



## Remembrance of Ed Wortz

Memorial Tributes, December 12, 2004

### Remarks for the Ed Wortz Memorial Service by David Shire

This morning at dawn I left Palisades (New York). By noon, I had traveled about 3000 miles and was walking down a street in Palisades (Pacific). And by dawn tomorrow morning I'll be back in... Palisades. What journey could be more Ed-like than that?



I'm David Shire, a composer and songwriter, and I first came to Ed, about twenty years ago, because I was told he specialized in helping artists with writers block. But now, looking back on it, my writers block was merely a subset of a much larger problem, a blockage of the writer's spirit. Ed taught me a number of techniques to overcome my self-imposed barriers to a more productive career, as well as a fulfilling life in all its aspects, and for that I am as deeply and eternally grateful to him as countless others. He helped me to be not only a better writer but a better husband, father, counter of blessings, appreciator of the miracle of everyday living, and human being as well.

I had previously worked with numerous therapists through the years, but part of my agenda was to defeat them. Ed, however, by his very nature and presence demonstrated that games, in the conventional sense, were irrelevant to what we were doing, so such concepts as defeat and victory were equally so. And the clearer that became to me, the less our relationship was one of therapist and patient and the more it became a matter of two close friends and fellow spiritual travellers, albeit one a little older and a lot wiser than the other, sharing their mutual interests, observations, joys and sorrows together. In the end, as far as the therapeutic aspect of our relationship was concerned, it didn't matter all that much what was actually said. Just being in Ed's presence for a hour, even if it was filled with a lot of silence, made me feel better, more alive, more able to cope, and accept.

Just two specific memories from an overflowing album. I once told Ed that everything I was writing was worthless. He told me to go home and write three absolutely worthless pieces of music and bring them in the following week. Of course, I tried but couldn't. Everything I wrote had some value, however slight, and that observation led me to a more accurate appraisal of my output.

Ed also, of course, urged me to use the famous Singing Cure about which you've already heard today, suggesting that I try singing my audible and silent whining, instead of speaking or thinking it, in order to shove it over from the left brain into the right and thereby get a fresh perspective on it. Certainly (sing): "I am a failure and a totally disgusting human being" had a less counterproductive effect on my psyche than its unsung counterpart. Maybe this is why "singin' the blues" has always been so universally cathartic.

Most of my work is written for specific projects - scores for stage musicals and movies, songs for specific performers and recording artists. But every once in a while, I write a song that I just, well, need to write because I need to write it - for me. I wrote one of these about a year ago, and I realized immediately that it never would have been written if I hadn't known Ed. So it's dedicated to him, and I'd like to sing it for you - and maybe for him - now:



THE LAUGHS WE SHARE AS WE MAKE DINNER.  
WARM SUNLIGHT ON OUR BED AT DAWN.  
TO SEE LIFE MORE LIKE A BEGINNER.  
SIMPLICITY.

OUR BACKYARD SOFTBALL GAME LAST MONDAY.  
THE PERFUME OF OUR NEW-MOWN LAWN  
TO SAY, TO HELL WITH WORK NEXT MONDAY!  
SIMPLICITY, SIMPLICITY.

A DREAM NEW BORN, YOUR TENDER SMILE.  
A FIELD OF CORN WE WATCH AWHILE.  
THAT DRESS YOU'VE WORN THAT'S BACK IN STYLE.  
NOT KEEPING SCORE.  
NOT WANTING MORE.

TO SPEAK MY MIND BUT NOT GET CLEVER.  
ACCEPT HOW MUCH THAT'S GONE IS GONE.  
TO MOVE BEYOND ALL VAIN ENDEAVOR.  
ALL SUPERFICIAL TIES NOW SEVER.  
AND LET THINGS FLOW.  
AND LET THINGS GO.  
AND TASTE FOR NOW, IF NOT FOREVER,  
SIMPLICITY.  
SIMPLICITY.  
SIMPLICITY.

### **Reflection and Remembrance**

**November 9, 2004**

I was fortunate enough to meet Ed about 3 years ago. My wife of 2 1/2 years Nancy, has been associated with Ed for many, many years. Even though there was a vast age difference, Ed became a fast friend, able to relate on all levels. Ed and his lovely wife Karen, are a very integral part of our lives. Ed and I spent many hours speaking of life, death, wives, children, football, personal ambitions, ear wiggling, finger warming, paper gliders, etc.....I will miss Mr. Wortz. He is as important, if not more, to me as most of my life long relationships.

*Greg Cantwell*

**November 9, 2004**

I met Ed a couple of years ago, when my friend Nancy invited me to a Dharma Family retreat. It wasn't until I started attending the sitting sessions in Hollywood that I really got to know him. I felt an instantaneous rapport and warmth from Ed. With but a very few moments together, I could tell that he could be a friend. He was acutely observant, intelligent, and had a gentle way about him that created a feeling of ease. I'm happy to have known him, if only briefly, and feel grateful to my friend Nancy for having introduced me to him and the Dharma family.

*Rita Valencia*



**November 10, 2004**

I remember the twinkle in Ed's eye.

*Molly Rhodes*

**November 13, 2004**

I met Ed Wortz in 1971. I will miss my beloved friend of over thirty years and I am unable to feel his absence in anyway near the way I felt his presence.

*Madelin Coit*

**November 14, 2004**

I knew Ed Wortz for twenty three years. He was the psychologist my friends said I should go see when I was having a difficult time in life.

"All the artists go see him," they said, "he understand creative people." And indeed he did with a smile, and a laugh, and a real sense of joy. I remember the first time I came to his office on Prospect Street in Pasadena, sat in his office on a couch across from a wall of books, and we talked about my mother. He asked me what I would like to do to my mother. I said I would like to punch her. He said, "Well why don't you pretend that Eames leather chair over there is your mother and go punch her." I responded, "I don't think I can do that I might wreck your chair." "No, No," He said, "It's OK, go ahead and punch the chair." I got stood up reluctantly. "Are you sure," I said. "Go ahead," He said. I swung hard and the chair flew across the room and crashed into his bookcase. Ed smiled, nodded his head and emitted a low laugh, "I guess you are angry at your mother." I began to cry. "Yes, I am I said." I saw Ed for several years, and he encouraged me to begin meditation. I meditated in the groups he directed me to and I meditated with him for many many years. He was the smartest, kindest, most perceptive man I ever knew. Whenever we saw each other we embraced and he would ask me, "How is your sweet self?" In his presence I always felt in a sweet space.

*Carl Davis*

**November 14, 2004**

I must have seen him very few times since I worked with him for nine months in 1987 and yet he seemed close. Our lives wove in and out. So often do I quote him: "wealth is a perception of obstacles", "just because you are doing nothing doesn't mean there's nothing doing" ...and so he lives on in countless ways, an utterly wonderful and precious spiritual friend and teacher.

*Carol Moss*

**November 15, 2004**

I don't know how long ago I met Ed, but if I remember correctly he was in transition from his career at Garret to becoming a therapist. I was teaching at U.C. Irvine and so was his wife Melinda, whom I knew when she was still Melinda Terbell. She met Ed when she offered her assistance to L.A.C.M.A. in arranging



meetings between artists and scientists for the Art And Technology Show.

At that time Ed had a machine that would teach people to train their brains to produce Alpha waves. I was curious about this and so through Melinda I arranged to met him. He hooked me up to the machine and I learned to produce Alpha waves and after some time I became one of his early therapy clients. Eventually I visited Japan and when I returned I wanted to study Japanese so Ed told me about a Buddhist monk named Shinzen who taught Japanese at the International Buddhist Meditation Center. It wasn't long before we were all meditating together every Sunday morning with Dr. Thien-An and a small community of Asian and American monks, nuns, and lay people. After, we would lunch at one of the first and only Thai restaurants in L.A. We attended memorable lectures when Shinzen would translate for Zen Masters such as Sasaki Roshi at Mount Baldy. Our lives intersected this way for a few short years. Although we never discussed the subject of Ed's personal practice, it seemed to me that it was during this period that he exerted himself in a formidable manner and passed through various gates of liberation.

If I understood Ed correctly I would say that it was important to him that people take pleasure in their lives and love each other and that this could be done by practicing attention and letting go. Ed subjected himself to a variety of processes and practices to satisfy his curiosity about human behavior. He once related to me that he had experienced his own death in a previous life while undergoing regression. He told me that it was a painful experience because it was very hard to give up the body. But that was many years ago and I would like to think that when that obligation came to him in this life he was well practiced and ready to meet it. When Dr. Thien-An died Ed Eulogized him by saying that none of us had any appreciation for the influence that this person would continue to exert on us for a long time to come. And so it is and will be with Ed. I was lucky to know him.

*Tom Wudl*

#### **November 16, 2004**

Ed Wortz was so skillful at reducing suffering! He understood that folks needed to know how suffering is created in order to dismantle it. Ed frequently asked, "How do you do suffering?" With great gentleness and humor, he encouraged everyone he knew to pay attention to the fascinating interplay of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and behaviors. Because he found meditation to be useful in his own life, he generously taught meditation to others. Ed's vision of a secular, non-hierarchical meditation group lives on in the Dharma Family. My favorite Ed quote is, "If there is no fixed way for me to be, judgments of myself do not pertain."

*Linda Hoag*

#### **November 17, 2004**

I heard a lot about Ed before I ever actually met him, usually from artists whom I knew who participated in his group sessions. This diverse group of people from different disciplines were all in agreement. So when I was introduced to him in the early eighties, I too was completely won over. Ed was a compassionate and understanding human being, inspiring confidence and emanating kindness and a complete sense of calm. He leaves us all with very special, but individual memories, of a beautiful and generous spirit.

*Pam Berg*



January 17, 2005

I met Ed around 1989. I was introduced to his meditation group through Sarah Seager, who I am grateful to for doing so. Ed made such an impact on my life and everyone he came in contact with, as well as with the people he didn't come in contact with. A domino effect. He changed the direction of my life forever, through one on one therapy, group therapy, and especially Zen and meditation.

I think about Ed often.

Ed had a great skill of always bringing me back to the present moment, with his words, his teachings, his hearty laugh, or even saying nothing and giving me a smile.

Thank you Ed.

*Thad Strobe.*