



BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel J. Benor, MD. (2018). *Wholistic Healing for the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP): A Mini-Encyclopedia of Ways to Develop and Deepen Wonder-full Relationships*. Guelph, ON, Canada: Wholistic Healing Publications. 549 pp. \$25.95 (paperback) Refs 13pp. Index

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away."

- Henry David Thoreau

Highly sensitive people walk to the tune of a different drummer. First identified and popularized by psychologist Elaine Aron in her seminal *The Highly Sensitive Person*, it has been followed by a flurry of other HSP titles including *The Highly Sensitive Child* by Aron; *The Power of Sensitivity* and *The Strong Sensitive Boy* and others by Ted Zeff; *Making Sense of your High Sensitivity* by Cliff Harwin; and *Being Highly Sensitive and Creative* by Douglas Eby. Daniel Benor's latest book is a welcome addition to this series.



Wholistic Healing for the HSP is a journey of exploration of the inner worlds and outer relationships of HSPs. HSPs can sometimes feel like aliens, feeling misunderstood or even pathologized as highly sensitive people in a highly insensitive world. As a minority of the population, HSPs often find themselves in relationship with non-HSPs. Non-HSPs can feel confused and bewildered by their HSP partners who are seemingly so over-reactive and "emotional." This can lead to misunderstandings, power struggles and relationship conflicts. Benor shows how these difficulties can serve as portals to greater awareness and deeper intimacy. They can be worked through, with counseling, tapping and psycho-education – as well as appreciation for their differences.

But why are many non-HSPs clueless when it comes to emotions? Benor discusses the phenomenon of emotional blindness, which he terms "neuroplastic disuse atrophy." When skills are not practiced, they tend to fade and are soon lost. The loss of these abilities is related to how the brain allocates use of nerve cells. If the neurons dealing with a skill are not used, the brain gradually re-allocates these neurons to other tasks. He speculates that non-HSPs "may lack the skill sets for emotional awarenesses and expression" because they haven't allocated neural circuits to developing these skills. Conversely, as HSPs are attuned to emotional nuance, their sensitivities grow and develop with practice and repeated reinforcement. Neuroplasticity works both ways.

Sensitivity is a trait that appears to be genetic. Studies of over 100 animal species as well as humans show that 15 – 20% exhibit *sensory processing sensitivity*, a personality trait characterized by a high level of sensitivity to external stimuli, greater depth of cognitive processing and high emotional reactivity. This can include greater sensitivity to light, colors, sounds, smells and sensory stimuli, as well as to the emotions of others and their own. HSPs literally “see,” feel and experience more than their not-as-sensitive cousins. In one experiment with sunfish, “shy” sunfish were harder to trap than “bold” sunfish, and thus more likely to survive. Aron has speculated that HSPs have evolved to be more sensitive because sensitivity has survival value.

Benor’s focus is wholistic healing, involving all levels of body, emotion, mind, relationships and spirit, which goes far beyond what passes for both “psychotherapy” and standard medical practice. He approaches this subject with the thoroughness and comprehensiveness readers of this journal would expect. His palette is rich and diverse, discussing medical issues such as nutrition, exercise, sleep and allergy testing; psychological techniques including EP, EMDR and TWR; and energetic methods like homeopathy, flower essences and vibrational medicine. As Dr. Edward Bach, who discovered the Bach Flower Remedies wrote, *“There is no true healing unless there is a change in outlook, inner happiness, and peace of mind.”*

In addition to HSP personality traits and relationship dynamics, Benor explores the interaction of psyche and soma – the mind-body connection. Symptoms – both physical and emotional – are clues, and Benor is a master sleuth as well as a psychotherapist. I found his case histories especially fascinating. Through skillful questioning and patient listening Benor reveals how patients’ symptoms reflect the life issues they are facing – in Susan Sontag’s memorable phrase “illness as metaphor.” When these life issues are acknowledged and confronted, the symptoms often dissolve.

Several chapters discuss and explore the issue of trauma, the underlying root cause of many issues and symptoms. While traumas occur to both HSPs and non-HSPs alike, HSPs can be particularly reactive and “sensitive” to these experiences. Possibly the major advance in psychotherapy in our time is the recognition that *trauma can be healed* – more quickly and effectively than previously recognized. Research on both animals and humans has documented the phenomenon of memory reconsolidation – memories and traumas once believed to be “permanent” can be rapidly re-evoked and reconsolidated with new learnings. Benor presents numerous cases documenting healing from different kinds of trauma – which result in much more than the simple alleviation of symptoms.

Readers of this journal will know that Dan is a researcher as well as a psychiatrist, and pioneer in the field of psychosomatic medicine. His 3 volume work, “Healing Research” is a classic reference in the field. He is the developer of a uniquely effective healing method, WHEE/TWR, and his methods for rapid pain release and symptom resolution are documented in a previous book, “Seven Minutes to Rapid Pain Release.” If adopted, these methods would revolutionize the field of psychosomatic medicine and the practice of psychotherapy.

Energy Psychology, of course, refers to a family of techniques which facilitate therapeutic change by moving energy. EP techniques both desensitize overwhelming and “negative” emotions (important especially for HSPs!), and catalyze rapid shifts in cognition, emotion and somatic experience. WHEE/TWR is probably the most user-friendly form of EP, as it is easily learned and practiced, even by children. It has the additional advantage of being able to be used flexibly and unobtrusively (e.g., in groups and meetings). Besides being an effective therapy in its own right, WHEE/TWR is a self-healing and self-empowering technique, which people can do by and for themselves.

At the same time, “Wholistic Healing for the HSP” is delightfully transparent. Benor includes himself in these explorations as a therapist-author who is also an HSP. Through reading his anecdotes he allows us to peer into his mind and get to know the man himself. By relating his own challenges and

experiences as an HSP, his discussions become more human and relatable than a more clinical treatment might be.

In addition – and more than I can adequately review! – are wide-ranging sections about HSPs in relationship, intuition, psychic, proxy and planetary healing, spirituality and the challenges facing HSP children.

Wholistic Healing for the Highly Sensitive Person is a major contribution, and greatly extends both the scope and depth of the HSP Literature. It is a comprehensive “how to” manual for the care and nurturing – and healing – of HSPs. It is truly a Gift to all HSPs – and to their partners, friends and families who love them.

Reviewed by John Freedom, CEHP, a counselor in private practice in Santa Rosa, California. He serves as research coordinator for ACEP, the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology; and on the Board of Trustees for AAMET, the Association for the Advancement of Meridian Energy Therapies in Europe.

Moseley, Lindsay and Sierra Club Books staff (Eds). (2008).
Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices on Caring for Creation. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club.
 \$14.95. 264 pp.

This thoughtful book collects the voices of a broad spectrum of healing voices from around the world. Some are those of religious leaders, others from people who hold our world to be sacred and deserving of our reverence and healing.

Here are but a few of many insights I found inspiring:

...The message is clear: our way of life is humanly and environmentally suicidal. Unless we change it drastically, we cannot hope to avoid or reverse cosmic catastrophe. Yet the crisis is not first of all ecological. It is a crisis in the way we see reality and relate to our world... (p. 36)

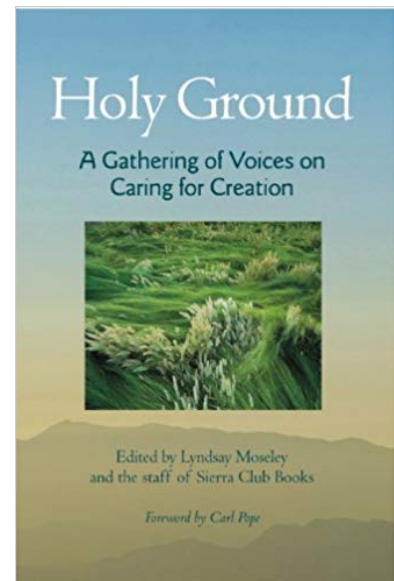
- Patriarch Bartholomew.

Soul loss – called *susto* in contemporary North American Hispanic communities – is what happens as the world around us disappears. It is a common condition in the modern world. *Susto* probably began when the soul was banished from nature, when humanity withdrew from the world, when there was a division into two realms – human and nature, animate and inanimate, sentient and not. This was when the soul first began to slip away and crumble.

...The cure for *susto*, soul sickness, is not in books. It is written in the bark of a tree, in the moonlit silence of night, in the bank of a river and the water's motion. The cure is outside ourselves. (p. 112-3)

- Linda Hogan (Chicasaw)

We perceive that the rapidly globalizing society of business and development has lost its way to a livable future for humanity and for the larger community of creation. Our modern cosmology can describe, calculate, and commodify in amazing detail and with relentless breadth. Yet it apparently lacks the power to inspire the world's communal moral imagination towards sufficient and effective



action. Whatever the positive aspects of our culture of commerce, it shows very little capacity to understand the lifegiving interconnectedness of creation.

- Mark MacDonald (p. 152)

Over the decades I have become more convinced that the roots of the environmental crisis are spiritual and intellectual. The crisis must be seen as the external manifestation of a universal pollution that has turned the inner landscape of so many modern men and women from a luxuriant garden into an arid desert. Without a change of worldview and a transformation of vision, all efforts to resolve the crisis are little more than cosmetic. They can at best buy a little more time or humankind to change its vision concerning the natural world and its manner of living in and dealing with that world and the creatures that inhabit it.

- Seyyed Hussein Nasr (p. 173)

Sometimes we must lose ourselves in order to find our way.

- Matthew Sleeth (p. 230)

Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
IJHC Editor-in-Chief

C. Norman Shealy, MD, PhD. (2017). *Conversations with G: A Physician's Encounter with Heaven*. Holistic Books International.

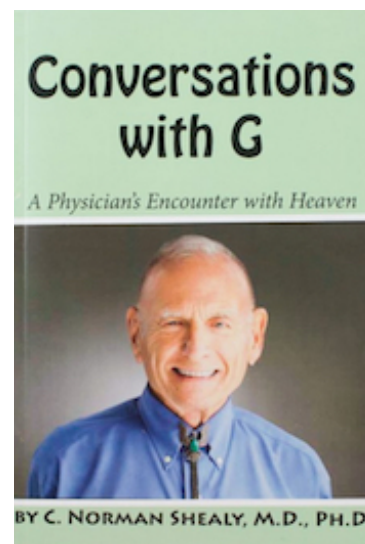
This is a most interesting book by and about Norm Shealy, an extraordinary neurosurgeon and pioneer in holistic healing. Its style is probably best described as a diary of experiences, achievements and discoveries in various aspects of holistic healing.

From childhood, Norm was exceptionally bright. He accelerated his studies and entered med school three years earlier than his classmates. He is also gifted with pattern recognition, seeing how pieces of the puzzles of medical problems can be addressed by various innovative assessments, treatments and cures.

These gifts also enabled him to see the value of bringing together pioneering doctors to found the American Holistic Medical Association, for support and stimulation in helping people deal with their problems through prevention and natural cures rather than only giving them medications.

The diversity and numbers of his innovative approaches are truly impressive. And here is where G, his spirit Guide plays an essential part in his life. G has provided Norm with inspirations and guidance in pursuing his paths of developing new understandings of various disorders and illnesses and in treating them.

The breadth and varieties of Norm Shealy's approaches in explaining the human condition and the illnesses that people experience along their life paths is truly impressive, including intuitive diagnosis and prescriptions for interventions; electromagnetic treatments; aspects of Chinese medicine; astrology; and much, much more.

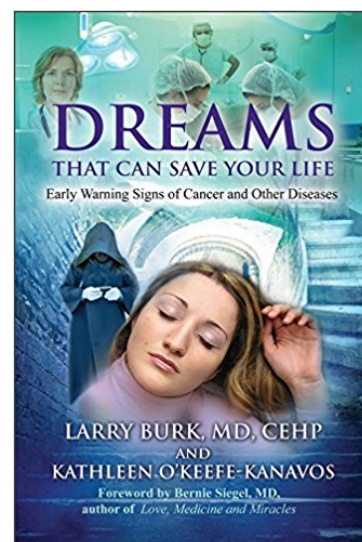


An index, or at least pages to help locate the chapters in the book would have made this a more user-friendly volume. Nevertheless, this is a fascinating read for anyone interested in unconventional, creative approaches to assessing and dealing with broad varieties of problems.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
IJHC Editor-in-Chief

Larry Burk MD, CEHP and Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos. (2018). *Dreams that Can Save Your Life: Early Warning Signs of Cancer and Other Diseases*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Co. 285 pp. Endnotes and additional reading 7 pp. No index.

Larry Burk MD, CEHP and Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos have brought together a wonder-full collection of precognitive dreams from people with cancer and other serious problems who had wake-up calls to attend to health issues they would otherwise have ignored, often to their great peril. Sometimes their dreams spoke very directly, in clear, strong words that identified physical problems in their lives and of the stresses that were creating these problems. More often, as is the nature of dreams, the messages came in images and metaphors that invited interpretations for the dreamers to waken to the issues that their unconscious minds were wanting to alert them to.



The authors strongly recommend that people get in the regular habit of writing down their dreams immediately upon waking up. For maximal benefits, it is important to record any and every detail and nuance of imagery or feelings in the dream.

Dreams may also be invited to bring us messages and information, by stating and holding the intention to answer a question prior to going to sleep.

The collection of dreams presented in this book includes a very broad spectrum of experiences in attending to messages from dreams that clearly identified the presence of cancers or that warned dreamers to the dangers of their impending development. It is a great benefit to have the interpretations and observations of such dreams, from both a very experienced dream analyzer and from an oncologist with very broad experience of using dreams (including his own) to identify the presence of cancer and often to advise as well in ways to deal with it.

While the initial focus of this book is on breast cancer, examples of many other types of cancers and illnesses are offered. Of note are the presence of warning dreams that occur months and years before the cancers are found.

The authors present many and varied examples of dreams that helped people wake up to the presence of cancers and other physical problems in their lives. It is wonderful to see how creative the unconscious mind can be in serving our best interests!

One of the most important aspects of the book are the encouragements to trust your dreams and to persist in searching for physical and medical evidence to confirm the messages you have received from your dreams. The most common responses of attending physicians and cancer specialists is to dismiss such dreams as being unworthy of their attention. One of the most important messages in this book is to persist in searching for evidence of a cancer or other illness if your unconscious mind raises this possibility in your mind. Again and again, the authors present examples of people who had to be

very strongly insistent that appropriate tests be run to identify whether the dreams were accurate in their warnings. Again and again, the authors present examples of people who were very, very glad they persisted until they found a doctor who was willing to trust their inner awarenesses and to run the appropriate tests, or at the least to do frequent followup examinations. With breast and skin cancers, a person can also be alert to do repeated self-examinations.

Be aware that you may also have dreams that alert you to the presence of cancers or other illnesses in other people.

Burk recommends the following steps to aid in interpreting your dreams:

1. Circle any words that seem to be unusual or out of place, and look them up in a dictionary to check for *wordplay* or unexpected *puns* related to your question.
2. Consider the dream from the *personal, shadow, warning, sexual, social, archetypal, synchronistic, and precognitive* perspectives.
3. Check for any *recurrent theme* from past dreams, and pay attention to any animals that visited you in the dream world.
4. Finally, ask yourself, *What does the dream want?* Give serious consideration to the possibility that the spirit world may have a question it wants you to answer in return.
5. *Sharing the dream* with someone who can provide candid feedback may provide a fresh perspective and additional insight. (p. 21-22)

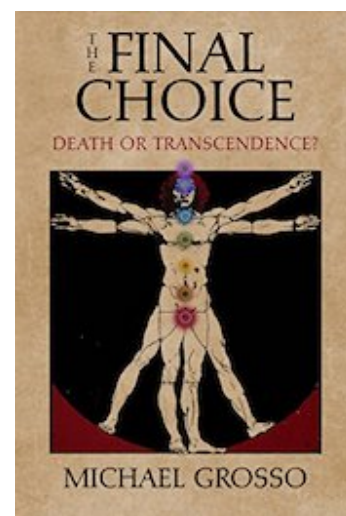
This book is very highly recommended for anyone involved in wholistic healing.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
IJHC Editor-in-Chief

Michael Grosso. (2017). *The Final Choice: Death or Transcendence?* White Crow Books. 208 pp. Refs. 6 pp. \$15.99

Michael Grosso brings us a very thoughtful and thought-provoking revised edition of his 1986 book about life and the hopes and wishes for the immortality of life continuing after physical death. Grosso's discussion is based firmly in rationality and in what science has explored and researched about the challenges that findings in the realms of parapsychology (extrasensory perception or ESP) pose to the conventional view that physical death is the end of life.

And he does an excellent job of pushing the limits of conventional, rational credibility in examining phenomena such as near death experiences (NDE), Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO) and what he identifies as "The Cult of the Virgin Mary" (Marian traditions) – demonstrating considerable overlaps in the content and forms of reports from people who reported they had such experiences. I particularly value Grosso's discussions on "the archetype of death and enlightenment (ADE). The ADE shows up in psychedelic experiences, UFO 'revelations,' ancient mystery rituals, dreams and hallucinations" (p. 109). One



must admire Grosso's erudition and his ability to share, in succinct quotes and explanations, a marvelous spectrum of insights from diverse scientists, philosophers, psychologists and researchers in parapsychology – as relevant to the core question of this book: whether belief in a transcendent reality of life after death is anything more than a wish, a hope or a fantasy.

Grosso acknowledges the subjective numinosity of these experiences, which often transform people's lives. He notes that fears of death are particularly reduced in many people reporting these phenomena, with concomitant development of strong beliefs in life after death. There are also transformations in people's relationships to each other, with frequent development of commitments to help others – individually and collectively.

Grosso observes that there is a strong component of collective beliefs in these experiences. "Our aim has been to marshal empirical materials that suggest two leading ideas: one is that consciousness survives death; the other is that our personal minds are part of, connected and interactive with, a transcendent mind." (p. 167)

Grosso points out that the prevalent, modern materialist views exclude and disparage beliefs in these phenomena. He explains that this is largely due to people's tendencies to wed themselves to systems of beliefs and disbeliefs within their families and cultures, and that for the most part these beliefs are very much restricted to the material realms; to mental processes of physical assessments and measurements in relating to the world around us; and to observations and experiences analyzed through logic and reasoning. People are then often unable to accept, or even to conceive of beliefs outside their conventionally taught and sanctioned worldviews. The realms of parapsychology, collective consciousness and transcendent realities are ignored or rejected because they cannot be perceived, assessed or dealt with in any objective, physically measurable or verifiable ways.

And here I strongly agree with Grosso. Even though psychokinesis, the mental influence on the material world, including psychic healings of physical and psychological disorders have been demonstrated in rigorous, replicated, statistically significant research, this is such a contradiction of materialistic consensus reality that it is rejected as impossible by the majority of modern western society.

Grosso points out that

Arthur Koestler comes close when he states that "ESP would then appear as the highest manifestation of the integrative potential of living matter— which, on the human level, is typically accompanied by a self-transcending type of emotion." Nor are we left out in the cold during this psychic expansion of reality: philosopher and psi researcher Ramakrishna Rao concluded that the evidence for psi implies a latent omniscience in every human being. (p. 23)

While there are acknowledgments, particularly in parapsychology, that ESP exists, is validated in clinical reports and research, and may connect with the collective consciousness of humanity and of a Divinity, the general consensus is that it remains impossible to fully and definitively confirm its existence. This is also a prevalent belief among many parapsychologists. There is still the alternative possibility that beliefs in the validity of parapsychological phenomena are fantasies or wishful thinking.

These are the limitations of explorations of our inner and outer worlds through thinking about them. And there appears to be no way to move around or beyond the questions posed by skeptics about these matters – using logic and reasoning.

However, in addition to these observations, I would like to suggest that the spectrum of *emotional* awarenesses and relationships on every level of our being can contribute to our trust in our awareness of and trust in our intuitive senses. These include awarenesses of body, mind,

relationships with other people, relationships with our environment (which also include participation in a collective consciousness of all living beings on our planet) and spirit.

For example, as we experience emotions and other inner awarenesses in our relationships with others, we gather experiences upon which we build meta-beliefs in the importance, powers and validity of our emotions themselves to cue us as to the value, trustworthiness or distrust, and other qualities of our relationships – as we perceive and experience them through our emotions.

For emotionally aware and sensitive people, who are conscious of our emotions, our emotions can be a radar that detects positivity and negativity, alerting us to seek out or avoid various certain choices and options in interactions with other people. So we learn to build an inner, emotional radar that we come to believe in and to trust because of the validations we experience over time about our positive and negative feelings about people and situations in our lives.

My personal experience, and that of many others I know who trust their emotions as indicators of positivity and negativity in the world at large, is that the same experiences occur in building awarenesses and trust in intuitive perceptions, which are often identified as “intuitive feelings” about things of importance to us.

In contrast, for people who are living their lives based primarily on rules of logic and reason, emotions are very often dismissed as of little value in making decisions about their observations of their place in life, the universe and everything. Many such people even see emotions (if they sense them at all) as bothersome interferences in their keeping a clear and consistent focus on their worlds built of logic.

From the vantage point of materialistic, outer world realities, our emotions are fuzzy, difficult to define and impossible to objectively measure. They tend to be dismissed as subjective experiences that may motivate us in positive and negative ways, but that are not really relevant to any objective, meaningful assessments of the realities of our experiences with the outer worlds.

But once we connect consciously with this emotional radar, it can also guide us in making decisions about whether to move towards or away from broader options in our lives. A part of whether emotions prove helpful or not depends on another capacity, which is observing ego. This is the ability to look at and analyze one’s inner mental and emotional processes, as well as to perceive them in others and in interactions with others. Observing ego is far more often seen in a highly sensitive person (HSP) than in a non-HSP. Many non-HSPs are densely unaware of their emotions or of the emotions of others.

While Grosso acknowledges the collective consciousness and transcendent awarenesses, and gives examples of the deeply meaningful and transformative nature of some of these experiences, and reviews research supporting that these are real experiences to those who report having had them, he appears still to relegate these phenomena to the realms of the unprovable constructs that abound in humanity’s individual, cultural and collective consciousness.

And there is no way out of this maze built on logic and reason.

Why, though, must we limit our assessments of the validity of our intuitive, psychic perceptions to logic and reason? This would seem to me to be rather like deciding on whether to eat a particular food strictly on the basis of its physical, objectively measurable properties rather than on how it tastes.

And the same is true of our experiential awarenesses of the transcendent. We can learn to experience them, trust our perceptions of these experiences, and grow, with trust in these inner awarenesses that they are valid and real – within their own dimensions and through our perceptions of them. While it is helpful and reassuring to have others who report similar transcendent experiences, their greatest

power to convince us of their reality is through our knowing of experiencing them. And the very deep transformations of people who have had these experiences bear witness to their validity.

So why the continued, very strong disbeliefs in frequently reported phenomena that have considerable similarities between the descriptions of diverse individuals, in diverse cultures around the world?

Answering my own question, I observe that there is a major divide between people who live their lives through constructs and rules based primarily (or even exclusively) on reason, and those who include acknowledgments of and reliance upon feeling and intuitive awarenesses in our lives. Carl Jung, cited frequently by Grosso, was among the early psychotherapists who made these observations, labeling the two polarities as Thinking – Feeling and Sensation (outer senses) – Intuition. These polarities create a divide between people that is, in my experience, difficult if not impossible for many to bridge.

To some extent, these difficulties in HSP – non-HSP understandings and communications appear to be due to a genetic division between the 80-85 percent of people who are born with preferences for reliance on thinking and outer-sensory awarenesses and those of us who are HSPs and more comfortable with our feelings and intuitions. Interestingly, many animals have also been found to have the same percents among members of their species who are highly sensitive, relative to the other members of their species who are not (Aron, Aron & Jagiellowicz, 2012; Aron, Web ref). It is postulated that within the collective species consciousness the HSP awarenesses probably confer survival advantages to the species, as in HSP awareness leading the HSPs to be more cautious with new elements in their surroundings that may prove dangerous, which would not deter the non-HSP individuals from exploring them – sometimes to their detriment (e.g. in human hunting and fishing traps).

I've written a book, *Wholistic Healing for the Highly Sensitive Person* (in press), addressing these (and more) issues of differences between people on the HSP spectrum and how to deal with them.

Needless to say, Michael Grosso's book is warmly recommended. And his article in this issue of IJHC demonstrates his sensitivity to intuitive, creative awarenesses, and how this inspires aspects of his life.

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IJHC Editor-in-Chief

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P.O. Box 1021

Guelph, ON N1H 6N1 Canada

Phone (609) 714-1885 (US)

Email: center@ijhc.org Website: <http://www.ijhc.org>

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