

The ACAT News

Autumn

Ron Dennis, Editor

1988

The Second International Congress Notes and Musings of a Trainee

By Kathy Moeller

My Point of View

I always find structure and the organization of events in time as interesting and informative as the content. So I would like to give you a flavor of the flow of events as well as some of the material I captured in notes and whatever residue of the experience that has remained in my Random Access Memory.

Garlick at the Gardner

After our individual morning rituals, all the participants gathered in Gardner Theatre for a "A Physiologist Looks at the Alexander Technique." Dr. David Garlick was cheerfully introduced as a principal part of the first decade of empirical investigation that will take the principles of the Alexander Technique out of the "ratbag fringe." This Australian researcher kept our mornings lively with his bawdy, irreverent sense of humor and his unique sense of 'forward and up' by being so 'down under'.

Dr. Garlick is following in the footsteps of Frank Pierce Jones; yet there are decades to go before we have a strong body of scientifically valid evidence. There is a lot about the Alexander experience that can be explained in the medical model. Dr. Garlick presented both theory and experimental findings that begin to explain the effect good use has on muscles.

His main point was that AT builds muscles and the right kind of muscles. It is hardly a relaxation technique. There are two fiber

types of muscle: red fibers which support posture and rhythmic activity, and white fibers which give us strength. Red fibers tend to be used for slow movements, while white fibers tend to be used for fast movement. It is these white fibers which are commonly overused as people hurry and muscle their way through daily activities and then feel exhausted and fatigued at the end of the day.

Most people have an even number of red and white fibers, this proportion is largely determined by genetic factors but can also be influenced by physical activity. A marathon runner will have a large proportion of red fibers and a weight lifter will have a large proportion of white fibers. If we don't use the red fibers, we lose the use of those fibers. The fibers will change and lose their postural reflexes. Perhaps AT builds on the red fibers.

Most people interpret no muscle activity as comfort and muscle activity as discomfort. Not true - Red muscle fibers don't fatigue. Lengthening is associated with some increase in muscle activity but no

increase in sense of effort, mainly because we are using the red muscle fibers. This may explain the feelings one has with good use - lightness, ease, "relaxation".

Coffee and Biscuits at Mandela Hall

More physical nourishment while we take care of personal business - late registration, phone messages, post card writing, moving about, getting acquainted, making connections, exchanging smiles, soaking in the beautiful countryside and English sunshine, browsing and buying Alexander related materials, etc.

Yellows, Blues and Reds Attend Master Classes

I was a Yellow. I went to the master classes in this order; Marjory Barlow on Monday, Walter Carrington on Tuesday and Marjorie Barlow on Wednesday. My notetaking got sketchier the later it got, so realizing this please don't give any extra weight to any one who has more said about them, it was just the luck of the draw.

Marjorie Barlow opened her master class with a definition - AT is an exercise in finding out what thinking is. Alexander teachers are teaching thinking. I find this thought frightening and awesome. I'm really not sure what thinking

A profession is a personal thing that man [or woman] acquires. It cannot be inherited. It cannot be bequeathed. Only he [or she] who, having made the acquisition, puts to use the knowledge and skill with all his [or her] ability and complete dedication of purpose can be truly called a professional.—R. E. Onstad

Congratulations, B9's!

is. I know I do it, but I'm never really sure what people mean by it. And I often doubt that we have similar experiences or understandings of this phenomenon. What's frightening is that I haven't the foggiest notion as to how I'm going to teach it.

Some other ideas from Mrs. Barlow are:

The danger of training is too much emphasis on the skill of the hands and not enough on how to think through the use of ourself. What am I doing and do I have to do it? It's clear what is wrong. RIGHT? There's no such animal. All we've really got is not what is right but what is better, improving, going in the right direction. That's all we've got.

Goals of a first lesson: a. Get the idea of 'No' in, the facility to just say 'No'; b. Tell them that you're not going to make them right; and, c. Have them say 'No' to each thing.

You can't prevent your students from making a mistake, you let them be wrong.

Watch eye direction. Focus on something, to see something without being spacy or having an internal focus.

She has found that legs lead two different lives - bending and straightening. In most people the movement in bending is forward and away from the torso, but direction is lost in the return trip.

FM. said that all you will ever know is when you're wrong.

Now this has, and still does create a lot of confusion in my mind about what it is I feel, what it is I think about what I feel and whether or not I know. Can I ever trust my debauched kinaesthetic sense to live in the present? That is, to give a fairly objective reading of what is actually going on in the moment? And what do I know about this moment? Do I know what I think? Do I know what I feel? When I feel that something is discomfoting, stressful, or unusual might I define it as 'not-

me' or 'not-right' or WRONG!
Do I only know what is wrong?

Most of my feelings and thinkings seem to be a combination of inhibition and direction. Inhibition telling me - HEY, wait a minute, something is not right here and could be better OR direction telling me - wouldn't it be nice if we went that way, more open and up in our self. I often have a sense that I know these things - both inhibition and direction. Now I would be willing to admit that the way I know inhibition is different from the way I know direction; but I think there is an attribute in both that I would call knowing.

Question - Is inhibition/giving orders thinking?

Walter Carrington's comments to student during demonstration:

"You don't have to do anything. Take a look and see where you are. What are the general habits of standing. Think of neck and head. Move a foot wider - to get out of habitual stance. Pay attention to feet and heels- a point from which it makes sense to lengthen. Let the chair support you. Allow gravity to work. Your mistakes reflect on me. Be prepared to have a go, care less if you are right. When sitting, weight is out of the hip joint, weight is on the sit bones. My hands look for light or heavy, fixed or free. FM. told me let your knees go as if you've been shot. Inhibition is a matter of giving yourself time, telling the cerebellum, "no" and the cortex, "Yes. I have time."

Dilys Carrington's comments to me during my tum with her:

"Drop weight of head forward and down. Let go the vestigial tension in back of neck. Think of your front length coming from your toes. I find Americans so agreeable and kind. They often tend to wobble or bob their head (as in a nod) which leaves muscular tension in their neck. Quit saying yes all the time."

Marjorie Barstow with her sharp eye and quick wit keeps everyone alert. Think of the head delicately moving

forward and up (She emphasizes the word delicately). You have to think about it. That's what makes it constructive conscious control. Then the body follows and the legs do their thing. Her light touch informs about the amount of tension that is not needed. Another thought - inhibition is an activity.

Lunch at the Refectory

You guys didn't miss much in the food department. I found English cooking not something you write home about except maybe to wish it were different.

Following Options

Here they gave us choices called "The following options: Informal Work Session Among Congress Participants or Informal Meeting with Sir George Trevelyan or The Alexander Bazaar - books, videos, T-Shirts (designed by our own Joan A.), posters, buttons ("Forward and up" Down and Under in 1990 - a campaign to get the next AT Congress in Sydney), and tables and chairs, etc.

This time of the afternoon I prefer something that involves space or motion, which means I did not pick the meeting with Sir George. This was my loss, as I heard many rave reviews and these question and answer periods probably did involve space and motion at some level. I was inhibiting my inclinations to conceptualize and theorize with a very skilled and experienced mind. I directed myself to the physical and experiential, which was also a treat.

Special Presentations (or the Mistake of the Shoulds)

In this hour slot of the afternoon, our choices were limited to two: I. A more technical subject matter, e.g., "Reflexes of Posture and Movement, and Their Relevance to Teaching The Alexander Technique" or, II. A lecture on the theme "Making our Links with Children's Education."

The subject of children and children's education brings out the noble, idealistic, 'look to the future' and 'be optimistic' part of

my psyche. These are all things which I feel I should be. And I am not alone in these noble righteous efforts to bring the Alexander Technique principles to the needs and education of children. Some of the presentations were grounded in personal experience. Some were taken as an opportunity to get on a soapbox and call for right living in a stressful modern world.

Grethe Laub spoke on "Present Day Trends in the Upbringing of Children." On the whole she finds falling standards due to increased stress. We need more confidence, openness, tolerance, honesty, understanding and security. Children are sensitive, therefore we must be open and honest. Confidence will lead to freedom.

Sue Thame's presentation, "Alexander Teaching in the State School System", summarized her work from 1978 to 1982. The concept of self development for teachers was not there. A teacher's focus is on the children. They want to know, "How can we help the children?" (Sounds a bit noble and idealistic?)

The limitations of the state school system are: Teachers who choose not to take AT for themselves; The furniture and buildings are unfriendly; Parents want children to sit in desks and learn to read and write; No money; No proper aids; and Teachers that have full autonomy.

Ms. Thame's thoughts for development: One-on-one with teachers, AT is very effective as an individual effort; AT community funding for the development of teaching aids and ideas; selling AT through articles in educational journals; Open our training school to collaborate with other systems.

Tea and Biscuits at Mandela Hall

Note - Coffee in the morning and Tea in the afternoon. Proper is as Proper does.

Parallel Presentations

This was the smorgasbord portion of the day. A sample of the

offerings includes, "The Alexander Technique and The Human Voice" by Glynn MacDonald, "Movement Improvisation For AT Teachers" by Mary Cerny, "Why we must train ourselves: The AT and Teaching" by John Woodward and a Video: "The Alexander Technique Today" by Image-Maker.

I attended "The Alexander Technique - Chinese Acupuncture: Different Approaches to Similar Conclusions" by Nilly Bassan.

Both systems are holistic, equate health with balance, define disease as the lack of balance. Their differences reflect a different approach, but that doesn't mean they are not compatible and perhaps even complementary. Where AT works towards a sense of energy, one may describe as vitality, the Chinese systems talk about Chi. Where AT uses the primary control to influence a change in habits, the Chinese systems follow the Tao to a proper way of life. Where AT looks at use to indicate malfunction, the Chinese Systems look at function to indicate misuse.

In a very simple way, the principle of dynamic opposition is translated into the principles of yin/yang. Everything going up (head, neck, back and torso) has a quality of yang. Knees forward and away to the earth are yin. Hands have yin, they are curved, shaping soft, empty. The Back is yang, strong, sending energy to the sky. When the yin and the yang are in balance there is a flow.

I also attended "Modern Man in Search of a Body" by John and Lynn Nichols.

The Nichols have been fascinated by a model of human anatomy taken from Stanley Keleman's Emotional Anatomy. This model describes man as an organization of tubes and chambers and the flow of substances through them. (Echoes of, 'We are only channels.') The function of diaphragms (note the plural) is to control the flow of substances which may be breath, blood, food, and, perhaps, even chi or consciousness. There are six main diaphragms: pelvic floor, the breathing diaphragm, throat, palate,

and two which surround the brain. Diaphragms function best when they have evenness of tone. Because most of the diaphragms lie in the horizontal plane, the widening one experiences in AT allows the diaphragms to have better tone and pump more substance, i.e. energy, and we experience lengthening. Also when we release muscular tension, we decrease the squeezing of the skeleton which allows the diaphragm their full shape. F.M. believed that good use promotes better breathing and health that prevents auto-intoxication. The Nichols have hypothesized that it also promotes a spiritual and psychological health through the more efficient channeling of chi and consciousness.

This lecture ended my week on a very high note. I found my length and width full and easy. My thoughts guided by the gentle insights of those ahead of me. I opened up quite a few new channels for this wonderful process.

Kathy Moeller is a teacher candidate at ACAT. She attended and reported on the 2nd International Congress as part of her Approved Independent Study in the Teacher Certification Program.

News Notes

Kim Jessor and Melmie Nevis will present the AT at Life in Motion: The Body-Mind Connection, a meeting for somatic educators and health professionals to be held at New York University on March 30-April 2, 1989. For further information contact Shelley Hainer at 212-864-0755.

Andy Zavada now resides at 8800 20th Ave NE #B208, Seattle, WA 98115 206-525-4405.

T-SHIRTS FOR SALE:

"2nd International Congress on the F.M. Alexander Technique . Brighton . England . August . 1988"

Original graphic, M & L, cotton. Call Joan Arnold at 718-768-2746.

Center News

By Ron Dennis

The fiscal year having closed on August 31, I wanted in this column to give a sense of both where we've been and where we're (hopefully) going, particularly for members not able to attend the Annual Meeting in February.

The major event of the year was, of course, our accreditation by a nationally recognized agency. Our application to the U.S. Dept. of Education for participation in Guaranteed Student Loan programs is currently in process, with approval expected imminently. Prestige aside, we expect these achievements to increase candidate applications, leading to greater stability of enrollment and associated enhancement of quality (yes, it's still possible, Pamela assures me!) in the TCP.

Getting computerized was another significant step, this issue of the *News* just the latest of office operations thus facilitated. Others have been accounting, monthly-updated Member-Teacher lists, and the data-basing of all ACAT^{ers} (graduates, members, candidates), as well as information requests from the public. We will supply labels at \$.05 each to members for Alexander-related mailings (call office for details).

Having had a very positive experience this past year in hiring a consultant to assist in our application for Federal education aid, the Board has budgeted funds this year to conduct a feasibility study for fund-raising. The Center is in good financial shape under current operating conditions, but with continued space concerns at Hebrew Arts School, fund-raising could be a crucial issue if we wanted or needed to establish a new home.

As for more mundane but not less-important matters, the Center brochure has been revised and attractively reprinted in blue-gray ink on white textured stock. An ACAT blurb has been incorporated in this version, so that for the first time, information about the Center (and a solicitation for contributions) goes out with every List of Certified Member-Teachers. The price is still \$.20/ea for "members-only."

From September 87 thru August 88 we sent out 348 M-T Lists. We would like to get some idea of how much business may have been thus generated for members, and so will be asking you to estimate this on the 89 Membership Data form. We also hope that you will indicate your fee (in confidence, of course) so that we can respond more accurately in terms of the fee range of our membership when people ask.

Please let me know your suggestions for *The ACAT News*, and by all means, plan to attend the Annual Meeting if possible!

TCP News

By Pamela Anderson

At the end of this term, Fall 1988, ACAT will graduate four candidates. They are Joan Arnold, Dirk Keysser, Jaye Miller, and Stan Tucker. Graduation plans are in process with the date set for Friday, December 16, the location still being arranged. Congrats Graduates! We warmly welcome you as colleagues in our profession.

This Fall Term saw the start for six new candidates. They are Shelly Batt, Sheldon Berkowitz, Robert Cohen, Rosalind Glatter, Sara Hesser, and Joel Simkin. On January 3, 1989, six additional candidates are slated to join the program. They are Henry Blumenkranz, Ingrid Hixon, Alina Holder, Heidi Korman, Donna Much, and Sao Nunes. We welcome all of you.

This spring we are planning to offer another graduate course similar to the one offered last year. The envisioned format will be one-and-a-half or two hours of Alexander work and an hour-and-a-half class led by a psychotherapist to discuss and explore issues relating to working with others. All members will be receiving information next year regarding the course.

The ACAT faculty started off the Fall Term with a day-long workshop. We did hands-on work, discussed various course outlines, and shared with each other where we currently are with our Alexander work. It was a very lively discussion and we all learned a lot about each other.

Insurance Update

The Summer 88 *News* carried information about liability insurance possibly available to graduates of ACAT from the Associated Professional Massage Therapists & Allied Health Practitioners International (APMT).

Recently, ACAT has received APMT endorsement as a "Professional" status program, meaning that graduates are eligible to join APMT at the lowest rate of \$195 per year. ACAT members are receiving APMT's brochure with this issue of the *News*.

Another source for such coverage (via Sarni Ogus and Marta Friedland) is Maginnis & Associates, 2135 Wisconsin Ave, Washington, DC 20007 (202) 965-1130. Coverage somewhat fuller than APMT's (\$3,000,000 vs. 1,000,000 annual aggregate) is available for \$261 or \$613 annually, depending partly on whether the insured works less or more than 10 hours a week.

On the subject of health insurance, Melanie Nevis reports that both APMT and Support Services Alliance are currently negotiating group coverage for their memberships. Members may call SSA at 800-892-8925 (outside NY State) or 800-322-3920 (within NY State). ACAT's membership number is 2872.

JACK MOORE 1926-1988

It is with great sadness that I write of the death of my dear friend and classmate, Jack Moore. Jack died of lung cancer on June 23, 1988, just as we were completing our eight term of the Teacher Certification Program at ACAT. And yet, there is much to celebrate about Jack's life and I think one of the most important threads was his absolute belief that all of life is process. This unswerving thought is what eventually brought Jack to the Alexander Technique. As a youth in Monticello, Indiana, Jack was active in music, drama and particularly dance productions. However, it was as a painter, studying with Mauricio Lansansky at the University of Iowa where he received his B.A. in Art in 1949, that he made his earliest artistic mark. But Jack loved to dance! And so, pursuing a professional career in dance, he moved to New York in 1949 where he performed with the Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, and Anna Sokolow modern dance companies. He continued his personal process as a choreographer as he taught dance composition and technique at the Juilliard Studios at Lincoln Center, the Neighborhood Playhouse, Connecticut College, University of California at Los Angeles, and Adelphi University. Jack studied dance composition with Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Louis Horst, making his choreographic debut in 1951 at the 92nd Street Y. He was widely acclaimed in the New York press for both his performance ability and the mystical calm and logic of his choreographic compositions. All Jack's art work--his paintings, drawings (some of which are in the permanent collection of the Brooklyn Museum Print Collection), dance compositions, and the over-200 fabric collages he began to create in 1972--were strongly influenced by Japanese and Southwest American Indian thought and design. He was also a

student of Jin Shin Jyutsu. I believe these influences as well as his inner peace and clear-thinking are the special qualities Jack brought to the Alexander Technique. In 1960 he received the first Doris Humphrey Dance Fellowship for choreography at Connecticut College and in 1961 he joined the dance faculty at Bennington College. Jack was very quiet about himself and would never have told you that his colleagues saw him as a visionary artist and educator who powerfully affected the work of many choreographers today. Indeed, to insure that young modern dance talents received extended engagements, in 1965 Jack co-founded with Jeff Duncan and Art Bauman the Dance Theater Workshop. In 1984 Jack retired as the head of the Bennington Dance Department specifically to begin a new path, another process, in his life--to train as an Alexander teacher. He had been a volunteer student for Remy Charlip and found the Alexander Technique very fascinating both as a philosophy and as a way of practicing "being in the moment." During the past year Jack combined many of his life's threads as he worked with June Ekman and a small company of dancers interweaving dance, choreography, and the Alexander work into compositions that were performed at Barnard College. Jack was most interested in communication and learning and laughter and being light. He has touched my life and influenced my thought deeply. For me, process is a continuum of learning and sharing and moving on. Jack's whole life reflected these ideas and he has moved on again. And while I miss him enormously, he will be with me always as I learn and share and also move on. I feel very lucky and grateful to have known and spent time with him.

--JAYE MILLER

Answering Questions about the Alexander Technique

By Bill Connington

As we all know, it can sometimes be difficult explaining the AT to someone who doesn't know anything about the method. It is a good idea to have a standard explanation of the technique that you can use in different situations. In a lesson or at a lecture, one is prepared to answer questions, but there are other times when people will unexpectedly ask you about the technique. For example, if you are in a social situation, and someone asks you to explain your work, it is useful to have one or two prepared sentences. Ideally the explanation should be short and clear. My standard answer is, "The AT is a method for changing habits which produce tension."

The word in my sentence that catches people's interest is the word "tension." People will often then say, "Oh, I have so much tension," or "Gee, my husband might be interested--he has a bad back." If the person is not interested in your answer, he will generally change the subject. It's best in these cases to let the subject drop. However, if the person is interested, generally he will begin to ask questions. Some questions that are often asked are: "Is it like massage?", "Is it like rolfing?", "Is it like chiropractic?", and "Are you a physical therapist?" Again, it helps to have a simple and easily understood answer to these questions. My answer to this type of question might be, for example, "No, the AT is not like chiropractic. Chiropractic is a therapeutic technique--people go with a problem--let's say they come with a back problem that is caused by muscular tension--the chiropractor will generally have the patient lie down on a table, then will manipulate them in order to try and relieve the problem. It is a passive, therapeutic technique. What makes the AT different from chiropractic and other therapeutic techniques such as massage, is that the AT is primarily educational in its focus.

It is not a passive therapy. When a student comes for a lesson, the teacher doesn't directly try to relieve the student's back tension. Rather, the teacher will show the student what inefficient body habits may be causing problems in the back, and teaches the student how to change those habits. The objective of studying the AT is to learn how to use your body well in everyday life, to learn how to prevent further postural problems. In some cases students report that there are indirect therapeutic results."

Another situation where you answer questions about the technique is on the telephone. It is important to answer telephone inquiries in a cordial, professional manner. This initial contact with a possible student is very important. It is also important to pay attention to your voice when speaking on the telephone. The ease exhibited in your body should also be exhibited in your voice. If someone calls when it is inconvenient for you to answer their questions fully, ask for the number and a convenient time to call back.

Some of the most-asked questions (aside from "What is the AT" and "How is it different from chiropractic?") are "How many lessons should I take?", "What do you charge?", "What is your background?", "What are your hours?", and "Will this technique help my condition?". I would suggest that you prepare answers to these and any other questions that you can think of so that you can answer them confidently. Don't hesitate to tell the questioner, "I couldn't tell without seeing you," if that is an appropriate answer. If the caller still feels unsure of whether he would like to take a lesson, offer to send written material. Take the name and address. I suggest that you mail the ACAT brochure, your personal brochure if you have one, your business card, the *Behavioral Medicine* article [available from the Center], or a recent article on the technique, or a special interest article that is appropriate, and a cover letter. Explain that you are enclosing information on the AT. In the cover letter you may also clarify any of your telephone answers if you feel they need it.

Close your letter by saying that they should call you if they need further information, or if they have any questions, or if they would like to make an appointment. If you don't hear from the caller, you can put them on your mailing list for future mailings.

Long Island Needs Alexander Teachers!

Over the last several months, the Center has received regular inquiries from Long Island residents about AT instruction. To date, the only teacher on all of L.I. to our knowledge has been Oded Levy of Great Neck, a faithful member of ACAT to whom all these inquiries have been referred. In a telephone conversation recently, however, Mr. Levy informed us that he would be leaving the area for at least a year, and regrettably unavailable for further referrals. Thus the headline of this piece. Any member wishing names of contacts in the Center data-base may contact the office.

Happy Birthday, F.M.!

The third annual E. M. Alexander Birthday Party will be held on Saturday, January 21, 1989, at the loft of (new ACAT members) John Knapp and Meredith Stead. The evening will begin with a potluck dinner at 6, followed by AT entertainment at 8 and dancing at 9. All teachers and trainees who find themselves in the New York area are welcome. For information or to R.S.V.P. call 212-608-1255.

Editor's Last Word!

As you can see, with the aid of desk-top publishing, the *News* has a lot of potential for communication. Deadline for Spring issue is March 1st, but I'd appreciate your contributions as soon as possible!