

ACAT TURNS 25

Recollections & Observations
By Judith Leibowitz & Bill Connington

In the late 50's and early 60's, Judith Leibowitz privately trained Frank Ottiwell, Virginia Wagner, Barbara Callen, Ilana Rubinfeld, and Judith Stransky. In 1964, the American Center for the Alexander Technique was founded by Judith Leibowitz, Barbara Callen, Joyce Ringdahl, and Frank Ottiwell. A fifth founder was Deborah Caplan, trained by her mother, Alma Frank, who had been certified by F. M. Alexander. Their objective was eventually to start a school for training Alexander teachers, and to have space for members to teach.

During the first year, the members met at 19 West 70th Street, the residence of Judith Leibowitz, which was also used as ACAT's official address. In this period, they met to do hands-on work with one another, and they also incorporated and obtained tax-exempt status. After about a year, they rented an apartment at 83rd and Central Park West. At this point, Barbara Callen dropped out and Judith Stransky joined. The ACAT apartment was on the fifth floor and consisted of three teaching rooms and a fourth room that Frank Ottiwell lived in. Each of the members contributed a percentage of their income in order to maintain the apartment.

In 1967 the Teacher's Training Course was started. The five members were the trainers; there were no teaching assistants. In the late 60's, Judith Stransky and Frank Ottiwell relocated to California, but continued contributing money to ACAT. In 1970 the landlord no longer wanted to allow ACAT to use the apartment on the fifth floor as a professional space. He tried to convince the members to take a smaller apartment on the first floor for more money. Their response was to move quarters to a building in the Lincoln Towers complex. That apartment was on the first floor and had one large teaching room and two small ones. Shortly after moving there, the members stopped contributing a portion of their income, and the

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FEDS O.K. CENTER FOR GUARANTEED STUDENT LOANS

One March 28, 1989, the U. S. Department of Education certified ACAT and its Teacher Certification Program for participation in federal Title IV student financial assistance programs. This means that, for the first time, TCP candidates are eligible to borrow funds under the Stafford (Guaranteed Student Loan) and SLS (Supplementary Loans to Students) Programs to apply toward their education here, under the aegis of federal and state loan guarantees.

Ron Dennis, ACAT Executive Director & Secretary-Treasurer, has acquired a new "hat"--that of Financial Aid Administrator--and has been busy revising the catalog to reflect the new status, orienting candidates (and himself) to the mysteries of the loan process, and generally working out the myriad details involved with needs analysis, state higher education agencies, and lenders.

At this writing, ACAT is fully approved by the New York State and New Jersey higher education agencies. Several currently enrolled candidates have qualified and applied for loans, three of which have been granted thus far during July. Some applicants for the new class beginning in Fall Term 1989 have already begun the application process, others have indicated that they would expect to use guaranteed loans at some point in financing their training. There is thus good reason to believe that loan availability will be a major factor in attracting candidates to the program and enabling them to finish on schedule.

Federal and allied approvals come in the wake of ACAT's accreditation by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training (ACCET) just a year ago. ACAT has been able to move decisively into these areas of public recognition and responsibility because of demonstrated educational, financial, and administrative ability. Certainly everybody associated with the Center--founders, members, faculty, candidates, staff, and alumni--has reason to take great pride in these accomplishments.

(ACAT Turns 25, continued from p. 1)

Training Program supported the rental of the space. ACAT remained at that address (142 West End Avenue) until 1985, when rent increases and the coping of the building prompted the move to its present location in the Hebrew Arts School, about two and a half blocks away at 129 West 67th Street. Throughout its 25-year history, ACAT has retained the same telephone number.

In the early years, Judith Leibowitz was responsible for the ACAT finances, and Judith Stransky acted as the secretary. Both were unpaid positions. After Stransky's departure, ACAT had a succession of part-time secretaries. With Cynthia Knapp's tenure as secretary-administrator beginning in 1984, it became apparent that it was invaluable having a certified Alexander teacher in the position, especially in answering a widening range of telephone inquiries. After Cynthia left in 1987, Ron Dennis was engaged to fill a new position of Executive Director. Currently, the Executive Director works in tandem with the Director of the Certification Program to form the Executive Committee, which handles daily operations of the Center under supervision of the Board of Directors. The Board, in turn, is responsible for the overall governance of ACAT, particularly regarding finances and long-range development.

ACAT has gone from a staff of five to a Senior Faculty of ten, an Associate Faculty of seven, and a Volunteer Faculty. For many years it was a struggle for ACAT to make ends meet. The financial contributions of the founding members were crucial in keeping the Center going. Today ACAT is in healthy financial shape and has a reserve fund of \$20,000, thanks to the hard work of Board members, faculty, and staff over the years. ACAT now has two special funds: the Judith Leibowitz Fund (for research) and the Barbara Kent Fund (for education). Donations to the funds and to the Center are tax-deductible and deeply appreciated. ACAT has gone through many changes and transformations in its efforts to grow, improve, and serve its members and trainees, and aims to continue these efforts in the future.

Rule 1: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while. Always be around. Come or go to everything, always go to classes, read anything you can get your hands on, look carefully and often. Save everything; it might come in handy later.

Rule 3: Consider everything an experiment.

From *Some Rules and Hints for Students and Teachers* by John Cage. Courtesy of Annette Werhahn-Cantor.

LEIBOWITZ, KENT FUNDS MAKE GRANTS

JL FUND BACKS FILM

In February, the Board and Judith Leibowitz authorized a grant of \$1,000 to Jude Ray Productions for an hour-long documentary film on Bodywork. Ms. Ray is a New York-based producer and filmmaker with many credits, as well as a student of the AT. The grant was awarded only after review of an extensive written proposal and a personal meeting among the Board, Ms. Ray, and her co-producer/writer, Brian Breger.

Individuals wishing to make tax-deductible contributions may do so via Women Make Movies/Perpetual Motion Productions, 225 Lafayette St. Suite 211, NY NY 10012.

KENT FUND SUPPORTS CEA

In June, the Barbara Kent Fund made a \$500 grant to fund a charter institutional membership for ACAT in the Continuing Education Association, "a non-profit trade association formed with the active guidance and support of the Board of Trustees for the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training and a broad coalition of interested ACCET member institutions." "The CEA," their brochure continues, "was organized to promote and foster the common business interests and general welfare of members involved in non-degree continuing education and adult training." The CEA aims to serve its membership through lobbying and information gathering in the Congress and in other agencies that influence educational legislation and policy. A prime concern of CEA is the maintenance of federal student financial aid programs, recently under considerable attack, hence the rationale for this use of the BK Fund.

ALUMNI OUTREACH

Alumna Eleanor Rosenthal (75) of San Francisco has suggested that a list of all ACAT graduates would be useful in referrals and keeping in touch generally. The Board is therefore pleased to enclose same with this issue of the *News*, in the hope that it will begin a process of generating a greater alumni consciousness among us. Alumni items for the *News* are always welcome, and we remind you that three issues will be sent for a contribution to the Center of \$10. We would appreciate your comments, any corrections to the list, and any information about those alumni for whom we no longer have an address of record.

1989-1990

September 1989

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October

2 Fall Term begins. Tuition balance due.
 6 Applications for Winter Term 1990 due.
 9 No classes (Yom Kippur & Columbus Day)

November

22 No classes Wed-Fri Nov 22-24 (T'ksgiving)

December

4 Winter Term tuition deposit due.
 12 No classes.
 15 Fall Term ends.
 16 Dec 16 - Jan 1 HOLIDAYS

January

2 Winter Term begins. Tuition balance due.
 15 No classes (M. L. King, Jr. Day).

February

19 No classes Mon-Fri Feb 19-23 Mini Break

March

5 Spring Term tuition deposit due.
 19 Last day of regular class schedule.
 20 Makeup for Mon 1/15. End of Winter Term.
 21 Mar 21 - Apr 8 SPRING BREAK

April

9 Spring Term begins. Tuition balance due.
 10 No classes Tue-Wed Apr 10-11 (Passover).
 13 No class (Good Friday).
 16 No classes Mon-Tue Apr 16-17 (Passover).

May

28 No classes (Memorial Day).
 30 No classes Wed-Thu May 30-31 (Shavot)

June

18 Fall Term tuition deposit due.
 22 Last day of regular class schedule.
 25 Makeup for Mon 5/28.
 26 Makeup for Tue 4/17.
 27 Makeup for Wed 4/11.
 28 Makeup for Fri 4/13. Spring Term ends.

March 1990

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NEWS

Judith Leibowitz is recovering from surgery at Roosevelt Hospital early in July. She is very grateful for the outpouring of cards, calls, flowers, and visits.

Kim Jessor and **Melanie Nevis** co-taught two workshops on the AT at *Life in Motion*, a conference for somatic educators and health professionals held March 29-April 2 at NYU, the first event of its kind to be sponsored by a major academic institution. More than 20 techniques were presented, including Feldenkrais, Trager, Rubenfeld Synergy, Rolfing, and Laban Movement Analysis. A plenary address, "Somatic Education: A Major New Initiative in Human Health," was given by Thomas Hanna, Ph.D., publisher of *Somatics* magazine. The focus of the conference was sharing and dialogue, with emphasis on professional issues and public awareness of the somatic approach. Kim and Melanie report that the conference was stimulating and thought-provoking; plans are underway for another in 1990.

Bill Comington taught a small group class for the Dance Department at Marymount Manhattan College this spring. He will be teaching a class for performers in the Extension Division of the Juilliard School in the fall.

Ron Dennis had a busy month of outside appearances in June. On the 16th, he appeared at *Mind, Body, and the Performing Arts*, a stress reduction conference in Birmingham, AL. The following weekend found him in Cambridge, MA for the NASTAT annual meeting, where his proposal for a committee to draft a continuing education policy for NASTAT was adopted. On the 26th, he lectured and demonstrated for Prof. Nancy Brooks Smith's class in the Dance Department at Teachers College, and on the

28th gave a full-day workshop as part of a vocal pedagogy seminar at the University of New Hampshire.

Recent ACAT graduate **Andy Zavada** of Seattle, WA, was elected Chairman of NASTAT at the annual meeting held June 23-25 in Cambridge, MA. Andy succeeds alumna **Missy Vineyard** (75), who had a major role in forming NASTAT and guiding it through the crucial two first years. As the national professional organization for qualified Alexander teachers, NASTAT has a tremendous potential for influencing the future of the AT in the U.S. Congratulations, Andy, and good luck!

Posie Green, White Plains, NY, has been featured in an article "Modern Posture: The Alexander Technique Relaxes the Rules," that appeared in *The Well-Being Bulletin*, published by Exercise Experience, Inc. of Mt. Kisco, NY. As consultant to this organization, Posie has given lessons to the founder, who was so impressed with the relevance of AT to the exercise process that she has in turn sent many of her instructors to Posie also. The result appears to be an "Alexandrian" tone in the studio's exercise sessions, to the general satisfaction of the owner, instructors, and clients [see also "Directions in Exercise" by Carolyn Monka Serota, *ACAT News* Spring 1989].

Australian AT teacher **Jeremy Chance**, editor of *Direction: A New Journal on the Alexander Technique*, has recently communicated with us regarding the necessity of spreading the word about this publication to ensure its continuance. This large, well-done journal with a decided editorial stance certainly deserves the community's support. The Raymond Dart and Walter Carrington issues are currently available. U.S. & Canadian subscriptions are available for \$25 from: *Direction Journal*, P.O. Box 27075, Seattle, WA 98125.

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