

Magda Grant

June 26, 1928 – January 16, 2021

Memorial Service

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Minister's Benjamin Yudin Introduction

We are here today to honor the life of our beloved friend, Magda Grant.

We are here to hold Magda in our hearts for this brief period, and then release her, together transforming our sorrow into presence.

At the death of a friend, we can see their play as a perfect, complete, and realized destiny. Now we more clearly understand the payment and contribution that Magda made, and we are grateful for her courage and endurance, her steadfast love for her teacher and the school, and her ability to recognize the miraculous as it manifests in everyday life.

Let us stand and remember Magda in silent presence.

(Silence)

Thank you.

The physical body is designed to produce presence and being, and then to be laid aside. Four years ago, Magda wrote, "After decades of being in the work, I am humble and very grateful to Celestial Influence for the guidance I have received. It has helped me to change the course of my life, turning me toward the miraculous process of creating a higher level of being – of learning to be present in life while preparing for a conscious death."

Magda takes with her the presence that she has gained in this lifetime, and her connection with Influence C. Our teacher has said, "That is all we can take with us, but it is more than enough."

[Reading:]

(Anne St-Laurent:) Sonnet 29 Shakespeare

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

[Eulogy: Rosalind Mearns]

Our dear Magda—her fragrance is still with us.

The most frequent description given of Magda is that she was so sweet. But her friends also knew her for her kindness and generosity. She would always bring gifts for her friends on her yearly visit to Apollo. She was able to see the miraculous in the most ordinary situations and, once she pointed it out, it was easy to see that that's what it was! She may have been petite and passive in appearance but she was definite and determined when it came to her relationship to the work and the Teacher. She said to him, "Nothing more miraculous or valuable could have happened in my life than to feel your presence and try to be present myself."

Magda was born in Budapest, Hungary on June 26, 1928. She lived there for twenty-eight years until the Hungarian Revolution forced her to flee with her husband and 3-year-old daughter. It was a very difficult and dangerous time.

Their escape was very, very perilous. At one point, the train stopped, and they had to walk twenty miles with their daughter and then, one by one, cross the highway into Austria—at the risk of being shot by the soldiers at the border.

Robert said, "Your life was in that moment." It took them nearly a year to reach Canada where they were granted asylum. There she began a new life, learning English and starting a new career. During that time, she came across the name "Gurdjieff." She began reading all the work books she could find, book in hand, dictionary in the other! She said of the first time she saw a photo of Gurdjieff: "I started to look at him and it seemed as though he looked back at me. After a while I felt some memory stirring in a kind of emotional connection, which I thought was miraculous."

She found a bookmark in one of the books, but there was no center in Montreal. So she joined a yoga group, which took her on a long journey to Europe and India with her yogi. Dissatisfied and wishing for more, at the age of 50, she finally quit her job, sold her furniture, and moved to New York to find a school. She first contacted the Gurdjieff group but, when they did not call her back, she said, “Let’s see what’s on the bookmark. Let’s find out who these people are – The Fellowship of Friends.” She joined the New York center and, when the Montreal center opened just a few months later, she came to support it and live in the teaching house. After its closing, she moved to Apollo for a year, working in the library. Then she packed up her car and drove to Fort Lauderdale, becoming the director of the Miami center, graciously hosting students and holding meetings and events in her apartment. Robert said, “Andrew Schutt had the good fortune of being introduced to the School by Magda Grant on Worth Avenue, meaning that they are worth it.”

When the Budapest center opened in 1996, Magda returned to her native city to help support the center and translate. As her health declined, she moved back to Montreal to receive the medical care she needed.

There, by herself for the first time in the School, her biggest suffering was her emotional isolation. That was partly resolved when she was introduced to the internet at her local library where she could read the Daily Cards and see the news from Apollo. But, when the broadcasts began, she purchased her own computer and she watched EVERYTHING—all the events: the meetings, the dinners, the presentations and performances. She admitted that it was so much that she did not have time for anything else!

From her mid-80’s, despite the heavy financial and physical efforts, she continued to come to Apollo every year to visit her Teacher and her friends. She said to Robert, “I’m honored, fortunate, and grateful to you.” He said, “I feel the same—about your valuation.”

One of the things she especially loved at Apollo were the “four beautiful bells, ringing angelic melodies,” as she described them, which she would

come to see on all her visits. The last Christmas before Covid, she sent a letter to her friends to tell them what they meant to her and included a photo of the Apollo bells along with a copy of the 1983 Renaissance Vine that spoke of them.

She wrote:

Greet them with affection for their angelic work
as messengers to tell us the TIME
---- TIME TO BE PRESENT.

In the words of William Blake: “Every mortal loss is an immortal gain.”

So let the bells ring out in honor of our dear friend Magda—for her warm, sweet essence, for her deep devotion and love for the school.

Music: *Spring, from the Four Seasons* by Vivaldi

Musician: Justin McKay

Minister's Conclusion:

The death of a friend reminds us that we each inhabit a fragile and temporary vessel, through which presence emerges and connects us. May Magda's strength and resilience in the midst of danger and disruption inspire us when we face our own difficulties; May her ability to recognize the miraculous nature of presence give us renewed appreciation for the Conscious Influence that guides our lives; May her determination in pursuing her aim to change her level of being strengthen our own desire.

The task of this lifetime has been fulfilled. The role of Magda is complete, and the soul that played the role is released to continue its divine journey.

Dear Magda, we thank thee.