

In memory of Monte



Monte and I outside his home in Ardsley. Spring 2004.

The first time I met Montague Ullman, Monte, was in the Spring of 2002, at a dream group weekend in Stockholm, Sweden. Participants at a dream group in Umeå had encouraged me to travel to Stockholm to experience his radiance for myself: Monte was 86 and was not expected to be in Sweden again. I made the trip – one that would turn out to mean a great deal to me.

I was instantly enamoured of this charismatic, open and generous man. He gave a long presentation on dreams and evil, a signed manuscript of which I still have today. His words went to my heart, opened it and made me want to share his wisdom about how our dream work can help us realize that we can change the world. I decided to make a documentary film, wherein he would present the stages of his method and talk about how dreamwork can help us be honest with ourselves, and dare to see ourselves how we are and not how we wish we were.

His speech that sunny afternoon examined the situation in a world where everyone shivered at the events unfolding after September 11th. Would the US use the event as justification for invading Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein? After speaking of wickedness in the wider world he turned his gaze to the smaller matters, and recounted one of his own dreams. Through this retelling he revealed his shortcomings in his personal development, his professional life, and in his relationship to his recently passed wife Janet. He showed how work in a dream group could deepen his contact with these shortcomings, and help him see himself more clearly and take the lessons forward in life. It was powerful, gripping.

Two years later I managed to a trip with my photographer to Ardsley, outside New York. I participated in one of Montes dream group weekends and recorded both his introductory speech and a long interview where he expanded on his thoughts about dreams and wickedness. When I told him I wanted to work with dreams in order to develop my creativity, he objected. "What do you mean develop? You have it all in you. Trust it." Time and again I have returned to these words.

The days in Ardsley were fantastic. My photographer, very sceptical to dream work, fell for Monte's charm and wisdom as well. Later, before winding down our work, I was able to visit Ardsley again. I needed to ask a question about something that had stuck with me from Montes introductory speech. Nothing in a dream is without meaning, he had told us. Playing with random images in our dreams could bring us in contact with our feelings about why these images might arise. We discussed deep memories, from childhood, from his time in the army ... and I found a kind of reprieve in the realization that the tales of another dreamer were bringing me in contact with myself. I am deeply thankful for having been shown this kind of listening experience.

That was the last time I met Monte. As usual he was full of warmth, generosity, and humour. He wished me success with the film, reminded me to trust my creativity and to enjoy the journey. The completion took many thankless, unpaid hours, but it brought me into deeper contact with my daughter, who helped edit the material, and with Monte, whose deep faith enriched the world and our understanding of ourselves.

In February 2008 I sent a copy of the completed film to Monte, and he replied immediately that he was pleased with it – the most important reaction I would receive. A few months later he had his first stroke, and June 7th that year his physical body left this world. I am so happy to have had the chance to know him, and so pleased that Catch the Dream might help others discover his work.

Gothenburg, October 17 2011

Ingrid Blidberg