

## Christina Grof, Ph.D.

December 30, 1941–June 15, 2014



ON JUNE 15, 2014, AT THE age of 72, Christina Grof passed away unexpectedly from pneumonia. Along with her husband Stan, Christina co-created Holotropic Breathwork, founded the International Transpersonal Association (ITA), and founded the Spiritual Emergence/Emergency Network (SEN).

### In Memoriam of My Beloved Christina

by Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D.

Now, several weeks after my beloved Christina's unexpected and untimely passing, I can see more clearly than ever before that I enjoyed for almost four decades that we spent together the rare blessing of having a true soulmate. As expected in an intense relationship like ours, our spiritual journey in tandem took us occasionally into stormy waters, but cruising through life we hardly ever encountered doldrums and boredom. We experienced countless extraordinary adventures in the inner world as well as crisscrossing the globe and doing our work on all the continents except Antarctica. And it seemed that our relationship actually grew deeper, stronger, and richer after we had encountered and overcome various challenges on the way.

Christina belonged to the rare breed of people who walk their talk. Spirituality was not something that she reserved for her lectures, workshops, and books; it constantly penetrated her entire life, including the most mundane everyday activities. She did not miss an opportunity to start conversation with little children in parks, people walking dogs in the street, or employees checking-out merchandise in grocery and department stores. She usually found something beautiful about them to make a compliment about. But her special attention belonged to homeless people. Being aware—on the basis of her own experience—of the menaces of alcoholism and addiction, she never gave these people money, but bought them a sandwich and fruit juice or took them for a meal in a restaurant. She was also the major inspiration for our family trips on Thanksgiving Days and Christmas holidays to Glide Memorial Church to prepare and serve meals for the homeless.

Another important channel for Christina's creativity was art and appreciation of beauty. Early in her career, she was a very gifted, resourceful, and original art teacher who cultivated and nourished in her pupils their natural talents. Later she became an accomplished painter who used art for pleasure, as well as an important tool in her healing process and self-exploration.

One of the powerful forces in Christina's life was her unconditional love for our daughter Sarah, son Than, daughter-in-

law Debora, and our five wonderful granddaughters. It was very interesting to witness the ingenious ways in which she was able to lead her children and grandchildren lovingly to desirable behavior without using disciplinarian method.

I feel deep appreciation for the role Christina played in my life as a Muse, who directed my attention to various areas in which I would not have otherwise been interested. On her 50th birthday, Roger Walsh said something that I believe best characterized Christina's role in this lifetime: "I do not know any other person who has been able to transform major problems in his or her life into projects that serve humanity."

Christina and I cooperated in many endeavors—from our early psychedelic training sessions for the staff of the Donwood Institute in Toronto, Canada, through thirty Esalen monthlong workshops, and a number of International Transpersonal Conferences to the development of the concept of "spiritual emergency" and of the method of Holotropic Breathwork, including workshops and training worldwide. Our cooperation was so close that it was not always easy to separate our individual inputs from each other. Unfortunately, because we live in a patriarchal society, Christina often did not receive any credit for projects that she had created single-handedly such as founding the Spiritual Emergency Network (SEN) or bridging between the addictions field and transpersonal psychology, as well as those to which she made substantial contribution, such as Holotropic Breathwork, Esalen monthlongs, and International transpersonal conferences.

Because of her modesty and humility and in spite of major appreciation that she received from our workshop participants, trainees, readers of her books, and professional colleagues (including three honorary Ph.D. degrees), I do not think that she realized the extent to which she positively influenced and even transformed thousands of human lives. I will certainly remain forever grateful for the blessings she brought into my life. In spite of all the hardships and challenges that we encountered on the way, it was a wondrous and magnificent journey that I would not trade for anything in the world.



*Christina resting in her and Stan's Buck Creek House in Big Sur: memory from their Esalen days.*