

Making a Difference Leon Chaitow: Renaissance Man of Complementary Therapies

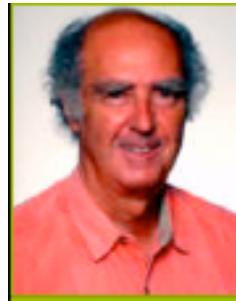
BY BOB KING

Leon Chaitow has been a practicing osteopath, naturopath and acupuncturist in the United Kingdom for forty years. Until 2005 he was a senior lecturer in therapeutic bodywork and naturopathy at London's University of Westminster, and is now an Honorary Fellow of that institution. He is also the Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, an internationally respected peer-reviewed journal published by Elsevier. He has written over 60 books on natural health and complementary medicine. His books on fibromyalgia, muscle energy techniques, and cranial manipulation are often found in the libraries of bodyworkers along with neuromuscular and clinical massage texts co-authored with Judith DeLany and Sandy Fritz.

What first attracted me to Dr. Chaitow in the 1980's was his book *Soft-Tissue Manipulation*, a somewhat disorganized but brilliant compendium of soft-tissue approaches, which inspired and influenced my own practice of clinical massage. The book articulated the somatic dysfunction concept, showcased the writings of the early osteopaths, and provided glimpses into muscle energy methods, European neuromuscular protocols and even the legendary "twig snapping" technique on the iliotibial tract. Chaitow credits Stanley Lief and his father's brother, Boris Chaitow, as early inspirations to his work. He refers to his uncle as a "difficult but brilliant man, and a gifted healer and manual technician" whose example he attempts to follow in his clinical methods.

In addition to his prolific writing, Leon Chaitow has presented workshops and advanced trainings at schools and conferences throughout Europe and the United States. Along with Judith Delany, he helped popularize an American version of neuro-muscular therapy in a prolific two-volume set titled *Clinical Applications of Neuromuscular Techniques*. Both books are used in many massage therapy schools as definitive texts in trigger point therapy.

In describing the opportunity and exceptional challenge of co-authoring with Leon Chaitow, Judith DeLany notes, "He brings together practitioners from all professions into multidisciplinary debates and discussions. He synthesizes information from a multitude of perspectives and sources, and hands us the



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core material to help shape our understanding and guide our choices, both professionally and personally." She added, "His contributions to the massage therapy profession are beyond measure and, because of his efforts, its emergence within the health care industry has been irreversibly propelled."

His future projects include a major textbook, *Naturopathic Physical Medicine* (with four co-authors), investigating the link between breathing pattern disorders and pelvic floor problems for a future book, and participating in the 1st World Congress on Fascia Research at Harvard University, October 2007 (www.fascia2007.com).

I first encountered this remarkable educator in 1986 when he presented a series of manual protocols for sports massage practitioners. Our school in Chicago would often sponsor his trainings and what impressed me the most about Leon Chaitow was the immediate interest he showed in our school's outreach program, especially the clinics where massage was the protocol for individuals with HIV/AIDS, and at a hospital setting where massage was provided for drug-exposed infants.

I observed Leon when he was visiting the practitioners at the outreach sites, which spoke volumes to me about his values, as well as his knowledge. In subsequent years he profiled this volunteer massage program in articles and editorials.

I believe his altruism is reinforced by the strong belief that complementary therapies really do make a profound difference in the quality of life. The scope of his research, teaching and writing is a powerful footnote underscoring his professional legacy. He truly is the renaissance man of complementary therapies. For more about Leon's work