



# Esalen

## Monarch Butterflies Bless Esalen

Frequent visitors to Esalen have undoubtedly noticed the proliferation of monarch butterflies beginning each fall and lasting through the early spring. A symbol of transformation, the monarch's choice of Esalen as a winter home seems like a perfect one.

Esalen is fortunate to have the climate and habitat that attracts monarchs, who find their way here to spend the winter months or "overwinter." Monarchs traditionally choose sites to overwinter where conditions are neither too cold nor too warm, and where milkweed, the monarch caterpillar food plant, is available.

According to Walter Sakai, Monarch Biologist at Santa Monica College, Esalen's Hot Springs Creek area has been a site for monarch overwintering for over 60 years. The populations over the past 10 years have varied from 0 (an extremely poor year statewide) to 75,000 monarchs. Esalen in a normal year has around 30,000 monarchs. The monarchs have historically roosted in several locations just north of the bridge that crosses Hot Springs Creek (near the Round House).

When the weather cools the monarchs enter a phase where they cease reproducing and stay put in comfortable sites through the winter. They become reproductive



Mike Harris

again when the weather begins to warm. They mate and begin their spring migration. These butterflies find milkweed to lay their eggs and eventually die, having lived close to eight months. Successive generations of monarchs continue their inland migration living about four weeks. By September/October, the third or fourth generation begin the fall migration back to where their ancestors came from.

The monarch butterfly is one of the

most recognizable insects in the world. It is unique for its migratory patterns and its bright orange-black-white coloring.

The butterflies don't fly well in temperatures under 55 degrees F. It is common for them to spread their wings to soak up the sun's rays and when the right temperature is reached, to take flight. Clusters of them can usually be found around the Big House lawn and near the Gazebo school.

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# Reflections from a Work Scholar

by Yossi Yassour

The first time I came to Esalen as a Work Scholar it was 1985 and I've been returning every two or three years ever since. The metaphor I use is a car coming to the mechanic for a periodic check-up. At Esalen I recharge my batteries, check my air pressure and oil, replace some clogged filters, refuel and hit the road again.

My experiences at Esalen have had a profound effect on my life, both personally and professionally. The Work-Study program (especially when I work in cabins cleaning rooms or folding towels) has allowed me to see my life from a perspective that is different from my normal view. The Work Study groups that I have participated in act like a room with 20 mirrors, each reflecting my personality back to me from a different angle. The contact with the group leaders and with the Open Seat reflectors illuminates and brings insights into dark areas in my life that I do not usually dare to observe.

In 1985 I was a visiting professor of management at San Diego State University. A friend of mine who was the head of the Psychology Department at Hebrew University in Jerusalem visited me and said: "Before you go back home to Israel you must spend some time in this special place called Esalen. You will learn a lot about yourself and you will look differently at your profession." He was right.

A few years earlier I had gotten my Doctoral degree from Harvard Business School and I was sure that the entire world, especially the business world, was run only by rational people who based all their decisions on analytical calculations. Surely emotions and intuition had no place in the busy mind of the modern person.

I was a professor of Quantitative Methods in Management and, more specifically, Decision Theory. After my first experience at Esalen I realized that something was missing in the way I taught my subject. Rationality alone



Yossi Yassour tuning up in the Esalen laundry.

could serve managers, and people in general, only to a limited degree.

At the Esalen bookstore I found a book entitled *The Wisdom of Insecurity* by Alan Watts (I have vacuumed the room at Esalen bearing his name a hundred times by now), and the following lines from that book have become an important part of my curriculum:

*We have been taught to neglect, despise, and violate our feelings, and to put all faith in our brains. Indeed, the special disease of civilized man might be described as a block or schism between his brain and the rest of his body. We have allowed brain thinking to develop and dominate our lives out of all proportion to 'instinctual wisdom.....'*

*The brain is desiring things which the body does not want, and the body is desiring things which the brain does not allow; the brain is giving directions which the body will not follow, and the body is giving impulses which the brain cannot understand.*

Esalen inspired me to include non-rational decision theory in all my teach-

ing. I also realized that my personal life would be richer if I would allow myself to be more emotional and intuitive. This part has been more challenging to implement than the academic part but has been equally as rewarding.

While changing my emphasis from rational to more emotional teaching, I took a two-year course in Group Dynamics Facilitation at the Psychology Department of Tel Aviv University, and began teaching a workshop called "Dynamics of Risk Taking." Many exercises used in the workshop are an adaptation of what I have learned and experienced at Esalen, such as singing in front of the group or fire walking.

Esalen has played an important part in my emotional growth and my career development and for this I am grateful. I plan to return in 2004, on my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, for another check-up.

For more information on the 28-day Work-Study Program please refer to the write-up at the back of each Esalen catalog or email [workstudy@esalen.org](mailto:workstudy@esalen.org).

# Esalen's Kitchen —Variety & Abundance

Eating at the Esalen Lodge with its variety and abundance is a gastronome's delight. At breakfast alone you'll find three or four hot cereals to choose from as well as soft- and hard-boiled eggs, homemade yogurt and granola, a half dozen freshly baked breads with 100% fruit jams, butter and peanut butter, and an assortment of common and exotic fresh fruit. And that's just the standard fare. There's usually a special breakfast entrée as well, like John Blunt's buttermilk pancakes, or Rachel Fann's cooked-to-order omelettes.

Esalen's kitchen does an amazing job of producing wholesome and delicious meals for seminarians, guests, and staff. Serving savory meals to a wide variety of people with different food and dietary preferences three times a day, 365 days a year, including holidays, is quite a challenge. Some of us are vegetarians, some are vegans. There are those who enjoy eating meat and fish, those who don't eat dairy, or wheat, or sugar, and those who do.

Charlie Cascio, Esalen's Kitchen Manager, doesn't push his personal vegetarian diet on others. Instead he prefers to run what he calls an "equalitarian" kitchen, where no one dietary preference prevails to the exclusion of others. When meat and fish are served there's always a vegan and vegetarian alternative available.

Charlie serves quality free-range meat and fish that is hormone-free and antibiotic-free. In season, the kitchen buys fresh fish – snapper, halibut, tuna, and salmon – from local Monterey Bay fishing families.

Esalen supports local mom-and-pop suppliers. Our veggie burgers and seitan come from a small health food manufacturer in Pacific Grove. We buy fresh pasta from a local pasta maker in Carmel. Our organic tempeh is produced in small batches in Los Osos. And our honey comes out

of the upper Carmel Valley.

In the summer and fall the kitchen gets about 80% of its produce from its own backyard. Esalen's farm & garden provides home-grown, pesticide-free vegetables harvested fresh six days a week. The kitchen makes fresh herbal tea daily using a special blend of spearmint, peppermint, pineapple sage, lemon balm and a smidgeon of geranium harvested from the garden every morning.

Other produce and fruit often comes from local organic farmers and distributors. On Sunday mornings you can find Bob Swanson, a quiet bearded fellow, unloading organic fruits and vegetables from his van.

Every well-run kitchen needs a good organizer and at Esalen, that's Gordie Nathan. Thanks to his organizing talents the kitchen makes food prep and service appear relatively smooth and easy, masking a rather complex work environment. Gordie, the Kitchen's assistant manager, takes care of ordering and storing hundreds of food items and cooking accessories, scheduling

a work crew of approximately 50 people, and ensuring the training of kitchen staff.

Imagine trying to run a restaurant with new staff every month. That's essentially what the Esalen kitchen does. As part of the Work Study program, the kitchen gets a new crew of 12 or 13 Work Scholars every 28 days. Many have no prior restaurant or kitchen experience and the crew needs to be trained each month. Just as everybody is getting the hang of their jobs, the Work Study month ends, a new crew arrives, and the process begins anew. Given this unusual work situation, it's quite amazing that the kitchen operates as smoothly as it does.

The next time you dine at the Esalen Lodge we hope you'll take a moment to reflect on the abundance before you and the work of the many hands, heads, and hearts, that went into preparing and serving your meal. If you ever have suggestions or ideas for the kitchen concerning meal service, please email Gordie or Charlie at [kitchen@esalen.org](mailto:kitchen@esalen.org).



Daniel Bianchetto

Kitchen Manager, Charlie Cascio (left) and Assistant Manager, Gordie Nathan

# Esalen & the Gestalt Model

by Gordon Wheeler

Beginning around a century ago, the first Gestalt psychologists sparked a revolution in psychology and philosophy of mind, at so profound a level that there really is no work in these fields today which is not fundamentally Gestalt in its assumptions.

Their basic insight, which is still percolating through cognitive science and brain/mind models today, was that we do not take in the world in discrete “pieces,” the way the dominant models of the day (and some of our day) had it. Rather, we orient, perceive, and then act in terms of *meaningful whole pictures*, always screening and selecting and putting what we’re seeing in context, always relating it to our situation, expectations, beliefs and needs. In other words, we participate actively in constructing an ever-growing understanding of our world and ourselves.

Of course, we don’t construct these “meaningful whole pictures” at random. We construct them in an interactive process of influence and feedback from and with our environment — especially our social environment, the world of other people. This is what our body/minds are evolved to do, as high-learning, low-instinct social animals who aren’t good at much of anything, except this amazing gift for problem-solving and meaning-making in an ever-shifting environment.

Thus our restless and relentless human drive to *understand* our world and construct more comprehensive *wholes of meaning*, from the most immediately pragmatic to the widest levels of spiritual meaning, to locate ourselves and survive and grow in an uncertain universe. And thus too Gestalt is the basis of *evolutionary psychology* — the relation of our behavior and experience to the demands and selection pressures of our long and open-ended evolutionary adventure.

A model of our human nature always implies models of health and dysfunction, and the early Gestaltists were not

slow to see the implications of their own work for development, education, and psychotherapy. Based on these implications (particularly the work of Kurt Lewin), in 1951 Fritz Perls and Paul Goodman wrote one of the seminal texts of the century in the field: *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*.

In sharp contradiction to the then-reigning Freudian and Behavioral models (and the stultifying conformism of the times), they argued forcefully that humans are not the destructive and antisocial isolates of the classic Freudian view, wracked with dark drives and mired in an infantile past — nor are we the passive industrial cogs of the Behaviorist world. Rather, we are by nature active, constructive social beings, problem-solvers and meaning-makers, inherently creative and potentially at home in the embodied, political world — if only that world and its repressive systems would get out of the way.

Thus the model from the beginning emphasized creativity, expressiveness, community, political commitment, responsibility, and spiritual exploration and the open-ended freedom of the full human potential. Humans were the artists of their own lives, Goodman in particular insisted: it is up to us to create a meaningful world, and to live



Katie Nash

Gordon Wheeler, pictured here at Esalen, is senior faculty at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland and author of *Gestalt Reconsidered*. He writes and trains extensively in the Gestalt model.

in it in a way that expands the horizons of our own nature.

Perls of course then brought this work to Esalen, where he honed and taught his own unique blend of dreamwork and psychodrama to a generation of seekers. His characteristic emphasis was on freeing up blocked aggression to reenergize the personality and throw off the constraints of personal and social repression. Goodman meantime continued his work of political activism, social justice, and social criticism in New York and around the country, becoming a chief mentor and voice for the protest generation of the 60’s and early 70’s.

At Esalen Dick Price, one of Perls’s most influential students, extended and developed the work with greater emphasis on the meditative, “being-with,” and relational aspects of the model — work which is very much carried on today by Chris Price and many, many others.

Meanwhile, sparked by Perls, Laura Perls, Goodman, and their students, training centers in Gestalt began springing up throughout North America and Europe. In an ever-widening range of applications, the model was developed and extended beyond Perls’s individual therapy focus, to work at all settings and levels of human experience: couples, families, groups, organizations, education at all levels, community intervention, politics, and spiritual development.

As fast as Gestalt generated new ideas and applications, these ideas have often been adopted and absorbed into mainstream models and applications — sometimes with credit, sometimes without. Most psychotherapy today is in a real sense present-centered, and much of it is relational and intersubjectively focused as well. Likewise, the importance of social/emotional dimensions of learning, and their inseparability from “cognitive” learning, is widely appreciated in education at all levels. In organizations too, emphasis on team support and creativity has found wide appreciation.

Like Esalen itself, Gestalt has been influential far beyond its strict boundaries — and well beyond what is always realized and appreciated. And like Esalen too, Gestalt today stays at the edge of the new, emphasizing our joint experiential participation in our common world and in each other, taking Perls's ideas about individual self-responsibility into new ecological, evolutionary, and spiritual/political dimensions.

Gestalt and Esalen have grown up together. From the more individualistic ideas and emphases of the 60's and 70's, we all appreciate today the urgent need for a new integrative vision, one that resolves the self and the relationship, "East" and "West," meaning-making and science, into a creative, evolving whole. We "co-construct" ourselves and each other, we now realize; thus agency and self-responsibility necessarily include co-responsibility for the whole field. If that whole is diminished, then I am diminished, and vice versa.

At Esalen and throughout the world, Gestalt is at the forefront of this kind of integrative, evolutionary vision, insisting on the role of meaning and spirit in creating lasting change at every level and sustaining a liveable world. Thus we stand in creative (and sometimes lonely) opposition to all the siren-calls for return to simplistic, polarized, "us-vs-them" thinking in every area — the kind of vision that reduces people to consumers, care to "management," personal encounter and healing to drugs-only treatment, and so on down the list of short-sighted approaches to the integration of a complex and unitary world.

We can do more and better than that, both Gestalt and Esalen insist, toward realizing the full promise of our evolving human nature and spirit, and our shared world. We must do more, if that world, and our grand evolutionary adventure as part of it, are to survive.

*Gordon and many other Gestalt practioners offer numerous Gestalt based workshops each year at Esalen. Please refer to the "Guide to Workshops" in our catalog under Psychological/Transpersonal Process*

## In Memoriam: Julian Silverman 1933-2001



*Daniel Bianchi*

*Julian Silverman, Esalen's good friend, teacher and former General Manager, passed away on April 14th. Julian started coming to Esalen in the late 60's He lived here from 1971-1981 and continued to teach at Esalen through 2000. The following tribute was written by his friend and colleague, Brian Lyke:*

Our beloved friend, Julian, was known to many of us in the 70's, when Esalen was experiencing the wave of Rajneesh Orange, as Swami Balmy Satcha Ding Dong. I think that was his perverse way of saying that you have to be your own guru, even if you are crazy. Crazy though he was, he was also brilliant and he helped guide Esalen through its formative years in company with his close friend Dick Price and his nemesis, and alter ego, Janet Lederman. I think Michael [Murphy] was happy to keep his distance during those years.

Julian's teaching and living took on a whole new direction when he began studying and teaching *A Course in Miracles*. He would spend hours in the bathroom doing the exercises that accompany the text, reprogramming that biomass we call the brain. It didn't bother him, a Jew, that the concepts were rooted in Christian terms because he saw through to the universality of the message. He was a Rabbi and a Priest and a Minister in the most authentic way, by seeking always to embody the truth that love is God and the way to God.

Julian Silverman lived a very full and happy life. He had two wonderful families and numerous interesting and fulfilling careers. He will be remembered by many of us for his bright shining eyes, wonderful smile and his helping spirit. He loved to instruct people on their paths to fulfillment and he helped to change many lives for the better.

He would like us all to remember three things. First, from *A Course in Miracles*, "This is an insane world ....don't underestimate the extent of its insanity." And in his own words, "Purposive thinking must replace our old perceptual ways of thinking." And, most important of all, "Shine your light!"

# Esalen Bath Restoration Nearing Completion



Daniel Bianchetta

As we go to press the Bath Restoration Project is approaching its final stages. The building is up. The roof is on. The outside tubs have been built. The outdoor massage deck is under construction. The end is in sight.

This has been a monumental project on one of the most difficult and beautiful building sites in the world. The new facility will be world class and unlike any other anywhere. If all goes well the new baths will be open this fall.

Many thanks to all who have helped financially with this project. Continued donations are welcome and desired.

# Esalen's Divinity

by Evelyn A. Brazier  
July 20, 2000

I slid my sore body and happy spirit  
Into Esalen's outdoor tub  
Of hot sulfur water  
And gazed at a million, billion stars  
Shining brightly, some shooting  
In the black, velvety sky  
And my heart sang in gratitude  
To be on holy ground  
In divine energy  
And with people having common  
purpose  
Growing, being and seeking.  
I find divinity everywhere  
But I especially find it at Esalen.

This is a wonderful place to come and unwind and forget about everything outside the gate. Maybe this really is "the real world."

Esalen Seminarian

## TRANSITIONS



Katie Nash

Bill Herr, long time Esalen employee and most recently assistant Kitchen Manager, retired in February after more than a decade at Esalen. Bill started as a work scholar in the maintenance department in 1984, and later worked in cabins, spent several years as a cook and coordinated the Art Barn before returning to the kitchen. Bill was known for his quiet wisdom, his beautiful art work and his buttermilk biscuits which he served most Friday mornings. Good luck to you, Bill.

## From The Archives

The following is an excerpt from Esalen's first newsletter published in February, 1965. The article was entitled "Intentions of the Esalen Institute." (author unknown)

*Our wish here is not to found a "school of thought." We want instead a center where laymen and scholars can explore those converging trends of modern thought which emphasize the potentialities of human existence. These trends are on the one hand developments from the traditional religions and philosophies and on the other certain developments in the contemporary sciences of man. We would like this place to be a common ground where many differences*

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*Italics below indicate a lifetime donation giving commitment and/or a donation pledge of \$100,000 or more*

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• You can designate Esalen Institute as a recipient of your donations through your workplace or United Way Campaign. You will not see Esalen's name listed as a United Way agency, but you can still designate your gifts to Esalen.

• For more information, please call Nancy Worcester at (831) 667-3032 or email [nancy.worcester@esalen.org](mailto:nancy.worcester@esalen.org).

# Spring Follows Winter

by Steve Beck, Manager, Esalen's Farm and Garden

It's early Spring and the earth here in Big Sur is full to bursting. Full from the winter rains and full of hope for the coming year.

Still too wet to till the fields at the Farm. The cover crop of oats and bell beans that were planted in the autumn are now three to four feet tall. All winter they've gathered the goodness of Big Sur's sun and rain and, in conjunction with billions of soil microbes, have co-created modules of nitrogen on their roots.

As the days lengthen into spring and the storms leave us, all of this is waiting to be plowed underground to provide a season's worth of nutrition to feed the broccoli, carrots and peas that will be served to Esalen's guests this summer.

I love this land. I love watching the miraculous process of constant change. I look back and I know where I've come from. I look forward with the hope that arrives every spring. I have that itch that farmers have had for the past 10,000 years: to plant hope, to work to-



Katie Nash

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