



## First Ever Scholarship Fund for Teacher Training in the Alexander Technique

by Kathryn Miranda

Deborah Caplan, a founding member of the American Center for the Alexander Technique (ACAT) in New York City, has donated \$5000 to start a scholarship fund for ACAT's Teacher Certification Program. The scholarship fund will be named the *Deborah Caplan - Alma Frank Fund* in honor of Ms. Caplan and her mother Mrs. Alma Frank. Ms. Caplan is a leading Alexander teacher, a licensed physical therapist and author of *"Back Trouble: A New Approach to Prevention and Recovery Based on the Alexander Technique"* (Triad, 1987). Mrs. Frank was among the first Americans to go to London and train with the technique's founder, F. Matthias Alexander. She received her certification from Mr. Alexander in 1940 and taught in New York City until her death in 1953.

The ACAT community of faculty and students are enthusiastic in their appreciation of this gift. ACAT Board Chair Thomas Vasiliades stated, "Debby Caplan and Alma Frank are a vital part of our teaching lineage. To have their names on a scholarship fund resonates strong and true with all our teaching values. We happily affirm their contribution to ACAT and we are pleased to begin a scholarship program."

The instructional requirements of the three year training program are extensive, with each student receiving a lot of individual training, coaching and supervision. Barbara Kent, Training Director of ACAT, says: "The Alexander Technique is a method of self-care and self-development that is practiced during the course of everyday life. People from all walks of life benefit from the skills they develop taking Alexander lessons. The high quality of our unique 3-year training enables our graduates to teach a broad spectrum of individuals such as performing artists, office workers and those with significant musculoskeletal problems."

Ms. Caplan states that, "This scholarship fund will help meet the financial needs of those students who cannot get other funding. The initial contribution will launch the scholarship program and hopefully, will help develop sources for additional funds."

To make a contribution to the Deborah Caplan - Alma Frank Fund, please call ACAT, a not-for-profit 501(3)(c) corporation. The telephone number is (212) 799-0468. §

## Floor Work: An Alternative to Table Work

by Ann Mathews

*The following is reprinted with the kind permission of Ann Mathews. It was a hand-out that accompanied her workshop at the AGM. Although I didn't attend the AGM this year, I had the good fortune to take a floorwork workshop with Ann at a prior AGM. She is also the author of the seminal Implications for Education in the Work of F. M. Alexander: An Exploratory Project in a Public Classroom, which I believe is still available from IRDEAT—Ed.*

Lulie Westfeldt and Walter Carrington have mentioned in their writings that students in F.M.'s early training classes used to work on one another on the floor using the squatting position

At that time table work as we all know it had not emerged as a part of the accepted procedure in teaching the Alexander Principles, although Carrington tells of F.M. asking him to work on a pupil on the table "before I give him a lesson."

Let me retrace some of the steps that led me to my convictions on the superiority of floor work. In 1975 I attended a Refresher Course at Lansdowne Road where Walter Carrington urged us all to persuade our pupils to take the Rest Position daily, saying that we would find our work and their progress much facilitated. As I didn't remember hearing this suggested in my lessons or training, I saw it as a new idea and obviously a useful one, so I began suggesting this to my pupils. But our accepted way of getting pupils on and off the table - supporting the head with direction as we take them down backwards, and similarly, bringing them back up as in a modified sit-up - was of little value on the floor. Their ability to direct was insufficient for the task.

Alma Frank's little-known 1934 paper in *Child Direction* was thought-provoking. In it she showed contrasting photographs of infants being pulled up from supine to sitting by their mothers and, alternatively, turning over by themselves in a lengthening/spiral movement. The contrast was dramatic. The sagittal movement compressed the babies so that they looked grotesque, and showed the strain - that usually accompanies unnatural and inefficient movement - particularly in the neck. The spiral movement, on the other hand, was beautiful at all stages and was apparently achieved with simplicity and ease, showing "no undue effort".

I noticed that the students in my small introductory classes invariably lowered themselves back down to  
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## Notes From the TCP

by Joan Frost

I am sitting, overlooking a lake in a remote part of Nova Scotia, reflecting on the past year at ACAT. As I think of ACAT, what comes to me first is the community of individuals who comprise it. As is intrinsic to the nature of a school, the composition of ACAT's TCP periodically shifts. Thus its collective nature changes too, in a subtle way. Through all, the love, dedication, generous spirit and presence of many have made ACAT what it has been over the past 33 years, and what it is now.

On June 27th, we graduated six candidates: Linda DeLeon, Alison Foley, Colleen Higgins, Gwynne Marshall, Barbara McCrane and Arthur Tobias. After much searching, they found a beautiful location for their ceremony - the Isadora Duncan Dance Studio on West 26th St. It was an attractive wood-floored open space with an outdoor terrace that accommodated a good number. There was an abundance of delicious food contributed by everyone, and the ceremony had a well-designed variety and flow. This included a dance skit, choreographed to convey the six' collective experience of 3 years of training together; a humorous piece about what it takes to make an Alexander teacher (how many miles collectively commuted, how many hours of child care paid for, how many tables waited upon, etc.); a story of the peony flower before thanking each teacher with a peony; and a song they composed and sang to the viola music of 7th termers Henry Lee and Eddie Malave. They also presented Barbara, myself and ACAT with two thoughtful gifts - a framed photograph of their 6 hands, which we now have in the office on top of the faculty boxes, and a Polaroid camera for taking before and after pictures of future ACAT classes. The evening and gifts left a warm memory of ACAT's 33rd class.

We have accepted four incoming candidates; Patricia Benstock, a violinist who teaches and performs in Long Island; Akiko Nishijima, a dancer from Japan; Denise Rathbun, a former editor for various publishing houses and a management consulting firm; and Chris Zatamei, a dancer who has performed extensively both here and abroad.

Barbara McCrane conceived and organized our Spring Term assembly. Having heard many references to and anecdotes of Judy Leibowitz over the course of her training, she wanted to know more about Judy's life, contributions to the Technique, and influences on the lives of those who knew her. She showed a video of Judy making a presentation of the Technique for a cable TV program; invited Pearl Ausubel, Barbara Kent, and whomever else to share their memories of Judy. Carolyn Serota and I led the group through Judy's approaches to the whispered and walking, respectively. I remember Barbara saying how Judy had confidence in one's capabilities and was able to take one a little beyond where they thought they could go: "I felt I could do it because Judy thought I could do it."

Based on feedback from the entire ACAT community, we are continuing to review our present structure to see if it can be improved. After a year of hard work creating a new TCP structure, it has become clear how difficult changes are to implement and how much time it takes. It is also difficult to sort out which changes would substantially benefit the majority affected by them enough to warrant the work to make them. The endeavor has proven much larger

(from preceding column)

than we had dreamed, yet have much work in front of us before we can make any final decisions.

So, for the present, changes at ACAT continue, but like changes in our use, on a more subtle level. Thank you to all who have made this past year what it was - full of good work and good learning. §

## Notes From the Chair

by Thomas Vasiliades

Thanks to the membership for attending the Annual meeting in March. Judy Stern has stepped down from the chair but remained on the board. Thank you Judy for your leadership. Kathy Miranda has left the Executive Director position and Jane Tomkiewicz has replaced her. Kathy has given many years of service to ACAT as Administrator and volunteered much time to ACAT. Kathy, thank you for your commitment and service to our community. Welcome to Jane. In this period of change it is your enthusiasm that will go a long way towards creating a smooth transition.

The board is actively seeking a rental space as a "home" for ACAT. Daniel Singer and I have been working with brokers, scanning the real estate ads for a suitable space. This is the primary objective of the board. Anyone with any leads or acquaintances in the real estate business please contact me. Debbie Caplan has generously donated \$5,000.00 to start a scholarship fund. The fund is named the *Deborah Caplan-Alma Frank Scholarship Fund* in honor of Deborah's mother. Members can make donations to build this fund.

The ACAT board has pledged to donate money to the NASTAT Marketing and Public Relations Committee. We will pay matching funds as follows: up to \$50 matching contribution of any current ACAT member; up to \$25 matching contribution of any ACAT graduate who is not a member. The total matching contributions will not exceed \$4,000. A minimum of \$2,000 in matching contributions is promised.

The ACAT board has also donated \$500.00 to IRDEAT for the publication of *The Books of F. M. Alexander*, to be published in a single volume. These have been difficult to obtain, and this will make them more readily available to ACAT trainees, members and the public. In deciding to make these financial contributions ACAT continues to support not only its own membership but the Alexander community at large.

This is a critical time for ACAT. In upcoming months the board will evaluate our resources, consider options and decide the direction ACAT will go. ACAT is a training center that can include post graduate courses and classes for the public. It seems to me that this is a direction for us to go. Other areas to consider are marketing of the technique to the public, public outreach, and fund raising to create these programs.

We are a membership driven organization. Volunteerism cannot be stressed enough. I invite you to become an active part in the building of the ACAT community. If you can give even two hours a week to ACAT that will go a long way. Your involvement will be very helpful to the growth of ACAT. Please contact me with any thoughts or questions. §

**"The endeavor has proven much larger than we had dreamed..."**

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## On Using the Principles to Start a Practice

by Mary-Beth Hraniotis

I spent three years at ACAT studying with an exceptional group of teachers and trainees. When this culminated in my certification, I embarked on the most rewarding journey, outside of childbirth, of my life. I was filled with the intense yearning to share this work with everyone, yet I was unsure of my ability to teach those unfamiliar with the work. Because I was new to teaching, I was timid to take on the responsibility of being a teacher. I wondered if I had enough experience with the principles to be sensitive to the subtleties of this work, and assist students through the process of change. I also no longer had hands-on, or the daily supportive environment of individuals who all shared the same language.

I didn't quite know how to proceed but decided not to let that be an obstacle. I believe that living with deep passion is an expression of true joy. I am passionate by nature, having grown up with influences which are in, around, and of me, deeply rooted in my familial tree. My passion for F.M.'s discovery and its implication for human evolution and development helped me find my own expression and my own style of teaching the Alexander Technique. I was determined to persevere in the face of innocence and ignorance (my own included).

I have often heard comparative questions like "is the AT like Pilates?" or "constructive conscious control, oh yeah, that's like meditation, isn't it?" At first I was timid when faced with these comparisons. I would often walk away wondering why, so I began to look to my own use to find the answer. I employed the principles, allowing myself more time before responding to the question "What is the Alexander Technique?" What I discovered in taking time between the stimulus of the question and giving my response was freedom to formulate an answer without worrying about the outcome, or if the answer was effective enough. I noticed people had an easier time understanding me, and my enthusiasm enhanced my connection to those I was conversing with. The result: people were interested in taking lessons.

As a new teacher my objective was to work, because the more I worked the more opportunity I had to improve my skill and improve my use. I asked myself who could benefit from lessons? The answer: everyone can. So how would I get students in the door and in front of the chair? This challenge intrigued me since I had absolutely no background in marketing.

I found that there is an ebb and flow in developing a student base. In the beginning most of my time was spent on bringing in students rather than teaching them. Following would come an influx of activity around my output and I would spend more time on teaching. The cyclical nature of teaching this work is engaging in and of itself.

I don't concern myself with not having students, my thinking is more with being accessible to those out there who want to take lessons. There are practical steps that I chose to facilitate this process. First I prepared a space to teach in because it created a boundary that was important to support my transition from student to teacher. Each time I entered this space it enhanced my process of creating the availability for attracting students. I would give myself a self-lesson as well as read from F.M.'s books. The teaching aphorisms of Marjory Barstow and Marjory Barlow were tremendously helpful. Once I was actively employing the principles, I could focus on what I needed to do in the moment.

I decided to canvass the area's yellow and white business pages to familiarize myself with the local markets. I chose the ones that interested me as well as studied the ads that caught my attention so that when I created my own, I had a springboard from which to work. I began advertising in the yellow pages because I believed it was important that my name and profession be in print and out in the world. I didn't have a huge budget to start with, nor did I choose to take out a business or personal loan to get me off and running.

I called the Nynex office and began to gather information. I found people to be quite forthcoming with information once I opened myself to receiving it. I had mentioned that I was new to teaching and to starting a business. The representative was so gracious and eager to help that we made an appointment to meet and she and I created an ad that spoke to the general public. Visual language is extremely important when using this means of communication. Because I was addressing the general public I chose a figure going from a sit to stand taking the first step of a walk, and placed this across the top of the ad. Underneath this I listed bullet points as to who can benefit, and that it is recommended by physicians. My name, the town where I teach, and phone number are listed across the bottom. I found out that there is usually a discount for first time advertisers so I benefited yet again!

I didn't get a huge response from this but have continued with it because I have gotten enough students from this particular ad to expand into another book, as well as to pay for the cost of it. The most important aspect was that it got my name out there and the phone to ring. The ad piqued their interest enough to make the call, but they have never heard of the Technique, and wanted to know how it can benefit them. What defines the AT and what makes it different from other techniques and disciplines?

When first beginning to explain the Technique during a phone inquiry, I would have by the phone a

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**"Once I was actively employing the principles, I could focus on what I needed to do in the moment."**

*(Starting a Practice, from preceding page)*

sheet that had quotes from F.M. and other teachers that I thought summarized what the Technique is and what its benefits are. I became a good listener from this because I didn't experience anxiety from floundering for a good explanation, and I could be more present during the conversation to pick up cues from the caller. I will always write down their first name upon the opening of the conversation and will refer to it throughout the call. Before hanging up I would have made an appointment, or at the very least gotten their name, address, and phone number for future use.

The next step for me was to design a brochure, letterhead and envelope that would be used to address all my further communication and advertising needs. It took me three months to put together a brochure that I thought was a good introduction to the A.T. I would work on it while waiting for the bus to drop off my kindergartner, or during bathtime while my twins were playing in the tub. Any free moment, and out would come the pad and pen! I began collecting brochures that attracted my attention and considered what it was that connected me to them.

The connection is not just through the words, but the design, color, spacing, etc., is communicating a message also. I considered this multidimensional aspect thoughtfully when putting mine together. The brochure represents an extension of my business card and covers the basics of the AT, its benefits and my personal background. I put it on card stock which has a great weight and feel so people are attracted to it and pick it up. I drove to the surrounding area's businesses that had a place for displaying information and dropped off my brochures. I would usually purchase something to show support of their business, and speak to the shop owners and establish a relationship so that if anyone picked up the brochure, the owner would be familiar with me and pass on information on my behalf. I would check back on a regular basis to replenish the supply. I have my brochure displayed in my office so that students who express interest in giving them to people or businesses can feel free to take as many as they would like. The benefits of this is twofold. I get my brochure distributed to places I have missed, and my student gets a free lesson if the referral calls, makes and keeps an appointment. I had also created a form letter to be sent out with my brochure following a phone inquiry. This worked well for me because it increased my response time to an inquiry which would increase my chances of booking the lesson.

I decided to connect with the larger community once I had all the other elements operating. I chose the medical community because of my interest in applying the A.T. in this sector. I again took several weeks to compile a letter that I thought was

effective in voicing what the A.T. is and how it could benefit their patients. I wrote and rewrote it, enlisting the feedback of family members who work in the medical environment. I picked up my yellow and white business pages and began a mailing list.

I had met an acquaintance at a party who had worked in marketing so I asked about return percentage in mailing. She gave me percentages that I then gauged my success on. Out of a total number in mailing a 1% return is the average. I got a 3% return first time out! The 3% that did call were very eager to meet with me and said right away that though they didn't have time to take a course of lessons, they would take a few and begin to refer to me. A physiatrist who had been coming to me for lessons (and was referred by NASTAT) invited me into his practice one day a week in a hospital setting after I had told him of my mailing and gave him the letter I had sent. He directed me to the administrator at the hospital, and I have been enjoying the challenge of working with chronic pain students ever since.

An important aspect of working in the medical arena outside of my education is the education that is passed on due to the Alexander influence. The physician will mention "use" and speaks to me about patients that have a specific pathology that could benefit from lessons. There has been a steady stream of referrals from him because he believes in the work. I love the term F.M. used, operational verification, because it implies that the proof of the work is not in blind faith but in the practical application it has in daily life. I can see it operating in students and the students recognize it in themselves. There is great power in this for chronic pain because it brings them back to themselves and lets them be a participant where they were once a victim.

When first starting a practice, I believe it is crucial to maintain a mental framework through which the transformation or growth of the practice can develop. A passage from a book by Lucy Goodison called *"The Dreams of Women"* encapsulates my early process. "Being creative means to let go of the security of the known, to follow our intuition, and then to act on what we believe to be true. It is not easy to do this because if we challenge existing structures, outside or within ourselves, we are confronted by our own fears, our own conditioning..." This passage spoke a truth that I had experienced in the beginning. I would be walking through the physical aspects of starting a business yet I observed myself disconnecting on a deep level. I noticed that I was placing mental/emotional obstacles during this stage and it surprised me. I decided to take a few days off and allow some space to consider what it was that I wanted to have happen. When I became clear and there was a congruence of all the parts, I became whole in my approach and clear in my pur-

*(continued in next column)*

**"Any free moment, and out would come the pad and pen!"**

*(from preceding column)*

pose. At first I would speak out loud to the silent phone and invite it to ring, or voice that I was ready to teach a lesson. I felt silly doing this but on some level it emancipated me. The interesting thing was that with in 48 hours the phone did ring. I no longer have to speak out loud; it is enough to reevaluate what I'm doing in the present and consider what I would like to have happen next. I trust that it will happen because the end does follow the means.

In closing I would like to make an analogy between beginning a practice and mothering because they began simultaneously for me. I believe that it was a natural progression that I didn't start off teaching 20 or more lessons per week, just as my children appeared as tiny, sleepy creatures rather than intense, fast moving toddlers. It was this progression that prepared me for what was to come. I don't believe I had the stamina to teach more than a few lessons when I began teaching, much like I had to be trained by my children to keep up with their energy. Like a child, a new practice has to be nurtured, given attention and gently disciplined if it is to grow and thrive. With perseverance, attention to patience and presence, the practice will develop naturally and in accordance with individual aspirations. §

*(Floor Work, from page 1)*

get into the rest position, with that same compressed look. Unless asked to do otherwise, they would automatically come up in a sit-up, losing inches of front length that they had just gained and obviously using much "undue effort. I remembered that a few of my pupils who had painful backs had objected when I described how I wanted to take them down on the table and asked if they could roll over instead. I agreed, and was each time impressed with the grace of their movement. I began asking the students in my class to get down on all fours, sit side-saddle on one haunch, stretch out and roll over onto the books, and later to reverse this, just as a baby does, to come out of rest position. Impressed with how much longer these beginners kept the front length and shoulder width gained in the rest position, I began to include this in the first few lessons with new pupils, so that they would get the sense of how to do it at home on their own. I would work on them in a kneeling position and I found that I could do everything on the floor that I could do on the table, although it was more work for me and took more time to get there, move about and get back up. After a few lessons we would again use the table.

I spent 1983 working on my Master's thesis on teaching the Alexander principles to children. One of the things I had to do was work with 20 children in a 25 minute rest period. This took me another step ahead. I clearly had to economize on time, and the only way to do it was to use the squat. As I was 55 years old at the time and had not for many years used the true squatting position, which requires the whole foot to remain on the floor, this was not easy:

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ankle flexion is slow to return. But squatting down with back lengthening and widening - while holding onto the head - was just barely possible. The more I did it, the easier it became, serving at the same time to lengthen and widen my once-very swayed lower back. In the beginning wearing a small heel was tremendous help in grounding me and giving me a sense of future ease in the position. I was soon able to do without it.

Ilana Rubinfeld once remarked that leaning against the backs of chairs teaches us to rely on something external for support, so we cease to use our spines. Similarly, Alexander tables teach us to rely on a piece of furniture for doing our horizontal work, so we become unable to do without them. I am happy to report that the more I used floor work the more I appreciated its virtues, and the more I came to prefer it over table work. There are things I can do in floor work that I cannot do on the table. Further, it keeps me moving and breathing. In chair work we stand endlessly, and in table work we do very little more. As far as positions go, we are limited to Monkey and Lunge. In floor work we can use squatting, alternating it with kneeling, sitting and a deep table-top Monkey, an almost quadruped position which increases lung capacity dramatically. The stand-squat-stand is far better, more basic and more challenging for us than stand-sit-stand, and actually improves the latter by placing it in the stand-squat-stand continuum where it belongs. Further, it demonstrates what we should be teaching every pupil and student: the importance of reclaiming the squat for our lives, for our breathing, for our backs and for our health in general. It is my firm belief that, in an ideal Alexandrian future, only those teachers limited by age, injury or a crippling disease would use the table.

The rest of us would accept the challenge of returning gradually to a fuller range of natural use, and so be able to work happily and creatively on the floor. Our pupils would benefit from this certainly, but the greatest beneficiaries would be ourselves. §

**"...I found that I could do everything on the floor that I could do on the table..."**

**Has the "librarian within you" been desperately longing to express him/herself?**

A volunteer is being sought to help work toward a system of better organizing ACAT's library. Other benefits beside that of giving some time to your local organization is that you may acquaint yourself with the many fascinating articles, books, research papers that you weren't aware existed - and you may be helping bring their existence to the awareness of your colleagues. You will be working with the Executive Director and an assistant. Possible AIS credit for trainees. Please consider this or any other contribution of time you may be able to make toward ACAT. For more info contact the center. Thank you .

## News from the Center

**New Additions to the Library:** *A Time To Remember - A Personal Diary of Teaching the Alexander Technique in 1946* by Walter Carrington; *Beginning from the Beginning: The Growth of Understanding and Skill*; Joan and Alexander Murray in conversation with Kevin Ahern and Marian Goldberg on the evolution of the Dart Procedures and beyond; *The Congress Papers: 125 Years on the Meaning of Change* 4th Int'l Congress at Sydney Australia July 1994. Dedicated to Marj Barstow/Edited by David Garlick/Published by Direction; *Direction Magazine: Macdonald and the Israelis* Vol. 2 #5; *The Healing Path - A Soul Approach to Illness* by Marc Ian Barasch; *Every Woman's Guide to Natural Home Remedies* by Sally Freeman; *Advances - The Journal of Mind-Body Health* Vol. 12 #4 and Vol. 13 #1& #2; *Alternative Therapies - A Peer Reviewed Journal* Vol. 2 #6 and Vol.3 #1,2,3; *Clinical Bulletin of Myofascial Therapy* - The Practical Journal for the Soft-tissue Practitioner.

ACAT member and Nyack resident **Claudia Peyton** will be teaching four upcoming class series to be offered by the Rockland County YMCA located at 35 South Broadway in Nyack New Jersey. Each class series will meet for eight weeks and will cost \$85. The hour-long classes will begin on September 8, Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:00 a.m. For more information call either Claudia at (914) 353-4463 or Steven Gunnat (914) 358-0245.

**Publications:** *Complementary Therapies in Rehabilitation - Holistic Approaches for Prevention and Wellness* Edited by Carol M. Davis Published by Slack Incorporated. Includes a chapter on the Alexander Technique. The center hopes to receive a desk copy soon. Also; *The Complete Guide to Natural Healing* by Tom Monte and the Editors of Natural Health Magazine Perigee Books \$35.

In 1996 *The Institute for Research, Development & Education in the Alexander Technique* (IRDEAT) received the rights to reprint the books of F. M. Alexander in a single, hard-back edition. Thanks to the generosity of many individuals' contributions of money, time and talent, *The Books of F. Matthias Alexander: Man's Supreme Inheritance, Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual, The Use of the Self, The Universal Constant in Living* will soon be available for purchase in one attractive, hard-cover volume.

Since 1995, when IRDEAT set out to make the then out-of-print books available to the AT community and general public, three of the books have come back into print. However, this hard-cover volume is complete and unabridged. Each book appears as originally printed by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. - (CCCI includes the preface that appeared in the 1942 version).

IRDEAT, a not-for-profit, tax-deductible organization is still accepting contributions to meet the expenses of completing this project. Many contributions have poured in, but more are needed. You've heard it before, but it's true: every contribution counts. . . and all contributions are tax deductible (notice of receipt is sent to all contributors).

*The Books of F. Matthias Alexander* is expected to be available for sale September 20, 1997. For more information, call IRDEAT at 212-473-3247. All donations can be made by sending a check or money order, made out to IRDEAT, to 74 MacDougal Street, New York, New York, 10012.

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