

# A MOMENT WITH MOSHE

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It was 1983, the 4th year of our Amherst *Feldenkrais*® Training Program, and because Moshe was very ill and couldn't come to America to teach, the staff decided to have his first generation of Israeli students teach us instead. However most lived in Israel. Some were willing to come to the states, some couldn't. So they split our class of 230 students into two locations. Approximately half of our colleagues chose to end our final year in Tel Aviv, Israel, while the rest remained in Massachusetts.

I personally wanted to be as close to Moshe as I could, even though I knew he would never witness us becoming *Feldenkrais*® Practitioners. Plus, something in my training experience seemed unfinished. I had to somehow see Moshe's town, his home and be among his people. From June to August, our training had many great teachers; it was marvelous to be in Israel, however something was greatly missing...Moshe.

One day, Moshe's protégé and now *Feldenkrais*® Trainer, Jerry Karzen came up to me and said, "Angel, do you want to visit Moshe?? Come on hurry." He grabbed me by the hand and ushered me out of the training room. We walked briskly down the main boulevard of Tel Aviv and he led me down that well know street where Moshe lived, Nachmani Street.

It all seems like a blur to me now, the smells of the old and musty things inside the apartment, piles and piles of books, manuscripts and *Feldenkrais* equipment.

I can't say that I recalled much of anything until I observed Moshe's frail body lying dormant in his bed.

Moshe Feldenkrais, an enigma of a man who was so powerful in my eyes. In Amherst, when he would holler, I swear the hairs on the back of my neck would rise, and shortly after, a nervous giggle would well up in my throat. Yet somehow there was always a twinkle in his eye that told me that he meant well and to not take him seriously. Since we only had him as our Trainer for the first two years, the force of his presence nonetheless remained a key focus in my recollection and lingered until that very moment when I first saw him lying there.

Before seeing him, I arrived with the memory of how he used to be, the image of him was etched in the walls of my mind. Then, when I saw him that day, I had to ask myself, "Is this the same person? Wait...how could he have become so thin, so pale, so fragile and so...so quiet?"

Just as I began to accept his new condition, I found myself reaching out to gently touch his hand. He stared straight into my eyes, and a fierce flame in his own eyes ignited. I saw him waver from meek to mighty in a fraction of a second as if he had a thousand faces, flashing before me like a slide show.

I thought to myself, "Moshe, who are you now? You are truly scaring me. Are you young, are you old, you certainly are brilliant, are you afraid, excited, angry, disappointed? I see you are exhausted and ready to take a long sleep, but now you appear babyish, and now a genius."

I found myself captured in the midst of his expressions, he was continually transforming and I became lost in a trance..."Ouch! He's squeezing my hand; if I pull away he'll break my bones. Just stay there Angel, his mood will quickly shift". And it did, he became immediately docile. Then he let go of my hand and slept. Then he snored.

From that point on, I would run to visit Moshe after class almost every day for months. I was hooked on seeing him; in fact this was the most important part of my training. Nothing else mattered in the course of my day. I would lean over his bed and say, "Hello Moshe, do you remember me? My name is Angel." His response was aloof and unchanged; I somehow felt that a mere name or handshake was irrelevant to him.

My time was running out, how could I connect with my teacher, say goodbye to the most important person in my life, when we rarely had any exchanges, not even when we were in Amherst.

One hot August afternoon, as I approached his front door, I noticed a lovely bush that had exceptionally fragrant yellow flowers: I recall seeing them in Hawaii. They smell like a sun tan lotion called "Coppertone". I picked a flower and continued to pursue my daily visit.

Moshe appeared to be growing less interested in visitors as time went on, his concerns were mainly what day it was, receiving FIs and spending a lot of time doing pieces of ATMs at his own slow pace.

With much concern of being rejected, I decided to take a chance nonetheless and appeal to his senses. I cautiously approached his bedside, leaned towards him and placed the flower under his nostrils. This gave him no option but to breathe in this fragrance. With this I said, "Hello Moshe, its Angel here to see you again. It worked; he smiled mischievously with a smile on his face and a glimmer in his eye.

I continued this flower routine daily. Our training was coming to a close and on the last day before leaving Israel I picked my last and final fresh flower and placed it under his nose.

Much to my surprise, he said, “Ahhhh, its Angel isn’t it? Sit down, I want to share with you a dream I have....” Once again, he grabbed my wrist, this time even tighter.

Moshe shared his dream with me. He said that his wish was to have the entire world doing one of his ATMs, all at the same time via satellite. Would I help him achieve this dream? I replied, “well, uh... yes, I will try.”

That day, I departed from his home walking on a cloud. “Moshe asked me to help him fulfill a dream. Moshe and I connected and talked and Moshe touched me in more ways than one. By the way, I found out years later, that he shared this dream with many people who visited him during those times. It was a bit of a blow, however I was grateful for having my personal moment with him.

I cherish and keep the very last flower I shared with Moshe pressed in my autographed Awareness Through Movement book. The fragrance is long gone, but the memory of Moshe Feldenkrais will linger with me forever.