

Mind, Body, Spirit Boom Town: Holistic Health in Santa Cruz

Marti Edwards

If you live in Santa Cruz, you have been exposed to it. If you have given up sugar for honey, red meat for tofu, coffee for herb teas, or cigarettes for jogging, you have been influenced by it. Like America's turn of the century "spiritual awakening," like Europe's renaissance, "holism" is mushrooming around the world and Santa Cruz appears to be a veritable vortex into this phenomenon.

The word holistic stems from the Anglo-Saxon root *hal*, meaning "health and holiness," and from the Greek *holos*, meaning "complete, whole, entire." Frequently spelled *wholistic*, the term connotes a central belief that all parts of a human organism are inter-related, affecting the whole person.

Why is it happening in Santa Cruz? Some believe that the town is a powerful energy center, a crossroads of vital spiritual forces, a community with a "light" surrounding it. One woman from Norway reportedly was sent here by her psychic (who had supposedly seen this light) to find a community called Heartwood. The woman did come to Santa Cruz and happily immersed herself in the study of natural healing arts at Heartwood (now called the Twin Lakes College of the Healing Arts).

Possibly no other geographical area in the United States has attracted more master teachers and eager students in the field; the phenomenon is not unlike the converging of the "called ones" in the movie *Close Encounters*. Some holistic disciples don't know exactly why they moved to Santa Cruz, but feel they were "called" by the vital energy being generated here. Others present more rational reasons for the influx of health enthusiasts, such as the mild climate, the relaxed lifestyle and the awesome presence of nature with its healing properties.

Whatever the reasons for its development here, holistic health in Santa Cruz spans a staggering spectrum of disciplines, including nutrition, herbal cures, acupuncture, acupressure, homeopathy, rebirthing, innumerable varieties of massage and deep tissue therapy, psychic healing, hypnosis, mid-

wifery, stress reduction, rolfing, chiropractic, bio-energetics, bio-feedback, yoga, meditation, color and dream therapies, and on and on.

Despite the almost infinite varieties of holistic practice, there are common goals and principles which all the disciplines share. Probably the most universal aspect is that all practices clearly address the **WHOLE** person — the body/mind/spirit as a complete organism — as contrasted to traditional medicine which tends to focus on constituent parts (particular organs or illnesses).

Second, holism emphasizes health maintenance and disease prevention. It seeks to stimulate an individual's own natural healing systems rather than to manipulate health from an outward source.

Third, a basic holistic tenet holds that the treatment of merely a symptom suppresses the real cause of illness and inhibits healing. Holistic practice, therefore, seeks to address the **ROOT** cause of illness and to effect a permanent cure. For example, a holistic doctor would not simply prescribe a pain suppressant for your headache, but would attempt to determine the cause of the headache and treat **THAT**. Hopefully, the pain would subside because the cause was addressed, not — as in traditional medicine — because a "miracle" drug dulled your senses.

Fourth, practitioners attempt to help patients remove themselves from the "victim syndrome" and take back power and responsibility for their own health. Most holistics agree that belief systems are central to one's health, and that a patient's changing of some very basic beliefs and attitudes can frequently effect a desired alteration in that patient's health patterns. In addition, many hold that the patient's beliefs affect the type of health care that works best for him or her.

Finally, holistic health treatment is individual-oriented and tailor-made; each person is viewed and treated as unique.

Tired of "taking a number" in a fast-food style medical center? Tired of freezing your fanny in a cold white cubicle where the only diversion is a dog-

eared copy of *People* magazine? Tired of doctors who evade your questions by rattling off ten-syllable words? Then perhaps it's time to try the holistic approach.

Generally, holistic practitioners are patient, care about your physical comfort and probably won't evade your questions. However, they can — like their allopathic counterparts — bandy about enough jargon to make your head spin. But I found the ones I talked with eager to explain the terminology whenever I revealed my ignorance.

New or potential consumers of holistic services want to know about the credentials of practitioners in whom they are entrusting their health. Santa Cruz has attracted several MDs who are practicing holistic medicine, albeit specialized. One such is Robert M. Tager, whose particular interests lie in stress reduction and stress management. "Credentials are important," notes Tager. "Patients should ask the practitioner about his or her training and licensing — it's their perfect right to do so." Tager cautions against any practitioners who hedge about their training. Tager displays his own two dozen or more black-framed certificates on the walls of his office so that a patient can see for him/herself the level of the doctor's professional training.

Medical doctors practicing holistic concepts obviously have considerable freedom, both in terms of types of treatment offered and in accessibility to prescription substances. They are also likely to enjoy a high degree of credibility with patients new to the holistic concept. Non-MDs may shy away from terms like "diagnosis," "prescription," and "treatment"; however, most are licensed or certified to practice in their particular field by an official state-regulated board.

Still, in the eyes of a wary public accustomed to sterile-smelling waiting rooms and white, disinfected floors, the holistic environment carries a few myths. Standing in the waiting room of a women's health clinic, I overheard the receptionist answering ques-

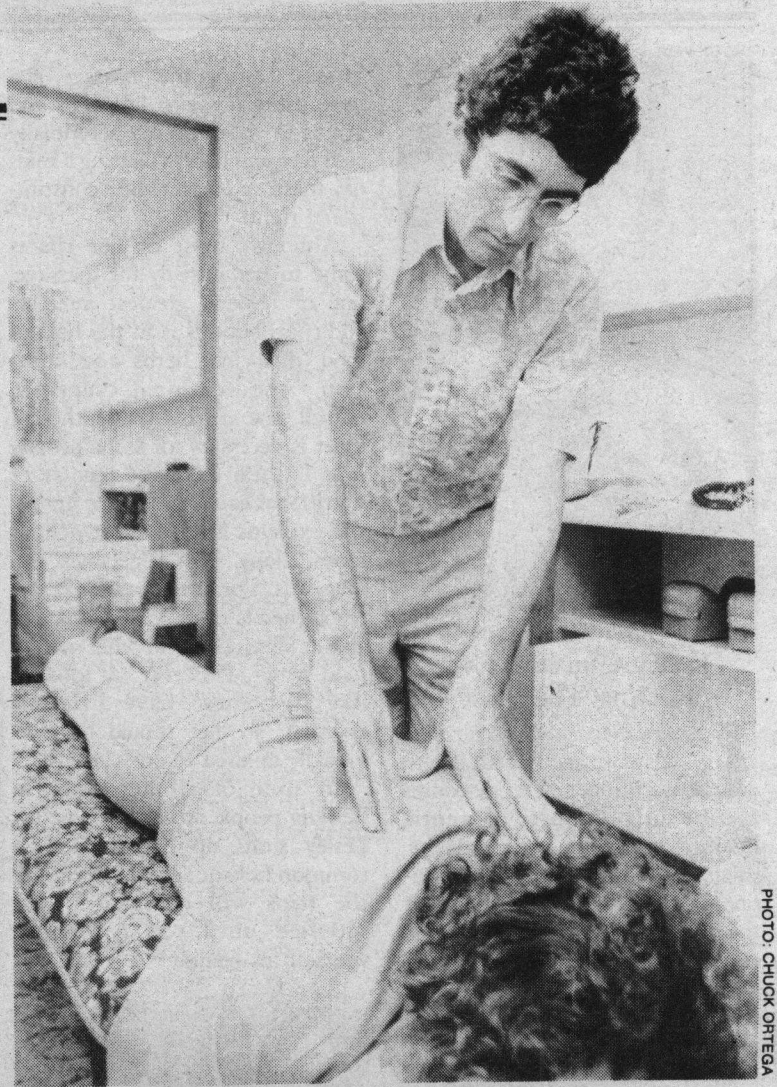


PHOTO: CHUCK ORTEGA

Chiropractor Harvey Markovitz gets straight to the point.

tions over the telephone to someone who had evidently conjured up images of body odors and dingy madras bedspreads. "Yes, of course," the receptionist replied in a bemused yet patient tone, "all of our instruments have been sterilized and we use nothing but clean linens." The whole field is striving for excellence and professionalism. Twin Lakes College of the Healing Arts, for example, selects its faculty very carefully, accepting only credentialed instructors who meet very specific professional criteria.

The holistic movement is not attempting to replace allopathic (traditional) medicine, but to fill voids that have long existed in health care, particularly in disease prevention. Holistic practitioners regularly refer patients to conventional medical professionals if they determine that the patient can thus be served more effectively. And all are quick to agree that we need "both systems." While holistic medicine focuses on wellness and disease prevention, most practitioners point out that for the treatment of traumatic injury and for emergency care, modern western medicine is unsurpassed.

Newcomers to the holistic arena will want to know if treatments by holistic practitioners will be covered by their medical insurance policies. Usually it depends on the insurance company and on the type of treatment received. For example, most insurance companies are willing to pay for chiropractic and acupuncture treatments, but draw the line on massage. It is best

to call or write your insurance company's claims division ahead of time to determine its policies for coverage. Prudential has traditionally been one of the best companies for covering alternative health care. Its general criterion is that the practitioner must be either an MD or a state licensed professional. Prudential has paid for acupuncture and chiropractic treatments, as well as for counseling by licensed marriage and family counselors.

Several practitioners I interviewed, whose therapies are not covered by medical insurance, assured me that, in their opinion, lack of coverage is not a problem. It seems that patients are more likely to "put their energy into their own healing and take responsibility for their health" if they make payment themselves. If getting one's money's worth is an incentive to tune into one's own healing powers, then payment helps to validate that experience. At any rate, you are likely to get more for your money — at least time-wise — with holistic care: treatments are typically an hour or more in length, as opposed to five or ten minutes in many allopathic offices.

I interviewed a motley assortment of Santa Cruz' holistic specialists and visited the industry's two major "institutions": Santa Cruz Holistic Health Center and Twin Lakes College of the Healing Arts. I was warmly received and graciously welcomed into the relaxed, nonviolently paced world of "natural" health care.



**Lesley Gunsaulus —
Healing Therapist**

Lesley Gunsaulus is a certified masseuse and holistic health practitioner, who dispenses a colorful potpourri of gentle healing arts. She uses polarity, shiatsu and Swedish massage, nutritional and herbal counseling, color therapy, meditations and guided visualizations, as well as dream work, metaphors and rituals, to name a few. She is also studying acupuncture.

Lesley states emphatically that we are all our own best healers and must take responsibility for our health and well-being. As a healing therapist, Lesley is in the business of holding up a mirror so that an individual can address his or her own healing needs and recognize the individual's power in this realm.

I was particularly interested in her use of ritual and metaphor. "Life is full of daily rituals, as simple as brushing our teeth," she says. "Setting aside time to do a certain thing can be used to establish a positive pattern, as a therapy and as a means to live life more artistically."

Gunsaulus' use of metaphor involves listening to a client on "other" levels. For example, a person suffering from a bladder problem may admit that he is "pissed off." Or a client may admit that her mother is a "pain in the neck." Literally. She explains that all of us communicate on many subconscious levels and that we can learn a great deal from each other and from ourselves by listening to our bodies, our metaphors, our inner senses. When she gives a massage, Lesley "listens" with her fingers.

During a heavenly lunch-hour respite from a wild, hectic day, I was the grateful recipient of some of that nice listening from Lesley's hands. She demonstrated various polarity movements (gentle massage which attempts to circulate vital energy flow throughout the body), as well as some shiatsu (not-so-gentle, but which invigorates pressure points that release blocked up energies). Modest souls will be pleased to know that Lesley requires the removal of only one's

glasses. During the massage, she gave me a few tips on herbs and grains to warm up my perennially cold feet and hands. Getting a mid-day massage ought to be a constitutional right!

Although most of her clients come to her initially for massage, one of Lesley's greatest interests and contributions is in the field of food, medicinal herbs and nutrition. An occasional carnivore herself, she affirms that, although meat is necessary for some people, it is farthest from the "center of nutritional balance." Whole grains, she explains are the most neutral foods, along with vegetables and seaweeds. For meat eaters, Lesley recommends organic meats, available at Sherman's and other natural food stores. However, all foods—like all bodies—have different energies, so diet should be individually tailored to one's needs.

In spite of all her work in helping people achieve well-being, Lesley sums up healing with a common holistic axiom, "Trying all the trips will never keep you satisfied until you go within yourself for healing."

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRAUB



**Twin Lakes College of
the Healing Arts**

Anyone who is "anybody" in holistic health care in Santa Cruz is connected in some way with this institution. Formerly called Heartwood, the college has been in operation for only four years and may be one of the fastest growing training centers of its type in this country. It is certainly the core of the movement in this town.

Ursula Cordero, the campus' publicity director, explains the mission of the college: "We are in the business of healing the planet by changing the world's energies. But first we have to change ourselves, prepare ourselves to be channels for the healing forces."

Located in the old Twin Lakes Baptist Church building on Seventh Avenue, the college accommodates around 200 full and part-time non-resident students, and offers vocational programs for Massage Practitioner, Natural Health Educator, and Massage Therapist and Natural Health

Counselor. The college currently is applying for degree programs from the State of California.

The school has recently undergone an administrative reorganization. When Bruce Burger, Director of Heartwood, moved that organization to a residential Shangri-La in the hills outside Garberville, Twin Lakes College of the Healing Arts organized as a separate entity. The college is now administered by a steering committee which acts as a collective decision-making body—a move which Dean Carol Teachout affirms is in keeping with the spirit of the college.

Twin Lakes' course catalog has not changed since the reorganization; it advertises about 50 classes, covering the holistic gamut from basic functional anatomy, herbs, nutrition and counseling to the esoteric Iridology, "In the Mind's Eye: Using Images and Altered States," and "The Healer as Shaman." Tuition this year is \$1,100 per quarter for full-time, or \$600 for part-time, enrollment. The public is invited to enroll in individual classes as well, which range from \$60 to \$300 each.

If you're not interested in taking classes, but would like to read some books on holistic health, the shelves of the college office are well stocked with volumes for sale. Creative visualization, rolfing, macrobiotics, acupuncture, Chinese herbs, spiritual and psychic healing, and massage are topics indicated on titles. You can also purchase massage tables, oils and cassette music tapes from the Twin Lakes store.

Formerly associated with the college, Heartwood Spa is still in operation on Mission Drive—a place where even the least enlightened of us can reap the benefits of holism. Ten dollars buys a Saturday half-hour massage plus hot tub and sauna privileges. The spa is open daily, but if you want that massage, you'll need a reservation.

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRAUB



**Santa Cruz Holistic
Health Center**

When you walk into the Santa Cruz Holistic Health Center, your nostrils still encounter a faint

vestige of the old days when 1700 Mission Street was a traditional medical establishment. A few disinfectant-doused carpets still remain, but the florescent lights have been replaced by soft, incandescent bulbs, and the dusty philodendrons by bright, blooming violets. There is an atmosphere of quiet serenity pervading; if you ever visited the place when it was a bustling allopathic center, you will notice quite a change.

It seems both ironic and appropriate that the old medical center is the new nucleus of holistic health practice in Santa Cruz. The center offers a multi-faceted approach to treating the body/mind/spirit, as each practitioner focuses on his or her particular specialty. A new client receives an intake interview with one of the doctors, who recommends the type of treatment most appropriate. The center will soon be handling medical insurance cases on a limited basis through an agency which covers alternative practice form licensed personnel. Good news for you insurance policy holders.

I interviewed Elethea Kasarah and Dov Nadel, two of five managing partners of the new venture. Elethea offers, among other delicacies, what is known as colonic irrigation—you guessed it—a cleansing of that portion of the anatomy that is most greatly in need of it. And from the pictures she showed me of the stuff washed out of human bodies, I was ready to sign up for one right then and there. Many natural healers, she explains, claim that all illness is generated in the colon, which is, after all, the sewage system for our entire life experience. Those who sign up for one of these inner baptisms do so expecting some relief from diarrhea, constipation gas and other such maladies caused by improper diet, by lack of exercise, by stress and by energy imbalances.

Dov Nadel's specialty is Ortho-Bionomy, a comparatively new discipline which seeks to bring about awareness of disharmonies and to re-educate the body/mind/spirit in breaking old destructive patterns and in establishing new ones. It is a non-forced, painless alternative to osteopathic and chiropractic work which includes working with the client's aura.

"If you believe that 'no pain is no gain,' then Ortho-Bionomy is not for you," declares Nadel, whose other specialty is Primary Problem Therapy—a discipline he helped to develop. This second technique attempts to diagnose the primary (root) source of illness, "whether it be physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, chemical, organic, genetic or whatever." It uses a variety of methods such as visualization, counseling, muscle testing, bio-feedback and other body therapies.

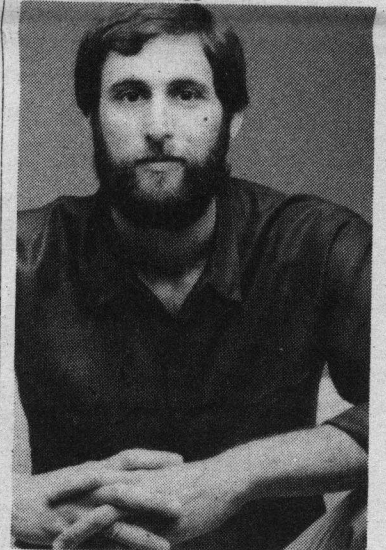
Other practitioners operating out of the center include: Dr. Aubrey Miller, whose specialty is

non-traumatic chiropractic for children; Dr. Thomas Clunie, whose gentle chiropractic work focuses on the methods and formulas of the late psychic Edgar Cayce; Chris Beach, who practices chiropractic for acute, traumatic conditions; Samuel Schoonover, who focuses on deep tissue integration (re-structuring of muscles); Patty Bernstein, a certified counselor in non-specific metabolic therapy ("an individual approach to building health through structure, biochemistry and emotional balance"); and Larry Bernstein and Hoanie Cecil who practice a variety of massage techniques, including polarity, Esalen and Swedish massage.

Homeopathy is also available at the Center and several of the resident practitioners have studied and worked in the famous Plaza Santa Maria Hospital for Degenerative Diseases in Baja, Mexico (where Steve McQueen was treated).

The center offers a hot tub, sauna and massage treatment at its spa, as well as classes for the public on various holistic topics such as natural methods for alleviating menstrual cramps. They are applying for state certification as a vocational school for training in body therapies and plan to offer seven-day chiropractic services in the very near future.

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRAUB



**Dr. Donald Rich —
Homeopathy**

No, the term homeopathy does not stand for home remedy. Far from it. Prepared in specialized pharmacies around the country, there are about 2,000 homeopathic formulas and Dr. Donald Rich of Aptos normally stocks several hundred. An MD who up until last year had a family practice with a holistic approach, Dr. Rich now practices strictly homeopathic medicine.

The word homeopathy derives from the Greek "homeos," meaning "similar," and pathos, meaning "suffering." The principle behind homeopathy is to treat a person with a substance which produces an effect similar to the symptom he or she is experiencing. The process, according to Rich, "stimulates the body's own recuperative systems

rather than manipulating the body to a particular end." The remedies can include synthetic substances, as long as they stimulate natural processes. However, according to Rich, the method doesn't seem to use the body's basic immunity system; in fact, experts really don't know why it works.

Developed around 1800 by a German physician/chemist named Samuel Hahnemann, homeopathic remedies appear to tap into basic energy sources. Dr. Rich provides clients with a written explanation, a handout titled *What is Homeopathy?* by Bill Gray. According to the handout, in preparing formulas an original substance is "diluted in alcohol and then serially diluted an incredible number of times, the vial being vigorously shaken between each dilution. Paradoxical as it may seem, the fact is that the more the original substance is shaken and diluted, the more its curative power is increased while eliminating all toxicity. To this date, no one knows how or why this happens, but it is a fact verified in daily homeopathic practice."

Apparently at each dilution, kinetic energy is somehow added, accounting for a phenomenon called "potentization." "A person's life is an energy phenomenon," added Rich, "and that energy (the vital force) is what we are treating."

Rich received his post-graduate training in homeopathy from George Vithoulkas, probably the world's most knowledgeable homeopathic expert. He treats mostly chronic illnesses and emphasizes that, although the treatment is ingested physically, homeopathy treats the whole organism: physically, mentally and emotionally.

Harvey Markovitz — Chiropractor

Harvey Markovitz's own definition of chiropractic is "the science and art of restoration and normalization of the nervous system through adjustments of the vertebra and muscles." Apparently people have been making spinal adjustments for thousands of years, but the method experienced a renaissance around 1895 by one D. D. Palmer, who revived some of the practices described by Hippocrates and other ancients.

Markovitz combines chiropractic with nutrition and meridian therapy to achieve optimum treatment of his patients. A graduate of the Western States Chiropractic College in Portland, Harvey has had six years of medical training—as much as a medical doctor—and claims that chiropractic is the best bargain in health care around.

The main focus of chiropractic, notes Markovitz, is on the nervous system, and this is achieved through manipulation of the spine (the "grand central station" of the nervous system) and other points of the body. An indirect method of affecting this vital communication

system of the body, the practice uses no drugs. According to Harvey, drugs are alien to the philosophy of chiropractic, which is to achieve healing through the body's natural processes.

What kinds of illness can be treated by chiropractic? The list is long: arthritis, muscular/skeletal disorders, abdominal pain such as menstrual cramps, knee and hip problems, headaches, neck, back, shoulder and spinal pain, and intestinal disorders, to name a few. Most of his clients come to him, notes Markovitz, through the default of traditional medicine. "When they've tried everything else, they come here." And it should be the other way around, he explains.

A typical holistic methodology, chiropractic is in the business of keeping people well. Most patients have been conditioned to see a doctor only when they become ill. "We have been led to believe that traditional western medicine should be our *first* approach, so we have been going for the most radical treatment first!" Markovitz goes on to explain that chiropractic is a gentle, conservative therapy which, again, addresses the root cause rather than the symptom.

"We take better care of our cars than we do our bodies," exclaims Harvey. "We don't drive around in a car that has run out of oil and then expect our mechanic to fix it. But that's exactly what we do with our bodies." He carries the analogy further. "If we found that our tires were out of alignment, we would get them aligned and so prolong the life of the tires. By realigning the spine when it is out of order, we can prolong our lives."

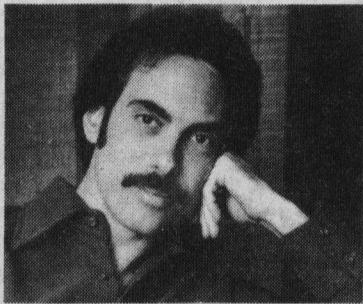
And nutrition plays a big role, according to Markovitz. "You wouldn't put diesel fuel into a car that runs on gasoline! Foods are the building blocks of health."

Somewhat of an iconoclast when it comes to allopathic medicine, Harvey freely dispenses his opinions on the treatment of mere symptoms. "Getting rid of a pain by merely taking a drug is a great disservice," he explains, pointing out that pain is a symptom of a deeper problem and carries vital information to the patient and the health professional. Allopathic medicine has traditionally handed out drugs to eliminate symptoms, notes Harvey. Meanwhile the problem behind the symptom grows worse and worse, until the body finally degenerates to a state of advanced disease. Adding that there is a *reason* the patient is experiencing pain, Markovitz gives a concrete example.

Say you were suffering from chronic back pain due to an improper alignment of the spine. A traditional doctor prescribes a muscle relaxant year after year, which simply eliminates the pain of muscle spasms caused by the spinal problem. But the initial alignment issue is not even addressed. Eventually, radical surgery

is recommended. "Drug it and then cut it out," according to Harvey, has been the philosophy of allopathic medicine.

If you don't want to use drugs, and if you want to keep the parts you've got (spare ones are hard to get), then Markovitz recommends alternative health care. "People who have gotten no help from traditional medicine and who have been cured through chiropractic, are our best advertisers," notes Harvey, who shakes his head hopelessly at the prospect of re-educating our society into thinking about maintenance rather than radical treatment. Fortunately, most medical insurance policies cover chiropractic treatments, so you might as well go in for that tune-up.



Steven Gold — Rebirther

Rebirthing, according to Steven Gold, is a form of holistic psychotherapy. Steven, a licensed Marriage and Family Counselor and a rebirther, explains that the process is essentially a deep breathing technique employed for the purpose of physical and emotional catharsis. A phenomenon peculiar to the therapy is that patients who engage in the series of extended breathing exercises usually re-experience aspects of their own birth trauma, hence the name "rebirthing."

After the release brought about by deep breathing, the patient typically experiences feelings of euphoria, ecstasy and general well-being. This is immediately followed up with a series of positive affirmations for re-programming what Gold calls "negative personal laws."

Most of us, according to Gold, base our attitudes toward life on our initial experiences. If our first moments were painful or frightening, we tend immediately to form attitudes and life patterns accordingly. Citing traditional hospital birth practices as traumatic (lifting the baby up by its feet for a firm whap in a cold, bright room), Gold notes that most of us found our first moments on earth less than comforting. Subsequent negative experiences further reinforce "negative personal laws" such as "I am alone," "life isn't safe," "I can trust people."

The deep breathing exercises allow a person to discover his or her own negative personal laws by prompting them to surface in a free, unforced manner. Based on the rebirthing premise that thought is creative energy, a series of

positive affirmations conclude and follow a rebirthing session for the purpose of creating new patterns in place of the old, negative ones.

According to Gold, most of us have learned to lock our breath during stressful experiences. Repeated rebirthing eventually trains one for deep breathing during times of stress to "keep the energy going." And although one rebirthing session is a "complete experience" in itself (lasting two to three hours), most patients tend to sign up for it again and again. It's great, notes Gold, for people with asthma, emphysema, and circulation problems, for athletes and singers.

At \$50-\$75 per session, rebirthing seems expensive, particularly since it frequently is not covered by medical insurance. But then, it is rumored that some Santa Cruzans spend that much for an evening's entertainment, which may or may not be as euphoric, but certainly is not as long lasting as getting "reborn."

Gold teaches classical rebirthing at Twin Lakes College and explains that one does not need a state license to practice the craft, but does need a considerable amount of training. In the class, you can learn rebirthing for personal use or become a rebirther yourself.

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRAUB



Dr. Robert Tager — Specialist in Stress Management and Deep Relaxation

Driving 100 miles a day on crowded freeways, inhaling smog while jogging and hearing the constant roar of the city during deep relaxation, Bob Tager began to see the discrepancy between his LA lifestyle and what he was teaching others. So last year he gave up a well-established medical practice and moved his family to Santa Cruz, where he now spends his time teaching stress management seminars and classes. But before he moved here, Dr. Tager underwent a great deal of self-re-education.

Trained in psychology and behavioral neurology, Tager had enjoyed a thriving private medical practice. But eventually he became disenchanted with traditional medicine, which placed heavier emphasis on diagnosis than on prevention and treatment. He acquired an interest in rehabilita-

tive medicine and was named medical director of a large rehabilitation hospital in southern California. He began to study disease prevention, nutrition and stress management. He began jogging and built himself up to six miles a day, while losing a total of 50 pounds. He cut down on red meats and his intake of salt; he cut out sugar and refined carbohydrates. He began to relax. Further trained in massage, acupuncture, hypnosis and a variety of other deep relaxation techniques, he is now an excellent example of a doctor who "practices what he preaches."

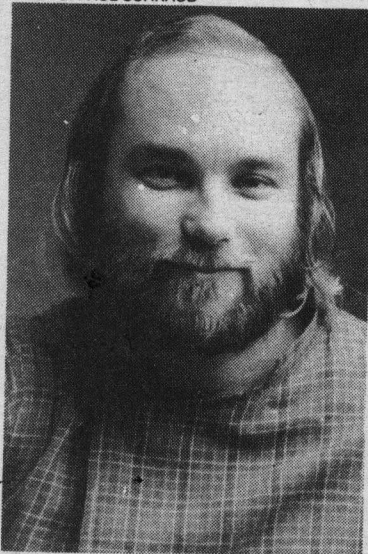
Tager is on the faculty at Cabrillo College, and Twin Lakes College of the Healing Arts, and retains his position as Adjunct Associate Professor at USC. His seminars emphasize stress in the work place, are usually on a contract basis and, typically, are custom-tailored. Before a session begins, you can be sure that Dr. Tager has done his homework, which may involve a prior meeting with several individuals from the group to assess the type of stress they experience and to determine specific stress management techniques appropriate for that particular work environment.

Having attended one of Tager's workshops, I can attest to the fact that his sessions are at once highly informative and most enjoyable—chock-full of technical information that has been partially digested for lay consumption. Tager explains why our bodies react the way they do to 20th century stress and what can be done to manage its corrosion of our systems.

Explaining that stress is an integral part of modern life and that one must learn to manage it (rather than letting stress manage you), Tager presents a practical approach to stress management while maintaining one's existence in present-day reality. On the "lunatic fringe" he is not. And much to the delight of his audiences, Tager maintains that consumption of wine, in reasonable quantities, can be a safe enhancement to one's health and well-being. "Moderation" seems to be the key for Tager—except for consumption of blatant stress-causing substances such as refined sugar.

Tager's favorite device for stress reduction he calls simply "deep relaxation." If you want to find out all about it, you can attend one of his classes at Twin Lakes or set up a group seminar.

Why are there so many alternatives for health care within the healing professions? "Because people are different," he explains. For example, in sports you have a wide variety of activities available; some prefer jogging, some handball, some bicycling. In stress reduction, some prefer yoga, some hypnosis, others biofeedback. Apparently whatever you are attracted to may be what is most effective for you.



**Ken Smith —
Acupuncturist and
Chinese Herbalist**

Entering the offices of Ken Smith, acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist, I was greeted by the soft-spoken gentleman himself, who offered me a steaming cup of delicious Chinese tea and showed me to a room as comfortable as home. A great deal of care has been taken to shape this warm, friendly environment, with its hard wood floors, white fluffy curtains and stunning Tibetan rugs and hangings draping the rooms in deep reds and blues.

Ken had prepared for me a list of over 75 maladies treatable by acupuncture, among which were listed asthma, arthritis, chronic lower back pain, hemorrhoids, injuries to ankles and knees, sexual dysfunctions, dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps), morning sickness, chronic sinusitis, colds, hepatitis and even tuberculosis.

Smith's credentials are impressive. He studied acupuncture at the College of Traditional Chinese

Medicine at Oxford, at the North American College of Chinese Herbalism, and further studied in Tibet under Dr. Yeshe Dhonden (personal physician to The Dalai Lama). For the past seven years, he has also been under the tutelage of Dr. Ken Pang and Dr. Lam Kong, both Chinese acupuncturists and herbalists in San Francisco. He currently serves on the Examination Commission for the California State Acupuncture Qualification Test. Slowly, he began to unravel the mysteries of his work.

An ancient art practiced for centuries by the Chinese, acupuncture works on the principle that the body/mind/spirit's energy (called "Chi") flows through the body in channels called meridians. Invisible to the naked eye, or even under a microscope, the meridians have been recently photographed with kirlian photography. How did the Chinese discover them? According to Ken, they were much more in tune with their body/mind/spirits than are we, who tend to look "outward" at the world. Anyway, he explained, certain "gates" or points exist along the meridians at which, by the insertion of a needle, the proper flow of energy can be re-established.

An acupuncturist must first produce a correct diagnosis of imbalances in the energy patterns, which is partially accomplished through the reading of pulses along the meridians. The diagnosis is vital in helping the acupuncturist determine the appropriate points for the insertion of the needles.

But it is really much more complicated than that, says Ken, as he goes on to explain that each of the body's main organs (e.g. kidneys, liver, heart, lungs) is integrally connected to various meridians and controls certain bodily functions. For example, the

reproductive function is controlled by the kidneys, so that in order to treat a reproductive disorder you would be treating the kidneys as well.

Ken combines his acupuncture treatments with Chinese herbs, so that if you visit him you will doubtless be requested to swallow some of the foul-tasting teas in which he specializes. Although they may not appeal to your western palate, Chinese herbs, Ken affirms, are frequently even more powerful and effective healing agents than are the stainless steel, silver-handled needles. In fact, according to Smith, many people who shouldn't be are taking Chinese herbs (i.e., ginseng) on their own. The Chinese, who have had centuries to learn to grow, dry and cure their herbs, have honed herbal skills to a fine art and the powerful substances should not be used indiscriminately.

Smith's own combinations are designed for the patient on the particular day of the visit. At next week's visit, he may prescribe something entirely different. He points out that he is treating patients, not illnesses, so that ten people with exactly the same symptoms may get ten completely different treatments.

If you become one of Ken Smith's clients, you can expect your 30-to 45-minute treatment to begin promptly (he doesn't overbook) in a warm room with soft, soothing music. And, according to Ken, even folks with a phobia of needles find the treatments generally painless. The bill is also quite painless, as most insurance policies cover his acupuncture treatments.

As a true holistic discipline, acupuncture's goal is maintenance of health and prevention of disease. Ken explained that in ancient China doctors were paid only if

their patients stayed well. Hmmm, now there's an idea.

How does one choose a holistic practitioner? Most people base their decision on the referral of a friend or another professional; and yet what works for one may not work for another. Most practitioners I interviewed suggested that one should "ask around."

Still, in these days of consumer "rip-off," most people choose cautiously. Dr. Tager, who has lived on both sides of the medical fence, warns "Beware of people who claim to be 'healers.' All practitioners (whether allopathic or holistic) are at best 'facilitators.' Healing is within the individual."

Tager also cautions against any practitioner who solicits a contract for continued treatment, and insists that anyone who categorically excludes allopathic medicine is not being holistic (WHOLISM recognizes the WHOLE field, you see). And just because someone is doing something different, doesn't mean that person is holistic, either, warns Tager.

As in all fields—business, religion, government—there are those whose occasional comments cause one to question a practitioner's validity, integrity, if not their common sense, such as the following advertisement I read with arched brow:

"Break free from the karma of destitution and poverty into the joy of financial success. Rebirthing sessions: \$50 per hour."

I wasn't sure how someone truly destitute could afford to break free in this fashion.

People could find themselves quite bereft financially were they to take advantage of ALL the self-help opportunities available in Santa Cruz—the Self Improvement Capi-

tal of the World. It is surprising that a community this size can support the industry. But support it it does, to the tune of at least a few who are beginning to enjoy the karma of moderate financial success.

Several things are sorely lacking in the holistic industry. First, a glossary of terms. Unless you have had more than a cursory involvement in the field, you may have difficulty hacking your way through the jargon jungle. Neuro-Linguistic Reprogramming? Rolwing? Macrobiotics? Feldenkrais? Bio-energetics? Ortho-Bionomy? If you are a hip but healthy Santa Cruzan, you may be embarrassed to admit that you're not really sure what the terms mean. Don't be afraid to ask. Most practitioners are eager to educate the public about their particular field of expertise.

The local holistic community could also benefit greatly from a directory—a listing of the various services offered (perhaps including the above glossary), names, addresses, phone numbers and fee structures. Anyone interested in compiling such a list? The holistic community would be most grateful.

Finally, there exists a dearth of holistic MDs who are engaged in basic family practice. Most Santa Cruz medical doctors with a holistic bent are practicing very specialized medicine; so if your seven-year-old gets strep-throat you may still be destined for the world of prescription drugs, muzak-massaged waiting rooms full of other coughing children, and white-shoed personnel wearing little plastic name tags. Hopefully this will change soon. Out of the dozens of medical doctors in Santa Cruz, surely more and more will begin to embrace the values of humanistic practice, of active disease prevention, of nutrition, and of natural health care. □