

### Don't Wait Too Long

by Alison Courtney

Of course I would get around to it one of these years – going to London to study with the Carringtons. I knew them only through reading, reputation, or the instances throughout my training that Barbara or Debby quoted them or taught one of their procedures. And any excuse to return to London would be most welcome. However, I had nothing concrete until I met Glynn Macdonald, chairman of STAT.

I heard her speak at the AGM and attended her "Voice and the Alexander Technique" workshop. She announced that her annual summer class focusing on the voice would take place on the four afternoons following the Carringtons' Teacher Refresher Course. After her lively and engaging presentation, I found myself propelled across the room thinking "Anyone who can make me laugh this much is someone I can really learn from."

After introducing myself and asking the cost of her class, I decided then and there that I was committed to making the journey and taking the two courses. Walter and Dilys were reason enough, but now there was also Glynn. London itself and my expenditures would be a tax write-off. As Glynn wrote my name and address in her diary I murmured words to the effect that I was completely decided, even though I had no idea how I would manage the financial demands of room, board and airfare. The tuition for the classes was very reasonable, but...then Glynn turned her earnest, direct, Aussie gaze on me and said, "Well, work it out somehow then, will you?" And somehow I did, for which I'll always be glad as it was an experience not to be missed.

To someone who has never been to London, I cannot imagine a more delightful and accessible city. For myself, returning years after having studied with John Gray under the Barlows, now myself a teacher- this was a very charged event. London is usually damp in all its seasons, and though not a typical climate, you could have fooled me as the

*(continued on page 4)*

### Body Learning in the Classroom

by Joan Frost

Inspired by Michele Arsenault's January talk at ACAT, I went in to speak to my daughter's third grade teacher about the disadvantages of having children sit cross-legged on the floor. She was very receptive to the information and felt that all the children should have the opportunity of learning about themselves in this way, so she asked if I would come in for a half hour to speak to them.

A month later, on St. Patrick's Day, I came into the classroom armed with two skeletons, a plumbline, even little paper people with moveable joints, and a host of books with pictures of varying degrees of poise. A half hour quickly turned into forty-five minutes, and I had gotten only through a third of my material. Before the children rushed off to lunch, they invited me back the following week for more.

One funny instance happened when I asked the students to move forward in their seats and sit on the edge of their chairs. (I wanted them to explore moving their legs and finding their hip joints.) They followed my directions completely and kept slipping off their chairs onto the floor! They thought I was being very silly to ask them to sit on the edge of their chairs.

Another time I asked for four people to stand up and come to the center of the circle. Practically the whole class stood up and stepped forward and no one sat down again, when they saw I had a lot more volunteers than I had asked for.

An experiment that didn't work was asking the children to walk around the room pretending their heads were made of cement, and that sandbags were sitting on their shoulders, and then to walk as if their heads were helium balloons with their spines as strings. With the

*(continued on page 3)*

### Inside:

- Don't Wait Too Long **1**
- Body Learning in the Classroom **1**
- Notes from the TCP **2**
- Notes from the Chair **3**
- New Library Resource **4**
- A Solitary Sense of Failing **5**
- News from the Center **6**

## Notes From the TCP

by Kim Jessor

***"I picked two trees from my childhood in Colorado, the evergreen and the aspen."***

Spring term at ACAT was the culmination of our 30th anniversary events. On April 14, the date of ACAT's incorporation, we had an all school get together where Debby Caplan reminisced about ACAT's founding and early days. This is available on audiotape in the ACAT library. Shortly thereafter, we had our very successful and enjoyable gala benefit. Many thanks to Jane Kosminsky, ACAT senior faculty who chaired the benefit committee and worked tirelessly on it for many months!

In May, the majority of the ACAT faculty and many of our students attended the NASTAT AGM. A stimulating mix of educational, business and social activities, the AGM was coordinated by Judy Stern, ACAT senior faculty member and NASTAT vice president. The F.M. Alexander Memorial lecture was given by ACAT's Barbara Kent. In the week following NASTAT, STAT Chairwoman Glynn Macdonald visited ACAT and gave an inspiring workshop.

On May 24, we held our second annual Open House for prospective applicants. Joan Frost and myself gave a presentation, after which visitors had an opportunity to observe classes, and then attend a reception with students and faculty. For the Fall term, we have accepted 5 new candidates. I would like to welcome Linda deLeon, Allison Foley, Colleen Higgins, Gwynne Marshall, and Barbara McCrane.

Early in June, we had our faculty retreat, which was held this year at Judy Stern's house in Rye. It was a beautiful day, and we spent much time discussing teaching issues from our classes this year. After a picnic overlooking Long Island Sound, we dealt with business issues, concluding the day with some voice work and singing with Barbara Kent. After dinner, I was deeply touched to be presented by the faculty and board with the gift of a jogging stroller!

During the last week of school, we had all school presentations. The theme was improvisation in dance and the Alexander Technique. Sarah Grindle (6th termer) performed an improvisational solo, and then Karen Langevin (9th termer) and Shelley Senter (8th termer) led the group through a warm-up and movement activity using inhibition. This was followed by questions and discussion.

The year ended with graduation which was held in a wonderful setting; the Prospect Park Picnic House. On a warm night under a full moon, Judith Barkow, Valerie Hooven, Karen Langevin, Ellen Melamed, Liz Reese, and Tom Vasiliades received their certificates. Barbara Kent was the featured speaker. Many congratulations to the six of you as you begin your teaching careers.

I am very pleased to write that ACAT has a new look! After a long time in process, we have completed an elegant brochure for our program. We also have a coordinated catalog cover and cover for our general brochure on the technique, as well as new stationary. Watch for our upcoming ACAT T-shirt! The text for the brochure was written by myself, Joan Frost, Kathy Miranda, and Ruth Nardini. Photos were done by Alexander student Reid Baker and recent graduate Judith Barkow, and the design by Alexander student Sara Seagull. Thanks to everyone else who participated in the photo shoots and gave input and feedback.

I'm thinking back over the past 3 years as ACAT's Director, and what comes to mind is an exercise the board did about a year ago when we met with an organizational consultant. She had asked us to think of a kind of tree that we identified with, and to then speak about why. I picked two trees from my childhood in Colorado, the evergreen and the aspen. These are high altitude trees. Perched on the sides of mountains, they have an overview of what is below. The evergreen represents the essential principles of the technique, which do not change. The aspen captures the constantly changing, cyclic nature of things. These trees are hearty, as they survive much extreme weather!

This job has given me the opportunity to have a kind of perspective (like the trees). Overseeing the program, I have witnessed all the process, struggle and learning. I have also participated in it. It has been a tremendous experience, and I feel proud to have worked in that capacity for such a unique place as ACAT. I feel deeply rooted at ACAT; the soil there is very rich.

As the aspens turn flaming gold in the fall, I wish you all another growthful year. §

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## Notes From the Chair

by Lori Schiff

As summer ends, some of us have been saying "No" to doing much of anything but constructive rest. Saying "No" does allow time for thinking and considering how to move into action and what direction to move into at this time.

So far 1994 has been a terrific year for ACAT. The thirtieth anniversary activities were successful individually, and in moving us forward into areas including fund-raising, public relations, and increased hands-on support from our membership.

The Board will be holding extra meetings this year to continue the momentum of the Thirtieth Anniversary celebrations. We are going to create an advisory board explicitly for development (fund-raising). We will be exploring further public relations work for the Alexander Technique and for ACAT, and we will continue the lecture series on an annual basis. We will also sponsor post-graduate classes or seminars for teachers. These classes will be taught by ACAT graduates.

ACAT has again been accredited by ACCET. The accreditation is for a three year period. We can continue to provide a financial aid program for eligible students in the training course. And, we are still authorized under federal law to enroll non-immigrant alien students. As an accredited school, we are now required to be licensed by the State of New York Department of Education. The licensing application is now being processed.

I am looking forward to the busy months ahead (that is, after a bit more of this constructive rest). We need to hear from you regarding your activities as teachers and what you want from your organization. Write for the newsletter or call or write to us about your ideas, concerns and how you can contribute your talents to the community of Alexander Teachers.

Thank you for your continuing support and best wishes for the fall.

Lauren Schiff, *Chair*  
August 1994

*(Body Learning in the Public Classroom  
from page 1)*

latter instruction, they stiffened and walked as if they were being pulled up.

At the end of the second session, I had the children come up, one at a time, and sit cross-legged on the floor as was their custom; then try sitting cross-legged on a stack of several folded towels. At least half the students found they were more comfortable being elevated. Some were such slumpers it didn't seem to make much difference, and some were quite free and upright with or without the elevation.

A few days later, Emily came home with a than you note from the class; each student wrote a sentence or two about what they had learned. Here are a few of them:

"I learned that if you bend forward your front muscles get shorter and your back muscles get longer."

"Thank you for teaching me that if you stay in a position for a long time your body will grow like that."

"I learned that if you sit on the floor you usually don't sit straight, but if you sit on a towel you'll be straight."

"...I liked when you told us about the line of gravity with that string. I wish you could come back and teach us more about our posture."

After the second session. I left feeling very fulfilled and happy. I think it had something to do with the children's energy and enthusiasm. One need observe children for only a little while to see how much this information is needed. Postural sets are already becoming established by this age (8-9years). The experience showed me there is an eagerness to learn and a real appreciation on the part of the students. We, as a profession, need to tap into this potential!!§

**"Thank you for  
teaching me  
that if you stay  
in a position for  
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*(Don't Wait Too Long, from page 1)*

U.K. and Western Europe suffered world-breaking heat this past seminar. So the entire, mostly NOT air-conditioned city and its Underground sweltered in the humidity while the beautiful window boxes and lush hanging baskets of flowers thrived on every street corner. (The English aren't noted for their cuisine, but their gardening is another matter altogether).

The two courses were taught at the Constructive Teaching Center, in the three story Victorian house near Holland Park that has been the Carringtons' home for over thirty years. It was one of the most enriching and deeply gratifying experiences that I have had since my ACAT training ended in 1990.

The teacher refresher course began with a period of floor work during which time Walter would speak *ex tempore* on a particular Alexander concept. This was then followed by work in small groups on a theme designated by either Walter or Dilys, who also gave individual turns as did Ruth Murray, John Browne and Allan Phelps. There were 18 of us representing America, England and Scotland. Somehow, Walter and Dilys managed to work with everyone.

The Brits must have their "elevenses" for which we would all head to the downstairs kitchen and then out to the lovely back garden with fountains, flowers, and benches, and immediately adjacent to a larger public park if a short stroll was wanted. Class resumed with Walter commenting on questions mentioned to him during the break, followed by more concentrated work in small groups, or a demonstration of a particular procedure, such as working in the saddle. (Fortunately, I am still outstanding when it comes to end-gaining; when Walter asked for a volunteer who had

never done this before, my hand went up several seconds before anyone else's.) These two white-haired legends of the Alexander world were generous, humorous, completely accessible and absolutely clear. I felt very grateful. And we can all celebrate the fact that Walter's many reflective talks on the work were recorded by some of his students and have been preserved in a collection titled *Thinking Aloud*.

The morning class was fairly depleting in its intensity and yet there was still the afternoon class remaining with Glynn Macdonald. I found her class equally challenging and provocative. Glynn has a remarkable ability to immediately sense what sort of quality is missing from an individual's voice, or needs amplitude. Using her vast experience in dramatic coaching and a thorough knowledge of Shakespeare, she was able to choose pieces for us and guide us in such an expert way as to evoke the very vocal quality needing greater support and freedom.

Her particular genius is an ability to aurally diagnose subtle embodiments in the vocal and respiratory apparatus, and with her uncanny talent for imitation to reproduce in her own voice the very condition she is hearing. This plus her incredible sense of fun, warmth, sensitivity of expression and incisiveness is an extraordinary combination. There were twelve of us, all grappling and exploring in our own ways. To add to my pleasure, six of the group were teachers and colleagues who were very dear to me, and sharing the intense experience of Glynn's class made it all the more memorable.

So my advice to everyone interested would be to give yourself this experience as soon as you can. Don't wait too long. I only hope that I can return next summer. §

**"Glynn has a remarkable ability to immediately sense what sort of quality is missing from an individual's voice..."**

## **New Resource Service from ACAT**

The ACAT office has announced a new project for library resources. We will begin to publish a list of papers (AIS and final papers) that are available as resource material in the office for the ACAT community. Currently, they will be available for reading in the office. Papers are included only with the permission of the author. Additions as of June 1994 include:

*"The Alexander Technique and Physics"* by Karen Langevin

*"Smoking Cessation and the Alexander Technique: Changing Habits"* by Ellen Melamed

*"Touch for Health and the Alexander Technique"* by Ellen Melamed

*"Using the Alexander Technique to Ease the Pain of Rheumatoid Arthritis"* by Ellen Melamed

*"The Alexander Technique and French Classical Equitation"* by Elizabeth Reese

*"Classical Equitation and the Alexander Technique"* (a series of articles) by Elizabeth Reese

*"Piano Pedagogy and the Alexander Technique"* by Valerie Hooven



# A Solitary Sense of Failing

by Jerry Sontag

*Editor's note:* This article was originally published in the Winter 1988 NASTAT News. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author. Jerry Sontag teaches Alexander Technique in San Francisco, and is the publisher of *Thinking Aloud: Walter Carrington's Talks on the Alexander Technique* (Morum Time Press).

When starting my teaching practice three years ago, I spent many hours trying to figure out how I was going to get from my humble beginnings of a few students a week to a fuller teaching practice. Since NASTAT's formation, I have spoken with recent graduates from training courses around the country. (When I say "recent graduates", I mean someone who has graduated in the last three years or so.) I found that my concerns were shared by many other teachers. Not only was a lot of time and effort spent trying to develop a teaching practice, but even more time and effort was spent searching for a meaning in this dearth of students.

Initially of course, the business problems of starting a practice (finding a teaching space, listing yourself in the phone book, etc.) preoccupy us. At the same time, many issues arise that have little to do with paying the mounting bills. Questions flit through the mind and linger: "Am I a bad teacher? Did that person miss their first appointment because of something I did? Am I the only one struggling to develop a practice, struggling to explain the Technique to callers, struggling to figure out how to teach a lesson? Was that hang up on the answering machine a potential student? I'll stay by the phone and stare at it until someone calls for a lesson."

I got the feeling while talking to many new teachers, particularly those isolated from their colleagues, that they felt they had failed as teachers because they didn't have a stable of eager students after teaching for a few months. They forgot, or never knew, that building a successful practice takes time.

This sense of failure can be debilitating, especially so if you believe your small teaching

practice is the meager exception to the plentiful rule. The sad fact is, as exemplified by the surveys returned to the membership office last year, the practices of most recent graduates are anemic. This fact will not brighten your financial picture simply because more teachers share your "beginning blues." On the other hand, your expectations will be more realistic and, therefore, should cause less frustration.

Now that much of the early organizational work has been completed, NASTAT is helping recent graduates in a few practical ways. High quality reprints of selected articles, useful for promotion, will be available this spring. Occasional articles, such as Bill Connington's on lecture demonstrations in last spring's newsletter, will be published detailing ways of developing a more successful practice. And the public's requests for teachers, running at about 20 per week, should bring an occasional student to a new teacher. But the principal challenges of starting a practice won't be solved by NASTAT, nor by any organization.

A lucky few graduates, either because of superb marketing skills, organizational affiliations, or personal charisma never need face the long weeks, months, and even years of too few students. We can certainly all learn something from them. More importantly, however, we can remind ourselves that the development of a successful private practice, even when working actively to build it, is usually a slow, difficult endeavor. Not only is there nothing shameful in that process, but the scarcity of lessons can, on occasion, contribute to a more thoughtful exploration of the fundamentals of teaching. §

**"They forgot,  
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## A Note on Submissions

*As much as I appreciate the effort required to write, please try to stick to the following guidelines:*

1. Please try to get it to me on time. The editor feels very, very bad when he has to say "No". This may account for some of his inhibitory problems.
2. Order of preference for format is as follows. IBM floppy disk, almost any program is okay. If you *must* send hard copy, I prefer original laser-printed copy, *not a xerox*. Then I don't have to type it in. Hand written copies had better be legible. Please print. Once again, articles can be submitted to or discussed with me by writing, calling or e-mailing: Sheldon Berkowitz 15 Woodbridge St., South Hadley, MA 01075  
Tel. (413) 532-7680 Mye-mail address is [sberkowi@mhc.mtholyoke.edu](mailto:sberkowi@mhc.mtholyoke.edu)

## News from the Center

*Heartfelt appreciation to Rebecca Flannery.* She served ACAT as a Board Director for six (count them, it's a long time) years. Her experience and intelligence helped ACAT's management provide consistent and sensitive leadership through many important issues. She resigned this summer to pursue her active private practice. Thank you, Becca.

The ACAT Board has appointed **Lisa Trank** (ACAT, 1993) to serve the remaining year of Rebecca's Directorship. We welcome Lisa's enthusiasm and her marketing, writing, organizational and promotional skills.

Congratulations to **Kim Jessor** on the birth of her son Merce Gabriel Jessor born at 12:20 AM on Thursday, September 15th.

NYNEX has just added "*Alexander Technique Instruction*" to their yellow pages categories. The NASTAT/ Boston Region is responsible for this breakthrough. ACAT (through the Judith Leibowitz Fund) contributed \$30 to support their effort and help with the costs of the letter campaign. To be in the next listing, which is free for business customers, contact your NYNEX representative by January of 1995. The new book comes out in April.

**Kathy Miranda** (ACAT, 1990) will speak about AT to a group of Occupational Therapists at *The Third Conference on Wellness and Health Promotion* in Rockville, Maryland.

*Errata sheet* available for Ron Brown's Summaries of Alexander's four books.

*Support Services Alliance* is offering a new Dental Plan. If you would like to check out their competitive rates, call 1-800-836-4772. Our group number is 2872.

**Library:** Check out "*The Alexander Birth Book*" by Ilana Machover and Angela and Jonathan Drake, "*Thinking Aloud*" by Walter Carrington, "*The Expanding Self - How the Alexander Technique Changed My Life*" by Goddard Binkley, "*Directing and Ordering: A Discussion of Working on Yourself and Working on Breathing and Vocal Production*" by Joe Armstrong, "*Present Yourself - The simple way to give powerful and effective presentations*" by Michael Gelb, "*Issues around Sexuality in Alexander Teacher Training*" by Chloe Stallibrass, "*The Voice Book*" by Michael McCallion and "*Alexander Technique*" by Glynn Macdonald, a gift from the author.

*More birth congratulations:* **Judith Barkow** and husband Joel are the proud parents of Oren Isaac, born October 4, 1994. He weighed in at 7 pounds 13 ounces.

**For Rent:** West London Flat - short term. It's near the Thames and 10 minutes to subway. Very pleasant and open plan studio apartment. Newly decorated. Garden level. Maximum 2 adults. 20-25 pounds per night including breakfast. Call 011 44 81 748 3900 (from US) for more info.

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