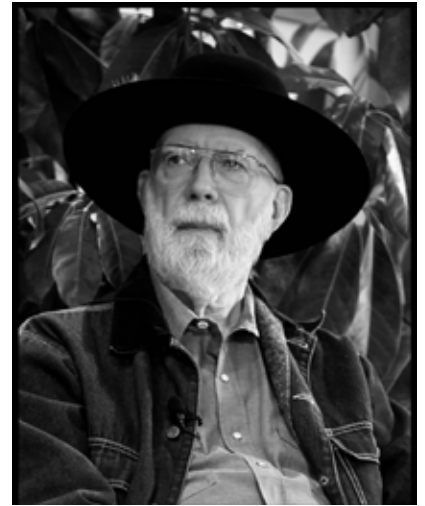


# Michael Harner: An 80th Birthday Tribute



*Photo by Jak Wonderly, 2009*

**B**irthdays are wonderful opportunities to let a person know what his life and work have meant to us. When I offered people whose lives have been touched by Michael’s work an opportunity to contribute to an 80th birthday book for Michael, the outpouring of responses was fantastic. You sent your letters, poetry, essays, stories, pictures, paintings, drawings, cards, donations, songs, and music – funny, profound, touching, and inspiring – from Canada, South America, Europe, Siberia, Australia, and points in between. Michael was deeply moved by your tributes and profoundly grateful for your participation in this work.

“If I were to die tomorrow, I’d feel that I’d done more than I had ever hoped. I feel very lucky that way. I never envisioned this path, and I never envisioned so many students wanting to seek it. Now there are so many people who are well-trained and prepared to work with and learn from the spirits. My legacy is my students as much as anything, because they will carry on, and some will go farther than I have ever gone.”

– Michael Harner

At a time of life when most people have long-since retired, Michael continues his research to develop further the principles and practices of core shamanism, drawing upon his deep knowledge of anthropology. While passionate and uncompromising about the authenticity and quality of this work, Michael personally is a humble man. His life’s work is fundamentally about the return of spiritual autonomy to contemporary society – the shamanic trainings he has originated, researched, developed and offered have been all about helping individuals connect personally with infinite sources of compassion and wisdom. He has said on many occasions that there are no gurus in shamanism and he has steadfastly refused that role. While he is not our guru, he is a beloved and inspired teacher who has brought forward into contemporary society the ancient wisdom of the shaman. At a time when this wisdom is most desperately needed, he has pioneered for us the return of the shamanic journey and a way back into the realms of the compassionate spirits – and in so doing, he has transformed our world.

*Happy birthday, dear teacher!*

*Susan Mokolke*

## A Chronology of Michael’s Work

**1964 onward** – Following his initial shamanic training in the Upper Amazon in 1961 and 1964, Professor Harner developed his personal practice of shamanism and shamanic healing in the United States.

Michael teaches, writes, and lectures about the practical importance of the ancient shamanic knowledge and wisdom of the tribal peoples of the world. People began to ask him to introduce them to shamanic methods.

**Late 1960’s** – After much cross-cultural research, Michael concludes that shamans in most indigenous cultures altered their state of consciousness without the use of biochemical substances. Percussion sound was far more widely used than plant “medicines” to achieve what he termed the “shamanic state of consciousness” (SSC). Michael experiments with drumming, or “sonic driving” for personal shamanic journeying and discovers that with the proper discipline, he can achieve the same shamanic results as with consciousness-changing substances. He concludes that

the shamans' spiritual experiences can no longer be dismissed as simply due to the effects of biochemical agents – drums and drugs are simply different doorways to another reality.

**1970's** – The discovery of the power of drumming allows Michael to start introducing Westerners to shamanism. In response to requests, he starts offering training workshops to small groups of people. He is invited to teach journeying and other aspects of experiential shamanism within a workshop context both in the United States and Europe.

**1979** – Michael founds the Center for Shamanic Studies in Norwalk, Connecticut, to facilitate the training.

**1980** – *The Way of the Shaman* is published introducing the shamanic journey and “core shamanism” – the universal and near-universal methods of shamanism – making it accessible worldwide for the first time in centuries.

**1980's** – Michael continues his duties as a university professor of anthropology. It becomes clear to him that firm worldwide action is necessary to help preserve ancient shamanic knowledge. He increasingly takes leave from the university to pursue shamanism and shamanic teaching.

**1980's onward** – Michael begins to train others, such as Sandra Harner and Sandra Ingerman, to teach Foundation workshops in core shamanism that he originated, researched, and developed. As interest in the workshops grows, he invites more of his students to join an international faculty teaching the methods of core shamanism and shamanic healing to a steadily expanding audience.

**1985** – Michael and Sandra Harner found the non-profit Foundation for Shamanic Studies. The Foundation receives financial support from shamanic training courses and workshops, private donations, and membership contributions.

Your dedication to education and exploration in the field of Core Shamanism has had and will continue to change the lives of so many. Being one of those for whom a world I knew existed and did not know how to access has been opened, I thank you from the core of my being. May this year and every year bring Brightest Blessings!

Myra Starr

**1987** – Michael resigns his professorship to devote himself full-time to shamanism. The Center for Shamanic Studies is integrated into the new Foundation for Shamanic Studies. The Foundation is dedicated to the worldwide preservation, study, and teaching of shamanic knowledge for the welfare of the planet and its inhabitants.

**1988** – Michael teaches the first *Three-Year Program in Advanced Shamanism and Shamanic Healing* on the West coast, with content originated, researched, and developed by him.

**1991** – The Living Treasures of Shamanism program is started, in conjunction with the FSS Field Associates program. Part of the responsibility of the Field Associates has been to locate potential Living Treasures for the Foundation. Through its international network of Field Associates, the Foundation has searched for outstanding indigenous shamans in jeopardized conditions to help them preserve their knowledge and practice through FSS recognition and lifetime stipends.

I'm eternally grateful to you, Michael, for bringing Shamanism to North America and into my life. My experiences with you in workshops and the three year program been both profoundly life-changing and delightfully playful. I appreciate so much your steadfast dedication to helping people to connect with the compassionate spirits and thereby transform themselves and the world. What I have learned through the years of working with you has permeated every part of my life, creating a much calmer, more open and loving personality. I appreciate too the relationship you and Sandra demonstrate, working and playing together. And of course, how could I not mention your sense of humor. What fun to learn something as extraordinary as Shamanic Journeying and to laugh oneself silly at the same time. A great way to teach, dear Michael. Happy Birthday! Have a blast! You've richly earned it. And just soak in all the love and appreciation that is being directed to you today and always.

Big hug,

Vivienne (Verdon-Roe)

By working with uniquely qualified shamans in such a manner, it is the Foundation's hope to help preserve their shamanic knowledge for the future generations of their peoples and the world.

**1994** – The Foundation for Shamanic Studies is relocated from Connecticut to Mill Valley, California, and continues to expand in this fertile environment.

Dear Michael,  
Many years ago I wrote you a letter saying that you are like the trunk and the roots of a sacred tree of knowledge which has blessed my life and the lives of so many people. A network of amazing shamanic practitioners has branched out and flourished because of your work and vision. For this I thank you from the bottom of my heart. May this special birthday celebration fill you heart and soul deeply. Thank you for who you are and what you have done.

Bright Birthday Blessings,  
Gail Gorelick

**2003** – Michael is awarded an honorary doctorate by the California Institute of Integral Studies in recognition of his achievements in shamanic studies.

**2005** – “What Yogananda did for Hinduism and D.T. Suzuki did for Zen, Michael Harner has done for shamanism, namely bring the tradition and its richness to Western awareness,” say Roger Walsh and Charles S. Grob, in their book, *Higher Wisdom*.

**2006** – The Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory is formally established in Novato, California. The Conservatory, unique in the world, includes a great archive that contains thousands of accounts of discoveries made by contemporary Westerners when in the shamanic state of consciousness, including their maps of what they discovered in nonordinary reality. The Conservatory also maintains extensive files on indigenous shamanism in more than 400 cultures, as well as a large in-house research library. Materials are being cataloged by Research Associate Gizelle Rhyon-Berry, and preserved for future generations using digital and other technologies. Michael continues his research into this unique collection, running experiments in the advanced training programs and developing new content for Foundation workshops.

**2006** – Susan Mokolke comes onboard as Assistant, then Executive Director. Michael begins to devote more time to research, experimentation, and writing his life's work. The work of the Foundation continues to evolve, with expanded use of web and communications technologies. Thousands of graduates of Foundation programs around the world are now aware of the methods of core shamanism and are offering in their communities shamanic healing and shamanic teachings discovered using shamanic journeying.

**2008** – The Foundation streamlines its operations by combining its Mill Valley administrative office with its Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory in Novato. Mill Valley remains the Foundation headquarters.

**2009** – Michael is honored with the “Pioneer in Integrative Medicine Award” by San Francisco's Institute of Health & Healing, as one of the world's foremost authorities on indigenous healing practices and their relevance in contemporary times.

## ONGOING –

◆ Michael's fundamental objective through the Foundation is to provide reliable, effective training in the universal or near-universal methods of shamanism. These “core shamanism” methods are taught worldwide. After learning the basic principles of practice, students are encouraged to work and gain experience independently. Often they join or form local, informal drumming groups or circles working autonomously to help each other, as well as their friends, families, and communities.

Hello, Michael,  
Happiest of birthdays to you. No one has done more to preserve shamanic wisdom. No one has done more to resurrect shamanism in parts of the world where it was disappearing. No one has done more to apply the principles of shamanism to counseling, consoling, and community-building. And you have done all of that, and more, in only eighty years. What a role model you are for all of us! Love to you, and Sandra too,  
Stan Krippner

◆ For those who wish more advanced training, FSS provides specialized advanced workshops, which have evolved into the *Two-Week Shamanic Healing Intensive* and the *Three-Year Program in Advanced Initiations in Shamanism & Shamanic Healing*. Training is

also offered in *Harner Method Shamanic Counseling*, a remarkably effective system Michael developed, in which the client uses shamanic journeying for personal problem-solving with the aid of the helping spirits.

◆ Michael has trained some of the most experienced faculty, such as Alicia L. Gates, Paul Uccusic, Nan Moss, and David Corbin, to teach the advanced residential programs, making core shamanic training more widely available. New faculty continue to be added.

◆ Today an international faculty teaches thousands of students each year in North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand. FSS Europa, the European affiliate of the Foundation directed by Paul Uccusic, offers the core shamanism programs originated by Michael in countries throughout Europe in several languages.

◆ Upon request, the Foundation helps tribal peoples to revive their own threatened or destroyed traditional practices of shamanism. The Foundation has dispatched basic training teams and individuals to various tribal groups. They visit for as short a time as possible to provide basic shamanic tools, so that the native volunteers can subsequently get most of their shamanic knowledge directly from the spirits, as is typical in shamanism. FSS has been invited to assist the Inuit of northern Canada, the Sami (Lapp) people of northern Finland, Sweden, and Nor-

way, the Republic of Tuva in Central Asia, and Native American tribes in the northeastern United States. The Foundation also sponsors a scholarship program for individual native students on tribal rolls.

◆ Another ongoing project of the Foundation is the Shamanism and Health program, directed by Sandra Harner. Experimental research is conducted regarding the effects of shamanic healing work on the human immunological system, as well as gathering case histories about the effectiveness of shamanic healing.

◆ The Mapping of Nonordinary Reality (MONOR) project collects and analyzes cross-cultural data comparing the shamanic journey, near-death, and other mystical experiences. Michael directs this long-term project, which has continued for many years. The results are expected to challenge Western paradigms of the nature and limits of reality. 🌀

Dear Michael,

Blessed Happy Birthday! May this special day be filled with all things that bring you joy! I hope you know what a profound influence you have been in so many people's lives...including mine. I think of your presence in the world as an ever expanding ripple in a vast sea...each ripple touching the lives of people who then reach out and touch the lives of more people who then extend that reach even farther...to the point where there are people out there who are benefitting from that ever expanding ripple with no idea of where that force originated. What I find moving is that your work not only carries shamanism into the future, but that you also give great care to preserving past. I had the privilege of experiencing, first hand, the difference you made in Pau Karma Wangchuk's life. You honored his work and his life. May the coming years bring continued good works!

With Heartfelt Gratitude,  
Sarah Sifers



Back in 1983 I walked into a semi-darkened room somewhere in Manhattan to take my first training with you. I carried with me only a sack lunch and a rock. The 30-odd others in the workshop also carried them. There may have been one or two people who had a drum or a rattle, but I don't recall them. What I remember are the sack lunches and rocks. Now 26 years later so much has changed. An enormous community of shamanic practitioners has emerged from those semi-darkened rooms where you introduced us to the principles and practices of shamanism. And the community stretches around the planet. When I taught my first shamanic workshop in Central Europe about twelve years ago, I was rather apprehensive about what the Europeans would be like. Would I be able to relate to them, would we have some common ground of experience? But when I saw them come into the workshop room carrying drums, rattles, blankets, and, yes, rocks, and then sit down in a circle, I thought to myself, "I know these people!" I realized then that you had indeed created a shamanic culture that transcends nationality, language, and history. When I reflect on how your teachings have transformed my life with the shaman's values and worldviews, and then realize that there are people who share this same shamanic outlook and lifestyle all over the earth, I am filled with hope. The world can never be a frightening place when there are people drumming and rattling everywhere! Thanks, Michael.

Tom Cowan

*Dear Michael,*

*What do you do?*

*You give us knowledge, not dogmas.*

*You inspire us with your experience, but you are not a master in search of followers.*

*You do not tell us 'how it's done': you show us the path to 'get there' by ourselves.*

*That is what you do.*

*And that is why you are a true teacher: you show us how to awaken the medicine of our souls, how to connect with a power greater than ourselves –with the living wisdom of our spirits and our ancestors.*

*It is unlikely that I would have found the door all by myself. Not a thousand books, experiences or signs would have achieved that by themselves.*

*You have given me the greatest gift: you have brought me home.*

*You have done that.*

*Thousands of us now know that we are not alone.*

*On behalf of so many Argentinians and Chileans who now know this thanks to you, please accept from down South our love, gratitude and a resounding Happy Birthday!*

*Gerardo Roemer*

Dear Dr. Prof. MICHAEL HARNER,

Happy Birthday to you! I wish you the best in the World!

I am the niece of Dr. Mongush Kenin-Lopsan, who is a specialist on Tuvan Shamanism and a "Living Treasure" of Shamanism. As to me, I am an expert on Buddhism in Tuva.

Now I am writing a book about D. Currutheres' and O. Menchen-Helfen's travels to Tuva. I use all your books and articles on Shamanism in the process of my work. Thank you very much for your research activity.

With my deepest respect,

Dr. Prof. Marina Mongush



*Michael & Sandra Harner, Journey in Two Realities  
by Dana Robinson.*

Dear Michael,

The skill of journeying you gave me in a dance studio in New York twenty years ago transformed my existence like nothing before or since. Blessings on your eightieth trip around the sun.

Evelyn Rysdyk



*Photo from Valentina Kharitonova, Russia*

Dear Michael,

A man's greatness is measured, I think, by his willingness to love despite despair, by his hold on integrity despite censure, and by his courage to share what he knows with the world despite danger. Your greatness has helped me rediscover those doors in my heart that not only open to the extraordinary world of Spirit, but also lead me to the core of where I begin. Because you steadfastly pursued your life's passion, I have been both taught and encouraged to assist many others in similar journeys through their lives.

Your work here, Michael, is the gift that keeps on giving to humanity now and for generations to come. I thank God for you, for the Foundation, and for its teachers. All of you have changed my life forever.

I wish you the Happiest of Birthdays, and send you Much Love, all Blessings of the Sacred, and a Joyous Spring! Big Birthday Hugs, too.

Karen Palmer

Hello Michael,

I had the great fortune to find your work and training many years ago. It gave me the opportunity to focus and understand there was a methodology to the shamanic things that had been going on in my life since my early teens. Knowing there were things going on that I wasn't prepared to reveal to friends or family, but was required to live with, had its good and bad points. The reality of those things was firmly planted as an infantry soldier in Vietnam. After my return from Vietnam, I blended into society, had children, a career and was otherwise very comfortable in my everyday life. But there was still that "stuff" going on. I was eventually downsized from my career and decided that after 30 years of management I needed to change directions.

Change came very abruptly. I had been doing volunteer work at churches, schools, hospitals and teaching classes at cultural centers when your book *The Way of The Shaman* and the Basic Workshop suddenly appeared out of nowhere. My volunteer work became shamanic work and I started working as an advisor at a center for troubled youth (boys 12-18 years of age). Drumming is now a staple at the center. They know how to journey and at lights out they fall asleep to the rhythm of my drum beating in the hallway of their open-doored rooms.

I have presented hundreds of programs over the years at schools, churches, the VA Hospital, cultural centers, centers for handicapped and many other places that call for my programs. My work with handicapped children teaching craft classes always ends with drumming. They call it the "magic drum". I use it as a healing drum in the Tuvan manner, but also as a way to journey as they lay their heads on the desk, lights out, shades pulled. What many of these children tell me after the drumming is so profound and enlightening it amazes both the teachers and me.

I recently did a program at a Junior High for 130 8th graders. They made a huge card they all signed and made comments on. The comments they made about the effects of the drumming was wonderful. These are young people that are no strangers to music in the form of Rap, rock and roll, country or the many other forms beat uses to drive the senses.

Thanks to you I have been able to introduce shamanism to countless people, from young and old, to very ill and terminally ill, to those that are suffering, fearful, and to those that needed only a method to communicate their feelings.

Thank you so very much for your lifetime of work in shamanism. It reaches and has brought comfort to more people than you may be aware. And most certainly thank you for finding me. I was able to then find myself.

Jim Johnson (Beadshaman)



Dear Michael,

Since first reading *The Way of the Shaman* and learning to journey, I have experienced such profound healings in my life that I cannot find words to tell you about them.

I love my life now. Since I've been doing this work in the Three-Year program, I have a deep sense of purpose on this planet. That is not something I thought I would ever have. My life is deep, purposeful, profound, fun.

Because of you and your devotion to your astounding life's work, I am different, people in my community have a chance to be healed, and I believe the whole world is a better place. I am deeply grateful.

Robbie Stauffer

Happy Birthday, Michael.

There is something curiously shamanic about humor as a method, perhaps the trickster-aspect or its unexpected presence during times of sacred tension or interpersonal drama, and Michael does use that aspect famously and effectively.

But there is something about the humor that also becomes evident working behind the scenes with him, and that is its spontaneity, its quickness, its expression of freedom—of free passage outside the constraints of conventional thought and speech.

Michael Flanagin

Happy, Happy Birthday, Michael!

What a profound influence you've had on my life and on the lives of so many others! Having given us hope, knowledge and skills for navigating yonder worlds, we are all so grateful, you know; you are *our* Living Treasure, much loved, highly esteemed.

Thank you for the gentleness, kindness and respect you have always shown me, and for the goodness, truth, and beauty with which you have gifted the world. May your birthday flow with sweet feelings, be filled with warmth, be wholly gratifying.

Many Blessings, Many Prayers of Praise and Gratitude,  
LaWanna Durbin



Michael, Ralph Metzner, and Ram Dass



Photos sent by Ralph Metzner.



Stan Grof

Michael,  
You have taught so many people, including me, that we can have our own conduit to the Divine. Thank you for the liberation!

Joe O'Laughlin

Your work and courage in bringing shamanism to the everyday person is indeed a great gift to humanity. The healing and knowledge that it opened up would not have happened without your training and guidance. Thank you from the bottom of my soul. – Cher Dinishak

Dear Michael,

Happy Birthday and every best wishes for a wonderful day!

I am writing to you from the east coast of Australia from a little village called Dunoon. I want to thank you for your enormous and fantastic contribution to the world and to my life in particular.

You have delivered back to the world the art and practices of the ancients and restored to modern society a means to interpret life and meaning in a manner that has previously been available only to indigenous societies. You and your writing and your work have changed the lives of thousands of people for the better.

Thank you Michael for what you have taught me and although I have never met you, I hold your teachings dear to my heart.

Enjoy your 80th Birthday and may there be many more celebratory years. Your legacy will rest lightly on the earth for a very long time.

Blessings,

Rasata Knight, NSW Australia

Dear Michael,

Happy Birthday! It has been such an honor to sit in circle with you and call you my teacher. You have given me, and the countless others who have followed your path, the keys to a long-lost and vast universe of unlimited creativity, vision, and healing that opens the heart of the soul.

Under your tutelage, I experienced spontaneous visions, gifted by spirit, journeys that took me along for the ride. At the start I wanted to know the path of my heart. To what purpose was the Universe guiding? If not for your teaching, I would not have known there was anyone there to whom to pose the questions. Thank you for a lifetime of empowerment.

With extreme gratitude,  
Larry Peters



praising the rain  
she who knows whence all life flows

big dream of an ally  
how to honor?

a book is shared  
a teacher made known

good fortune ensues

a great teacher  
points to the path  
says "Go!...  
find your own way

but return to tell..."

a rain falls gently  
sprouting seeds of shamanic vision  
long lain dormant and denied  
beneath a culture of oblivion

the earth rejoices!

thank you sir  
for pouring those healing waters  
onto so many thirsty souls  
nourishing the roots of ancient ways

and restoring shamanism to our awareness

how can we ever know the true impact of it all?

all wet

– christina berteau

Dear Michael,

Happy 80th birthday!

I took the Basic workshop from you in San Francisco in 1994. It was a phenomenal experience. I felt like I was "coming home" after a life-time of yearning for that very sense. The previous 25 years of daily-meditation and numerous other inner exploration styles (crystal therapy, regressions, guided imagery) gave only a glimpse into it.

But beyond that, there was one instruction dictum that you repeatedly said to our class of 80+. When someone would ask you the interpretation of a particular symbol, power animal "meaning" or other journey experience, you repeatedly advised, "ask your spirit helpers what they say." That totally empowering advice astounded me.

For 20 years prior to this workshop, I had taken many metaphysical workshops, heard thousands of metaphysical lectures and even became a metaphysical minister from a seminary that required 3 years of study and attendance. In nearly every instance, the teachers would respond to such questions of interpretation by giving what they had studied or intuited.

Your empowering advice was significant to my own self-empowerment. It has been significant to my own shamanic mission of helping others to become self-empowered. I too tell my students and clients the very same thing when they ask for interpretations.

Thank you, thank you, Michael, for all else you have done to revive the shamanic path, to validate to the world the deep spiritual significance of the shamanic path, and to revive the shaman's way in the world.

You are a blessing.

Maryphyllis Horn



Dear Michael,

Happy 80th OR Birthday!  
Best Wishes for many more in  
Good Health and Happiness!

Thank you for sharing your  
life's work with us by founding  
and guiding the Foundation for  
Shamanic Studies. Without the  
educational programs of the Foun-  
dation, I might never have known  
that I am not alone, that so much  
love, compassion and beauty are  
my companions for the asking.

Thank you for the gift of direct  
spiritual experience, freeing me  
from the fear of death so that I  
may truly live. My greatest tribute  
to you will be to try to make the  
best use of this life in service to  
others.

Thank you for giving of your-  
self so generously, so that we may  
Know.

Warm Regards,  
Mary Anne Luttrell



*Soul Retrieval and the Bear* by Katalin Koda.  
Warm blessings and aloha from Hawai'i.

### *Listening to the Teachers*



Michael, thank you for helping me open to the journey!  
-Skip Parsons



Dear Michael,

Some of us from what we call URSA – the circle that came into being for your Second East Coast Three Year Program in Advanced Shamanism (1992-1995) and continues to meet yearly to share our practice(s) of shamanism – journeyed to ask for a healing image or sign as a gift for you for your 80th birthday. Maria Moonlion put these images together into a picture (below), hopefully conveying our love, appreciation and celebration of you.

*HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY!*

*Love and best birthday wishes from all of us from the FSS Second East Coast Three Year Program*

Dear Michael,

For the past 14 years I have been teaching Foundation weekend workshops in Eastern Canada. I feel privileged in this role, because I get to experience over and over that wonderful moment in the Basic workshop when people “get it” for the first time, or when they put into context a lonely search for spirit that has finally brought them home. In the advanced workshops I witness the commitment of people whose desire is to improve their lives and live according to a shamanic standard. I see over and over how people embrace and are embraced by the simple, but profound techniques that you have synthesized for us. I am proud of the clarity and impeccability of the material I offer, just as I was filled and inspired by it when I first experienced it.

So, I thank you, along with the many others whose lives have been made better because of you.

– Sharon Van Raalte, Second East Coast Three Year Program

