

## J'aime Schelz: healer and teacher with a difference

*"Working in a healing way with people is a way of mutual empowerment — acknowledging the power in both of us"*

BY ANNDEE HOCHMAN

J'aime Schelz was walking along the Oregon coast, along the shore of the Pacific, wondering whether to move here from New York. A wave lapped up, dropped a "big green round thing" at her feet, then rolled back to

### Profile

sea. She took it as a message, an offering, and moved.

It's the kind of sign — partly internal, partly delivered from nature — that keeps Schelz awake, curious, grateful.

During a meditation exercise one time, a guide introduced her to crystals. "Come on — rocks?" was her initial reaction. Now she has a shop full of them, of amethysts and tourmalines, of rose quartz and moonstones. The shop, *Healing Crystals in Sellwood*, also stocks wooden rattles and drums, tarot decks and incense, silk-screened shirts and the spicy-mossy smell of sage.

Schelz walks around the shop in a bounding gait, as full of energy and amazement as if she were the 6-year-old owner of a toy store. An amethyst wound in a silver band hangs around her neck; four long thin braids, each a different shade of blond or brown, drip over one shoulder. Her left eye is more green; her right, more brown, and the difference seems perfectly appropriate.

She touches some crystals on a shelf, talks about what it's like to dig for them, fingering the earth with a long, thin probe. You hit a crystal, pry it up, scrape it carefully and, in your hand, light hits it for the very first time.

"Now," says Schelz, with a smile as wide open as the shoreline, "is that the moment of the crystal's birth or its death?"

"I have a background as a registered nurse, both in hospital work as well as home care work and in business, managing a home health agency. So I had a lot of exposure to various levels of healthcare professionals, as well as people in the community who were seeking healthcare. It's kind of funny, because I always tell people that trying to be a nurse was my way of trying to go 'straight' with healing, because I've had, all my life, a strong focus on healing and consciousness, and a lot of extraordinary experiences with healing and awareness. It wasn't until I was completely out of school and classes that I realized that Western medicine, to me, has very little to do with healing at all. It has

a strong focus on disease and illness and death . . . power, control over others' bodies and minds. And I thought, 'Well, this isn't it.'

"What happened in the process of denying myself what was really true for me about consciousness was that I got really ill. By the time I was getting ready to graduate from nursing school I had a life-threatening disease. There were a lot of other things involved with it. I had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, which is a cancer of the lymphatic system, the defense system. What it did for me was that it enabled me to experience intimately the avenues of healing offered by Western medicine — and really come to understand how little it had to do with healing and how much it had to do with power trips and control.

"It's perceived somehow that you goofed up, you did something wrong, you failed, you're not a perfect human being, and now if you surrender your life and destiny to this doctor — or group of doctors — maybe they'll cure you if you're good enough, if you're a good enough patient. And so I was a miserable, nasty patient. I questioned everything; I resisted everything that did not feel right to me, that didn't resonate. It was as if I needed to reclaim what was true for me about healing through my own process. It happened in my last semester, so I had to move out of school, go through surgery and radiation and a daily kind of intense sickness.

"It was a wonderful experience. It sounds incomprehensible to say that, but it brought me into a deep intimacy with being a . . . living being. Owning my body was a wonderful experience in a way that I had denied before. It was a strong personal healing experience for me.

"I went back to school the following fall, completed my nursing degree and went on to work at a university hospital. I thought I had something specific to offer, having come through this experience — you know, the 'recent-graduate' kind of mentality. I learned within a fairly short period of time — about three, four years — that as much as I was a kind of 'special' nurse, I was still not being true to what moved me the deepest in my heart. So I left nursing and went on to learning about healing, tried to strengthen my psychic/spiritual skills with different teachers.

"It was easy [to move from mainstream to alternative healing], because that was kind of turning to me. It was actually harder to go into mainstream nursing, but I thought I had to do that. Your guidance counselor doesn't say, 'If you take this course and this course, you can be



a psychic/spiritual yahoo.' No job description says that. So what we're always trying to do is to fit ourselves into something that somebody else has thought of and articulated and created. So actually, moving out of nursing was a complete relief: 'I get to be me for a living.'

"Really, working in a healing way with people is a way of mutual empowerment — acknowledging the power in both of us. The patriarchal model of power [says] that power's somewhere else, anywhere else but in you. And so people may feel that's what's true because that's what they see, experience and reinforce in a cultural way. But I've really found that, as much as people actively say it's true, deep inside people desperately hope it's not. It's what we all strive for — that just maybe there's power within me, and someday I might be able to experience it.

"Another really important thing is to recognize the power of every experience. Drop by drop, you fill the glass. And everyone thinks that in order to be powerful, they have to be the last drop that fills the glass. Like, 'I'm the healer that made you well.' I don't expect or need people to go, 'Ohhh. Yeah, that's right! God, I'm so glad you said that!' I don't need that, because I know that the kind of experience I've had, that's nurtured me, I've experienced drop by drop. There have been innumerable faceless people and events and animals and trees that have added drops to my experience and, little by little, there's a groundswell.

"Friends of mine kind of tease me because they say I seem to be this 'angel of death,' because I'm always advocating people to die, all the time. Every day. Breathe, live, die, you know. In, out. Inhale, exhale. So we're processing death all the time, and we don't have to save it up for some big bang at the end.

"That Hodgkin's experience . . . some people would see it as a brush with death, but I saw it as a real brush with life, because for me what it was really about was reclaiming life. I was such a little spiritual goody who loved to have out-of-body experiences and dreams, you know, conscious dreaming, and I always felt like, 'Wow, I can't wait till I'm dead; I get to be here all the time.' And yet I wasn't fully acknowledging knowing living-ness. Now I'm

so grateful, because I get to experience the beauty of being alive, the power. I don't feel like this is some grammar-school experience, and if I'm really good, I graduate and go to heaven or go on to being an enlightened being.

"I've been thinking about this idea of a wounded healer. It's a shamanic concept. The point is not the wounding that can enlighten you or enable you to be a healer; it's how you experience it and how you interpret it. We really need to shake the idea, 'No pain, no gain.' I think, yeah, that could work, but what could also work is, 'No joy, no gain.' Joy teaches as well. We don't have to use pain as our only edge to experience a change in reality.

"There's a lot more awareness about healing here [than in New York]. There's a lot more innocence. People aren't as jaded in the Northwest. In New York, everyone's still trying to justify [alternative healing] in terms of Western medicine. Or there's a kind of strong commercialism associated with the process. For instance, out there, when I was teaching, people were constantly asking if they could get a diploma from me. I really feel I have no right to give anyone a diploma. I think the state would agree with me. I don't want to get into a relationship with people where I decree them powerful.

"I don't feel anymore that I have to dismantle Western medicine in order to validate for myself what I'm doing. I think that Western medicine is in great service to a large number of people. And I don't feel people should renounce practices of healthcare that are working for them. I believe we can work together. A lot of the kind of healing work that people like me are doing is educating people about our relationships to ourselves, to our bodies, to each other and the world.

"[Healing means] to be in the moment. To me the process of healing is synonymous with loving. It's a spiritual idea, one of those lofty ideas. But it's really true. The process of healing is one of coming to love ourselves more and to be loving with other people more in a conscious way, in a natural way — letting go of the past, forgiving and forgetting. Healing means being in the moment and loving the moment and loving ourselves in the moment.

"I don't think that's anything that people haven't heard before. Lots of people have said that all along. It's a question of whether you want to explore that or not. I think it's really important — it's like the coming-out thing — to be yourself. It's really important, I've learned, not to make excuses for myself. Additionally, not to say, 'I'll be myself after I get out of work.' Or 'when I retire.' Or 'when I've said enough prayers to get rid of my sins.' There's not any 'until' — it's just now. And I've really got that — I believe that.

"I'm being myself because I like to be myself. I find it challenging to explore who being myself can be. And I recognize that I live in relationship with the world, and I'm happy about that. I love that. And I relate to people as if they're being themselves. I believe they are. We are."

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