

FRANCES VAUGHAN
TRANSPERSONAL PIONEER
Died September, 2017

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One of the great transpersonal pioneers, Frances Vaughan, died suddenly in September, 2017. She contributed to the field in many ways as a teacher, author, speaker, and administrator. She served as president of the Association of Transpersonal Psychology, as a board member of the International Transpersonal Association, and as an editor of and frequent contributor to *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*.

She was, by any standard, a remarkable woman. She was clearly brilliant, graduating from Stanford in only three years and as Phi Beta Kappa (one of the highest academic honors).

Her life was subsequently transformed when she was a subject in one of the early legal studies of psychedelics. There she had a mystical experience so profound that her description of it has been cited and reprinted many times. https://erowid.org/psychoactives/writings/vaughan_perception.shtml This inspired her to explore

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Note: Roger Walsh is pictured above with Frances Vaughan

multiple spiritual traditions and to go back to school so that, as she put it, “my intellect could catch up with my experience.” She received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, and was eventually also awarded two honorary doctorates for her many professional contributions.

She raised two children and loved five grandchildren while offering a full-time psychotherapy practice, and was widely regarded as one of the world’s foremost transpersonal psychotherapists. She was a faculty member of The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and of the University of California, served on the board of the philanthropic Fetzer Institute, and taught around the world.

She published over a hundred articles and nine books including the transpersonal texts *Beyond Ego* and *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*. Her other books include the classic introduction to intuition, *Awakening Intuition*, and an integration of psychotherapy and spirituality titled *The Inward Arc*. She also published a collection of exquisite quotations titled *Gifts from A Course in Miracles*, and a study of spirituality, *Shadows of the Sacred* which Stan Grof described as “a brilliant and groundbreaking exploration of the promises and pitfalls of the spiritual path written by one of the pioneers of transpersonal psychology.”

But what were most remarkable were her personal qualities and interpersonal skills. She was, as Ken Wilber wrote in a foreword to one of her books, “the wisest of wise women” and her deepest value was love. Extraordinary wisdom and extraordinary love: what a combination!

This deep wisdom and love flowed in part from her deep commitment to contemplative practice and values. She had a daily meditation practice, studied multiple traditions, and was a deep student of Zen and *A Course in Miracles*. But her primary focus was on daily life and relationships as places to offer love, service, and truth telling. Thus, she moved gracefully through life, offering insight and support to the many people who sought her wisdom.

On a personal note, I had the extraordinary good fortune to be her partner and husband. She was my priceless life-partner, best friend, beloved, and teacher for over forty years, and she enhanced and transformed my life in more ways than I could ever enumerate. Many times, I literally sat at the dining table with her and took notes as she illuminated some topic I was writing on, a dream one of us had, or a question we were pondering. I'm so glad that I told her many times that she was the great gift of my life.

On her last day a friend asked about her spiritual practice and she replied as she had for many months, "I'm practicing gratitude." For more information see <http://www.francesvaughan.com/>

The Author

Roger Walsh is a Professor of Psychiatry, Philosophy, and Anthropology at the University of California at Irvine, and coeditor with Frances Vaughan of *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*.

