewer in remaining years. Yet what passes away from us grows in silence, a shining silence. Wonders await us; A welcome beyond words; Love beyond description.

Death allows us to pass into a higher world, into which nothing mortal may pass. And Leslie made the payment, for herself, and for all of us. Every arduous breath of her illness revealed the transitory for what it was, and prepared her for existence in a higher world.

Pain is finite, paradise infinite.

We could not share her pain, the physical and the emotional. A thought, an experience, an understanding, a moment, these can be shared. But it is a law that each one have their allotment of pain. And through this sum of effort, presence breaks through time and death.

Finally, the events of one's life end and the purpose of one's life –the purpose for which we were born– comes into being: silently, an immortal soul ascends.

Her matchless presence takes its place in another realm.

For this, and on behalf of all of us, one can say nothing but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks.

Leslie, we thank thee.

Minister signals Patrick Stuart to pick up the urn and show it to the assembly.

Minister blows out candle.

Funeral party leaves.

At the Cemetery: Minister's Introduction

Here on this beautiful day, we release Leslie to her home, and return her ashes to the earth.

Reading: Patrick Stuart

Tibetan Bardo Thodol:

O nobly-born, listen.

Now you are experiencing the Radiance of Pure Reality.

Recognize it.

Your own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, has no birth, nor death.

Knowing this is sufficient.

Music: Anicca Bat-Adam

Bach flute piece.

Wayne places the urn into the grave. The minister places rose petals into the grave. Patrick and Wayne do the same.

Reading: Patrick Stuart

Bhagavad-Gita

Before birth all beings are invisible.

After death, all beings are likewise invisible.

One scene between two unseens,

Why find sorrow in this?

Minister's Conclusion

The earth returns to the earth and a divine spark returns to its divine source. "Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity". The circle of life is complete.

Minister hands rose petals to Leslie's family and then steps back. Rose petals are offered to everyone. Family and friends depart for the Toast to Leslie at the Prytaneion.