

WALKING In two worlds

Things aren't necessarily
logical for shamanic healer

By Mary Cecelia Bowman

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Pam Hale Trachta defies categories. She isn't the silver-haired, stooped and aproned grandmother of fairy tales and Saturday morning cartoons.

She doesn't carry herself with ramrod straight sternness that sitcoms and comic strips give former school-marms.

You'd never know by looking at her that she flies a small plane or that she's an accomplished art photographer and writer.

But she is all these things and more. She's intelligent, well-spoken, down-to-earth — and a shamanic practitioner.

Trachta has been an Episcopalian from birth who also happens to practice shamanic healing.

She described shamanic healing as a process through which she creates a sacred space so she can "act as a kind of intermediary who can help you release energies that are not serving you."

Trachta, however, doesn't see conflict among the many facets of her life or her history.

"I've always walked in two worlds," she explained, adding that she's lived in the traditional culture but has always embraced the non-traditional.

Those two worlds came into stark relief when Trachta was diagnosed with breast cancer four years ago. She drove from the radiation treatment to her first shamanic workshop.

"In the morning I listened to the doctor discuss medical matters in scientific jargon," she smiled as she recounted the day. "In the evening I sat around a fire and danced in the moonlight."

She said her experience with breast cancer took her to the limit of the allopathic world of contemporary medicine. Her spiritual healing journey took her inside herself, she said, where things aren't necessarily logical. She said she went to the place where she believes the source of the creative imagination and her spirituality reside.

Shortly after Trachta was diag-

BIOGRAPHY

- > **Age:** 61
- > **Career:** Teacher, artist, counselor, healer
- > **Education:** Bachelor of arts in history from Stanford, master's degree in education from Columbia
- > **Family:** Husband, Jon Trachta; two daughters, Laura and Erin; three grandchildren
- > **Northwest connection:** Moved to Catalina three years ago because she and her husband wanted to live next to "the most beautiful part of nature, the Catalina Mountains."

nosed with breast cancer, a friend gave her a pamphlet written by an oncology nurse who had given up medicine to open a healing clinic. She called the nurse that moment and started her journey toward shamanic practices.

She studied under Alberto Villoldo, a psychologist, medical anthropologist and author of the book "Shaman, Healer, Sage." He also runs the Four Winds Society, where Trachta received her shamanic healing training.

The Four Winds Society offers personal and professional training for energy healers. Trachta even traveled to Peru — which has a centuries-old tradition of shamanic healing — to study Villoldo has been a liaison between the modern world and the Peruvians, who have kept their practices secret for 500 years.

The Peruvian shamans maintaining the ancient knowledge have now begun sharing their teachings with outsiders, acting on an ancient prophecy.

They believe that humans have an energy field where deep healing can take place. "I'm excited about this work," Trachta said. "If we can adjust the energetic level, we can change our destiny."

When Trachta works with a client, she tells him or her she can't heal a broken foot, that a doctor is needed for that. However, she said, "Illness can be a metaphor for deeper things going on in our lives."

Trachta asks questions that allow her and the client to decode the cir-

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Jim Davis / Arizona Daily Star

Pam Hale Trachta displays some of the tools she uses in shamanic healing.

cumstance of, for instance, a broken foot.

"I would be looking for someone's unconscious reluctance to walk into the next area of life, or for a breakdown in their foundational support, or for an unconscious way of having to stop and be still and do some healing before moving on."

She said she helps her clients understand the opportunity for growth that a broken foot provides. "Our souls, our highest selves, are speaking to us, and these are opportunities for moving forward."

Trachta sees her work with shamanic practices in line with and a continuation of her previous work as a spiritual director. "All these techniques and attitudes fit under the umbrella of 'life coach.'"

Before she entered the Four Winds Society program, Trachta was a spiritual counselor at St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church.

Trachta acknowledges the ways her

journey could be misunderstood or even ridiculed.

When she heard that an acquaintance referred to her as "witchy-woman," Trachta said the support of her family gave her the safety and security to withstand the criticism.

It was a fear of not having the support of her loved ones that kept her from going on this path sooner.

"But my husband, Jon, is an adventurer. He went to Peru with me. He found it personally meaningful, and he has been supportive and excited for me."

Her daughters are supportive of her endeavors, too. Their new nickname for her is "Shamana Mama."

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► For information on workshops, visit Pam Hale Trachta's Web site at www.throughadifferentlens.com