Our Spring Workshop: Exploring Renewal

We wish to thank all those who participated in our Spring workshop on stress and renewal at Mt. Madonna in Watsonville, California. Often after a workshop like this it can be challenging to integrate what’s been awakened into our everyday lives. To do so is usually not easy nor immediate. This is why we call Sensory Awareness a practice, because it simply needs practice. It is really a lifetime study... if and whenever we are interested.

From many perspectives this event was a success. For the first time we offered continuing education units for psychotherapists and due to this we were able to attract many new people to this work. Of the 39 attendees who returned feedback forms 38 reported they felt quite positive about the workshop overall. Here are some samples from the feedback received:

“I feel back in touch with my nature.”
“It made me more conscious of how subtle changes can produce big results. I think I'll use more sensory awareness with clients.”
“I experienced how delicious the ordinary can be.”
“It has been a struggle to stay awake and present, but I think the effort to do so has been worthwhile.”
“I feel empowered to work with myself discovering how to live in more alive awareness.”
“The conference allowed me to slow down and savor the experience of my life.”

For more photos go to page 8.

As in past annual workshops Sensory Awareness teachers who are members of the Leaders’ Guild came together a few days prior to the weekend workshop.
This year in addition to getting to work with each other and get to know each other on a deeper level they grappled with some very complicated issues, including exploring guidelines for how new leaders and guild members could become approved. Guild president Virginia Veach reports on this meeting on page 4.

For 2010 our next sponsored workshop will be held at Vallombrosa Retreat Center in Menlo Park, California from August 6 to August 8. Our title will be Reclaiming Vitality: The Practice of Sensory Awareness.

Please save the date. We very much hope you will be able to join us. The convenient location of this peaceful facility will enable more people to commute, if they wish, and it is much closer to a major airport than Mt. Madonna.

Connection and Support: Sensing the Gifts of Cancer

By Cathy Edgett

In 1993, I took a poetry class with Norman Fischer at Green Gulch Zen Center. At one point when the energy was flat, Norman announced an experiment. He guided us to stand in a circle and place our hands on the back of the person in front of us. Thus in a circle we were all touched. After a time we then scattered outside to write.

When we re-entered the room, we sat in a circle and shared our words, and discovered as we read that our writing formed a cohesive and coherent story. Where one person’s thoughts ended, another person’s began. Norman said if we were intrigued with the results of the experiment, and were interested in the connectedness that ensued, we should check out an upcoming workshop with Charlotte Salver. After a workshop with her, I was hooked.

I participated in many Sensory Awareness workshops over the years and daily felt the gift of being more aware and awake. I learned to appreciate the journey and not be so concerned with a destination or end point, but I don’t think I fully grasped the intent of the work, the power and support generated from within until I began treatment for cancer in 2005.

Treatment began with surgery which led to eight rounds of chemotherapy. I arrived for the first chemo treatment with books, clay, things to do. I intended to “help” with the process by visualizing healing and welcoming the poisonous fluid as a guest. No battles for me. I was going to do chemo “well.” My mind was set.

When I learned that a nurse would hand-push the drug into my vein, because if it touched my skin I would need a skin-graft, my heart sprang into overdrive and I felt wild cats scratch and scream through my veins. I wanted to cry but had signed a form that my time in the infusion room would be met with a smile. I thought of the words of Charlotte, and the two stiff backs of my knees curved into smiles. I nourished on the support of the floor, the chair, the air pumping within. I counted birds outside.

When I returned to the infusion room for the second treatment, I was worn out. I had no energy for plans, no desire to visualize, no mind-set to orchestrate, hold, or control. I brought a few lines of poetry, and as I sat there, I heard and fed on the memory of Charlotte’s words. “Every moment is a moment.” “The organism is intelligent.” “The organism knows what to do.” My foot came up. My foot went down. I had nowhere else to be, nothing else to do. I left the room, peaceful and calm. I felt renewed.

Alan Watts described Charlotte’s work as “a Western form of Taoism—a form of spontaneous action that makes you and your surroundings become one.”

As I went through treatment, I didn’t have the energy to divide myself from my surroundings, to put on an ego shield of defense. I opened my heart to receive and that opening felt like the bowl of water in one of Charlotte’s class experiments into which she would invite us to drop or toss a rock. I felt the ripples three hundred and sixty degrees around, and those ripples didn’t stop at my skin. I was a community, supported and supporting.

I was monitored and cared for by more people than I will ever know. Where, then, did I begin and end? I was being poisoned and burned to save my life. How could I then judge good or bad, forward or back, view life as too much, or not enough? Duality fell by the wayside as Charlotte’s words circled within me as a mantra of support.

In my mind, I heard Charlotte say, “And this is your experience.” I became clear that each of us is a rock tossed into a bowl of water making ripples that never repeat. How could I waste a moment of this unique experience by wanting anything to be different than it was? Could I meet each moment new?

My cells, though battered, continued to round into smiles, until, one day treatment was done, and then, I was back in the world of more energy than required for survival. The world of decision making and choice may incite confusion and expectation, but my nine month immersion in treatment offered me an opportunity to better integrate the words and work of Charlotte Salver and Sensory Awareness, to awaken a wealth of connection and support and to know more intimately the ground we share.

Cathy Edgett is a Rosen Method bodywork practitioner and the author with Jane Flint of Breast Strokes: Two Friends Journal through the Unexpected Gifts of Breast Cancer which will be released February, 2010.
President’s Message

Many Changes

Our board has recently gained two new members. We are very happy to welcome Terry Ray, a long time leader, psychotherapist and meditation teacher; and Sara Bragin, a therapist and long-time student of Sensory Awareness with a background in advertising. Lee Lesser who has served for many years on the board has decided it is time for her to move on and devote her energies to the many other activities that are needing her attention, particularly her growing workshop schedule as a Sensory Awareness leader. She will be missed.

Lee has agreed to join our newly formed S.A.F. advisory board. I am pleased to announce that joining her are Norman Fischer, Zen teacher, writer and poet; Russell Delman, well known embodied mindfulness and Feldenkrais teacher and former student of Charlotte Selver; John Travis a Vipassana teacher and former student of Carola Speads; and, last but not least, Judyth Weaver, a veteran leader of this work, therapist and a graduate school educator in somatic psychology.

In addition to our publications and website the foundation continues its focus on promoting the work through sponsoring annual Sensory Awareness workshops, and by actively working with and supporting the Leader’s Guild.

Through sponsoring the annual workshops and the Guild conferences which precede them we strive to help create conditions for more dialogue between guild members. We feel such an effort is essential for the future development of Sensory Awareness. This seems to have been proven out when, partly as a result of this year’s leaders’ conference, the guild was able to make much progress towards a subsequent election on some important issues. The result of which should help create more clarity and unity. Guild president Virginia Veach reports on this on page 4.

We also have helped financially support Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt’s Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project, feeling that, even though, this project functions independently from the foundation it very much compliments our publication and educational efforts.

In addition we continue to explore ways to help sponsor workshops and classes in areas outside of Northern California. Thus The S.A.F. continues to be dedicated to developing the growth of this valuable study and awakening public interest in it. But we need your support to keep us going. As in the Buddhist tradition the sangha (community) is an important part of the practice, so too in our study our community is a very important part of the practice. Our sense of community and working together are very much in the tradition of this work.

If you haven’t done so already, I ask that you take the time now to help the S.A.F. insure the growth and future of Sensory Awareness. Please don’t forget to renew your annual membership and also consider contributing when you can. The S.A.F. needs your help to keep moving forward. Our members not only help support our many important projects but also receive discounts at future SAF conferences and sponsored workshops, books, publications, and CDs. More importantly, perhaps, your membership helps us all stay connected as a community.

Sadly two dear friends of this work have recently passed away: Babette Wills and old friend and student of Charlotte’s, and Martina Hornstein one of our active leaders in Germany. You can read more about these two remarkable women elsewhere in this newsletter.

With my best wishes, Richard Lowe

PS. We are happy to announce that in addition to the cassette recordings we sell of Charlotte Selver’s classes, we now have these same recordings in CD format. Both CDs and tapes will now all come with written transcriptions. Fortunately our audio expert Mark Watts was able to enhance the audio quality of the CD recordings during the process of converting them.

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Report on the Leaders’ Meetings at Mt. Madonna

By Virginia Veach, Guild President

Here are some highlights of the special Guild meetings which were held before the weekend workshop at Mt. Madonna this year.

We had a wonderful and full several days of sensing, talking and listening, thinking and partying, and getting to know one another. Too short for all we needed to take care of, but it was truly delicious to see so many friends and colleagues, and to get some very important decisions made.

This year’s Guild meeting was well-rounded, with attendees from every region except Canada:

U.S. East Coast: Bob Smith, Penny Smith, Ray Fowler and John Vitell.
Midwest: Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt.
West Coast: Virginia Veach, Jill Harris, Richard Lowe, Connie Siegel, Lee Klinger and Julie Esterly.
Europe: Gloria Lerin Vilardeids and Helga Hoenen.
Mexico: Mercedes Lopez.

Joining us were Sara Gordon and Eugene Tashima from the S.A.F. board.

We spent much of our time exploring important topics, but making sure we left time for different individuals to lead us in sensing. Much of our discussion time was spent reviewing the important topic of how new leaders should be approved and what qualifications, if any, should there be for membership in the Guild. These had been questions the Guild membership has been grappling with for many years. Based on these discussions a proposal was drafted to be voted on by the Guild.

Among other discussion topics explored:
1) We asked the question, “What is the value of having a guild, and what do we want out of it?”
2) We discussed the issue of what we call ourselves “leaders”, “teachers”, “facilitators”, “guides”, or what. No conclusions were reached.
3) Other very hot topics which we did not have time to cover adequately were:
4) How can we communicate sensing to others more effectively? What words or language is more easily understood than “Sensory Awareness”? What about “mindfulness”, “consciousness”, “greater aliveness”? We agreed to continue this conversation as it is something we are all interested in and affected by.
5) How can we better support one another?
6) How do we improve communication between the guild members?

Happily the following people volunteered to be our new “communicators”, to help us work as a tighter team, and to be real conduits of information flowing to and from the president, etc. I’m very happy and appreciative for their participation and willingness to all work together:

Helga Hoenen for the Europeans, except for Spain
Mercedes Lopez for the Spanish speaking members in Mexico and Spain.
Ray Fowler for the East Coast of U.S.
Paul Zweig for the Central States and Canada
Jane Vogel Riley will be the communicator for the U.S. West Coast

We reviewed our budget to understand where the Guild’s money is going and how close we are to where we need to be. We agreed to offer $1,500 to Stefan in order to show the Guild’s support and enthusiasm for his project of documenting Charlotte’s life and work. The $1,500 comes out of the Publication Fund; it does not affect the General Fund. After deducting $1,500, the Publication Fund now is: $1,670.

Richard spoke for the Sensory Awareness Foundation. He expressed the Board’s desire to support the members of the Guild in their work of continuing to bring Sensory Awareness to the world. Foundation help could come in the form of mailing lists, publicizing workshops on the website, help with brochures, etc.

Richard also asked leaders to send him news about their work in Sensory Awareness to be printed in future SAF newsletters, which come out twice a year.

The Foundation is looking into ways of offering
continuing education units (CEUs) as a way of attracting more professionals to workshops. The SAF would also like to help leaders by co-sponsoring Sensory Awareness workshops offered by leaders in their home areas.

In appreciation of my work as president, the Guild presented me with a very beautiful book entitled “Elder Grace-The Nobility of Aging” by Hester Higgins Jr. with a forward by Maya Angelou. It is truly extraordinary in its beauty, sensitivity, depth, and wisdom. I thank you all. It sits on my table in the living room for all to enjoy.

Many weeks after Mt. Madonna proposals were sent to the entire Guild membership for a vote and as a result we have passed two new By-law changes:

The first clarifies how new leaders will be approved and how new members will be invited into the SALG*. It also changes dues requirement to include timeliness in the payment of dues. The second adds a vice-president to the number of officers. (I am delighted to report that Seymour Carter has volunteered for this office!)

I feel so blessed to have been able to serve our Guild members thus far, and I look forward to the Guild growing and blooming in the future.

It was a wonderful conference; many, many thanks to the SAF Board for making it possible.

*Editor’s note: The vote determined that the guild will not be in the position of approving new leaders. Instead the voting defined a process for accepting new members, a process in which a candidate must first be sponsored by a current member who will collaborate with at least two other members. Working with these members and with the candidate the sponsor will then develop a plan of suggested additional experience or other steps needed prior to a nomination for membership.

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Charlotte Selver and Suzuki Roshi

Yvonne Rand, in an interview with Stefan Laeng-Gilliat
An edited excerpt of an interview conducted as part of the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project.

Yvonne: The first time Charlotte and Suzuki Roshi* taught together in North Beach was in San Francisco in 1967. It was the first time Suzuki Roshi had met Charlotte. He was right there doing everything with her. He led part of the day, and she led part of the day, and he was completely a participant.

His students noticed that. Oh, so this is a teacher we should pay attention to. There were also some of Charlotte’s students who felt a resonating with Suzuki Roshi and what he was teaching.

I remember one of Charlotte’s first workshops at Green Gulch where she had some big stones. She had us lie down on the floor and put the stones on different parts of the body as a way of bringing attention to the body. Suzuki Roshi was thrilled with all of that. Because for us as Americans, even to this day, we concentrate our attention very much from the neck up. So I think he was very glad to feel that kind of company and mutuality between what he was doing and what she was doing.

For Suzuki Roshi, who loved stones – he was mad for stones – to meet somebody like Charlotte who used stones in her teaching, and who would use stones as a way of introducing her students to a kind of awakening of sensing, and beginning to allow oneself to pay attention to what one experiences in a body-based, sense-based, way – it was clear to him that she could provide what was missing.

For a Japanese Zen priest here in the United States at that time, body-based work and practice would have been unusual. To find a Westerner who was doing the kind of work Charlotte was doing which resonated so strongly with Zen and with his own experience was rare. And I think there’s a way in which he sometimes felt rather lonely. He certainly had a very close connection with his students. But there was something different and reassuring about the kind of company that you have that’s collegial with another teacher.

Most American Zen students tended to dogmatism – it’s almost as though people had blinders on. If Zen practice is not strict and formal, it is not Zen. And yet if you look at the history of Zen in China and in Vietnam and Japan, there are all these eccentrics, and there are all the different forms that are recognized as the expression of Buddhism and in particular of Zen teachings.

My sense, from Suzuki Roshi, was that it was very clear to him that Charlotte’s practice was very much a spiritual practice, one that could give people experientially a sense of how to awaken from the neck down.

So there is a way in which Charlotte’s teaching, towards the latter part of her life, integrated into this community which was primarily focused on Buddhism and primarily focused on Suzuki Roshi’s teachings. There was some sense of resonating, I think both for her and her students and subsequently for the Zen students at the time.

I remember talking to Suzuki Roshi about his experience of teaching with Charlotte. That was when he made the comment about what she is doing is bringing in the elements that have to do with ceremony, a kind of ceremony that was body-based.

Stefan: It’s interesting that you point to the importance of ceremony and ritual, and how Sensory
Awareness or Charlotte played a part in that because...

**Yvonne:** Well that was Suzuki Roshi’s perception.

**Stefan:** Charlotte of course avoided ceremony and ritual.

**Yvonne:** Well, she did and she didn’t. I mean having a meal out there on the patio at their house in Muir Beach was everything about ritual and ceremony, disguised if you will under the designation of, “let’s have lunch together.” But my sense was when I ate meals with Charlotte and Charles, that there was a way in which sitting down to eat a meal was a sacred practice, a spiritual practice. That was very clear to me. That was one of the things I appreciated about Charlotte. Because I felt there was a way in which Suzuki Roshi would – how can I put it? I felt like that he was present whenever I’d go up there to the house and have lunch with Charlotte and Charles, or later just with Charlotte. There was a sense of, oh, Suzuki Roshi would have enjoyed this. And it’s also to some degree the way Charlotte arranged the house. The way she dressed. The way she taught, how she would arrange the room, and the kinds of things she would do in her teaching.

And also I think Charlotte maybe was the first person I knew who was supportive of setting the table without having everything match. The dishes didn’t necessarily all match; the silverware certainly didn’t all match. The napkins might or might not all match. So even that was a kind of play. I never experienced her as being held by the need for perfection. She really wanted to invite whatever responsiveness would arise out of somebody that would be unique to them. And that sense of uniqueness, I think she really expressed.

**Stefan:** Yes. At the same time, while it might not have mattered whether or not things matched, it was not out of carelessness.

**Yvonne:** No, no. It was not chaotic. The table was always harmonious. She had a developed sense of presentation. And I think that that cultivated sense of aesthetics on Charlotte’s part in particular was something that really rang true for Suzuki Roshi. It was one of the places where he felt a real connection with her. That sense of shared enthusiasm was a great gift for him because it gave him a sense of friendship. It is one of the reasons why I think he was so sympathetic and keen on having her teach his students.

And Charlotte had a certain kind of – the word that comes up but it doesn’t seem quite accurate – a kind of capacity for devilment. A capacity to be a little naughty, to be a little playful, which he had also.

In terms of my own teaching as a Zen teacher, I’m viewed by traditionalists as being rather eclectic, but actually I think that is not at all accurate. There is a way in which the Japanese Zen tradition can be misread as teaching a disconnect from the physical body. Part of what opened up Zen in America, in physical terms, was Charlotte’s and Charles’ work which was so much about bringing attention back into a more body-based way, not coming from Asia, but coming from Europe.

**Stefan:** So would you say in your work today what you learned from Charlotte is somehow present?

**Yvonne:** Very much so. Charlotte helped me understand how, particularly for Americans, there is so much emphasis on thoughts, and often a kind of disregard or diminishment of what we are experiencing in a more body-based way, and how reliable body sensing is in a way that thinking can be but often is not. She enabled me to appreciate what happens when you do walking meditation and you really let the foot come to the floor. Well, I think of Charlotte in that context. That sense of when you walk and you feel the movement of the air in the room. For a lot of meditators, they’re so in their heads that it’s like, huh? What are you talking about?

My sense is that the heart of Charlotte’s work was paying attention to everything we know through the senses. And the fact that she was drawing on her own experience as a westerner, and her own experience with her teacher, for me, that’s been crucially important.

I think she was an important person for those of us who had a chance to work with her, who were also practicing Zen. There was a way in which her teaching brought everything to life. . . . Rather than going to rigidity, there was no way she was going to collaborate with rigidity.

*San Francisco Zen Center was established in 1962 by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi (1904-1971) and his American students. Already a respected Zen master in Japan, he was impressed by the seriousness and quality of "beginner's mind" among Americans he met who were interested in Zen. (For more information go to www.sfzc.org)*

Yvonne Rand is a meditation teacher and lay householder priest in the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. She began her practice and study of Zen with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi in 1966. Her primary practice path is Zen, augmented by practices and teachings from the traditions of Theravada and Vajrayana. Ms. Rand is married and is a mother and a gardener. (For more information go to www.goatintheroad.org)

To learn more about Charlotte’s life and hear and read excerpts from interviews, go to [www.CharlotteSelverBiography.org](http://www.CharlotteSelverBiography.org). There, you can also find out how you can support the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project.
Martina Hornstein (1933 – 2009)

An Obituary by Marianne Ebrat.
Translation by Stefan Laeng-Gilliat

I must have met Martina for the first time in a workshop with Charlotte Selver in Winterthur in 1987. Martina had just finished her 4-year training as a breath therapist with Hildegund Graubner and Ilse Middendorf. She had already experienced the work of Elsa Gindler through Micke Monjaü. Martina was planning to attend Charlotte’s 1988 Study Group in California and encouraged me to come along.

This where we got to know each other really well, housed together in a small space on two mattresses. It was a difficult time for Martina. Just after her departure her husband had to undergo life-threatening heart surgery and it was unclear what the outcome would be. This is when I experienced for the first time her strength and endurance. She was always fully present in class and afterwards she would jot down her experiences and then go work in the kitchen – and how! One could see that she was used to cooking for a big family. It was something to see her chop chives, very finely, very fast!

I later learned that she had also cooked for the school during her demanding training as a breath therapist. And she didn’t just cook there: thanks to her presence the kitchen became the room where everyone gathered, students and assistants alike, and this was where all the important questions were addressed.

Martina later went back twice to the US, once for a study group and another time for a Sensory Awareness leaders group. Besides the Sensory Awareness classes and individual lessons in her house in Gauting near Munich she also worked in the South Tyrol in Northern Italy, where she had grown up.

For more than 15 years Martina offered workshops as part of a training for day care providers (Tagesmütter). Being a grandmother of five and because of her thorough knowledge of the work of Emily Pikler she had a deep sense for how to best relate to children in their development.

Her longtime student and colleague, Frieda Schaiter, once told me how touching it was to see the changes in the faces of the women with which Martina worked. Frieda Schaiter will, by the way, continue to offer Sensory Awareness classes in the context of the training for day care providers, together with Annemarie Gartner another longtime student of Martina.

In the South Tyrol, Martina also offered energy work which she had learned from Rosalyn Bruyere over the years and she was able to help many people. Sometimes she would say, with a twinkle in her eyes, that she had “made another child”: Women who had longed for children in vain for years often got pregnant after being treated by Martina.

With no other colleague and friend have I exchanged and experimented as extensively as with Martina. When we spent our vacations together we could discuss anything and everything deep into the night. And the next morning after breakfast we always first pulled out the mats for “sensing” before going out to indulge in the pleasures of vacation.

In April of 2009 Martina was in Zürich for the last time. She had just had a serious flu, which was unusual for her. A few days later she called me and told me that she had a persistent cough and that she wanted to see a doctor. Then came the diagnosis: Acute myelogenous leukemia. The doctor wanted her to immediately start a four week chemotherapy treatment. She refused, luckily, as they told her later. The blood tests showed worsening results and a blood transfusion did not bring the expected result.

In spite of her weakened condition she traveled one more time to the South Tyrol to work with her favorite group. On August 18 she was admitted to the hospital after collapsing in her home.

On August 22 I took a train to Munich to say goodbye to her. Three students left her room crying when I arrived. Martina was composed and told me that she was not worried. “When you feel a wind on your ears you will know that I’m gone” … I did not feel the wind but I received a call from my bookseller who told me that the book I had ordered had arrived. I first did not know what he was speaking of until he mentioned the title: The Forgetting of the Foot Means the Shoe Fits Comfortably, by Zhuangzí, Martina’s last book recommendation. The book had been out of print and came now, a day after her death, to me.
Some pictures from the Mt. Madonna workshop.
Babette Wills (1912 - 2009)

By Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

(Editor’s note: Babette Wills who recently passed away has endeared herself to hundreds of sensing students through her enthusiastic warmth and hospitality. For many years she and her husband, Michael, would invite Charlotte Selver and Charles Brooks to offer weekend Sensory Awareness workshops in their lovely owner designed home in Portola Valley. Among other things Babette was a highly regarded teacher of French country cuisine. Often surpassing the workshops themselves were Babette’s amazing home prepared lunches and snacks served in their beautiful garden.)

Babette Wills was one of Charlotte’s closest friends and a longtime student. She was a wonderful, lovely and lively woman. I interviewed her last year but the interview hasn’t been transcribed yet. I briefly listened to the beginning and Babette starts out saying: "Charlotte taught me many things. But one of the most important things she taught me is how to disobey." I also found this on my web site from the memorial service for Charlotte. Babette couldn’t attend but she wrote a letter. Jill read it. Here is just a brief note about it:

Babette wrote about her first meeting with Charlotte: It was in a studio in San Francisco’s China Town, where she had gone with some friends to one of Charlotte’s classes. When Babette first saw Charlotte, she had a look on her face that made her seek a far corner of the room. There she stayed for the rest of the class, trying to comprehend what was going on and wondering if all these people were perhaps a bit “coocoo.” When the class was over Charlotte walked over to Babette with a beautiful smile, both hands reaching out to her and asked: “Hello, what is your name?” – Babette came back to take the class the very next day, and has been doing so every since – for forty years. She wrote how much Sensory Awareness enriched her life and that she will be grateful to Charlotte until her very last breath.

I last saw Babette earlier this year after she had been moved from her very beautiful home in Portola Valley to a nursing home in San Rafael, CA. She was very frail and bedridden but in good spirits and as always we opened a bottle of French wine together and had some French goat cheese and crackers. Babette was French.

I feel very fortunate to have known her. I will miss her.

PS: There is a fascinating biography which tells of Babette's life (Babette: Elisabeth Ullman Wills by Constance Crawford)

Here is an excerpt from a review of it:

“As we quickly learn from Constance Crawford’s perceptive and engaging memoir, it was in Babette’s nature, in the genes and circumstances she inherited from both her mother and her father, to go against the grain of the high French bourgeoisie into which she was born. Once free to choose, she chose a far richer world of painters, writers, and musicians. ’We were not hippies,’ she says of the circle of impecunious friends she shared with her first husband, Paul Ullman, in Montparnasse, in the 1930s. ’We were Bohemians.’

The difference, of course, was—and is—style. Everything about Babette, including her generosity of spirit, her hospitality, and her gift for friendship, is infused with style. Sartre wrote: ’Life is nothing until it is lived.’ And Babette has lived hers to the full, with courage, imagination, and elegance. By way of that modest Paris atelier followed by several gilded and cosseted years in New York and Connecticut, it has taken her from the band-stand and fishing boats of Sanary-sur-Mer to the virtually organic house in Portola Valley so familiar to her friends, so much a part of the texture of our own lives, that we all seem to live there, too. And, in a way, we do.”

— From a review by Gerald Asher

(Executor’s note: To see many pages and photographs from this book go to Google books and type Babette Wills into the search window.)

“The distinction between spontaneous and habitual behavior is one of the main topics of our work in general. How a person lives --is he habitual, or is he reactive in everyday living? --is the great question upon which our work turns. Many people do not make a distinction between spontaneous and habitual breathing. They have a notion that when they are just as they always are, this is being spontaneous, just as people who are very pushy, or very lazy, say, “This is my nature; it’s the way I am,” while it is only a habit --a deviation from their true nature.”

-- Charlotte Selver

From Recaiming Vitality and Presence
Report on Study Group in Bavaria

By Anneke Hopfner

Seymour Carter and I thought it might be a good idea—maybe a bit risky to offer a 10 day Sensory Awareness workshop in Riedercour, Ammersee in Germany. We did it and actually got some students interested.

We were able to work intensively with a small group of very motivated people with various professional backgrounds. The program provided that every morning was dedicated to Sensory Awareness experiments, the afternoons were focused on enlarging our knowledge of the functioning of our organism, our structure and posture. We called it a BodyReading class. On some evenings the students could take advantage of Seymour’s Gestalt sessions.

At the end of the SummerGroup we had such good feedback about the class, we decided to plan another "Long Term" study group for June 3-13, 2010 with the following variation:

We will split the group into 2 periods, which can be booked separately or booked as a whole. The idea of a longer course is to give an opportunity for a deeper experience for those who are looking for this, and also offer a continuation of the study of Sensory Awareness for students wanting to take steps in the direction of becoming a leader of Sensory Awareness studies. The Details of this Study Group will be found on Seymour’s website: seymourcarter.com.

Please note: We occasionally share our mailing list with Leaders Guild members who offer Sensory Awareness workshops, but with no other organizations or individuals. Please let us know if you do not want us to share your address at all.

Reclaiming Vitality and Presence

Sensory Awareness as a Practice for Life

“This is a wonderful and welcome expansion of a true classic. It teaches us Charlotte’s and Charles’ remarkable way to be genuinely alive.” — Jack Kornfield

“This remarkable book is the most definitive account of the life-long work of Charlotte Selver. It speaks articulately of that which is hard to put into words.” — Edward L. Deci

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