

Taking Steps to Recovery

By **Bruce Richmond**

“I was leading a very active life style when I developed a neuroma (a mass growing from a nerve) on my right foot,” said Jeri Ann Smith. “When I couldn’t walk 15 minutes to the grocery store, I knew I needed to do something about it.” Fearing that surgery would limit her future options, and finding physical therapy only partly helpful, Jeri Ann began *Feldenkrais*® lessons. “*Feldenkrais* certainly took longer than surgery would have,” she says, “but I’m still noticing continual improvement in my use of my feet and how they connect through my pelvis and spine - even influence my head position. I’m not afraid of reinjury because I’m very aware of my foot and all the different ways to use it.” Jeri Ann has fully returned to her active lifestyle - in fact, she has learned to surf in addition to resuming her skiing and bicycling. She has also completed walking her first half-marathon.

Peter Broadwell suffered foot pain when walking, which had intensified over a five month period. His pain was exacerbated by standing all day on the hard cement floors of convention centers, difficult in the best of circumstances. Not considering surgery an acceptable alternative, Peter sought me out. “I felt immensely better after the first lesson,” Peter said. After a few *Feldenkrais* lessons integrating the feet in standing and working with balance he said, “I learned some things I could do to maintain my recovery.” Peter reports he has minimal trouble walking, and manning the convention booths.

I am no stranger to foot injuries, myself, says Bruce. After eight years of folk dancing concurrent with martial arts (both barefoot), I developed bunion pain and a collapsed arch that left me unable to walk barefoot for almost two years. After a full week of *Awareness Through Movement* lessons and one *Functional Integration* lesson during the beginning of my *Feldenkrais* training, I was pain free for three months and even began to run during that time. Over the years since, occasional FIs and lots of self-experimentation, *Feldenkrais* style, have minimized any continuing pain.

Not everyone has come to me to avoid surgery. Having spent his fourth birthday in the hospital with polio, David Bunker has had eight surgeries in his ankles and feet. Now 56 years old with two fused ankles and severe hammertoes he began taking *Feldenkrais* lessons two years ago to deal with low back pain. “I’m a long-term project,” he says, noting that his back pain has substantially decreased on an ongoing basis. David has been learning to sense the ground with his feet and organize himself around balancing so well that he now only uses his cane while traveling and has “successfully negotiated the cobblestones in Brussels.” His pelvis, and spine are becoming more mobile, to the point that “I went in to pick up my custom fit shoes and the owner of the store was amazed that they were for me,” David laughs. “She said that never during her 30 years in business has she seen anyone with bilateral foot orthoses (supports for joints or muscles) walking as well as I do.”