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Commemorative Edition

Mike Boxhall

January 4, 1930 - April 10, 2019



John Chitty

April 15, 1949 - February 28, 2019



**Remembering Mike Boxhall:
January 4, 1930 - April 10, 2019**



By Amanda Biggs
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“Craniosacral therapy, at its tenderest, is a journey taken by two or more people towards a level of being where there is no pathology.”
- Mike Boxhall

Mike Boxhall, CSTA member, Fellow, supervisor, Chair 1994 to 1998, and much-loved teacher, passed away peacefully aged 89 on 10th April 2019.

Many will have met Mike through the courses that he offered, which were based around Stillness. Over several days of practice which included meditation, hands-on work, reflection and often lively discussion, the work deepened without fail, opening up a unique process for each participant.

Mike’s exploration of working in this way began, he said, from contemplating a phrase by William Sutherland, “You can rely upon the Tide.” Mike set about studying this phrase experientially, exploring what happened if he deepened his trust in the Intelligence of the Tide to know what to do, rather than ideas and concepts about what “should” happen. This was Mike’s gift to the craniosacral world—to embody a trust in the Tide, the Intelligence of the body and of Spirit, to “let the work do the work”—inspiring practitioners to wrestle with their need to fix, to intervene, to do, to not-trust. At the same time, he was always clear that this was one type or “level” of work, and other ways may be appropriate in different circumstances.

Mike had a great sense of humour, including about his own “neuroses” as he called them. He was full of many self-deprecating and hilarious anecdotes about his insecurities – “a substantial gold mine of material” – and for many years one of his courses was entitled, “The Blessing of Insecurity.”

Mike always embraced our shared sense of human frailty with great warmth and compassion, yet sought to see and experience beyond our limited beliefs—about ourselves, each other, Spirit and this work. He was dedicated to finding the good “compost” that even the most difficult experiences may become, if they have the time and grace to digest fully. Mike’s emphasis was on hearing as fully as we possibly can, receiving the “other” in their entirety, much of which may not be accessible to our understanding or even perception. To receive another, without judgment from our own undigested life experience, and to allow ourselves to let go into a mystery, to meet where there is no longer any sense of separation.

Mike’s work was informed by a long interest in spirituality, particularly Buddhism, but he was experienced in many approaches to spirit, and was part of crossfaith meetings on several occa-

Who I Am

No beginning, only Process.
The Spirit reincarnates.
Birth and Life
The meeting of the unfolding and the experience.
Layer upon layer of delusion.
I have become I and forgotten.
Yesterday was and tomorrow will be—or so it seems.
No now.
A tide there is,
An ocean then.
Beneath the waves,
There is only still.
The Mother.
Pure awareness.
And I remember who I am.
The Ocean stirs,
There is only process.

By Mike Boxhall

sions. His poems and book on his teaching, *The Empty Chair*, give a gentle emphasis to “the teaching not the teacher.”

One of Mike’s favorite influences was Milarepa, “a Tibetan rogue then saint of the 11th century CE,” who learned that rather than fighting his enemies, he could, as Mike said, “schmooze them.”

“Some traditions would have us go to war with Maya, Illusion, the Ego and try to destroy it. I would say, in the model of Milarepa, which I love, let us get to know it much better, befriend it, be more fully aware of it as compost... Then, we expand into fuller realisation of our whole identity.”

Mike touched many lives very deeply over many years and continents, and his voice in our field will be greatly missed. I cannot hope to describe him adequately in words. My memory of him will be of a tender, warm, mischievous, poetic, fiercely compassionate man.

All thoughts are with his wife Barbara, and his family. Thank you, Mike.



By Rose Khalsa

Around 15 years ago I started to teach craniosacral work. I had been teaching polarity therapy and shamanism for over 30 years and felt guided to begin to share with some of my students the work I had learned studying with Franklyn Sills and others, practicing craniosacral therapy.

When I started teaching, what I found hardest was the language used for describing what was going on in the body and the “lens” used, which was from an osteopathic viewpoint.

I saw the body as energy patterns and always kept it simple as far as describing what was going on. As a shaman and healer, my language was different.

One of my friends, Stephanie Abramson, told me about this awesome man named Mike Boxhall. She said he had been a Buddhist monk and that I may really enjoy taking one of his classes.

So I did.

I found him totally approachable, humble, funny, and deeply spiritual. And his “lens” fit mine.

What I enjoyed the most was that he did not teach technique. He taught simply to “Trust the Tide.”

This mantra became stamped on my frontal lobe every time I did a session.

Once when I was having a hard time with one of my classes, I e-mailed him and instead of telling me what to do, he encouraged my openness to being vulnerable. He reminded me how insecurities were an open door to healing the heart.

I approached my class with this open heart and found all the answers I needed to support my students and to feel grounded in my being a teacher.

To hear it from Mike at that time gave me great support, especially when I had three of my

closest beings pass away suddenly—my partner, my Mom and my son—all within a year. My heart cracked wide open and I learned how to use grief as the biggest door to transforming my heart.

I know Mike’s presence and wise words will always sit close to my heart, especially when I am teaching and see the incredible journey how the Tide, in Her inclusive magnificence, supports so much healing, love, and the enfoldment of divine wisdom.

Wherever you are, my Mentor and friend, I will miss you.

An excerpt from a biography written by Mike Boxhall:

The Empty Chair Teaching Foundation

“I have been a therapist for about 40 years.

I have been a Buddhist for about 40 years.

All the above and some others that I won’t bother you with, is called compost. Oh, and I used to be an athlete, but that was a really long time ago, now I feel very mortal..

It all comes together in what I try to teach which is, in the meaning of words of the Buddha, that enlightenment is in the body. Right here and right now.

The felt sense of this started emerging when I trained in craniosacral therapy with Franklyn Sills in his early teaching days before the Karuna Institute was formed. I much valued that teaching—and still do—it has lead me to evolve my own style, just as he evolved his, out of his previous work. I wish everyone would teach their own story rather than recycle someone else’s with the inevitable consequent loss of integrity.

I hope the following work will eventually reveal that the essence of what I now see the work as being is surrender. Briefly, and this will expand as we go along, the surrender of Intellect to Intelligence. It is a good deal; new lamps for old or, in this case the limited constructs of the personal, for the infinite potential of the communality.

This is the path. This is the road that hopefully, we shall explore together.”



Remembering John Chitty: April 15, 1949 - February 28, 2019



By Kate White

John Chitty, my teacher, mentor, supervisor, friend and fellow pilgrim-on-the-path, has transitioned to the “magical place” where his life began.

He often said, “We are a unit of consciousness that comes from an invisible spiritual world to Earth for the purpose of gaining wisdom through experience.” He offered these words as a mantra, used whenever greeting a baby. And, I think, perhaps everyone he met. I imagine him back in that other realm having new experiences, gaining more wisdom.

Here on Earth, it falls upon us—those left behind—to find a way to celebrate his life, his turn on this planet as the one and only John Chitty. How did he touch us? What was and still is our experience?

John was a celebrated teacher of polarity therapy and biodynamic craniosacral therapy. His blend of therapy combined ancient wisdom with current health practices. He and his wife, Anna Chitty, started teaching polarity therapy in 1979 and opened the Colorado School of Energy Studies in Boulder, CO, in 1992. At the end of his life, John created Polarity Counseling. I was one of his many students. We practiced this approach in our sessions, and he coached me on the combination of healing arts within it. He was ardent about the Two-Chair process, and I was a great beneficiary.

I offer my story, here, today, to honor my dear friend. Over the years, we collaborated on neuroscience projects, the latest trends in polyvagal theory application, working with babies, bodywork courses for perinatal healing, polarity counseling, and so much more. This is a personal remembering of John and only scratches the surface regarding the depth of the impact he has had on me, my work, my family, and all those that come within my reach. My students benefit from his wisdom as it passes through me to them.

A Distinguished Lineage

The Chitty’s had a distinguished lineage that one could always feel when working with them. John and Anna openly shared where their ideas and practices came from and credited teachers who blended energy and bodywork healing practices. They credited Randolph Stone, founder of polarity therapy, and John Upledger, creator of craniosacral therapy. They acknowledged Robert Hall and Fritz Perls for the Two-Chair Approach, a method designed to help shift fixed energy.

And Peter Levine, who also credited Stone for influencing his pendulation work (this, not this) was noted. In addition, John and Anna pulled from the great osteopaths: Andrew Still, William Sutherland, Rollin Becker, and Robert Fulford. They also blended in: Focusing and the work of Eugene Gendlin; Listening by Carl Rogers; and attachment theory and neuroscience, especially the polyvagal theory by Stephen Porges.

Learning about the story of their lineage, I also imagined these personalities coming together to form the Chitty’s current practice: Ray Castellino, who brought them understanding of prenatal and perinatal imprints, and Maura and Franklyn Sills, who added spiritual psychotherapy and biodynamic craniosacral therapy, respectively. I am also indebted to John and Anna for bringing Jaap van der Wal to the United States to share his teachings on spirituality and embryology.

Colorado School of Energy Studies a.k.a. The Jedi Training Academy

My studies in prenatal and perinatal psychology started in 1999 when a client of my biodynamic craniosacral therapy practice remembered her birth on my table. In the course of my studies, I came across a paper by John on the polyvagal theory titled, “An Introduction to The Polyvagal Theory.” Through his writings, I began to understand the impact of social engagement on babies and taught this to parents using his two-page paper as a handout.

I vowed that one day I would meet the great John Chitty and study with him. At the time, however, I was raising babies of my own and running my therapy center—travel was difficult. When I felt I could leave my family to attend his workshop on “Working with Babies,” he was sick, cancer (Stage 4 2D prostate-lungs-bones cancer, diagnosed September 2010). Finally, in 2013, he was well enough to teach. I made the journey to see him and to attend his course, “Working with Babies.”

I picked up my rental car at the Denver Airport. The man at the counter asked why I was there and where I was going. I said, “I am here to study at the Jedi Training Academy.” Taking in his response, I could tell he believed me for a moment. I guess anything is possible in Boulder, CO. But it was partially true.

The Chitty’s are well known for their capacity to train practitioners in the science and spirit of biodynamic craniosacral therapy, and the wisdom of Randolph Stone’s polarity therapy. When you study with them, you feel the Force! The Colorado School of Energy Studies was like a modern Jedi Training Academy. I paused in front of the Energy School and took a picture of my reflection in the glass door. In the picture, you can barely make out that I am standing there, the words of the school melding into my body.

John and I connected quickly, easily. We talked about the application of the work and different hand holds for good craniosacral therapy. We worked on each other so he could give me feedback. Vulnerable, honest, the consummate teacher, scientist, guide to one’s deepest mysteries, John took me on as a student and mentee then and there. Much later he told me he recognized me, especially by the questions I was asking. He probably did that with everyone.

Over the Years

John and I separately, and then together, developed educational materials on the polyvagal theory, each of us developing a poster series. We loved to discuss the merits of different approaches people examined in the published literature. He was a consummate reader, thinker, practitioner, and teacher. With each discovery of better teaching methods and ideas, John encouraged me to learn and teach them. He was a big supporter of the Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health where he gave many talks in our online program and at our conferences.

Dancing with Yin and Yang

My in-depth training in John’s polarity approach—dancing with yin and yang—began after the “Working with Babies” class, mostly in the form of supervision and coaching. In our sessions he would say, “Give me 10 minutes and two chairs.” Or, “We can solve this! Get me two chairs!”

The years following 2013 were filled with many two-chair sessions and a full education in the application of energy medicine and polarity to every life situation. John said to me, “State change is the name of the game.” He did not necessarily believe in getting to the root cause of anything. It was more about acknowledging states and how they are coupled with experience. He also did not pathologize behavior, and he refused to participate in my attempts to do that to myself or any situation.

Many times, we did “Body Low Slow Loop”: an instruction summary for their sympathetic

nervous system first aid method as taught and used in their classes. It was derived from the work of Peter Levine, an attempt to simplify the trauma-recovery model into as few steps as possible. I listened to their podcast (<https://www.energyschool.com/audio-recordings>) on the approach out loud so often my husband could imitate him.

One of the things I really loved about John was his faith in love, relationships, marriage, and the importance of the couple as a unit of yin and yang.

John taught my husband and me about the importance of seeing each other in this way. He would say that my husband's opinions were primary. To this day, when I have a dilemma that needs a polarity approach I often say to my husband, "May I ask a John Chitty question?" This is our code for a request for him to become yang to my yin. It made our marriage stronger. John coached us on how to improve the energy system of our family, and within myself. Being a wife and mother was an important role in his book and took precedence over work or play. My family thrived.

Working with Babies Until the End

John and I connected deeply in our work with babies. It was our joint passion besides interrogating neuroscience. His mantra—recognizing babies as spiritual beings having a physical experience—is one that I have turned into an exercise for students so that everyone can see and feel this special way of feeling heard and seen, a blueprint experience for human beings.

His work on understanding parenting and his 5-step approach to helping babies heal are a must for anyone who wants to work with families with babies.

Toward the end of his life, John asked me to teach the two-chair approach for working with babies. For this, you put the baby in the empty chair and have the parent dialogue with the baby. This was part of the original "Working with Babies" course. I said I would.

We prepared together for his death. That last time I saw him was at the biodynamic craniosacral therapy conference. I tried to gently talk with him about his condition and was glad I told him how important he was to me and to all involved in healing arts. We had a chance to exchange table sessions. Always the teacher, he gave me feedback on different hand holds that combined polarity and craniosacral therapy.

We talked occasionally up until his death. He told me, "Nothing lasts forever except the mountains." He always kind of smiled when we talked about what was happening. Modern medicine's approach to healing cancer amused him. He combined many things to help extend his life way beyond what he was told to expect. Anna told me later that he often said that he lived beyond his expiration date.

Pretend You Are In A Clearing

John had many practices for me to follow, all of which are too much to list here. However, I will complete this remembrance of John with this story.

When I was recovering from one of the biggest losses in my life, I felt unsure of my next step. He told me, "Pretend you are in a clearing in the forest, and you have an instrument like a xylophone. Find the tone of what you want for yourself and strike it, then wait to see what comes towards you."

He taught me so much with this one story. First, there is finding the tone, the vibration and that takes threshing and self-reflection. Second, trust that all that needs to be done is striking the tone and then waiting. Third, recognize that your tone is creating an attraction so you can see what is happening. These are steps to guide myself and anyone through life's experiences: Strike a tone, wait, and recognize that what you want is coming toward you.

Saying Goodbye

All my love goes out to John's family, especially Anna and their children and grandchildren. I also send out a big hug to the many people who were touched by John Chitty. He meant so much to so many.

May we all have lives like that. John's courage and capacity to live eight years with stage 4 cancer made him fearless about many things. He confronted me when he felt I needed it, and supported me when I had a dilemma. Until we meet, let me say three things John frequently said to me: Greater Forces are at Work, Full Speed Ahead, and To Be Continued (dot dot dot)

To be continued . . .



By Margaret Rosenau

For each of us, there are people who have influenced our life so deeply that there's no question that life would be different if they had never been part of it. I'm talking about those people whose level of impact on you is so big that there's literally no way to imagine your life without them.

For me, John and Anna Chitty are two such people. They have been my mentors for decades. They have shown up for me in countless personal and professional ways, and have always been generously open to sharing their deep knowledge and wisdom. Their support of my decision to take on the School of Inner Health and teach biodynamic craniosacral therapy foundation trainings has been steadfast and invaluable.

It is with deep sadness, immense gratitude, and a great reservoir of respect that I share the news of John Chitty's passing on February 28th, just over a month shy of his 70th birthday, after a more than eight-year journey with cancer. John approached his cancer as he did the rest of his life — with courage, curiosity, discipline, and grace. Upon learning of his diagnosis, John researched everything he could about his type of cancer. He knew that in order to chart a course of action, he needed to first know the territory.

Discovering everything he could about a new idea, interest, or expansion in our field was quintessential John. In the classroom, his excitement about each new discovery was infectious, and his ability to convey what he knew about relevant and complex scientific research clearly and directly was consistent and astounding. When his cancer entered the picture, John expanded this innate ability into new regions. As John's illness taught him, he in turn taught us all, both about what he learned and about how to help others. He also turned his illness into a catalyst to expand his legacy, writing two important, thoughtful and accessible books in the last eight years. The impact of *Dancing with Yin and Yang* and *Working with Babies* in our field is significant and will be long-lasting.

I've said for years that if John hadn't taken the path he did, he would have been a successful comedian. John was hysterical. His wit was dry and spot on. Laughing hard was a reliable perk of being in his classroom. In addition to his humor, I will always remember his kindness, thoughtfulness and care. I've had conversations with several people in recent days about how deeply he touched them and how thoroughly he made a difference in their lives. John mentored and supported thousands of people over the course of his life. John loved to be of service, and he served all who came into his orbit with humility and grace.

My relationship with John has been built through our common work and focus, but I find in these days of mourning that the memories I am revisiting are those times where we talked about other things. Just this past September at the biodynamic craniosacral conference in Maryland, we shared stories about our childhoods and our children, and we learned new things about each other. At that conference, John was given an award, and the award ceremony included an opportunity for anyone who wanted to honor him directly. I am grateful for the chance I had to thank John in the presence of the rest of the participants for the impact he and Anna have had on my life.

Travel well, John. I take comfort in knowing that you are discovering all sorts of answers to questions you have long asked about energy and matter and motion. You will be thoroughly missed and are absolutely loved.

By Ray Castellino

These were the words that I spoke to the 350 people that gathered to pay tribute to John at his Memorial Service, July 14, 2019.

John was a dear friend and fellow traveler on the Path. Over the decades, I've had the amazing pleasure of being part of the Chitty household. When they moved to Boulder, Colorado, I was given the pleasure of staying with the Chittys in their home. I stayed with them on almost every trip I made to Colorado. I stayed with the Chittys so many times, I've lost count. I've been welcomed into the Chitty family as "Uncle Ray."

The Chitty family welcome is like no other. Their love has always been first and foremost. In their home, John consistently reminded me, "*Mi casa es su casa*." And, when it came to food and eating, he said over and over again, "If you can see it, you can eat it." Welcome words for my little inner kid, who was trained that one is never to open and take food out of someone else's refrigerator. John's and the Chitty family's generosity so welcomed, opened, and soothed me at the same time. I feel as if their home is my home.

John was brilliant and an amazing historian of subjects far and wide. One time I slept in a spare bedroom. On the built-in bookshelf was a hand typed manuscript, "History of the Civil War." I began reading in the middle of the manuscript. . . It immediately captured my attention. I kept reading. After a while, I began to wonder where this manuscript came from. Then I turned to the cover page to discover that this history of the Civil War was John's Senior HIGH School Project.

So many times we would sit and watch football together. So much fun! He tracked all sports. Like in all other subjects, his sports knowledge was encyclopedic. With each visit, John tutored me into the details of the current state of whatever sport we were talking about, be it football, golf or basketball.

Yet, there was a whole other quality to John. His presence and his attention had velvet like quality . . . When he gave you his attention he was totally there on your behalf . . . in ways that settled the mind and opened the spirit so that we could have access to our finer deeper essence. . .

The summer of 2018 was the last time I saw John. He and Anna sat with me as John facilitated me in one of his two chair explorations . . . I got to relish in the Dance of Yin and Yang and come to a deeper level of peace within myself. . .

John had a deep spiritual commitment that he did not flaunt. He was humbly and simply living the path. He knew the force that was directing his life from the very depths of his being. He aligned himself to that essence in very real and grounded ways. John walked his talk.

In the last paragraph of his book, *Dancing with Yin and Yang*, John wrote:

My wish is that young people might somehow catch the spark that illuminated my life experience and carry it into the future where its full potential might be realized.

He referred to Dr Randolph Stone's visions of a truly full-spectrum health care including not only treatment as we have today, but also perception based on a deep understanding of the Laws of Nature and the purpose of life.

He began that last paragraph with the words, "So there you have it."

So John, "There you have it." This life has come and gone, you've touched us and now your soul soars in the beyond . . .

By Cherionna Menzam-Sills

John Chitty, who has been a major fulcrum in the field of biodynamic craniosacral therapy, at least in America, sadly passed away in February. After studying with Franklyn Sills, John assisted his wife, Anna, in teaching this beautiful work at their school in Boulder, Colorado, The Colorado School of Energy Studies (CSES), where they also taught polarity therapy. CSES quickly became one of the largest, most influential biodynamic schools in America.

I was fortunate to not only have the opportunity to study with John and Anna, including assisting their trainings, but I have also appreciated their friendship and support through the years. I had met Anna in the mid-90s through a training we were both taking in bodymind psychotherapy. We immediately connected and soon I had been invited to have an office in the new clinic Anna and John were opening in Boulder. I have fond memories of us all spending long hours painting the new venue, while their little daughter, Lizzie, and her little friend ran around us playing. It could have been hard work, but with the Chitty's, it became fun.

As I was already a craniosacral therapist, it took me awhile to sign up for the Chitty's training after moving to Boulder. Being practice client for my friends training with them, I began to get a sense of something special and magical happening in their classes. In the meantime, as I was seeing my own clients, I would frequently hear roars of laughter coming through the wall from the class happening on the other side of it. When I mentioned it to my friends, they laughed, declaring that John was becoming even funnier.

John was not only funny. He had one of the most organised minds I have ever encountered. He reliably provided the yang for Anna's yin, creating integrative charts and lists clarifying in simple, understandable, digestible terms some of the most challenging concepts and anatomical details involved in our work. John seemed completely tireless in his commitment to understanding and explaining the mystery.

Long before the polyvagal and social nervous system were familiar terms amongst therapists, John in his usual endless research had come across this important work of Stephen Porges. John soon began developing a way of addressing the polyvagal system in craniosacral therapy. I had the honour of being one of his practice clients as he was testing out his new approach.

John also introduced me and many of us in our field to beloved spiritual embryologist, Jaap van der Wal, bringing him regularly to teach at CSES for many years.

John brought so much to our field, including his infectious personality. As I was finding my own way as a teacher of biodynamics, I felt grateful for his support and encouragement, always available. I still consider John one of the biggest inspirations for me becoming a biodynamic teacher.

John authored three books, *Working with Babies: A Five Part Therapy Method for Infants and their Families*, *Dancing with Yin and Yang: Ancient Wisdom, Modern Psychotherapy and Randolph Stone's Polarity Therapy*, and *Energy Exercises: Easy Exercises for Health and Vitality Based on Randolph Stone's Polarity Therapy*, which he co-authored. You can experience his educational charm via videos, articles and other educational materials available at the CSES website.

John also served five terms as President of the American Polarity Therapy Association and served on the Boards of Directors for associations including polarity, biodynamic craniosacral and Peter Levine's Foundation for Human Enrichment (Somatic Experiencing®).

So many of us feel so grateful for all that John contributed to our field and to us personally. We wondered where he found the energy for his tireless research and creativity. I remember him saying, "Sleep is over-rated." It seems John had so much he was trying to get done in this life. I hope he was able to accomplish all he was aiming for. I suspect his reach was greater than his aim.

So many of us are deeply sad to see him go. I hold him and Anna and their family in love, wishing them all ease in this time of transition. And these days, little Lizzie, who has recently had her own baby, is all grown up and has brilliantly taken over running CSES with her mum. I see the legacy of John in both the insights he has left us and his influence on Elizabeth. Thank you, John.

By Ken Rubinstein

Crazy as it might sound, I feel like I'm hearing John Chitty communicate with me, asking me to help him say some things to everyone. I am feeling like what follows is a message that John is putting out everywhere right now, so I am writing this down with the expectation that others are receiving something similar.

In some places a few words at a time seems closer to what I'm receiving than complete sentences, and sentences one after another rather than paragraphs, so I'll just write it out that way.

Hello to everyone.

Very thankful.

Not just for all the love and support at the end

But for the whole ride.

You all know how curious I was about the interplay
between different dimensions,

How spirit comes into manifestation.

I am no less curious now.

No less excited about the possibilities.

If you'd like, you can call on my help when you
are doing sessions (and at other times too)

And I'll be there to whatever degree you are welcoming me.

This is already happening.

We can make it a lot more conscious.

I am not, and will not be involved with your clients directly, unless they are strongly welcoming it.

As respect for boundaries is no less a guiding principle in the place I am speaking from as it is in
the work we have all done together.

I am putting this message out to everyone

And especially those people that I have had a connection with.

Long live the tides and the field and the love.

(Ken can't figure out whether to put an exclamation point at the end, after "love." I am telling him, yes, he is right in hearing the excitement that would come with an exclamation point, but none is needed—the tides and the field and the love are just fine on their own.)

