

Steve, do you want to come up?

Steve Stockdale: Hi, my name is Steve Stockdale, from Fort Worth, Texas.

I didn't meet Charlotte until 1994. I'm a relative late-comer to things; but I met her through general semantics at a seminar workshop.

I was privileged this last fall to actually work for Charlotte on behalf of the Institute, with the Institute's archives over in New Jersey. And so I spent about ten weeks here, and once a week I would come into the city to Charlotte's apartment, to more or less get instruction for what to do and how to do with respect to the archives. And I had some questions about things.

One of the items that I found about Korzybski in some correspondence is he used to use this phrase in corresponding with people, and referred to the "semantic family". And I never saw him write anything for publication about that, because I can only imagine the types of inferences that people might make.

But I asked Charlotte about this. And she kind of smiled and reflected on it, and said,

“Yes, I remember he liked the feel of the phrase. He liked the feel of people who come to the work, and feel *of* the semantic family.”

And that came to mind, because what I wanted to do was to talk about the sense of Charlotte from my perspective, even though there was an age difference; that is, what I would look at is like the big sister of the semantic family.

Irving Lee gave a talk in 1951 at a conference in general semantics, and he entitled it the *semantic man*. And it was his idea to list about thirteen or fourteen attributes, if they subscribed to and followed general semantics, they would exhibit these characteristics.

It was too many to summarize, but of course the point would be that Charlotte would have embodied each of those.

But I did want to close with the way that Irving Lee closed his talk. And that was from quoting from a book by Constantine Stanislavski, who would be considered as the forefather of the school of acting which would be referred to as method acting. But he has this book called building a character. And at the end of the book, one of his students questions the master teacher, and the student says, “Oh, but how hard it all is, how are we ever going to achieve that? How can we ever take it all in?”

And as I read the response of the teacher, I would like for you to think about these words in the context of general semantics, or sensory awareness, or whatever you would put in the very broadest sense of being human behavior or acting.

The teacher responds with these words: Those are the doubting reactions of impetuous youth. Today, you learn something. Tomorrow you think you can already be letter perfect in technique, but the system is not a hand-me-down suit that you can put on and walk off in—or a cookbook where all you have to do is find the page, and there’s your recipe. No, the

system is a whole way of life. You have to grow into it, and educate yourself in it, for years. You cannot cram it into yourselves, you can only hope to assimilate it, take it into your blood and flesh until it becomes second nature and so organic as part of your being that you are transformed by it for all time.

It is a system that must be studied in parts, and then merged into a whole, so that it can be understood in all its fundamentals. When you can spread it all out before you like a fan, you will have attained a true grasp of it. You cannot hope to do this all at once.

I hope you would agree, or I hope Charlotte would agree, that whatever she learned, she did not learn all at once. And I hope that you would agree that she did indeed obtain a true grasp of these systems that she affectionately referred to as "the work". And in spreading out her fan in such a way as to allow all of us to take a peek, she's left a legacy that ought to temper our own impetuosity, and help us assimilate for ourselves the work.