

“Nothing Special” by Kaori Yoshino

Ed. Note: This article was submitted to ACATNews quite some time ago by Kaori Yoshino. Unfortunately, there were delays in printing it. Since it was written, Kaori has also launched another venture – that of producing small teaching skeletons (see ACATNews Summer 2005).

“HOW TO USE THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE; a way to think about your “usuality” published on July 2003 is my first original publication. This is the first Alexander book written in Japanese by a resident Japanese certified teacher.

I had the good fortune to receive an offer from a publisher in 1995, the year I graduated from ACAT. But I couldn't write so soon after graduating. I knew that at that time I was not mature enough to translate what was in my brain and my sensory and nervous systems into writing. In 1999 I had the opportunity to translate Deborah Caplan's “BACK TROUBLE; A New Approach to Prevention and Recovery” into Japanese. It was well received. Critics and readers said this it was the best translation of any book on the Alexander Technique. I was so glad, because what I tried to translate were not simply words. What I wanted to translate was the essence of the technique. Translating Debbie's book gave me courage to go one more step forward. I slowly started to learn how to give a form to what was in my mind.

Writing and then publishing “HOW TO USE THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE” gave me the opportunity to introduce the Alexander technique as a brand-new, foreign technique. It allowed me, as well, to let people know how this technique can open the door of possibilities every single day. I presented many different case studies of lessons, providing examples of how Alexander lessons can help students to identify habits and also clarify confusion they may feel as their habits are changing.

Fortunately, this book was also favorably received. One reader wrote to the bookseller's web site “This book may be regarded as a great book for decades. I know no other book in which the sensitivity of the body has been described this way.”

I know it is not easy to really sense the

normal, usual and “automatic” things one does daily. We call these things “nothing special”. But people who start to study Alexander Technique may see that “nothing special” may not really be nothing at all. Like a little bit of salt supports the sweetness of the whole cake, I think the idea that we call “inhibition” and the technique of “hands-on” can be that little bit of salt in our life. It is not apparently a really big change but it is not so small either.

Parallel to my teaching, I am now working on my next book. If my writing can help people in Japan who want and need the technique to understand and enjoy it, I will be very happy.

Report from the Librarian by Tom Weiser

The Library has been very active this year. We've loaned out over 100 items to dozens of ACAT members. We've been fortunate to receive gifts of material from the estate of Debbie Caplan, as well as from Patty Llosa, Phyllis Jo Kubey, Anne-Rene Lawton and Elizabeth Buonomo. We've been diligent in using our budget to purchase new books: now we have lending copies of all of the required reading as well as most of the recommended reading on our shelves.

ACAT members have also been benefiting from the transfer of audio-visual material to DVD. Library users can now check out demonstrations by Walter Carrington, Patrick MacDondald, Marjorie Barstow, Judy Liebowitz, and Debbie Caplan, as well as talks and classes by this year's visitors to ACAT.

The Alexander Technique and Body Conscious Design: Shoes, Chairs, Interiors and Beyond, with Galen Cranz

by Jane Tomkiewicz

The ACAT fall membership/associate membership event on September 27 with Galen Cranz was a great success. Galen addressed a very enthusiastic full house. The love fest was mutual as Galen later wrote "yours was the most radiant and receptive audience I have ever had, and I thank you for this pleasure!" Her slide show presentation was largely based on her work in writing the highly acclaimed "The Chair". She also presented a query/invitation to the audience: she teaches a seminar on "Body Conscious Design," which will eventually form the basis of a certification program she envisions at Berkeley or elsewhere to educate both designers and movement educators regarding how the body meets the environment. She let audience members know that this is a work in formation, and asked for ideas and input. The presentation resulted in some press for ACAT, the Alexander Technique and for International Awareness Week in *New York* magazine. In a quirky blurb entitled "The Posture People" which appeared in the "intelligencer" column, Galen addressed various posture challenges of city life - including bar stools, restaurant booths, subways, buses and taxis.

Her presentation was videotaped and shown again to close up ACAT's International Alexander Awareness Week activities. It was attended by a modest but enthusiastic audience that had various alternative seating options (including ball chair, horse, meditation benches and reclining) from which to choose - see photo on opposite page.

Galen Cranz, interdisciplinary academic, designer, inventor, writer, and movement educator seeks to make body conscious design a worldwide social movement (with links to ecological sustainability). She is a Ph.D. sociologist teaching social and cultural processes in architecture and urban design at UC Berkeley. She has been acknowledged for her interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving as a Kellogg National Fellow, 1981-84, which she used to study film as a medium for environmental design education.

She published the original and now classic *The Politics of Park Design: a History of Urban Parks in America*, and thereafter won three park design competitions in an effort to demonstrate that clear conceptual thinking produces superior design. Through study of

the Alexander Technique she turned a disability (severe scoliosis) into a quietly radical critique of how our culture designs for our bodies. In *The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body and Design* she demonstrated that sedentary culture and the chair in particular are responsible for the epidemic of back pain, which is second only to the common cold as a reason for missing work. In order to go beyond academic boundaries with this surprising and important message she published the book with WW Norton and spoke about it on TV and radio, including three different interviews on NPR, starting with Terry Gross' *Fresh Air*.

Her next goal is to make body conscious design a worldwide social movement. Accordingly, she has started teaching in craft schools (Penland, Anderson Ranch), consulting to industry (chair manufacturers and airplane interior designers), and designing body conscious products, for two of which she holds US patents (a bathtub and a lounge chair). She teaches a seminar on "Body Conscious Design," which will eventually form the basis of a certification program she envisions at Berkeley or elsewhere to educate both designers and movement educators regarding how the body meets the environment. She has invited three others in New York City, Amsterdam, and Milan to work with her to organize a conference to map out a global campaign for body conscious design. Ecological sustainability and body conscious design support one another in many ways, and the senses (what we eat, breathe, hear, touch, see, and feel kinesthetically) provide a way into environmental problem-solving. For the month of May 2007 at Southeast University in Nanjing she will be teaching social and cultural approaches to sustainability in China—where most of the world's building will take place in the next 30 years. Uniquely poised at the intersection of social-cultural studies, architectural design, and body-mind practice, she intends to use this position to continue helping the world create new ways of living.

Galen sought the input of ACAT members to help her realize the certification program she envisions to educate both designers and movement educators regarding how the body meets the environment.



Alternative seating, including balls, stairs and a "horse" await viewers of the video of Galen Craz's presentation.



Karla Booth Diamond's workshop on the Alexander Technique and Belly Dancing

NEWS FROM THE CENTER

This news reached us just as this issue was going to print. We are saddened to let you know that our colleague, **Robert Lee Cohen**, passed away on Saturday, December 23, 2006. He entered hospice on December 22 after having undergone treatment for sarcoma, a form of cancer, over the last two years. Robert had said goodbye to those close to him and told them he was ready to go. His wish is to be cremated and to have his ashes given to his niece and nephew.

We will be having a memorial service for Robert at ACAT on Sunday, January 28th from 3-5 pm. All are invited. The next ACATNews will contain an article honoring Robert and sharing more about him and his life.

NEWSFLASH!! A generous anonymous donation of \$10,000 has come in to launch the **Pearl Ausubel Fund**. The fund will be launched at the champagne and cake reception in which we will thank Pearl for her 30 years of teaching at ACAT and wish her well in her move to Northampton. More details next ACATNews!

ACAT member **Michael Protzel** announces the launching of a new website that presents in words and animated illustrations his view of how our innate uprighting system works....and how we interfere by habitually mis-directing the force of our gravity-compelled falling. Check it out at www.uprighting.com.

In September 2006, ACAT member and ACATNews Associate Editor **Tara Sullivan** relocated to Auckland, New Zealand, where her husband, David Rauscher, got an exciting new job. Get in touch if your travels take you to beautiful New Zealand! She can be reached at taraRsullivan@msn.com.

Jackie Rose is grateful to join ACAT as an Associate Member in Oct. 2006. Jackie is a member of The NYC Reiki Meetings Group www.reiki.meetings.com/57 who sought now hold their monthly Reiki Practitioners Exchange at the studio. She writes, "We enjoyed the calm, happy energy aof the ACAT studio so much, we are now using it for our monthly discussion groups as well. ACAT members, students and clients who wish to leave more about Reiki are welcome to attend. Reiki combines well with many energy modalities to promote balance and healing." Upcoming discussion gropus will be on Jan. 22, Feb. 16 and Mar. 22 @ 6:30pm at ACAT. All are welcome.

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