



The following letters are a continuation of the discussion started at the annual meeting last year about the future of ACAT. It was decided at that meeting to use the ACATNews as a forum to express opinion on the issue, so that at next year's meeting we could better discuss and possibly vote on it. Last month Daniel Singer wrote to the issue in "A new paradigm for ACAT?" - ed.

Director's Letter

by Jane Tomkiewicz

Dear Members,

Due to an oversight, a letter I'd written didn't appear in last edition of the ACAT news. Although technically now longer "news" I would still like to include the section regarding departing board members as well as my letter of background to the "ACAT - Training Program and/or Membership Services discussion."

Goodbye and thank you.

During a spring board meeting this year, Chairperson Tom Vasiliades and board member Daniel Singer announced their resignations. Tom had served for 2 years on the board: one year as a director and one year as Chair, which he assumed when Judy Stern stepped down. Since certifying in 1994, Tom has been a very active ACAT member serving on volunteer faculty for many terms and assisting and eventually taking over the full task of organizing and running the post-grad courses. Daniel had been on the board for one year, having also previously served on the board some years ago. Daniel's resignation was effective as of the Annual Meeting, whereas Tom agreed to stay on until the end of the TCP year. Although they relinquished other board duties, Daniel and Tom both committed to continuing to lead the new location search and to assisting in the relocation process. On behalf of the board and the membership I would like to thank both Tom and Daniel for their service to ACAT.

ACAT's Future

One last proposal made by Daniel before resignation was the proposal to the board that ACAT change from trying to serve both trainees and teacher members, and instead focus only on the teacher certification program. It was a proposal that the board could not vote on as such a move would require a bylaw change and bylaw changes need to be discussed and voted on by the general membership. In fact, this matter has come up before in ACAT history. Around the time of the formation of NASTAT the issue of was put to the general membership and voted down. That was over ten years ago and in light of certain developments,

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An Open Letter

by Deborah Caplan

Dear Board of Directors,

This letter is in response to the final discussion at ACAT's Annual Membership meeting on 3/15/98 concerning the future structure and purpose of ACAT. My following comments are from the perspective of being a founding member of ACAT.

When ACAT was started there were no Teacher Certification Programs in the United States to set a protocol for training Alexander teachers. There also was no organization in this country to which the general public, the media, or the educational or medical communities, could go for information on Alexander's work.

Since its founding, ACAT has provided both these resources in such an excellent way that the Technique is much better known and is held in high regard.

Since we now have a national organization (NASTAT), perhaps the time has come for us to focus our energies on what we do superbly, which is to train teachers. As a founding member, I am immensely proud of what ACAT has accomplished since its beginning. I would be very comfortable with our becoming solely a Teacher Certification Program if the consensus of the Board and the membership is to do so. Our current members could form an alumni association (suggested as a possibility by Barbara Kent), or become a local chapter of NASTAT.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Caplan

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Notes From the TCP

by Joan Frost

The Fall Term has begun in new environs! We are delighted to be holding our classes in the spacious and elegant accommodations at the Sandra Cameron Dance Center, 20 Cooper Square, 6th floor in downtown Manhattan. Even though the Alexander work is always good, what exists in one's visual field, the general surrounding atmosphere, and the sense of space all do contribute to how one feels. We are all much happier in our new location. For the time being, the ACAT office remains at 129 W. 67th St., Rm. 419, Phone: (212) 799-0468.

We had nine unique and qualified applicants for the Fall Term and decided to take all nine. We have Beth Gauharou, a chef and former student of Florence Korzinsky; Anne Rene Lawton, a dancer/fitness instructor and former student of Anne Waxman; Sabine Heubusch, a dancer and dance teacher from Vienna, Austria, student of Shelley Senter; Yorgos Matskaris, a dancer from Greece, student of Shelley Senter; Gary Ramsay, an actor and voice teacher and student of Barbara Kent; Gwen Roe, a reflexologist, student of Pamela Anderson and Joan Frost; Kathe Jarka, cellist and student of Jessica Wolf; Melissa Mazzeo, dancer/philosopher – recent graduate of Sarah Lawrence, student of Jessica Wolf; and Maiké Lenz, a dancer and dance teacher from Germany, student of Judith Grodowitz. It is the largest incoming class we've had in many years.

Because of the group's size, we hired two new senior teachers: Diane Young and Brooke Lieb. Both have been on our associate faculty for many years and are well-qualified to be leading their own classes. We also hired a new associate faculty: Hope Martin. Hope had volunteered for many years at ACAT and has significant teaching experience in New York City and abroad.

Kim Jessor and Marta Curbelo are both back teaching after extended leaves of absence and Debby Caplan and Jane Kosminsky are off for the next two terms. Robert (Bob) Bradley has just completed his training and is now volunteering at ACAT and Edward (Eddie) Malave and Henry Lee are soon to follow. This December, three more will be graduating: Kecia Chin, Anke Froehlich, and Tara Sullivan. The time and location for the ceremony are still to be determined.

A year ago, Barbara Kent and I updated our reading list and included a list of recommended reading culled from our faculty. If you are interested in a copy of the list, please contact me at (914)365-3497 or write me at the ACAT office and I'll get it to you.

Because we now have so much teaching space, it opens up possibilities of more whole-school gatherings. At our recent faculty retreat in Sag Harbor, we discussed possibilities for using some training time this way, perhaps an hour a month. I'll be able to speak about this in more detail in the next newsletter. §

"It is the largest incoming class we've had in many years."

(Director's Letter, continued from page 1)

Daniel and other ACAT members would like to take up the discussion again. As was decided at the Annual Meeting, The ACAT news would be the format to air opinions such that an informed vote could be taken next year at the Annual Meeting if it were properly proposed beforehand. I would like to provide a little background that you can keep in mind as you consider the various issues.

ACAT is a membership organization created and incorporated in 1964. There are teacher-members and trainee-members. ACAT runs a Teacher Certification Program as well as provides members' services. Furthermore, ACAT serves as an information source to the public, responding to about 750 calls a year. Although the majority of the callers are individuals seeking information about the AT or seeking teachers (or trying to become volunteers for the trainees) there are quite a few calls from writers, editors, libraries, schools and other organizations. In that regard ACAT serves all teachers including future teachers (trainees) regardless of affiliation (ACAT/NASTAT/ATI or other).

The majority of ACAT's income and expenses are involved with the running of the TCP (incoming=tuition, expenses=faculty, rent and administration).

There are three main paid administrative positions, the Director and Associate Director of the TCP, and the Executive Director of the Center who is involved with technical and financial support for running the TCP, directing all membership services as well as responding to all types of public inquiries. There is also an office assistant (of limited hours a week) who may provides technical assistance in all areas but whose majority of work supports the TCP.

Membership services receives less support from the administrative staff but that is commensurate with the fact that compared to tuition, membership dues contribute a much smaller portion of ACAT's operating budget (about 5%). What are membership services? Voting rights at the Annual General Meeting, inclusion in the Member Teacher list which is given out to over 500 people a year, access to mailing labels of all public inquiries, access to ACAT library (including videos), ACAT newsletter 2-3 times a year, ability to serve on volunteer faculty, ability to give ACAT sponsored lecture/demonstrations to the public, ability to participate in continuing education programs (this last year was the first year in several that no continuing programs were offered due to board energies being diverted toward TCP restructuring and space search) and/or ACAT special events. There are cur-

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rently about 90 ACAT teacher members and about 24 trainees.

ACAT has been able to maintain its basic level of services quite well for a number of years now; however the various forays into the expanded realms of a postgraduate program, extended support services for teachers, public relations, grant-writing or fund-raising have not been able to either be supported or sustained, requiring too much volunteering from a limited number of people. I think it is from the frustration or disappointment with the inability to expand ACAT's function that the current proposal to entirely eradicate services springs. I want to add a cautionary note and some information so that the baby is not thrown out with the bath water.

First, I would like to point out that currently the annual membership renewal rate is extremely high and has been for the last several years. I believe that shows that whether or not members feel more could happen, they are not unhappy with what is happening. Why eliminate something that seems to receive a vote of confidence each year?

ACAT/NASTAT/NASTAT Regional?

The main and most common sense arguments that I hear in support of eliminating ACAT's member services is that ACAT and NASTAT duplicate services, that NASTAT has more members and resources to provide member services in a superior manner, and that eliminating ACAT member services could greatly reduce my workload. (The great majority of ACAT members - 95% or more - are also NASTAT members. Of NASTAT members in our area, ACAT grads and members make up a great majority.) Although there are some areas of overlap - and I am entirely in favor of ACAT and NASTAT working together closely to eliminate duplicated or wasted energy - I don't believe there is as much overlap as is commonly believed and more importantly, the fact that so many members continue both memberships leads me to believe that ACAT must be satisfying some other need or providing something else - less tangible though it may be. Could it be that members continue renewing not entirely for the services they receive but for say, that of wanting to belong to a local organization?

This was evidenced by the numerous people who spoke at last year's meeting. There were several comments made to the effect of "Yes, let's eliminate the membership services - however could someone still keep and update a list of member teachers in the area so that we could still contact each other?" And another typical comment: "OK, I see the sense of eliminating member services however, could we still take local inquiries at the ACAT office so that they don't have to go to Minnesota to be processed and then come back to us here?" Any number of times people agreed to the principle, but then cited a practice that they didn't want to let go of that contradicted the principle.

Although I do believe that all the kinks could eventually be worked out one way or another I think that the important point is that having some kind of local organization seems to be important to our members. I would say that it is time to really explore the mechanics of how a NASTAT regional chapter might work to serve this community. I would not like to see us rush into anything until this is thoroughly and practically discussed.

There are yet other not so tangible aspects of why members continue to renew "duplicate memberships". One has to do with ACAT's history, its wide recognition and reputation. I got an interesting perspective on this subject speaking with Hope Gillerman who has served on NASTAT's Media and Public Relations committee and who has recently rejoined ACAT. Hope said that because of ACAT's long standing nature (30+ years) she is proud to be a member and thinks that it helps her professional credentials. Furthermore she said that she feels that ACAT supplies the public with a better information packet (including a good brochure on the AT, a listing of a local lecture demonstration) than NASTAT does. (This may change as NASTAT works on creating a good brochure.) Other members have mentioned to me that they generally get a better response from ACAT labels than NASTAT labels. I bring this up now not to compare the two - but only to say that perhaps the "local brand" has the advantage of the familiarity over the national product sometimes. And that furthermore our local brand has the further incalculable value of "being well established." Personally, I wonder how we could "broker" our reputation and our history to work for us as we negotiate how NASTAT the national organization might support our NASTAT regional chapter.

There are two more "NASTAT issues" to consider in all of this. Will the increase in NASTAT dues impact our renewal? (Please feel to phone, fax or e-mail in your personal opinion about this issue to me at the center.) Secondly, does NASTAT need time or anything else to prepare for a change in volume that our "turning everything over to NASTAT" might bring? Our newsletter is always sent to the Chairman, to the Newsletter Editor and the Administrator) so if they have been reading they will be aware of the issues at hand, however, so far there have been no formal discussions about the possibilities.

Again, these are some of the tangibles and intangibles that we will have to deal with, that we have to sift through as we consider our future. Let the discussions continue, let the brainstorming happen, however please let's inhibit coming to conclusions until as much information as possible is in and until we've had the occasion to assemble and discuss.

Sincerely,

Jane Tomkiewicz
Executive Director

**“Why
eliminate
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The Technique

by Robert Bradley

I have contracted inexplicable maladies: I can feel the weight of my eyeballs in my head; my skin, in certain areas, is rotting due to unexpressed rage; my toes feel like they're made of glass; my tongue is too fat; I have suspicions regarding my spleen and as far as my jaw goes I'm at a loss for words.

Furthermore, I know that time is a product of the ego and that my ego has been dislodged from its moorings and is floating senselessly in a pool of narcissism.

Time then, for me, proceeds in fits and starts convinced as I am that I am its focal point set adrift on its dark sea depths to peer for unspoken hours with failing vigilance upon its surface, rise and fall.

Fact is, Time's origins lie in the future. And you and I can only brace ourselves with lies or uprightness, given choice, against its persistent weathering, like frost on rocks.

Braindrabble

No. This self-evaluation is my attempt to bring sense and order to the fifth and most perfect element, i.e., dust. Or man. Or in my case, my self. Let me assure you I have been studying myself, on and off, for over a year, sometimes using a mirror, as per The Technique, and I must say that my observations are practically scientific. For instance, I rate myself every evening on a scale of 1 to 68, 65 being healthy. My average, thus far, is 17.

Three days ago I decided to see a doctor. He gave me something for my knee, which hurts. To my chagrin, the prescription caused my stomach to become upset, spurring in me such anxiety that I felt inclined to dart into moving traffic. Instead, I drink a lot of water with the pill and that seems to help.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm a student of The Technique. The Technique is taught by an insular group of teachers who live in N.Y.C. They invite you into their homes on Central Park West and point things out to you about yourself that you were not aware of. They call this teaching "awareness." Awareness is the cornerstone of The Technique.

They will also teach you to say, "No" to bad habits. And then after you have learned that they'll teach you to think, "up." If you remember these instructions, in the proper order, they'll tell you, "That's good" or "That's it." Then they'll teach it to you again. The same exact thing. Because, in truth, you will have forgotten it. You forget because your habits are insidious and will tip you, always, in the direction of misuse and degradation.

Bad habits are the mind's response to a lifetime of horrors, slights and misunderstandings, disrupting the body's rapture and the mind's bliss which you'd be

residing in, right now, if only you could master your conscious and unconscious thinking and evolve, according to God's Plan, to the next phase of human consciousness where discomfort is abolished and all are free to express themselves without fear of reprisals. Here, in the next phase, people will address only their own faults and misgivings as they arise internally and finding any disturbances there, in body or mind, quell them and realign themselves with the Universal Order.

That the human being is an emotional animal and will not be swayed by science alone cannot be denied. So then, before an emotion, I would dare to instruct that, the correct posture to assume is a bending at the hip, arms outstretched, palms up, knees slightly bent, head bowed in supplication. Anything short of supplication will cause a split in the self and born of that split, to jump ahead, is the blighted soul who, craven, seeks revenge not against itself but against imagined others, and in so doing invokes evil and forsakes the good and to extrapolate further, renders harm to others, and jumping ahead again, rallies nations to war: brother against brother. And this, all due to internally perceived threats to one's self-image.

In response to the above the teachers of The Technique practice the "Inner Smile" and the "Free Neck" and they invite you to do the same. I am one of them, now: a recent graduate of their program; a moth among butterflies. I am six weeks into the world and in that time I have taken on a student or two. With one student I have discussed Dante and his Inferno. She said, "We live in a Sinless Society, not because everything is forgiven but because so much is allowed out of wanton ignorance... Knowledge means responsibility," she concluded. I said, With understanding comes freedom which is the greatest responsibility. Then I pointed to her neck. To be free you must lift the restrictions manifested by the mind in the body... beginning with the neck. Let go of muscular habit so the bones can be free... I'm paraphrasing. This went on for an hour or so.

With another student, a dancer, I said we are interrupting habit patterns. She said she didn't want to interrupt her habit patterns. I then demonstrated to her that that was not true. It's amazing to me how we can say things with utter conviction only to find out later that words are not reality. Behavior is reality. At the end of the hour she left saying that she'd call me next week. She didn't call. Also, we must take care not to mistake reality for our interpretation of it.

We live under spells and move from place to place in a dream. Nobody understands anything. To begin to understand even the simplest interaction between two people you have to begin with the idea that communication is an illusion. I called the dancer and left a message on her machine asking her to call me.

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"And this, all due to internally perceived threats to ones self-image."

(from preceding page)

Life is too complex to be adequately thought. So how, I ask myself, can I live a thoughtful life? When I look back on the lived part of my life I experience a sense of loss. My response to loss is always grief, unless I include this moment as ironic counterpoint. That seems to balance things out so that I can, and I was taught this, proceed without proceeding. My teachers are a wily lot, so give pause, for when they are moving toward you they are also moving away from you. This is not an optical illusion, but something to be marked, studied. In any case, regarding my past, it becomes something to build not on but with.

Further, The Technique requires that I rethink notions of self-identification and recreate myself, so as not to be dragged, a bundle of bones at the end of ropes, to dusty death. I will certainly die. But first, a life.

My chosen models are a bright, energetic people. Friendly and polite. Given over to hugging and accepting people as they are. Until that time comes when they put their hands upon you and change you forever.

I have expanded my awareness under their tutelage and it appears to me now that life is lived in the space of time just before a decision to act is made. So, if I can focus my will and attention on that gap and can continually expand it while remaining easy in myself I may yet achieve a degree of freedom and see beyond the ordinary...

But self-rule comes first. And self-rule requires bold action. In preparation, and under doctors orders, I will undertake a week of complete bed rest and see how I feel then. §

ACAT Fall 1998 Retreat

by Brooke Lieb

On the weekend of October 3 & 4, many faculty members of ACAT joined together at Barbara Kent and Julie Tatkon's beautiful Sag Harbor home for our "almost annual" retreat.

Mornings began with Connie Serchuk leading a Chi Gung warm-up, followed by hands-on exchanges. On Saturday we worked in triads, taking a turn each as teacher, student and observer. This allowed a chance to experience each other's work and see the uniqueness and similarities in our approaches to teaching the work. Sunday morning we had the luxury of working one-on-one. Many of us commented on the performance anxiety that comes up when teaching a teacher and when being watched. We also acknowledged what a treat it was to have this kind of time to spend exploring our work together.

On Saturday afternoon, we heard each teacher's syllabus to have a sense of what each level would be studying this term. This assured there would be a balanced curriculum through the ten weeks. This was done in part because we have opted not to assign specific topics by day of the week as has been the practice for many years.

Sunday afternoon centered around discussions of how to format the monthly sessions where we would bring all the training classes together for an hour. Some of the topics considered were a group warm-up; viewing videos and then giving turns based on what the videos inspired; demonstrations of whispered ah and hands on the back of the chair; and discussions of communication skills and giving constructive feedback.

While we accomplished a great deal of work, we had ample time to enjoy each other's company, go to the beach, take a dip in the pool, take walks, and savor Julie's astounding and nurturing cooking. The house is beautifully open and full of light. We worked in the living room and on the deck overlooking the backyard and pool. Some highlights from the menu included homemade pumpkin pie, salmon with ginger lemon sauce, onion soup, and a berry mousse in pastry shells. §

Barbara Conable at ACAT

by Patricia Benstock

This past spring, Alexander Instructor Barbara Conable visited the American Center for the Alexander Technique to discuss what cellist William Conable she have termed "Body Mapping." Although her time at the Center was brief, she was able to go into some detail explaining "Body Mapping," as well as to explain how she relates this to the Alexander Technique, and specifically, to her work with musicians. She also introduced her audience to her recently published book, *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body*.

Ms. Conable began her half-hour talk by providing those in attendance with a tangible "guide" to the "Body Mapping" concept. She handed out photocopies of very basic, drawn representations of the skeletal structure. On this reproduction she pointed out what she terms "the core of the body and the places of balance," emphasizing these by having the participants place sticker-stars on these points on their diagrams. After they had done this, she explained how, when working with a group, she uses this visual aid to explain how and why "Body Mapping," in conjunction with the Alexander Technique, can lead to an improved kinesthetic sense—which in turn can lead to better function. This can offer myriad opportunities for heightened performance of any task or skill. Besides the recent publication of her book, Ms. Conable also has to her credit the pioneering of teaching a course called "What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Alexander Technique: The Course". At present, she has enlisted over thirty people to train to teach this course in New York. The opportunities this opens for performing musicians are exciting.

Ms. Conable's approach to the Alexander Technique via "body Mapping" was quite intriguing. After hearing/participating in her demonstration, one can only look forward to reading her new book and exploring her ideas of "the mind and self in movement." Surely, musicians and non-musicians alike will benefit greatly from Ms. Conable's refreshing slant on F.M. Alexander's work! §

**"...the core
of the body
and the places
of balance..."**

News from the Center

In the old news is good news category: The fabulous **Sarnie Ogus** gave a lecture-demo in July for the Physical Therapy Department of Southampton Hospital, in Southampton, Long Island. In September she gave a lecture-demo at an all day retreat for the staff of *Family League Service of Suffolk County*. All the participants were psycho-therapist. Both events were very well received.

Congratulations to the class certifying Dec. 1998. At this writing, **Kecia Chin, Anke Froelich** and **Tara Sullivan** are planning their graduation which will take place at *Cafe Cafe* on Dec. 12, 1998. All ACAT members should have received an invitation in a separate mailing. Our best wishes to the grads!

Congratulations! Because there was no formal graduation ceremony/cel- ebration the community did not have occasion to congratulate and extend best wishes to the class of June 1998. **Robert Bradley, Ed Malave** and **Henry Lee** finished their formal classtime training in June of 1998. Although formal class hours were over all three still needed to complete some work/hours. At this point **Robert and Eddie** have made up ab- sences etc., and are certified. Once again, our best wishes to you as you move into the world of teaching.

Correction: In the last issue in the "Notes from the Center" a heading was omitted. "New Additions to the Library" should have appeared before the entry about Pedro de Alcantara. The video of his presentation is one of the new additions to the library.

The following titles have been added to the ACAT library: Stevens, Christopher - *Towards a Physiology of the F.M. Alexander Technique: A record of work in progress*; McCullough, Carol Porter - *The Alexander Technique & the String Pedagogy of Paul Rolland* (Thesis); Gray, John - *The Alexander Tech- nique*; De Alcantara, Pedro - *Indirect Procedures*; Brennan, Richard - *The Alexander Technique Workbook*; Brennan, Richard - *The Alexander Technique Manual*; Garlick, David - *The Lost Sixth Sense*; Oliver, Bruce & Sherry Berjeron- Oliver - *Working Without Pain*; Shaw, Steven and D'Angour, Armand - *The Art of Swimming*; McGowan, Daniel *Constructive Awareness*; Nelken, Shmuel - *The Alexander Technique*; Macdonald, Robert - *The Use of the Voice*

Joy Jacobson has been teaching group lessons in a physical therapy of- fice that specializes in RSI. The class series is ten sessions long with 3-4 people per class. Joy is back and working after the birth of Leo Russell Velleu. Joy, her husband Rick, and their son Jesse welcomed Leo who was born May 2, 1998. Joy says "the second one is easier".

Professional Office for Bodyworker or Health Provider. Great location in Soho. Available daily until 1:00pm and/or weekends. Flexible fee: per hour or per 1/2 day or per week. (212) 502-8546

There is a new weekday rental space available at the *Ward Studio* at 145 W. 28th st. Their spaces are light and perfect for group classes and private

lessons. The 400 sq. ft. main studio costs only \$15 per hour and the 160 sq. ft. studio costs \$10 per hour. Call the Ward Studio at (212) 239-1456 for reservations.

Office space available:

Carpeted studio, ideal for individual or group sessions /classes, located at 5th Ave. at 28th street. Call 685-2561 for more information.

Connie Serchuk is looking for a teaching space on the upper west side, If you have any information or leads please call Connie at (212) 677-1663

Kim Jessor will be teaching on the staff of the *Miller Institute for the Performing Artists* at St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital -the "largest and most comprehensive program of healthcare for performing artists in the coun- try, founded in 1985." Good luck Kim.

Jane Tomkiewicz and her husband "officially" announce that they had a daughter on Dec. 28, 1997. Elyse Maria is just over 10 months now and is a joy! Retendy, while with her daughter, she bumped into ACAT members who said they had no idea she was a mother and encouraged her to include it in the news - so here you are.

Born to **Barbara McCrane** and her husband Paul Reale, daughter Hannah Elise Reale on July 15, 1998; baby Hannah weighed in at 8 lbs. 13 ozs.

ACAT Has Moved (Well, sort of): As noted in Joan Frost's column, the teaching space is now located at the *Sandra Cameron Dance Center*, 20 Coo- per Square, 6th floor in downtown Manhattan. For the time being, the ACAT office remains at 129 W. 67th St., Rm. 419, Phone: (212) 799-0468.

A Call for Volunteer Faculty

ACAT has some openings for volunteer faculty for the upcoming Winter and Spring terms. It can be a wonderful way to get back to the source of the teaching and to refresh your skills in a learn- ing environment. Positions are open to any certified teacher of the Technique. We do ask that you spend some time observing in the class you are assigned to prior to working with the trainees, especially if you have been trained elsewhere or have been away from the program for several years. The teacher you are working with may also want to spend some time working with you pri- vately to get to know your teaching style. For more information, please call Joan Frost at (914) 365-3497.

Seeking Editor for ACATNews

The position of Editor of the ACAT News is now open; com- puter skills needed, desktop publishing skills would be a plus. Inquire at the ACAT office.

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