
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 Selver. 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 Selver 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.*