



The ACAT System As A Whole

by Kathy Miranda

The following is a partial transcription of Kathy Miranda's farewell speech. - Ed.

Seeing the *Local Picture* is the best any of us can do.

And as for local perspectives, I've had quite a few. I've had the opportunity to see ACAT from the outside looking in as a volunteer body and an applicant. And I thought it was disorganized and unresponsive.

I've seen it as a student from the bottom looking up and as the client who pays for its services. And I've felt insignificant and at times "done-to".

I've seen it from the inside looking out as chief interface with outside agencies and the general public and have felt much like the *manager of the heart*.

I've seen it from the middle as an administrator carrying messages between government agencies and the board and between board and students. And I've felt my allegiance torn.

I've seen it as a faculty member providing service to our clients, and felt the pressure to provide immediate value with my expertise and skills.

I've seen it from the top looking in all directions, trying to understand the big picture and feeling responsible for every part of the system and burdened by all the things that should be done.

With all the perspectives I've had, ACAT still can seem a lot messier than it really is or a lot neater than it really is. When things go wrong, I've struggled to understand the reasons. But it seems that reasons are complex and conditions are always shifting. Important facts are either not revealed or revealed too late. It is easy to misinterpret events when you don't have the big picture. And the big picture is a composite that no one person at ACAT can compile. It takes all of us.

So I'd like to make a contribution to your composite picture of the ACAT big picture by sharing this synthesis of my 11 year history of ACAT.

The wholeness of ACAT is *not like* the wholeness of a *Human Being*. I say that might be obvious. But our sense of wholeness, our expectations of systems that

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Deborah Caplan's Workshop

by Linda De Leon

On February 2, 1997, Deborah Caplan presented an all day workshop on the Alexander Technique to Master's candidates in the Physical Therapy program at Columbia University. She was assisted by teachers Ruth Nardini, Jane Tomkiewicz and Hope Gillerman, and trainees Allison Foley and myself.

Debbie began by distributing handouts of the topics she would cover, detailing the lecture segments and the demonstrations. Her description of the Alexander Technique as "a learning process that teaches you to use your body in daily activities with efficient use" fit well with the workshop's primary purpose of helping the students to use their bodies better in the course of their demanding profession. She emphasized balanced muscle tone and efficient alignment. She was aided by the full skeleton provided at the Neurological Institute, where the workshop was held.

Debbie immediately established that A.T. is a Mind-Body discipline that is applied to movement in everyday activities, and that people learn it on two levels: cognitive and kinesthetic. She mentioned that performing artists were the largest group studying the technique, followed by people with musculoskeletal problems. Her description of the technique pointed out that there is no conflict between A.T. and P.T., and that A.T. is especially good for postoperative back patients. Debbie gave her own personal biography as an Alexander teacher who became a Physical Therapist, returning to A.T. as her modality. Since her mother had studied with F.M. and he had worked on Debbie when she was a child, her own story flowed into the biography of F. M. and the history of AT.

After the biographical and historical material, she went into the three main concepts: Conscious Control, Directions or Orders, and Inhibition, briefly explaining each. Everyone took part in the following demonstration: *put your hand in back of your head and slump; notice what that feels like under your hand; allow the muscles to lengthen and feel the difference as you rotate your head.* Then she went into the first Direction of releasing the neck to allow the head to balance forward and up off the spine. She explained the 'forward' as a corrective forward rotation, not a dipping down. Throughout, she stressed that the directions are really what *not* to do. She was consistent in explaining terms as she went along, defining the term *release* as follows:

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Notes From the TCP

by Joan Frost

We opened our doors October 7th with six new candidates: Naina Dewan, a dance major from SUNY Geneseo; Hyun Sook Baek, here from Korea, and a dance major from New York University; Emily Fraenkel, also a dancer; Beate Mathois, from Vienna, with a background in dance, theatre, and voice; Loren Shlaes, from San Francisco and an occupational therapist; and Ralph Zito, voice teacher at The Juilliard School's drama division. All together they form a delightful, committed group.

Colleen Higgins, our one 8th termmer took a leave of absence in the Fall, rejoining ACAT for the Winter term. She came into an existing 8th term class of 5 candidates, so she will graduate in June along with Linda De Leon, Allison Foley, Gwynne Marshall, Barbara McCrane, and Arthur Tobias.

Due to our continuing restructuring process of the TCP program, and to limited physical space at EKCC, we decided to postpone admitting a new class until Fall 1997. We plan to admit six new candidates at that time.

On our faculty, Bill Connington has had to take an indefinite leave of absence from ACAT, due to increased demands at The Actors Studio- Judith Lakin came back on as senior faculty in addition to her position as associate faculty. Jane Kosminsky rejoined us in the Winter term, managing to fit in time at ACAT in the midst of her busy Juilliard dance division schedule. Marta Curbelo has taken a leave through this coming year, but hopes to reconnect to ACAT in some capacity in the future.

A highlight of each term is our school assembly. Traditionally, the theme is chosen by one (or more) of our candidates in December. Arthur Tobias gathered together 5 ACAT teachers (past or present) who practice another modality in addition to the Alexander Technique: Barbara Kent- Rubinfeld Synergy; Sarnie Oigus-Feldenkrais and Gestalt Therapy; Pamela Anderson - psychotherapy; Kim Jessor - Body/Mind Centering; and Brooke Lieb - Craniosacral Therapy. Each teacher was given 10 minutes to address why they have chosen to train in an additional field followed by a question/answer period. It seemed the general consensus was - if your spirit or interests take you a certain way, go with it. The additional knowledge was considered an enrichment to the Alexander work.

For our recent Winter term assembly, Allison Foley's mother came and taught us the mambo, the cha cha cha, and the tango. We danced to the music of Jose Curbelo, faculty member Marta Curbelo's father. It was a fun way to end the term.

On March 3rd, we held a meeting with the candidates to inform them of the Board's ideas for restructuring the TCP program, to commence in the Fall. We held a follow-up meeting on March 17th and are presently gathering more data and feedback from candidates and faculty before we go ahead with major changes. For the history and reasons for our endeavors, and where we presently are in this process, please read the accompanying "Report on Restructuring", given by Barbara Kent at ACAT's recent AGM. §

Report on Restructuring

by Barbara Kent

Over the past two years we made the difficult decision to discontinue accreditation with ACCET. The main difficulty in letting go of ACCET, of course, was that our TCs would no longer be eligible for student loans. A big issue for many students in the program. The main problem in keeping ACCET was two fold: it put a big strain on our delicate budget, and it made it very difficult and expensive to make any changes in the program or the location of our school.

Having made the decision to discontinue ACCET, we were free to explore making changes in the program that would give the TCs a shorter training week, to pursue a new location, and to review our strengths and weaknesses (a subject that had occupied our yearly faculty retreat for the past two years). We telephone polled a number of ACAT alumni last year, and based on those responses and our own determinations from 30 years of training experience, we began a process of restructuring our TCP. This has been an enormous endeavor and has occupied the bulk of this past year's Board efforts.

As we worked a few goals became clear:

- 1) That we needed to address the educational and philosophical issue of what has been experienced as both our strength and our weakness, that is, the exposure of the trainees to so many teachers in a week. Currently a TC sees 12-15 teachers in a week. We wished to preserve the richness of our collegial training experience, yet develop a way to offer a deeper, more consistent exposure to fewer faculty members in a given period of time.
- 2) That a shorter training week could ease a TC's schedule for work responsibilities as well as to allow a little more "breathing assimilation space" (a four day week instead of a five).
- 3) The shorter training week could be accommodated by a shorter summer break, since many have felt that 3 1/2 months was overly long.
- 4) That finding a new location was imperative.

(continued in next column)

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(from preceding column)

The Board proposed a restructuring that addressed these issues. Sharing it with the faculty and trainees produced a lot of good feedback, and the Board is still working with that input. The original hope was to implement a restructuring in the Fall of 1997. However, acknowledging that change takes time, and without the issue of location being settled, the Board decided to postpone the full implementation of the proposed restructuring until the Fall of 1998. That will free our energies for a space search, and allow us to suit our new structure to the conditions of space size, location and costs.

The Board is currently working on making a few modifications in the structure of the TCP for this fall. This will probably have to do with the possibility of shortening the training week. Issues of faculty diversity/consistency are being considered, but nothing definitive will be decided until the beginning of May. §

(Deborah Caplan's Workshop, from page 1)

"released muscles are muscles that are working efficiently at a given task." There was no confusion that *release* might mean *relaxed*.

Interspersed within the directions were physical self-demonstrations. To demonstrate Direction #2, she asked the students to slump and put a hand at the small of their backs, then to allow the back to lengthen and feel the back lengthen. She asked them to find their sitbones at the edge of the chair and then slide back; unfortunately, due to what Debbie called 'unfriendly furnishings,' that was impossible to do. The plastic chairs were molded in such a way that you couldn't stay in contact with your sitbones...the chair bottoms went downhill in a rounded shape and a writing surface on the side also interfered with sliding back.

Direction #3 was done with a demonstration of hands on the thighs and the direction of releasing in the hip joints to allow the legs to move away from the pelvis. With Direction #4 she asked for a volunteer from the group. She mimed the draping of a shoulder girdle over the skeletal structure, emphasizing that the mobility of the shoulder means some degree of loss in stability from an evolutionary viewpoint. She mentioned a condition called *scapulo-costal syndrome* (muscle pain from shoulder blades not resting or gliding properly over the ribcage) with which A. T. is very effective.

The day was broken up into approximately 45 minute lecture sections, followed by hands-on demonstrations for approximately one hour in groups of 3 to 4 students for each Alexander teacher or trainee. After the explanation of the four directions there was a session of hands-on work that focused on chair work and walking.

In her second lecture, Debbie emphasized the importance of flexibility of the spine, and that the central issue is efficient use, not straightening the spine. She explained the lesson pattern of chair work, activities, and table work. She pointed out the advantages of table work

in allowing the person to 'think' the Directions without doing anything. She mentioned a medical textbook on EMG (electromyography) by J.V. Basmajian, specifically the chapter on 'Conscious Control and Training of Motor Units and Motor Neurons.' She was asked how many lessons and gave 15 to 30 as the usual with preferably one lesson per week for the first 10 lessons. When she gave the table demonstration she said that she gives a little shoulder direction each time she does the head and explained the thinking that goes along with each activity. Then, each teacher or trainee took 3 to 4 students through a 15 minute table lesson.

After lunch, Debbie discussed scoliosis in detail. I will not go into that here as the same information is available in her book, *Back Trouble*. She did state that A.T. cannot cure or prevent scoliosis, and neither can a brace; but A.T. gives emotional and psychological support, especially to adolescents, helping to strengthen postural musculature. She pointed out that A.T. keeps a child or adolescent in touch with his/her body, and for an adult A.T. saves wear and tear on the joints and increases awareness of habits that feed into the scoliosis. Debbie then presented her slide show of scoliosis patients (also in her book). Slide projectors are not always reliable and she mentioned that she has often had to improvise at workshops when machines didn't work. Her sense of humor and pacing made the eight hour workshop flow smoothly and pleasantly; no one ever appeared bored or restless.

Later, mats were brought out and Debbie went through the instructions for Constructive Rest as we all went around giving head directions to the P.T. students. This part of the workshop was really a challenge as there was not much room to work on people; it was gratifying that A.T. works even under cramped conditions.

In her final lecture, Debbie pointed out that A.T. requires motivation and participation of the student, and that we must be aware of our use at all times, in all activities. We broke into small groups again and worked with students on P.T. procedures, some of which are very awkward and hard on the body. In my group, one procedure chosen was kneeling on the table over the patient and exerting force on a patient's hip. The most exciting part came when a P.T. student was doing massage on her 'patient'. She had so much tension that her knuckles were white. In the process of giving her both hands-on and verbal directions, the student playing patient spoke up and said "your hands just changed!" The student doing the massage could feel the difference and was so impressed that she later said she planned to do her senior thesis on the Alexander Technique.

The day passed quickly and, in spite of our relative inexperience, Allison and I were not as tired as we had expected to be; we actually felt exhilarated and fortunate to have had this opportunity to take part in Debbie's workshop. §

"There was no confusion that release might mean relaxed."

(ACAT as a Whole, from page 1)

are whole come from our experiences. If we expect the same level of unity in direction and internal communication that we experience in ourselves, we will be disappointed. I have been disappointed, but I know now that my expectations were fanciful and unrealistic.

There is no Primary Control of ACAT. There is no one person, concept or organizing skill by which all other persons and events are influenced. ACAT is a community of individuals that come together for a variety of purposes. Our connections, our cooperation, our support for each other and our commitments to the organization are stronger than any other organization to which I've belonged. The structure of the membership, the Board, the Faculty, the volunteers and the students seems to serve most purposes. But not without gaps and bumpy places.

This is the nature of organizations. We need to know that so that we do not get stuck in our limited views. We need to know that so that we make an effort to broaden our views and fill in our blind spots.

An institution has to work harder for that same sense of integration and coordination that an individual gets through the psycho-physical skills of inhibition and direction.

An institution can be experienced as integrated, whole, moving forward and up, but not without the participation of every part. *And that is why I am so grateful for all those individuals who have given their part voluntarily with great warmth and love. They pump life into the heart of our organization.*

The concept for this day came bursting like a flash of bright light into one of my blind spots. I really had not seen the need for this kind of recognition. And it was long overdue. Thank you Ruth Nardini for helping me to see this.

The reason for this party began not to honor my years of service but to honor all those who have made voluntary contribution of time and skill to any aspect of ACAT. The first challenge with doing something like this that is so long overdue is "How far back do we go?"

That's where the tie-in to me comes from. It seemed to work and I hope you understand.

Coming up with names of all those volunteers was quite a stretch for our memory banks. So much that happens goes unrecognized, and unrecorded. But certain things we knew for sure: Those who volunteer teach in the TCP both on a regular basis and in school assemblies, those who organized and participate in special projects or events like the 30th anniversary, the post graduate workshops, the free lecture demos, Judy Leibowitz Memorial lectures, the Membership survey, those who provide administrative support like newsletter editing, creating brochures, answering phones, donating meeting spaces, computer consulting and supplies (That's just one of the ways my husband has volunteered. Thank you John.) and of course there are those who have served on the Board. Those are just the general headings, I couldn't possibly list every contribution. It's quite impressive and you deserve lots of thanks.

The history of volunteers at ACAT has been an essential part of the training program. Besides the practical side of helping to keep costs down, volunteer teachers give students a sense of the progression from student to teacher-in-training to new teacher to experienced teacher to master teacher. They have supported the training process in ways that often are less demanding and less pressured than turns with Senior teachers. Their input as new teachers offers an understanding of the training process that seems closer to home. In a moment of frustration, volunteers can prove that there is light ahead and these incredible hands-on skills are attainable.

Volunteerism at ACAT does help keep costs down. And I make no bones about it— it is important to the organization's viability. But what has been most healthy and exciting is how volunteers have allowed us to grow and develop. ACAT has been doing a lot of reaching out lately and doing it with volunteers developing and running events and workshops, for teachers and for the public. Now that we have some experience under our belt it seems that this part of ACAT is blossoming. Without volunteers we wouldn't have been ready. §

The Flow of ACAT Money

by Kathy Miranda

Our budget preference is to aim for an excess of \$4,000 to \$8,000. That makes good business sense and was partially our effort to play by the rules of ACCET which require evidence of financial stability. Showing a loss is a red flag.

Last year I reported a loss of approximately \$2,000. We were prepared to show a loss on the 1995-96 school year. This would happen even with reduction of admin-

istrative costs of \$10,000, a voluntary pay cut of faculty of \$9,000 and a \$4,000 increase in tuition.

However, instead of the \$4,000 loss we projected in our budgeting process, we ended the 1995-96 school year showing an excess of revenue of \$6,022 over expenses.

Those year end numbers are:

(continued in the next column)

**"But not
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(The Flow of ACAT Money, from preceding page)

Tuition	\$105,000
Dues	5,013
Contributions	3,560
Books, brochure	2,273
Int. and Divd.	4,695
Misc.	1,215
Less refunds	(708)

Total Revenue \$121,048

Expenses

TCP	93,531
Mgmt. and General	21,495

Total Expenses \$115,026

Excess Revenues over Expenses \$6,022

Where did that money come from?

Some of that money comes from events that we do not put into the budget, like contributions (\$3560) and post graduate workshop income (\$1300). Some of that money comes from unexpected tuition sources like anatomy auditing and make up classes (\$700). Some

of the money comes from expenses being lower than we had projected (\$3700)

Where does that money go?

For the most part that money has been going into savings to build up our reserves. The vision most have for the health of the organization involves a new home, a center where we can offer more to our members, our students and the general public. That time is coming and that is the main reason we have been putting money into the growth of our funds and our reserves.

In six of the past seven years ACAT's Total Funds have grown approximately \$50,000. Half from the bequest of Judy Leibowitz and half from year to year money flows. As of 8/31/96 the total is \$100,038. We think we are getting close to moving ACAT into a new space, a real center for the Alexander Technique.

We also think that we are poised to use money more creatively. Dropping ACCET has lifted some of our fiscal restrictions and there is a dream of starting a small scholarship program. §

Speaker's Bureau

by Diane Young

With Tom Vasiliade's lecture of March 3, ACAT entered its second year of offering free lecture/demonstrations to the public. This is clearly a timely venture, as evidenced by the numbers of people who have attended. Follow-up surveys have shown a modicum of interest in continuing study, including private lessons coming from the ACAT teacher telephone list which we hand out at the lecture. ACAT's intention for the Speaker's Bureau is three-fold: 1) to demonstrate to the public the value of the Alexander Technique, 2) to provide a means of easy access to teachers and information about the technique, concomitantly generating more substantial financial footing for our graduates, and 3) to place ourselves in good will with the larger community of Alexander teachers. In other words, although these lectures are sponsored by ACAT, we welcome teachers who have been trained elsewhere to both lecture and attend.

This effort hopefully promotes a cross-fertilization and exchange of ideas which can enhance our work. This offers a more unified presence of the Alexander Technique to the general public. This tradition of excellence deserves continued nourishment!

My concerns about these lectures are the following: 1) We do not seem to get the word out consistently. If each teacher can remember to tell students, acquaintances, even passersby that we have these lectures "the first Monday of every month", and to have the person call the center for information, the word would spread and we would have a body of people to lecture to...2) If anyone can think of free monthly or weekly newspaper, radio shows, or schools, even laundromats, restaurants, etc., where we could post flyers, we could generate more interest. I am looking for an ACAT student to assist me in the outreach aspect of this project (AIS credit?). However, any help would be much appreciated and valued. Remember, the more New Yorkers know about this Technique the stronger an impact we can have. This is the principle of tithing; it will come back to us tenfold.

To close I would like to thank Sarnie Ogus, Victoria Hyatt, and Sally Sullivan for initiating the Speaker's Bureau. I especially would like to thank Connie Serchuk and Pearl Ausubel for their continuing involvement and support. §

Next lecture is on June 2: Kathy Miranda

"I am looking for an ACAT student to assist me..."

Your faithful editor would like to thank Jane Tomkiewicz and Laurie Curry for their invaluable assistance in being my "in-town" contacts. As you may have possibly heard, submissions may now be routed through them, or directly to me. I appreciate the current effort to send me computer ready material. On disks and via email is certainly the way to go. I would like to request though, that materials also be a bit more "copy-ready." Please check your articles for spelling, punctuation, abbreviations and format consistency before submitting them. Thank you all. My phone number is incorrect in the ACAT Directory; it is 413-532-7680. My mailing address and email address are listed on page 2. I hope you are, like me, at home quietly watching the beautiful use and athleticism of the NBA playoffs. Knicks rule. Hi Frances, I suspect only you are laughing at this. I imagine virtual you, on your own couch, pumping your arm along with me, as Patrick dunks on Alonzo. Goodnight, Gracie.

News from the Center

Claudia Peyton was asked to teach "*An Introduction to Creative Movement & Games*" at an after school program at the Blue Rock School in N.J. She describes it as "a fun-filled program for children based on the poise and fitness principles of the Alexander Technique with emphasis placed on the learning process and games that build a child's self-confidence, coordination and simple understanding of how the body is designed to work." It will be offered again in the fall.

Claudia has also completed her masters thesis "*The AT and the Voice for Stage*" at Lesley College at Cambridge, MA. through the Graduate Arts and Social Science Independent Study Program. The thesis presents AT and Voice Technique in a course to enhance performing abilities and is geared towards actors.

ACAT grads/members/trainees are playing pivotal roles in realizing the NASTAT (10th anniversary) 1997 Annual General Meeting at Suny Purchase this June 5-9, and they hope that the rest of the ACAT membership makes a good showing at the event so that they can share the fruits of their labor with you. The theme for this 10th Anniversary celebration is "*Improving the Use of our Collective Voices: Presenting the Alexander Technique.*" ACAT Director of Administration **Jane Tomkiewicz** is the general co-ordinator. **Lori Schiff** is the education programmer, assisted by **Jessica Wolf** in programming the Pre-AGM. **Barbara Kent** will lead a special participatory vocal event after the opening reception/buffet. **Judy Stern** is organizing a panel discussion of "*AT in the Emerging Medical Model.*" **Marj Dorfman** is heading up the fabulous fundraising project. **Barbara Kent, Pamela Anderson, Debby Caplan, Jane Kosminsky, Jessica Wolf, Beret Arcaya, Carolyn Serota, Ron Dennis, Michele Arsenault, Joanne Howell, Joan Arnold, Judy Grodowitz** are leading workshops. **Daniel Singer** and **Hope Martin** are co-leading a roundtable discussion on "*AT and Spirit.*" (Practically honorary ACAT member **David Zyla** is also presenting!) Other members, trainees and members of the ACAT group

are also contributing time and effort to the cause. If you want to help please call **Jane Tomkiewicz** at (212) 529-2087. If you are driving back and forth and will consider giving other members a ride call her. Call her as well if you haven't registered yet and need another. Everyone is working hard toward creating an exciting, stimulating and engaging AGM. We really hope to see you there.

Laura Smith was invited by the Physical Therapy department at the *Hospital for Joint Diseases* to give an in-service presentation of the Alexander Technique. About 40 people attended and she said she was very well received. She was also invited by the director of a Reflexology Certification program run through the *Open Center/Omega Institute* to demonstrate the Alexander Technique in the context of how understanding the principles could assist practitioners to use themselves well as they work on their clients.

Four ACAT members - **Deborah Caplan, Robert Cohen, Melanie Nevis** and **Hope Martin** were interviewed for and are quoted in a new book called *The Art of Practicing, A Guide to Making Music From the Heart*, by Madeline Bruser- The Alexander Technique is represented by these four individuals, particularly in the chapter on Body Mechanics. *The Art of Practicing* is published by Bell Tower and is available in bookstores. (*Maybe in the ACAT library? - E.d.*)

Hope Martin contributed a section on the Alexander Technique for a book called *EveryWoman's Guide to Natural Home Remedies* by Sally Freeman. It is available in bookstores and in three book clubs: Doubleday, Doubleday Health Books and Literary Guild Book Clubs. It is also in the ACAT library. Hope is also teaching one day a week at the *Turtle Bay Music School*, 244 East 52nd Street. The school is underwriting private lessons and group classes for the faculty. Hope is also teaching group classes at the school to the general public. She is collaborating with a Feldenkrais practitioner, Mary Newell, at the New York Open Center, 85 Spring Street, to teach classes in April and May on the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method.

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