

A TOUCH OF WARMTH

A TRUE STORY

by **Stephan A. Schwartz**

We were studying healing. Bob was 25, sallow, and very sick. Diagnosed as being HIV-positive 18 months earlier, he was now in full-blown AIDS and his once handsome features were disfigured by the beginnings of the cancerous lesions known as Kaposi Sarcoma. I was the Research Director of The Mobius Society, a Los Angeles based foundation that studied extraordinary human functioning. In the course of preparing for the experiment we were beginning, I had spent months reading everything about healing I could find in the research literature, and felt fairly competent with what was known scientifically. I had also had a number of personal experiences with energy healing, both giving and receiving, and felt I knew something about the human dimension. What I didn't know was that I was about to be taught a lesson in how subtle and complex this mysterious aspect of human consciousness actually is.

After volunteering and being selected Bob presented himself at the clinic, on that Tuesday morning. Our research was simple in concept. We were asking 14 men and women, seven of them experienced healers using techniques ranging from evangelical Christian laying-on-of-hands, to channeling space people, and seven of them volunteers who had never tried energy healing to beneficially affect the

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Reference: *Papers, both preliminary and final, entitled Infrared Spectra Alteration in Water Proximate to the Palms of Therapeutic Practitioners, by Stephan A. Schwartz, Randall J. De Mattei, Edward G. Brame, Jr. & S. James P. Spottiswoode, which represent the scientific report of this experiment are as follows: The final publication can be found in Subtle Energies. vol. 1, no. 1. 1990. A preliminary report on the research was presented at the 29th Annual Parapsychological Association Annual Meetings, 5-9 August 1986. See Proceedings pp. 257-282. An abstract of that paper is published in Research in Parapsychology (Meutchen: Scarecrow, 1987). The paper was also presented as an Invited Paper at the Society for Scientific Exploration Sixth Annual Meeting 29 May 1987, and a slightly edited version was presented at the Federation of American Chemical Societies Meetings 1987, and an abstract of that version is to be found in the Proceedings for that meeting.*

well-being of the patient-recipient each treated. One healing practitioner was assigned to each patient-recipient, Collectively, they were being asked to treat 14 men and women suffering from everything from migraines to cancer, while small sealed vials of water were strapped to their hands. In the experiment these little bottles, the same kind of rubber topped bottle used in the injections we all know from getting “shots” in a doctor’s office, were filled with a very pure triple distilled water -- to avoid getting false results as a product of pollutants in the water. The bottles were held in place by a tube of white cotton into which the bottle was inserted. Velcro patches took the place of a knot to hold the bottle onto the healing practitioner’s hand.

Our focus was to see if the water changed, if something in its structure was altered by being exposed to healing energy, whatever that was, in a way that could be measured. For each of the three little sealed vials of water used in a session there was a control; a vial of water exactly the same but one which was unexposed to the healing energy. We used three bottles because we wanted to see if increased exposure caused an increase in effect. During each healing session, one treated bottle would be exposed for five minutes, the next for 10, and the third for 15. If there was a relationship between time and intensity of effect, presumably the 15 minute vial sample would show greater change than the five minute sample.

The difference we were measuring was the difference between the treated vial and its control, as determined by one of the most widely used and traditional techniques in water research, infrared spectrophotometry. A small sample of the water from each bottle was placed in this device, which was cleaned after each measurement, and a beam of infrared light was passed through it. Changes in the structure of the water caused changes in the paper graphs drawn by the instrument.

The 14 people who were to receive the healing were randomly matched by a computer to one of the 14 healers, and the luck of the draw had matched Bob with Ben, a 40 year old film producer, with a fundamentalist Christian background, and an almost aggressive masculinity. Ben had never tried to do healing before, and was admittedly homophobic.

When we saw the pairing we realized that with Session 10 we had a dilemma. We had not been told, by the independent group who had selected the patient pool, that an AIDS afflicted recipient would be included, and the healers were not being told by us, in advance, the medical condition of the person they were to heal. It was their choice whether to ask, or not ask, their healing recipient about their condition. But AIDS with its usually terminal outcome and potential for transmission -- however small -- was different. Worse, we knew that Ben was not only homophobic but -- this was 1986 -- concerned about the

contagiousness of AIDS. He had made a point of telling us that during a pre-experiment interview. Could we be ethical and not tell Ben? Was it fair to Bob to be assigned to a healer who found his lifestyle personally repugnant, and who was afraid of his disease? While Bob and Ben both filled out a long series of questionnaires we wrestled with these issues, and finally decided that Ben had to be told.

When he heard the news he blanched and asked to be left alone. He walked into one of the small rooms where his healing session was to take place and closed the door, apparently forgetting that everything in the room was being videotaped. The tape would later show Ben pacing up and down as he struggled with his inner fears and demons. After about five minutes he came out saying, "We came here to do healing, let's go." He smiled at Bob, and did not waiver, even when he saw that Bob, who had been sitting while he answered the questionnaire could hardly rise from his chair.

"It's just my arthritis," he said to Ben, with a wan self-deprecating smile. "Whenever I sit for more than 10 minutes my body locks up." Ben hesitated, then visibly gathered himself to his purpose, walked across the room, and helped Bob rise from his chair. Bob leaned heavily on Ben as he struggled to get onto the massage table we were using. "I'm sorry," was all he said. For a moment both of them were silent, then Ben began to slowly run his hands over Bob, about five inches above his body. "How long have you had this?" Ben asked.

"I probably became HIV-positive a few weeks after I came out," Bob replied. "It was like some kind of punishment, I thought at first." The two men locked eyes, then glanced away. "What are the major problems?" Ben asked, struggling to keep his voice under control.

"Oh, God, I don't know. There are so many things. Right now though I guess it's the arthritis, I used to be a dancer before... before all this. And I'm cold. God, I'm cold all the time."

"Cold?" Ben asked in surprise considering the upper 70 degree temperature of Los Angeles.

"Yeah. I can't get warm. Its the AIDS, it screws up your circulation. I haven't been warm in oh, maybe four months. Even when I take hot baths, it only lasts for a few minutes. I'm just cold, deep down inside all the time."

For the next 30 minutes Ben worked on Bob with an intensity that made conversation superfluous. Even though he was lying down, and the video camera was 15 feet away, it was easy to see that the experience was an intense

one for Bob. His eyes closed, and his body gradually relaxed, his breathing coming through his mouth which was open as if he were asleep. Yet he was awake, and spoke words so softly only Ben could hear them. Ben worked carefully, slowly going over Bob's body, sometimes moving his hands as if he were pulling something invisible yet thick and clinging out of Bob's body; pulling it out and throwing it away with a flick of his hand. Finally, it came to an end and he stood away from the body on the table, looking down on Bob.. Tears ran silently down Ben's cheeks.

After a minute or two, Bob opened his eyes. He looked like a man who was slightly stunned. It took a moment more for him to collect himself then without a care, with easy grace, he rose from the table and was half way across the room when he suddenly stopped. He looked at Ben and, then, looked down at his feet. With a broad smile he did a little dance step. Both men began to laugh, and Ben went across and hugged Bob.

"Thank you, Ben. Thank you so much."

"I don't think God punishes people by giving them AIDS," Ben said. "I might have thought that once, but now I think maybe His punishment is reserved for people whose hearts are closed to a brother's suffering."

As Bob came out of the room, he turned to the researcher who was monitoring the experiment and said, "I'm warm. For the first time in four months, I feel warm inside."

Was it all just subjective, a kind of placebo effect? An hour later, when we examined them, we found that each of three vials from the healing session, was changed when compared with a control water sample. The way the individual molecules of water linked was different. In the weeks that followed we also discovered that not only Ben's water samples had experienced this same change. It didn't seem to matter what technique was used and, to our surprise, we found that the naive healers (those like Ben who had never done healing before), taken as a group produced significant results, although not as powerful a difference as those who had some kind of training, and used their healing skills with some regularity. It seems that healing, like other human skills, works best when an individual's potential is developed through discipline, and they perform this act of service to another regularly.

The big surprise was that although samples from all three time periods -- five, 10 and 15 minutes -- were changed, there was no greater effect to be found in the five minute samples than the samples taken after longer exposure. This would suggest, although this is speculative and preliminary, that healing, like many other human functions, is a pulse phenomenon. During a healing session

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it does not take place as a continuing event, sort of like putting constant strain on a rope to pull a car out of a ditch, but more like the swings of a hammer; there is a period of build up, a moment of discharge, then a period of relaxation.

We also stayed in touch with those who had been the recipients in the healing sessions, particularly Bob. He reported that his arthritis had returned, although it was not quite as bad. To him though the most important effect of his healing session with Ben was that he continued to be warm. What he had called “the chill of the grave” did not return to torment him. Three months later Bob contracted pneumonia. A week later he was dead. Bob’s death forced me to reconsider what I thought about healing. We all expect the big finish, the lame child who throws away his crutches and walks again. Sometimes, I realize, healing is just warmth, and a change of attitude.