



*This monthly article, by one of our Elder Council Members, is sponsored by Healing Touch Program and Healing Touch Professional Association. We are especially happy to bring these stories to you as part of our **20th year celebration** of Healing Touch Program. Our HT Community is rich with practitioners and instructors who were with Janet Mentgen when she created her Healing Touch Program. Many remain active today - all have experiences and stories that contribute to our "Healing Touch Historical Roots."*

HTP and HTPA have joined together to develop the historical stories of Janet Mentgen's Healing Touch Program by documenting the memories and experiences of those that were in the first classes, attended the first gatherings, witnessed the early growth and held the Vision with Janet. They supported her and blazed the trail with & for her and for those who came later. These individuals are the Elders.

Note: Because each Elder story is a unique personal memory back in time, we recognize the potential challenge of accuracy; we appreciate, accept and will publish corrections if needed.

By Cynthia Hutchison, DNSc, RN, MSN, HTCP/I, Program Director

I took my first HT class in 1992, so I don't officially qualify under the criteria of "elder" in the HT Program. However, because I have spent so much time with Janet, starting in 1993 and especially in the last years of her life, I was asked to write this month's *Elders' Wisdom* article.

I was urged in 1992 by my friend (and later HT mentor) Maureen McCracken, HTCP/I to take the Level 1 class offered in Washington, D.C., near my then home town, Silver Spring, Maryland. I already had a ten year practice background in Therapeutic Touch, mentored by Irene Morelli, RN, MSN, HTCP/I and had studied numerous holistic therapies. Sharon Scandrett-Hibdon was my first HT instructor and also was my instructor for Levels 2 and 3. She continues to be a dear friend.

Back in the early days of HT, we were happy to receive "hand-outs in a folder" as the course materials along with demonstrations, guided practice and group sharing to learn the work. My first three levels were taught in a retreat setting where we stayed overnight and also evening classes. We were hungry to learn and relished in the long hours of being together doing healing work and talking about how we could bring this new wave of hands-on healing to our various hospitals, health care facilities and private practices in holistic health.

Janet Mentgen was my Level 4 instructor in 1993. I found her to be quiet and humble, not the kind of person who draws attention to herself. She dressed plainly, and spoke professionally from her heart with a sense of groundedness and no nonsense.

Janet didn't say more than was necessary in her teachings.

One of her teaching styles was to ask the same question back to the student that was asked of her and allow the student to come to her own realization that s/he knew more than s/he thought. I liked that about her...

I told Janet at my Level 4 class that I would soon be moving to Boulder, Colorado just thirty minutes from her home. We agreed to reconnect at that time. Soon after arriving in Boulder, I set up an appointment to have a Healing Touch treatment with Janet at her office. I started participating in local HT events and became acquainted with some of the regional instructors, including Linda Smith, Carol Komitor, Sue Hovland, Anne Day, Cindy Aspromonte, Judy Turner, Mary Beth Bastian, and Nancy Burns. (Janna Moll came along a bit later as did Joan Payne and Ruth Muhr). Mary Szczepanski had just moved out of the Denver area about the time I moved in. I loved this community of people and knew I was "home."

At my Level 5 in Mill Valley, California in 1994, Janet encouraged me to attend the next instructor training in just three weeks. I took a deep breath and said "Yes!" Back then, Janet moved people through a faster track to get instructors out into the world. Having been a holistically oriented nurse with a doctoral degree and experience in teaching nurses made me a good candidate to move on. Our instructor training took place at Shadowcliff Retreat Center, a very special place outside Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado where Janet had first envisioned Healing Touch years before. We had a large class of new instructors with Janet Mentgen and Dorothea Hover Kramer as our instructors. Some of my classmates

included Marilee Tolen, Maureen McCracken, Kathy Moray Allan, Sandra Lutz, Merla Hoffman, Vickie Slater, Susan Maclaren, Lori Wyzykowski, Karilee Shames, Cecil Del Carmen and Claramae Weber. Myra Tovey and Pamela Potter Hughes came as helpers. We had a wonderful time, laughed a lot, bonded, played, practiced teaching Level 1, and at one point, abandoned Janet and Dorothea to go outside and enjoy a spectacular double rainbow over the lake and mountains where we took our class photo. This felt this was an ominous sign for our futures in HT.

Little did I realize at that time that eleven years later Janet would hold her final teachings for four days at Shadowcliff with forty-four instructors. She surprised me with a sacred circle ceremony in the chapel to pass on the responsibility of Program Director to me, witnessed by the community of instructors. Since that event in 2005, just a few months before she died, I have made an annual visit to Shadowcliff as a way to rededicate myself and my work to her legacy.

The retreat center was hand built by a group of volunteers as a spiritual retreat center in the 1970s. Janet taught many classes there in the early years of HT. It resides on a hill next to a small but powerful branch of the very beginnings of the Colorado River, the same river which carved out the Grand Canyon. What a wonderful picture for us to hold about the potential of Healing Touch in the world as each of us carves out places in our communities over time where the practice of this sacred art and science impacts the world in many ways.

Back to 1994... I approached Janet with the idea of creating the role of Director of Research for Healing Touch. Janet loved the idea as we both wanted HT to gain respectability in mainstream healthcare, with insurance companies and with consumers of healthcare. The best way to do this was with scientific research. I started out with one study, Concepcion (Connie) Silva's doctoral nursing study done at the University of Texas in the early 1990s. Connie had to change the name in her study from Healing Touch to Relaxation Touch because it wasn't at that time an acceptable term by her dissertation committee! (Connie continues to be an active HTP instructor in Texas and Mexico and is helping with Spanish translations of HT standardized curriculum.) I also started collecting any



Above: Cynthia's Level 6 instructor class, Summer 1994 at Shadowcliff Retreat Center near Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. Janet Mentgen and Dorothea Hover Kramer were the instructors. The rainbow is touching Cynthia's back.

studies related to HT that would support our work, including many studies done in Therapeutic Touch, documentation done by spiritual healers and early studies in consciousness, long distance healing and energy medicine. The International Society for the Study of Subtle Energy and Energy Medicine (ISSSEEM) started out the year after HT and Janet sent me to their conferences. ISSSEEM is now an affiliate of HT Program whose community and resources have been a huge support to Healing Touch scientifically and organizationally.

She hired me into a paid position six months later in 1995 and then we moved my position the following year into her new HT branch, Healing Touch International, which she created to become the autonomous supportive body to grant certification status to her HTP graduates. She needed a new (second) certification body because the American Holistic Nurses' Association (AHNA) decided they could not serve as the autonomous certifying body for graduates who were not nurses. Because Janet wanted to include EVERYONE who wanted to be certified after graduating from her HT Program, HTI then became the HTP's second certifying body. HT Certification (HTC) has been in place as the third autonomous certifying body since April 2008.

The next ten years proved to be very fruitful to Healing Touch all over the world. Janet's standardized curriculum spread beautifully not only through the United States and Canada but to other countries as well with established HT communities growing in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, the Netherlands and Peru as the most active nations. Janet traveled almost every weekend somewhere in North America to teach and would rest for a day or two upon her return to Denver before spending a few days at the HT office and then travel again. She loved teaching in Hawaii, Canada, New Zealand and Australia as well.

When she could she would spend a weekend or several days at her daughter Lynn's farm on the other side of the Rocky Mountains in Paonia, Colorado. She found sweet respite working in the organic greenhouse alongside Lynn and playing with her grandchildren. I had had the pleasure of spending several weekends on Lynn's farm and know the deep peace Janet must have experienced from being on such rich expanse of fertile land surrounded by mountains, big sky, grazing cattle, clucking chickens and Lynn's flock of sheep.

Janet discovered that she had breast cancer in the summer of 2003. While fully immersing herself in both holistic practices and also choosing the route of chemotherapy, she "put her ducks in a row" facing the fact that she could die. She called me up at the end of the summer and we started meeting weekly to discuss my mentoring under her wing, first as her assistant and down the road as the new HT Program Director. I took Janet to her chemo sessions, as well as gave her HT treatments each time I saw her, which was usually three days a week. She remained very optimistic throughout her last two years, hoping she would get to continue HT's legacy in human body form. She very much retained control of Healing Touch these years and was fully cognizant and spiritually active while undergoing cancer treatment. Though she would experience fatigue and have occasional episodes of crankiness, she actively stayed engaged in preparing the future of Healing Touch. Janet attended her last HT international conference the second week of September 2005 where she had many short conversations from a wheelchair with numerous HT practitioners, students and instructors. She was on oxygen and did not attend all the activities. I stayed with her in a hotel suite and we shared some very special time, especially before saying good-night. At the banquet, which was attended by almost 600 people, she ceremoniously passed on the ownership and operation of Healing Touch Program to her family, Lisa Gordon, Lynn Gillespie and Bill Mentgen. Three days later, after a long day of transition, she died peacefully at home, surrounded by

her son, Bill and daughter-in-law, Tanya (who lived with her), Carol Komitor (founder of HT for Animals), Linda Smith (founder of HT Spiritual Ministry) and myself. I was honored to give Janet the Chakra Spread early in the day and repeated it again with Carol.

A few months before, Janet had planned her memorial service with her priest for a month after her death. A few hundred people attended and we witnessed her ashes placed in a common grave with ashes from other members of the Episcopal parish in Golden, Colorado. Many in the HT community wondered what would happen next? How would HT go on? There was much to do and we had to find ways to work together and continue the legacy.

It is now over four years since Janet crossed the threshold. Many of us feel that she supports our "doing the work" from the other side. Healing Touch remains strong and growing. Lisa Mentgen Gordon in the next few years after Janet's death would emerge as the natural leader from Janet's family and I continued in my role as Program Director. Though the road has not been easy in many ways, the bumps are fewer and path significantly smoother. Lisa and I have bonded as friends and colleagues and love working together and with the many instructors and practitioners who work with us to carry on Janet's legacy.



Above: Cynthia and Marilee Tolen, Level 6 classmates at the Shadow-cliff Cross outside the chapel.

Sadly, a break off competitive group emerged after Janet's death offering independent and unstandardized teachings of Healing Touch. Such occurrences are quite common after a founder dies. ***A historical document linked here***, is now available for those who are interested in reading a comprehensive overview of what has transpired since Janet's death from an organizational perspective.

In closing, I'd like to share something more personal about Janet. During the two years as she mentored me, we spent our time in different ways. Of course, there was always the work portion where she taught me things about how she ran the business or how she handled communications. She gradually had me do more things on my own. The other parts of our days together consisted of more personal time where I would give her an HT session, or we would go for a walk, share a meal or be in conversation. We talked about many things....her faith and spiritual beliefs, healing work, her thoughts about the latest book she had read, her family, stories from the past about her life or Healing Touch, her hopes for complete physical healing, her nursing career and what she hoped for in the future. She wasn't naturally talkative and often kept her words to a minimum which used to remind me of my favorite saying from St. Francis...."Preach the gospel at all times!!!.....Use words when necessary." As I look back at those times, when I remember wishing that she would have told me more or shared more details, I can see that some of her greatest teachings to me were when she would receive HT from me. Being consciously joined in our energy fields, I think Janet spoke silently to me helping me to know who I am and how to direct my life and my vocational work in HT. In past reflection, those regular quiet

times together "just doing the work" are probably the times and places where her teachings and wisdom were most imprinted upon me. Thank you Janet for all those times you were teaching me and I didn't even know it....

I want to thank everyone who has played a role in the teaching and practice of HT and in spreading the light of Healing Touch around the world. We know that practices like Healing Touch are desperately needed in the world. HT is easily accepted in various cultures due to its universal scientific and spiritual teachings. I recommit myself in serving you as Program Director for Healing Touch. **Please join us as we joyfully move into Healing Touch Program's NEXT twenty years which we begin on January 1, 2010!** See December's issue of Energy Magazine to read about HTP's twenty year accomplishments and plans for the next twenty years!

About the author:

Cynthia Hutchison is the Director of the Healing Touch Program™. Beginning over twenty years ago, she began studying natural medicine and energy therapies. She has studied world religions and is an avid student of spirituality. As a doctorally-prepared nurse from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. (1987), Cynthia is also knowledgeable in the mainstream health sciences and the nursing profession. With a master's degree as a clinical specialist in mental health, she has maintained a private practice in both Healing Touch and transpersonal psychotherapy for many years. She teaches all levels of the HT curriculum, including Advanced Practice 1 and 2. Cynthia loves teaching and brings much positivity, enthusiasm, and creativity to her classes. She lives in Boulder, Colorado with her three "awesome" daughters who are all attending college.