

OBITUARY

WILLIAM G. BRAUD
1942–2012

BY ARTHUR HASTINGS

William Braud, a major contributor to parapsychology and transpersonal psychology, died this spring. William had retired from 17 years of faculty status at Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) in 2009, and was living in Texas with his wife, Winona, and two Siberian husky dogs. After his death from cancer, his wife sent this message to his friends and colleagues: “It was William’s explicit wish that he be cremated, and that his ashes (mixed with wild flower seeds) be spread at a select, private retreat. He also requested that there be no ceremony, no funeral service, no memorial, and no obituary to note his passing.” In keeping with his wishes, these words will simply be a remembrance for him.

William’s PhD was earned at the University of Iowa (1967), in experimental psychology. He was on the graduate faculty at the University of Houston (1967–1975) and conducted research and published on learning, memory, motivation, psychophysiology, and psychopharmacology. In 1971 he began consulting for the Mind Science Foundation in San Antonio, Texas, and from 1975–1992 was a senior research associate of the MSF, studying parapsychology, states of consciousness, psychophysiology, psycho-neuroimmunology, and the use of psychological techniques for physical and mental health. William and the researchers at the foundation developed the concept of Psi Conducive States as facilitators of psychic performance, similar to the well replicated ganzfeld technique created by the research at Maimonides Medical Center in New York. The group also pioneered in remote viewing techniques.

William was an individual in whose presence paranormal things happened. He told one account in which a book of matches on the table burst spontaneously into fire shortly after an irritating secretary walked through. William said that he investigated the matches meticulously, but found no cause for the fire. Some days later he told this story to a visiting psychologist. As soon as he heard the story, the psychologist asked William, “You weren’t thinking of *firing* anyone, were you?” (Braud, 1994, p. 301). Only then did William realize the connection between the matches and the secretary, who was not doing a very good job and whom he should have fired.

William had a strong transpersonal orientation in his research. He was interested in validating nonphysical connections among people,

and devised ingenious ways of identifying mental influences on fish, gerbils, and human blood cells, along with feeling stared at and focusing concentration. This was characterized by William as Distant Mental Influence on Living Systems (DMILS), and has emerged as a significant field in parapsychology with others following his lead. His book *Distant Mental Influence: Its Contributions to Science, Healing, and Human Interactions* (Braud, 2003), with an introduction by Larry Dossey, collects his work in this area. William hoped that his work would stimulate further research in this area, and this appears to be occurring.

His vast knowledge of research led to coauthoring two books on research methods with his friend and colleague Rosemarie Anderson. These are *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honoring Human Experiences* (Braud & Anderson, 1998), and *Transforming Self and Others Through Research: Transpersonal Research Methods and Skills for the Human Sciences and Humanities* (Anderson & Braud, 2011).

William joined the faculty of Sofia University in 1992, as professor, Director of Research, and Dissertation Director. He was also a codirector of the William James Center for Consciousness Studies. In 2002 he moved to the online Global MA and PhD programs, enabling him and his wife to move back to Texas. Although they enjoyed living there, it was not always serene. While there, floods damaged his extensive library. William and Winona also barely escaped the raging fires last year, with the blaze coming to within one house of their home. He officially retired in 2009, and the university honored him at a faculty senate retreat. Nevertheless, he did not stop his writing and publications, even during the medical treatments that he underwent, and he said to several of us that the writing served as a distraction to him.

William's research methods were meticulous, with impeccable design, and he transmitted his research standards to his dissertation advising with students. He had highly successful results and yet he was modest and humble in his work. It is not surprising that he did not want a fuss around his passing. I think he would appreciate our continuing his personal qualities and his professional work.

To me he was a close and cherished friend. The times I spent with him are among my most valued experiences, and it was a treasure to have conversations with him. We had many "coincidences," even to wearing similar colors and clothes to school some days. No wonder he was interested in synchronicity. I miss him, and he is missed by a wide circle of friends, colleagues, professors, teachers, and researchers.

Here is William Braud in his own words (slightly edited).

An Experience of Timelessness

I get up and walk to the kitchen, thinking about what a timeless experience would be like. I direct my attention

to everything that is happening at the present moment— what is happening here, locally inside of me and near me, but nonlocally as well, at ever increasing distances from me.... I begin to collapse time, expanding the slice of the present, filling it with what has occurred in the immediate “past.”... The present slice of time slowly enlarges, encompassing, still holding, what has gone just before, locally, but increasingly nonlocally as well. By now I am standing near the kitchen sink. The present moment continues to grow, expand. Now it expands into the “future” as well.... the moving window of the present becomes wider and wider, and moves increasingly outwardly in two temporal directions at once. The “now” is becoming very thick and crowded.... The moment continues to grow, expand, fill, until it contains all things, all events. It is so full, so crowded, so thick that everything begins to blend together. Distinctions blur. Boundaries melt away. Everything becomes increasingly homogeneous, like an infinite expanse of gelatin. My own boundaries dissolve. My individuality melts away. The moment is so full that there no longer are separate things. There is no-thing here. There are no distinctions. A very strong emotion overtakes me. Tears of wonder-joy fill my eyes. This is a profoundly moving experience ... I am out of time and in an eternal present. In this present is everything and no-thing. I, myself, am no longer here. Images fade away. Words and thoughts fade away. Awareness remains, but it is a different sort of awareness. Since distinctions have vanished, there is nothing to know and no one to do the knowing. “I” am no longer localized, but no longer “conscious” in the usual sense. There is no-thing to be witnessed, and yet there is still a witnesser. The experience begins to fade. I am “myself” again. I am profoundly moved. I feel awe and great gratitude for this experience with which I have been blessed. (Braud, 1995, pp. 64–66)

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