

## Notes From the TCP

By Pamela Anderson

For the 1991-1992 school year I have asked the Board of Directors for a leave of absence from my administrative duties due to personal and family needs. For the remaining year of my tenure as Director of the Teacher Certification Program, and due to the steadily increasing workload over the past four years, we have split my current job into two positions, they are: 1) Acting Director of the Teacher Certification Program, and 2) Dean of Admissions and Student Relations. If this division of the workload is manageable, then the Board may implement this type of administrative staff for the TCP for the next Directorial election to be held in 1992. The two people who have been chosen to fill my vacancy are Kim Jessor as Acting Director and Joan Frost as Dean. I feel they will do an excellent job in filling these demanding and rewarding positions. I will continue to remain on staff this coming year as a Senior Faculty member and my various committee obligations.

## OTHER COMINGS AND GOINGS

For this fall term, ACAT accepted 6 candidates, Judith Mizrahi Barkow, Patti Bradshaw, Karen Langevin, Ellen Melamud, Tom Nichols and Valerie Resh. We on the faculty extend a warm welcome to the "A1s."

We are very happy to have Inez Zeller re-join the ACAT Faculty as a Senior Teacher. For those of you who don't know her, Inez has over 20 years experience as an Alexander Teacher, she graduated from ACAT in June, 1969 and taught in the training program from 1969 to 1982. Inez has a personal and professional commitment to the Technique that will be very beneficial to the TCP.

There are several teachers who will be on leaves of absence this fall. Rivka Cohen will be out of the country this coming year. Melanie Nevis is taking a leave from the classroom schedule but will continue her work as TCP Coordinator. Sarni Ogus is taking a leave this fall for personal reasons. Lorna Faraldi is limiting her ACAT teaching to private lessons for the fall and hopes to return to her full schedule in the near future.

## A THANKS OFFERING

By Ron Dennis

Thank you, ACAT News, very much for the "Farewell Ron" editorial. Right off, let me greet everybody--members, faculty, candidates, and Board--and tell you, in true Georgia-style, that I miss you-all A LOT. Exciting and, I hasten to add, challenging as it is to be doing my own thang down here, the ACAT experience remains the bedrock and benchmark of my daily Alexander consciousness. Having become through necessity considerably more accustomed to blowing my own horn, I wanted to set down for the record some of my Center involvements prior to 1987, when I became Executive Director. Call it perhaps an early installment of my memoirs, while it's still a bit fresh in my mind, and some important Center history in the bargain!

I first came on the Board in Spring 1980, just after graduation, as director of what was then called "The School of Alexander Studies." This was a division of the Center provided for in the Bylaws but non-operational. On paper, the SAS was supposed to handle public relations, "research," outreach, and other related non-training activities. An important accomplishment of this period was founding *The Alexandrian: A Periodical of the Alexander Technique*, the first of its kind in this country. From 1980-1985, I edited, and the Center published, 13 numbers of this periodical, including "The Frank Pierce Jones Memorial Issue," as well as many very fine articles by, among others, Deborah Caplan, Walter Carrington, Joan Frost, Michael Gelb, Kim Jessor, Judith Leibowitz, Alex Murray, Frank Ottiwell, Chris Stevens, Tommy Thompson, and Yours Truly. Thanks to the initiative and effort of Cynthia Knapp, then ACAT Administrator, *The Alexandrian* sold creditably at the First International Congress in Stony Brook, and I take this occasion to remind everybody that ACAT maintains and sells a complete back-issue file. Another, and still-enduring, accomplishment of SAS was planning for and implementing the Judith Leibowitz Fund, which received its initial funding of about \$4,500 from a gala benefit given for that purpose on the occasion of Judy's stepping down from the training directorship in 1981.

The period 1983-1985 was a crucial one in ACAT's history, for it was then that the Center's rent was doubled as its space was halved at Lincoln Towers. These developments precipitated an intense, and

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sometimes bitter, debate, initially among the Board, then eventually extending to members and even to non-member graduates. As I said editorially in the last *Alexandrian* (Vol IV, No 3): "... it became clear that maintaining an independent headquarters in Manhattan would become increasingly problematic if not impossible. Yet it was equally clear that the Teacher Training Program of the Center--its 'heart'-- must be continued in an accessible and adequate facility." The burning issue was how ACAT could continue to be a "professional membership organization" if it couldn't provide teaching space for members during non-training hours. Wouldn't it become necessary structurally to "split" ACAT into a separate training program and membership organization? In addition to the Center's internal crisis, this was also the period of great tension between the independent ACAT's in New York and California, when the western group was putting itself forth as a new "national ACAT," having publicly promulgated the notion that the membership organization in New York was defunct.

By this time (Fall 1984), I was Acting Chairman of the Board, having been appointed on the resignation for personal reasons of Jo Nichols, and the Board was meeting weekly to deal with these related situations. I personally was doing everything in my power to prevent what was then called "separating the training program from the membership organization," as one faction of the Center was advocating. Convinced myself that such a schism would effectively ruin ACAT, I had also become aware of the legalities of ACAT's status as a membership corporation--it would have to have members regardless of how those members decided to function as a corporation. It was this last insight, coupled with my influence at the Hebrew Arts School as a faculty member there, that ultimately led to resolution of the internal crisis. The plan I eventually proposed to the Board had two basic elements: (1) that the Center re-define its mission to function primarily as a training program conducted by the existing membership corporation, ACAT, Inc.; (2) that the corporation should seek a new location with adequacy for the training program as its prime criterion. This plan was approved in principle, and, after due investigation of virtually no space alternatives, was implemented with the move to Hebrew Arts School in September 1985. The thing with ACAT West pretty much fizzled out after the Center acquired sole right to the ACAT name through the federal service-mark procedure.

At this time I wish to acknowledge the pivotal role that Pamela Anderson played in this whole process. As these events began to unfold, I was essentially alone in terms of my understanding of the legal issues around the Center's corporate status. Of the entire Board, it was Pamela who first really saw and voiced her support for the view I was putting forth--that the Center, as a membership corporation, through its board, in accordance with its charter, in terms of its perceived needs, could define its own mission and operate accordingly. Our working partnership, which started officially in September 1987, when Pamela commenced the TCP directorship and I became Executive Director, had for me its de facto and, one might add, spiritual, beginning at that earlier point. I am very pleased to say here that all the positive developments of the last few years are due in no small measure to Pamela's grasp of the crucial issues and her unflagging (though by no means uncritical) support--all the while conducting the TCP in a truly exemplary manner--of my vision for the Center as an accredited and otherwise recognized institution of higher education.

In early 1986 I was elected Chairman of the Board in my own right, having completed the balance of Jo Nichols' unexpired term. I had stood for chairman once previously in 1982, as the Board's sole nominee, when Troup Mathews declined to seek re-election. I was defeated by Jo Nichols, who was nominated from the floor, in what I imagine was the only such contest in Center history. I felt humiliated as well as disappointed, and only with considerable soul-searching was able to continue in my Board role. It was not so much the defeat per se that galled, but rather that no one else had come or been put forth when the Board was soliciting nominees for the position. However late the hour, the membership had spoken, to my great personal discomfiture but in the essence of the democratic process. "If you want an omelet you have to break eggs," they say in politics. The shell of my pride had taken a good crack this time, and dealing with it yielded the deepest lesson in inhibition and non-endgaining that I have yet experienced!

During this period the greatest issue facing the Board was responding to the initiative launched by David Gorman and several American teachers to found NASTAT. The situation at the outset was this: Without warning or consultation, the ACAT Board was informed by two of its own sitting members that they were also members of a steering committee that had begun its drive to organize NASTAT as the American equivalent of STAT, complete with a 1600-hour training requirement. As the Center's training program consisted of 1200 hours at the time, it was immediately obvious to me that ACAT would be facing unknown financial and administrative consequences in conforming to the proposed standard. While generally supportive of the notion of a broad-based national professional organization, I also perceived a clear conflict-of-interest on the part of the above-mentioned two Board members, and said so at the meeting. There ensued conversations with our lawyer as well as intense Board discussions as to the legalities and/or ethicalities of the situation, with the upshot that the two members involved soon resigned from the ACAT Board, in order to continue their work with NASTAT.

That still left the Board, temporarily in disarray as a result of these developments, with the issue of the NASTAT response. I felt on the one hand that it would be unthinkable for ACAT--at that time alma mater to most of this country's teachers--to remain outside the NASTAT "umbrella," but on the other that adding 400 training hours to the

program was neither feasible nor fair for us. Such a change would have required inordinate and perhaps impossible tuition increases (no student loans then!) for candidates already struggling with the high cost of living in New York and supporting a training program that rented space by-the-hour in Manhattan and paid a large and experienced faculty. This predicament, unique among American training programs, reveals in no uncertain terms the basis of my conflict-of-interest concerns cited above.

Thus was born the idea for extending the training from 4 to 5 days a week maintaining the same tuition rate and the Approved Independent Study program—a plan whereby candidates themselves would design and complete the additional 160 hours, enriching their already-superlative training, with the guidelines allowing this to be accomplished at minimal extra expense. I conveyed this plan to a joint meeting of Board and Faculty, it was approved, and was finally implemented through the labors of a valiant faculty committee that served—as have many others in the ACAT tradition—without extra compensation for the greater good of the Center. From this initial period of intrigue and confusion, ACAT went on to give NASTAT strong moral and financial support, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Lest I be remembered solely as an administrator, I want to close with some reflections on my involvement with the TCP. A year or so after graduating, I presented a plan to Judy Leibowitz for a separate reading class that I felt should be instituted to cover in a systematic way Alexander's books and other related literature. Judy, always supportive of my intellectual bent, approved and hired me to teach the class, which met for one hour per week with the morning group. Although it continued for a couple of years, and basically succeeded in establishing the notion that candidates should at least pass their eyes over the relevant printed pages, the class really wasn't very successful. I realized that it represented an arbitrary separation of Alexander ideas from Alexander experience, which just ain't the way it works. So sometime around 1983, with the Center under extreme financial pressure after having just lost four of a group of five trainees, I proposed to Barbara Kent that the reading class be discontinued. In its place I organized the core literature in what I felt to be an appropriately progressive term-by-term sequence, with the basic idea that the senior teacher in whose class the reading was assigned would be responsible for leading the discussion on it. Although Barbara approved in principle, the plan met with considerable initial resistance from some of the faculty, who felt unwilling or unable to deal with the literature aspect of the curriculum. Eventually passed, and still in effect today, this approach has in my opinion proved—despite its challenges, both logistic and intellectual—not only educationally valid but also the source of a broad faculty competence in this important area.

I first joined the senior faculty in 1985, after having assisted first Sarnie then Judy for a little over two years. Barbara asked me to take over a class—the famous afternoon D's—that Judy was no longer able to teach because of her Juilliard schedule. My first intimation of the controversiality that was never far from my work in the TCP came when Barbara invited me to a breakfast "chat" and informed me that the group were complaining. I don't recall the exact issue, but I do recall Barbara's suggesting that I talk with the group and work with them through the problem, which I did, again with some "attitude adjustment" on my part, to the general relief of all. At evaluation times my reviews were regularly quite mixed, some liking, even raving, others not, and a lot! Generally, I was praised for one-on-one work and damned for class organization, with "too much talk" and "not enough hands-on" oft-voiced criticisms. I remember telling Pamela somewhat ruefully at one evaluation session, "At least they want more hands-on from me—I'd be in real trouble if they wanted less!"

Aside from incidentally (and not always comfortably) providing the only direct male influence at the senior faculty level in recent history, I tended to shape my role in the TCP in terms of exploring a theoretical content for the hands-on and experiential work that forms the vast bulk of the training. I coined the notion of "conceptual work" as the necessary complement of "hands-on work," with special reference to the demanding activities of sorting out terminology and ideas, contemplating the sources of direction in anatomical structure, entering into dialog with Alexander via his writings, and generally coming to grips with the ideational process that is inseparable from direct sensory experience. Alexander himself did not shrink from this process, as evidenced by his four books, but I continue to imagine that too few of his successors enter into it in sufficient degree to comprehend (com, with + prendere, to take hold of) to the fullest degree what they're doing. If I at times erred on the side of "too much talk," it was on this account, and I apologize for it only in the sense of regretting a certain loss of flow. On the "practical" side, I feel extremely gratified that to my direct knowledge, one Alexander teacher was able to work out a troublesome back problem on her own after attending my "Breath As Postural Process" presentation, and that a candidate finally "found" her problematic feet, primary control notwithstanding, as a result of studying and eventually comprehending a complex research paper that I had handed out and discussed only briefly in class.

And so it goes. Without question the greatest lack in my current situation—excepting the company of my beautiful Suzy—has been that of regular contact with teachers and intending teachers of our work. I hope this memoir, faithful in substance if not in every detail to the events from my perspective, has given some insight into the wonderful community that is ACAT, as well as into the experience of one who has been and continues to be privileged to serve and be served by it.

## News from the Center

**Lori Schiff** (ACAT '87) has recently joined the faculty at the Juilliard School. She is teaching group classes in the Evening Division for the general public and in the Music School for wind and brass players.

**Judy Grodowitz** (ACAT '87) spent her fourth July teaching Alexander Technique and Movement at the Penland School of Crafts in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. Judy works with craftspeople as they are working at the potter's wheel, weaving loom, blacksmith's anvil, etc. She also presents a daily movement/Alexander class.

**Joan Frost and Deborah Gladstein** will be co-teaching a special weekend workshop entitled "FALLING UP: explorations in the Alexander Technique and Movement Improvisation". This workshop is being offered as part of Movement Research's 1991 Fall Series, and will take place on Sat. and Sun., Nov. 16 and 17, 12-3pm, at Pentacle Studio, 104 Franklin Street, NYC. Enrollment is limited, so register early! To register call 212-691-5788. (Good for AIS credit.)

**CONGRATULATIONS to Barbara Kent** for completing the Rubenfield SYNERGY Training!

**CONGRATULATIONS to Amy Kitahata-Sporn** who completed training in Authentic Movement!

**LIBRARY acquisitions include The Alexander Technique** - In Conversation with John Nicholls and Sean Carey and **AS I SEE IT** by Patrick MacDonald.

Recently ACAT has received several inquiries about the Technique from individuals who have read *The Vocal Instrument* by Lelia Calder, *Bridge of Light* by La Una Huffine, *QUIT FOR GOOD - How to Break a Bad Habit* by Dr. Ralph C. Cinque. ACAT received a complementary copy of the latter book from Dr. Cinque, a Natural Hygienist who highly recommends AT.

**RE-ACCREDITATION NEWS!** The ACCET on-site review of ACAT was Thursday June 13th. Maureen Ordman-Fike the Commission Rep and the other members of the team were very impressed with the quality of staff, faculty and students. Excerpted from the team's report: The rationale for offering the program is well defined; Staffing procedures are systematic and thorough; Instructional methods are active and positive; Individual differences are central to the program; Instructors are well qualified; Instructor orientation and training is comprehensive; and Participant satisfaction is high. The weaknesses identified were relatively minor. Of the two most significant, one involves a little more paperwork and the other involves our job classification status.

**A Statistical Note:** Last year ACAT provided 17,800 contact hours of Instructional Activity.

**APPLICATIONS** to the Teacher Certification Program are currently being accepted for the winter term. Deadline is October 11, 1991.

**Studio Apt Sublet** at 103rd and Riverside Drive. Available 9/1/91, for 1 year initial, more probable. Call Ron Dennis at 404-841-0386.

**THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE** by Judith Leibowitz & Bill Connington has been released in paperback by Harper Perennials (I guess that means it'll just keep coming up!). It's available at Shakespeare Books for \$12.95.

**EDITORS NOTE:** In the last issue of ACAT News, I misquoted Steve Neeren in "News from the Center". I took his comment out of context and I apologize for any misunderstanding this may have created. Steve says, "In my practice, I teach a lot of beginners, which I enjoy. But when I work with the trainees at ACAT, there's such good direction that it's almost like power steering."

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