Memoirs (2018) by Harold Dull

The version that follows is intended for those that already know Watsu. If you don't, go to www.watsu.com and look at the descriptions and videos posted there before your read this memoir.
All that follows are my mind's renewal or reconstruction of my memories. Rather than going back (or rather coming up) period by period. I recreate the Memories up through four lines or paths:

Family
Poet
Body
Watsu.

We share here the 4th part, about Watsu and WABA.

IV Watsu

I search through the woods for hot springs. I happen upon a woman sitting in a pool. I ask her if she would like a massage. I am forty years old. I have never had a massage, let alone given one. She says yes. She shows me how to get under her shoulder blade. We become friends. She teaches me massage. I set up a padded board in the hot tub pool I had built in my backyard to massage people on. I call it Wassage.

My friend practices on me the Zen Shiatsu she had just studied. I love it. I take classes with Reuho Yamada. I go to hot springs and practice on whoever is there. One morning at a hot springs I wake up before dawn and go down to the pool. A woman is in it. I give her a Shiatsu while she sits in the water. When I finish she turns her head from side to side and says she hasn't been able to move like that since she had been in an accident. She says she felt healing in my hands. I thank her. My joy at hearing that stays with me as I stride up the side of a mountain, in awe that something like this could happen through me. At the top the circle of trees are filled with light. God is here. I drop to my knees. He bends down and lifts me. Holding my arm, He walks at my side along the ridge. He guides me down a stream. The streambed below is tangled in brush. There is an easier path along the gully's side. "Which way do I go?" "Whichever way you go I am with you." -words that never leave me. I sit out on the bank over the pool - such brightness- the pool, the children splashing in the water, the trees, the birds singing in the branches, are all sitting in God's hand. We are all sitting in God's hand. I look down at my own, open to hold others.

I continue studying Zen Shiatsu with Waturu Ohashi in New York, and offer Zen Shiatsu classes in my home. I study with its creator, Shizuto Masanaga, in Japan and offer classes at Harbin Hot Springs.

A woman floats me in the warm pool one night and a body wave takes me up into a world of light. I want to take others to that place. I apply the stretches of Zen Shiatsu while floating people. My students watch and want to be shown how to do what I just did, but as in Zen Shiatsu, stretches open the flow of energy. I follow wherever that energy takes us around the pool. I can't repeat it. When I lean someone against the wall, as I lift my hand off their crown chakra, we spiral heavenwards, two intertwining dragons.

I slow down, stay in one place, and drop into the emptiness at the bottom of the breath. The getting lighter of the one in my arms draws me up out of that emptiness. This Waterbreath Dance opens every Watsu. I am amazed at how much oneness I have with whoever I float at my heart, even those I would never have imagined being one with. I am no longer amazed. The heart holds, wraps around whomever

we float. It is our oneness with everything. Once felt, there is no way we can violate the trust with which someone lies back in our arms.

Zen Shiatsu's principal of being, not doing, finds a home in the water. The more we hold somebody's whole body, the more the stretches and moves come out of the depths of the breath that we share. With the help of many, those stretches and moves evolve into a form that can be learned and adapted to anybody.

I, and some of our students, start introducing Watsu into facilities around the country. I am surprised how quickly it is accepted as something their clientele need.

My assistant, Minakshi, and I drive to the first facility that invites us to teach their staff. I wonder if I should leave Watsu's more intimate moves out. I don't. They invite us back. I tell them I was considering leaving those moves out. The staff are glad I didn't. Those are what their special needs clientele most need.

I am invited to Israel to teach the staff at their largest facility. To this day hundreds receive Watsu there every week.

I am invited to Phoenix to teach the staff at their largest facility. I do and receive reports at how much it is helping their clients until I am told the corporation is shutting down the pool. A building with doctor's offices will generate more income.

I am invited by Cameron West to teach at an Easter Seals pool. An Occupational Therapist, she becomes a Watsu Instructor and to this day volunteers to help us on the new WABA board.

Michele Chelenza becomes a Watsu instructor and develops a Watsu Instructor Training Program. She also donates a lot of time and money in getting Watsu out to spas.

Another early arrival on the path to become a Watsu Instructor from the Therapy community is Peggy Schoedinger who still introduces Watsu around the world. As the head of a committee, she blocks the Physical Therapists attempt to have a law passed that only Physical Therapists can work in the water. She continues to add to the list of conditions Watsu is found to alleviate.

Another therapist to become a Watsu Instructor, Mary Seamster, invites me to teach at her center in Northern Washington which, unfortunately, has since been closed by the authorities when they saw a glowing report about classes there in a newspaper. She has since built a beautiful center in southern Washington where classes and Instructor conferences are held. She too, continues to volunteer her service on the WABA board.

The latest Watsu instructor to have her center shut down is Anat Juran who has been working for years to establish a Watsu School in Australia and has been taken to court by a neighbor.

The same year I develop Watsu, I bring its close unconditional whole body holding back onto land in Tantsu. Students at Harbin from Europe ask me to come and teach Tantsu in Geneva, Paris and Munich. My organizer in Paris is the head of the French Shiatsu Association. He brings me back to Paris each year. In Geneva I do the first Watsu in Europe in Lavey les bains. In Germany, Helen Schulz and others find pools where I can teach Watsu. They begin learning and training to teach it.

A student in a Watsu class in Germany offers to give me the experience of a wonderful form of Aquatic Bodywork that he just learned, Waterdance. He has me put on noseclips and takes me under. He doesn't bring me up at the right time to breathe and my head hits the bottom. I am afraid that if this is someone's first experience of Aquatic Bodywork they would never want a Watsu.

Next year Aman Shroeter and Arjana come to my Watsu class in Germany. They had been developing Waterdance. Arjana gives me a Waterdance session and, not hitting my head on the bottom, brings me up when I need to breathe, I enjoy it. Arjana goes on to study Watsu with me and Minakshi at Harbin. She becomes a Watsu instructor.

Minakshi proposes we invite Arjana to teach Waterdance at Harbin. We do. I, and several Watsu instructors at Harbin, enjoy sharing that first class. It is a completely different experience than Watsu. My body wave goes into multiple dimensions when Arjana or Minakshi Waterdance me. When I am brought up I want to go right back under. Not everyone is ready to face the challenge of being taken underwater. I encourage its being added to our program after someone has had or studied Watsu without having to face the challenge of surrendering their breathing.

Someone moves his massage school from Santa Cruz to Harbin and then, sells it to a resident who has been assisting him. The new owner asks if I would like to go into partnership and offer Zen Shiatsu at the school. I do. He wants to move to Thailand and sells his half to me. I now own the School of Shiatsu and Massage. I never intended to own a school, but Pavana is here to help.

We establish a Watsu practitioner program the same length as the school's Massage practitioner program, 100 hours. It is the last year any vocational school can establish a program without first proving there are full time jobs waiting out there in the field. Even though the program got under the wire, to continue a program a school still has to prove all its programs lead to full time employment in the field for most of its graduates. The only exception is a program at a non-profit. We develop an educational non-profit, WABA, the worldwide Aquatic Bodywork Association, and sell the school to it. I am the right person in the right place at the right time. A year later we could not have a Watsu program at the school.

In Europe we had talked about having a non-profit to oversee the development of Watsu, Tantsu and Waterdance. Now that we have a non-profit to own the school it is logical to extend its use to promote and oversee Aquatic Bodywork. It is not a member association but has a board of directors.

I have already started a registry to store the records of our students around the world. Someone turns up in our classes at Harbin who sets up databases on the internet for banks. He offers to set up one for WABA in exchange for classes. I convert all the records in the school's database to one that works on the internet. The offer is withdrawn. I learn HTML and the mark up language needed to present and share data on the internet. I work on the Registry that stores the transcripts and authorizations ever since. It holds the water family together. Instructors have to add their classes to the Registry to get students. Practitioners need to be on the Registry to list themselves to the public.

Harbin offers to build the school its own center with pools. We invest our savings in it. Eugene Tsui designs a complex of five geodesic spheres. The actual cost of it exceeds the architect's estimate by many times, a cost on which our monthly rent is based, an amount that is difficult to generate, particularly since we open the same month as the 9/11 takedown of the twin towers and many prospective students, afraid to fly, decide not to attend.

Watsu continues to grow at a faster rate in Europe and elsewhere than in the U.S., primarily because there are more pools and a culture that values social services. I teach Watsu in almost every country in Europe as well as Israel, Turkey, India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Canada, Mexico and Costa Rica.

I am invited to present Watsu at a conference of birth preparers in Monaca. There, Robert Fraioli, a doctor who heads Italy's Natural childbirth association invites me to teach Watsu to midwives and childbirth preparers in Northern Italy. They are amused by my Italian which is influenced by my year going through Dante's Comedia line by line, canto by canto. I teach in Italy every year. There are now more than 20 Watsu instructors in Italy and a wealth of pools and a population that welcomes holding and being held.

We have a Watsu Instructor Conference in Europe every year. I fight to avoid territoriality, to ensure students can continue our worldwide Watsu program with authorized instructors anywhere. I invite my first organizer in Geneva to the conference in Italy. I am shocked when Arjana announces that she owns Watsu in Switzerland. When Arjana and Helen Schultz started their IAKA schools in Switzerland and Germany, they obtained the Watsu trademark in each country and signed agreements that they were obtaining it as my representatives and that I had oversight as to how it was applied. I assumed that they were for German speaking areas. Fortunately, Arjana has not blocked other WABA instructors from teaching Watsu in the French and Italian parts of Switzerland.

Over the thirty years many issues come up.

Linda De lehman, a Watsu instructor from America who has taught many classes with me, moves to Europe and begins teaching there. The Germans object, claiming that her teaching there should be approved by the European instructors.

One year, the Instructor Conference is held in Austria. The German, Swiss and Austrian instructors announce that they will no longer honor the agreement they had made to follow the worldwide Watsu program and add their students to the Registry. They have formed their own program in IAKA. I am told they want their students to experience both Watsu and Waterdance in their first class, so that they can process whatever the work brings up before attending their training. I feel Watsu can take most people to a level of accepting whatever had happened without having to relive it.

Helen Schultz tells me I can look at the instructors at the conference and retire with the satisfaction every teacher seeks, knowing that their students turn out better than themselves. I don't retire.

The German IAKA invites the other instructors to join them in forming a European school. I had resisted the Germans attempts to have more control in previous conferences. Now, to my relief, the other European instructors choose to stay in WABA instead of joining them. The next year the Italian instructors, who work mostly in teams, ask me if they can develop classes that complement the program that all instructors follow. I agree to give it a try and set up an Italian Training Institute on the Registry to which they can add and list their supplemental classes. It works so well that now more than 30 Training Institutes are on the Registry and complement our worldwide core program with classes developed for their populations.

Issues continue to arise.

Jun Konno asks me to come to Japan to teach Watsu. My schedule is full but one of our Watsu instructors, Bascia Szpak, is in the area. I refer her. Jun wants further classes with me and brings his students to classes at Harbin and Hawaii. He becomes a Watsu instructor and opens a Training Institute in Japan where he organizes several classes for me to teach. Jun had been the head coach of the Japanese swim team when Japan joined the boycott of the Olympics in Russia. He quit and attended conferences on Aquatic Exercise which he introduced into Japan. He saw Watsu at one of the conferences. When he learned Basic Watsu he told me that it would be honored and taught for centuries in Japan without change like the tea ceremony. Then I developed a new Basic Watsu. The Watsu students at his Institute meet once a year to review both the old and the new Basic Watsu. Having taught countless Watsu 1 and 2 students in Japan, I keep asking Jun to organize a Watsu 3 that completes our core program. Jun keeps telling me that they are not ready for its Free Flow. In the meantime another Japanese, Toru Ogasawaru, has completed his Watsu instructor training in America and attends Jun's review week. While there he demonstrates some Watsu 3 moves and Free Flow.

I get an email from Jun telling me to watch out for him, that he is not real Japanese, that he is a bad person. It doesn't fit well with my own experience of Toru in my classes. His training of practitioners in spas, would open a new world for Watsu in Japan. Jun's students are mostly Aquatic Exercisers. The next time I teach in Japan I arrange a meeting of the three of us. To no avail. My ten year contract with Jun happens to be ending. Toru organizes my Watsu 3 in Japan and opens his own Training Institute in Okinawa.

When Jun is training to be an instructor, he assists me in my favorite pool in the world, one that a hot spring fills alongside the Ocean in Hawaii, or used to fill. This year an eruption of the volcano fills it with lava. We are doing our Watsuchanics, going through the moves without a person in our arms like Tai chi. I suggest to Jun that he develop a form of Aquatic Exercise that opens with these moves and concludes with participants floating each other in their arms. He sees its potential for Japan's aging population and develops, what he calls Ai Chi.

About 10 years after Jun left the Registry as a Watsu Instructor, he happens to be offering an AI chi instructor course at a Watsu Center in France where I am finishing a Watsu 3. We are very happy to meet again and welcome each other's successes.

Another issue develops in Brazil where I teach several times and it is hard to get students to complete their Watsu courses before they start teaching it themselves. A problem there, and elsewhere, still being worked on.

One momentous occasion is the celebration of Watsu's 25th year and my 70th. The Watsu instructors in Europe rent a whole hot spring hotel in Italy for the weekend. I have been teaching in Australia and New Zealand on a round the World trip. Pavana, Calias and Watsuers from all over join me in Italy. I receive word from Harbin while I am in Australia that we can no longer have the Watsu Center. I join the beautiful celebration without telling anyone until my parting words. Everyone is stunned. Cristina Levi offers a sizeable donation to help. I don't accept, knowing it would not match the amount Harbin plans to make from the center. Cristina has bought an agroturism with large stone buildings on a piece of property almost as big as Harbin's and is building a beautiful Watsu pool and a Tantsu space overlooking the hills of southern Tuscany. She offers to help us move to Italy but I would lose my medicare and still have too many things to do, but I gladly come there to teach every year and meet our Water family.

The loss of the Watsu Center was a blow, but we were able to do much for Watsu in the five years we had our own center, enough time to fully test and, with the help of many others, establish our programs, including those that train instructors from all over the world. The school changes hands and ends up belonging to Harbin Hot Springs. I continue teaching there and all water classes there continue to be added to the Registry.

An issue develops around the non-profit WABA that had purchased the school from us. I had operated the Registry through it and we had a Board of Directors made up mostly of Watsu Instructors who oversee our programs. A senior instructor was elected by the board to be its president. He tried to take over control of the Registry not realizing an earlier board had voted to acknowledge my ownership of the Registry for whatever WABA still owed me for the purchase of the school. No longer having a school to justify its non-profit status, WABA was dissolved.

The instructor who tried to take control of the Registry, forms his own International School of Watsu and invites Watsu Instructors to teach in it. Except for a couple who were trained in an instructor training he had set up, almost none join him.

Two instructors, Tomasz Zagorski and Gianni de Stefani, come up with the idea of forming a new WABA that is a member association that includes practitioners and instructors of the many forms of Aquatic Bodywork such as Waterdance and Healing Dance that have long been welcomed onto the Registry. The new WABA is set up in Switzerland. We work out how it could closely work with the Registry which continues to store the transcripts and authorizations of the members and collects the dues that go to the new non-profit. Gianni de Stefani, a Swiss Italian who is active on Watsu Italia, helps us oversee the Watsu trademarks that the Italians originally took out for us in the Madrid convention. There are so many like Italo Bertolasi and Keli Procopio that have continued to help us establish Watsu and Tantsu in Italy and elsewhere. Thomas Zagorski, who heads the Polish Institute and brings Watsu into the programs of Olympic Athletes, helps set up programs and institutes in Russia and Eastern Europe.

The new WABA works so well that the IAKA instructors join. I am invited to Germany to celebrate the 20th anniversary of IAKA. I show them our latest developments. They have a powerful practitioner association and have done much to get Watsu accepted in their countries. But now that they are surrounded by WABA training institutes, they agree that when they teach outside the Germsn speaking countries, they will teach the WABA forms and add their students to the Registry.

In order for students to be able to continue their Watsu studies with more than a hundred instructors around the world, there has to be a standard form and levels on which it is taught. The 50 hour Watsu 1 introduces the transitions into Watsu's major positions. Watsu 2 explores what can be done and adapted in those positions. Watsu 3 introduces advanced moves and Free Flow. The first 16 hours of Watsu 1 can be taught as a Basic Watsu. Working together with countless instructors in America and abroad has helped develop and test each part of this core program. Training Institutes allows it to be supplemented with courses appropriate for the population served.

In the first years Basic Watsu was intended to be an introduction to Watsu. Students followed what the instructor showed with someone in their arms,

stretches and moves from different parts of the Watsu 1 form just to experience them. It was not intended to be learned as a sequence. But many instructors went on to teach it that way, creating stress in students being forced to learn the moves in one sequence and again in another when they attend the rest of Watsu1. Also, following along, watching what the teacher does with someone in their arms, does not help the student be with the one in their arms.

I develop a new Basic Watsu that could be learned in a weekend without ever having to follow along and brings everyone to a level of Watsu connection from the beginning. It gives participants a form they can practice with family and freinds. Since it is the opening moves of most Watsus, it does not have to be re-arranged in Watsu 1. I develop this new Basic testing every move of it with many of our instructors. When I feel it is as good as it can get, I present it at instructor conferences in Europe and America and most instructors now use it, except the one who tried to take over the Registry. He had just developed his own material and DVDs based on the old form.

Now that we have a Basic form that really brings people into the soul of Watsu, with the help of many, we've made necessary adjustments to the core form that grows out of it, and I promise 100 instructors to not make any further changes, I turn my attention to something I've been wanting to do since Watsu first came into being.

I saw in our first drop in classes how much participants got from floating each other. I also saw how much Watsu was needed in clinics and spas. Fulfilling that need on what I call the vertical dimension demanded our attention. Now that the program to fulfill that need is set up, I turn my attention to the horizontal dimension. I have already developed a form of Tantsu that anybody can share in rounds of three called Tantsuyoga. I explore how the ease of learning and the power of three learned in developing those rounds can be applied to sharing the simpler of the new Basic Watsu moves in Rounds. I have also been working on a Tandem Watsu in which two Watsu a third between them. I discover that in our new Watsu Round the opening moves of the new Basic Watsu combine beautifully with the powerful closing moves of Tandem Watsu.

About this time a huge fire in Northern California takes out Harbin Hot Springs and the access to our house. We are moved to Berkeley and my daughter and I search pools where we can continue developing the Watsu Round. We find that six people can share it in a 3-4 hour class in a pool with a 12 foot diameter and each have a profound experience floating each other. I show the Watsu Round to instructors at our conferences in America and Europe and we are encouraging practitioners to help bring as many people as possible to its joy of unconditional holding. I include it in my new book:

Watsu Basic and Explorer Path on Land and in Water

This year I was scheduled to take my fortieth trip to Europe, but I had a complete laryngectomy to remove a tumor and will not be able to enter a pool again. I am grateful to have had enough time to develop what has been coming through me, and to have had so many help realize its potential and continue to support me with love, and to have had the opportunity to visit again and again in museums and churches the paintings in which I recognize the wholeness that draws me to whoever I have in my arms, the creative. I continue to work on the Registry and the Waba Board. Watsu continues.

I sent the above memoir to my friend, Minakshi, and today received the following from her:

> Thank you for including me. There were so many problems with waba and I recall this to be true. However, I missed your optimism. Usually you would have presented a positive or humorous point of view. At the end you did tie it together. I missed something earlier like: "although the problems rose to the top I was buoyed by the joy of teaching." Then share some memories of special classes. The one at Peter's facility still stands out in my memory. What inspired me especially that time was how clear the importance of being happy while learning was. It wasn't so much about learning the material as finding joy. You don't teach that specifically, you role model it. Of course so many classes/years (of joy) at Harbin. You must have special memories of classes in different countries. At Ettawa you shared with me once about special friends you have made over the years. If it doesn't seem appropriate I guess you don't need to name names. I remember the husband of the doctor in Rome who was your age and a composer, if I remember correctly. The fringe benefits of Watsu. The special places you got to visit on your travels. I remember the artist's home that we saw while we were in Italy. Perhaps there were too many galleries to be specific but at least another mention. You brought me to tears at the museum in New York City when you expressed your joy over a painting of de Koonig. You didn't want to do it for some reason but your compassion for my ignorance won out, I think. Perhaps you could find motivation in your memories to express yourself about art in a way that even I could understand. You mentioned elsewhere your experience with sharing with your soul mate and perhaps another reference to art in the waba section would not be too much. I remember the museum in Boston when the time was up and you were in the room with Degas' dancers. You were whirling with joy like a kid in a candy store as you said "good-bye" to your friends, from my point of view. How well you were always taken care of during your travels! Oh how I enjoyed being a part of it all!

My mother always said I had been a happy baby and Jack Spicer, in his farewell to me, said he was amazed at how I was able to remain so positive.

For me, the Heart Wrap that begins a Watsu is love and when that love moves us it is joy, whether it takes us through the moves of the form or Free Flow. The more our

body as a whole is engaged, the more we engage someone's whole body, the more the creative is brought into play. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, the greater our joy.

My experience with projective verse in which the line is an engagement of the breath and anything can lead into anything else prepared me for Free Flow. I have taught 562 Watsu classes. 132 of these were Watsu 3 intensives. Each student in my Watsu 3 receives a free Flow from me. Each has been Watsued before. I feel honored to be invited into the middle of their life long Watsu session. Body waves often draw us together up into the light.

The class at Peter's is one of the first Watsu 4 intensives. Focusing on the Body Wave and exploring freely in threes and other combinations brings the whole group into new levels of joy..

My friend in Rome, Susan Levenstein, is a Doctor from New York (and a Watsuer) who regularly invites me to stay in their flat. Her husband, Alvin Curren, is the only friend I have my own age who is as much engaged in their creative work as I am. He is a composer and I have enjoyed many of his events, one in which wolves were projected on the walls of the Tiber while we walked through an orchestra amid the cries of wolves. Thanks to them, Rome has become my favorite city.

On my first trip to Europe I fell in love with Florence and its art. On each of the forty plus additional visits to Europe I have come to appreciate more and more places and artists. Besides having so many people surrendering in my arms I feel very fortunate to be able to see and return to so many masterpieces. Painting is unique among the arts. Its wholeness is right there in front of our eyes. As in a Watsu, when I feel that source of the Creative, the joy is a body wave (imperceptible to others except those close to me).

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