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Dear Friends of the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project,

I have just looked through a diary Charlotte kept to take notes of workshops. In it we find a day-to-day record of what she offered and some thoughts about the classes. This particular diary covers workshops from September 1994 through September 1995. At that time I was working for Charlotte. While I do remember her taking notes, I did not remember the extent to which she was dedicated to this process of recording and reflecting on her classes. Every day, after hours of teaching, this 94 year old woman went to her room, sat down and wrote, often a page or more. Here are just a few snippets:

Green Gulch Study Period, April 24, 1995: People are only interested in "progress", when they see more, feel more, etc., not where they are nonreactive, without contact. They only want to be "good", successful - - - I will have to work on that. - -

Green Gulch Study Period, April 18, 1995:

Sensing = following, trace - "tasten", finding one's way like a blind person, not knowing, discovering - -

Trust: Maria Gurewitch: We all have it, we only don't know of it.

Gindler: Getting peaceful in one's mind to be able to sense.

Korzybski: Becoming impregnated. sensory nervous system - experiencing - silent levels - thought based on experiencing - word - on action.

Monhegan, August 14, 1995: I speak of Gindler's finding of the three tendencies of the organism: renewing, healing, balancing. Can we permit them? These secret positive processes are not of our doing, they occur when we don't hinder them.

There was as discussion about touch + embrace (in coming to rest with arms + letting hands be in loving touch with knees or thighs, not decay.) - (I would like to elaborate on: how "relaxed" hands, and arms rob us of vitality and defeat our airy structure, make us falling together + limp [pains]).

It is incredibly inspiring to see such commitment. I believe it comes from another "secret positive process", namely the joy that comes from giving oneself fully to something instead of being absorbed by the obstacles in the way. You may have experienced this in a Sensory Awareness class; you may have experienced it at work - or on a walk in the woods. You give yourself to it - you "don't hinder" yourself - and suddenly what you do gives you tremendous joy and energy.

This has been my experience with the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project. When I focus on what appear to be obstacles on the path it is hard to make progress but when I give myself fully to the next step I immediately feel excited about the work at hand - and I do what wants to be done with joy.

One important part of this project is to capture the memories of people whose lives have been touched by Charlotte. These interviews are not only an important source of information for my work on an extensive biography of Charlotte Selver; they are a wonderful collection of voices in their own right. I am collecting these memories as a source of information and inspiration for us to learn from and enjoy now, publishing several already.* I think they are of tremendous value for a wider public as well, and for future generations.

In response to these interviews, Sensory Awareness Foundation board member **Eugene Tashima and his wife, Helen**, wrote:

“Thank you so much for the mountain of riches which you are so skillfully bringing to life and sharing. We appreciate the questions you ask and the genuine interest and presence you arouse in those you are interviewing. You are doing (being) magic.”

Most recently, I published an interview with Johanna Kulbach (find it on the web site). I have received enthusiastic responses to it, such as this one from **Don Hanlon Johnson**, Professor in the Somatics Graduate Program at CIIS in San Francisco:

“I find the interview with Johanna marvelous. I’m particularly intrigued by her differentiation between Charlotte and Gindler. . . . You are doing such valuable work.”

Such responses are very encouraging at a time when a lack of funding has made it more difficult to work full time on this project, which is now going into its fourth year. When I started, I estimated that it would take me about three years to complete this work, but I had to realize that this is not realistic if I want to do justice to Charlotte’s life and take advantage of the trove of materials which make it possible to write a thorough account of her life and times.

I know that you are eager to read Charlotte’s biography, and like my eight-year-old son, Julian, (who frequently does so) you might be asking: “When are you going to be done?”

Earlier this year I interviewed **Edward Deci**, Professor of Psychology at the University of Rochester, NY. He asked me how my work was going. When I told him that I still had a lot of material to work through and that it will probably take me twice as long as I originally thought, he said:

“People spend six or eight or ten years doing research, pouring through all the material, in order to distill it and organize it and come up with a kind of storyline that they want to use in presenting the person. . . . We are fortunate that you have decided to take this on because it would be a shame not to have a really definitive account of her life and her work given how many people she touched in really profound ways.”

I feel very privileged to be able to do this important work and I look forward to continuing sharing with you what I learn about Charlotte’s life and legacy.

Can I count on your continued support in 2011? If I raise \$60,000 or more for the coming year, I can devote myself full time to the project (though I will still offer a few Sensory Awareness workshops on the side). However, I can assure you that I will not abandon this important project even if a lack of money forces me to look for other sources of income as I had to this year. It may then take more than three additional years but it will still be done.

Everyday I am fascinated by Charlotte's life story. It is not only the story of a Sensory Awareness pioneer. It is the story of an unusual woman living the 20th century; it is the story of a German Jewish life; it is the story of times and people exploring the human potential, struggling sincerely to find ways of living in harmony with one-another and all life on this beautiful earth. To tell this story is a tall order and the hardest thing I have ever done but I am as committed to doing it – and doing it thoroughly – as I have ever been. With your help I can.

Thank you!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

* On the web site www.CharlotteSelverBiography.org you can find excerpts from interviews, reflections and a log of my activities. Members – people who actively contribute to this project – can access even more materials.

How to make your donation:

- Tax-deductible donations, earmarked for the 'Book Project' can be made to the Sensory Awareness Foundation, 23 Wallace Way, San Rafael, CA 94903.
- If you do not need the tax deduction or if you don't reside in the US, send your donations directly to me. Make the check out to 'Pathways of Sensory Awareness' and send it to: Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt, 2300 W Alameda Street A3, Santa Fe, NM 87507.
- For more options, such as PayPal, visit the web site.

... There is no one more qualified to do this valuable biography. ... Truly Charlotte has contributed in her unique way to the field of human consciousness and defining what it is to live a meaningful and enriched life. Her work deserves to be recognized and available to a larger public.

*From an email from **Phyllis Gilmore**, Alexander Technique Teacher, Irvine CA*