

Memorial Thoughts for Betty 4.7.2018

By Karen Johnson

I have struggled to find the words to adequately describe my experience with Betty.

I was fortunate to be among those who Betty mentored. I have many teachers and many dear friends but, Betty is the only person who I call mentor. Our connection was like no other relationship I've had in my adulthood.

Of course, in the Odyssey, Mentor is the trusted counselor of Odysseus and Athena often appears in his likeness and acts as guide and advisor to Telemachus. No doubt Betty is divinely inspired, always "in the Dance."

Betty is a deep listener, hearing on all the levels with an open, generous heart and extraordinary mind. She is wise with a wisdom forged through broad life experience, deep intelligence and encyclopedic, encompassing knowledge. She was a discerner of patterns—cultural, mythic and personal. She was a weaver, adding texture and color to the pattern of my life. I always felt confident in her knowing. Her presence, her way of guiding cultivated utter confidence. I was never disappointed, I never doubted.

Many of us know that Betty was the wisdom keeper or archivist of Mystery School and Social Artistry. I often joke that Betty knows Jean Houston's work better than Jean. Sometimes after Mystery School, I'd receive an envelope from Betty. I know others had similar experiences. Inside was a note with a quote of something I had said that she found on the recordings. "Remember." Such caring attention to the detail of our lives.

So much of my creative and spiritual growth in the past decade was encouraged and guided by Betty. She took interest in every dimension of my life. The time she devoted to me was an immeasurable gift. "What's coming up for you next?" she would ask. She wanted to know what I was thinking about, what I was studying, what challenges I was facing, where had I been, who had I seen, what had I done, what actions or experiences I was considering, where was I going next. She asked me to put my spiritual journey into words. As recently as this winter when I mentioned that I felt encouraged to study permaculture, Betty asked if I had thought about studying with Starhawk. I will be part of an Earth Activist Training in June. She persisted in believing in me, in my worth, in my ongoing possibility. If Betty asked if I had considered bungee jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge, I would be looking for a way!

Betty's encouragement emboldens me. She leads me to amazing experiences and growth. To hear the word "wonderful" from Betty was enlivening and deeply transformative. And to be challenged, to sense that I might have disappointed her, was humbling! She didn't suffer any foolishness and she would let me know when my Fool had become just foolish.

I know that her attention, time, insight and wisdom is a precious gift. From the beginning, when we had scheduled a time to talk, I would make notes. I so valued Betty's time and energy that I wanted to be prepared, to be thoughtful and ready to listen. Overtime she shared more about her life, but she was typically quick to say, "I want to hear about"

The last time we spoke in February she asked me to be in touch when I return from a visit in the Midwest.

Then I received Anjela's call. Betty was answering a different call.

Of course, I was grateful for the end of her suffering and I was heartbroken. I felt lost. Finally, I set down and I wrote to Betty. I had the sense that she is ever present, ever near. When I said I am so grateful and I love you, I heard her say as I'm sure many of you have, "right back at you."

From Sun Dance, to Reimagining education: The Teacher as Social Artist, to Athena, to Permaculture, Betty has guided me in almost every major commitment in my life for the past decade. She is also the person who first really called me to connect with the phrase, "Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional."

I wear this symbol of my ongoing connection to Betty; this symbol of personal, cultural and social transformation, of the rising of the feminine and the return to the Goddess-of-Many-Names.

When I tap as part of my morning ritual, "Awake, Aware... and then whatever word comes from the stillness," I remember that Betty taught me to reflect and prepare for the day in this way.

I am so honored that Betty chose to help me hold the threads of my life, to identify the patterns, to offer new colors for the loom.

I know that she will continue to guide me. Betty, I love you. Today the ritual is "Awake, Aware and Grateful." "Awake, Aware and Grateful." "Awake, Aware and Grateful."