

ACAT Faculty Retreat By Kim Jessor

On a sunny weekend in June, the ACAT faculty convened for a rustic retreat in the Catskills. In this serene mountain setting, far from the sounds of the city, we awoke to the songs of birds. We passed deer in the woods on our way to breakfast, ate wonderful healthy meals on the porch, and walked at night under the stars.

This environment provided time and space to work together in depth on various aspects of the training program. After an early morning meditation or a jog around the grounds, we began each day with hands-on. Jane Kosminsky presented her famous "warm up wheel", and Carolyn Serota led us through Judy Leibowitz's energy games. Once our energy was flowing, we turned to discussion. Our first agenda item was a report from the recent NASTAT meeting in Chicago. We looked at some of the issues facing the Alexander community, and where ACAT stands in relation to them. Next was an overview of ACAT's development since its inception, with an emphasis on educational philosophy. For newer faculty, this provided a kind of historical context, and gave senior faculty an opportunity to review where we have come from. Debby Caplan began with a description of the original vision that she and Judy Leibowitz had, and of how the program began and evolved under Judy's direction. She was followed by Barbara Kent and Pamela Anderson, who also shared their perspectives as former

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Judy's Bequest

In June ACAT received a \$25,000 check representing the bequest of Judy Leibowitz. Here are reprints of the letters to and from David Arens, Judy's nephew and the attorney handling the affairs of Judy's estate.

Dear Mr. Arens,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the general membership of the American Center for the Alexander Technique, I acknowledge receipt of Judy's bequest to the Judith Leibowitz Fund.

As a family member, perhaps you know that Judy's contributions to ACAT and to the Alexander Technique are widely acclaimed as inspirational. Her life's work was a cornerstone in the growth of the Alexander Technique in America. ACAT trained teachers are proud and honored to perpetuate Judy's love for teaching and learning.

It is with respect and truly warm gratitude that we accept Judy's bequest. The Judith Leibowitz Fund was established in May, 1982 on the occasion of Judy's retirement as Director of the Teacher Training Program of ACAT. The Fund was established in honor of her accomplishments to fund research and development, public relations and general promotion of the Alexander Technique in the U. S.

Respectfully Yours,
Kathryn Miranda, ACAT Executive Director

Dear Ms. Miranda,

I have your letter of June 9, 1992. I acknowledge with thanks receiving the Release and Receipt.

I thank you and the members of the Board of Directors for your kind sentiments. The American Center and the many friends Judy developed there were a very happy and fruitful part of her life.

I wish ACAT all of the best, and I am confident that it will continue to grow and help people towards a more constructive and pleasant life as it has so wonderfully in the past.

Respectfully yours,
David Arens

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directors. We traced ACAT's development up to the present, looking at how educational decisions were made along the way, such as the introduction of our mixed level structure, or the choice to seek accreditation. It was moving to see how a vision became reality, and has grown over the years, continuing to clarify and refine the teacher training process.

Judy Leibowitz's influence was palpable in these discussions. There was a strong sense that we are carrying on her special approach at ACAT.

Saturday afternoon began a new exploration for us, the culmination of many discussions over the years regarding how to deal with the emotional and psychological dimensions of the training process. Joan Lakin and Robert Marantz, two psychotherapists who are also longtime students of the Alexander Technique, gave a workshop which focused on these issues. This was very stimulating and provided a lot of insight. We will continue our work with them this year.

We ended the day with a going away party for Charlotte Okie, who is moving to Hong Kong and will be very much missed. We sent her off with champagne and sparklers.

Sunday's focus was an assessment of curriculum and class structure from the perspective of senior and associate faculty as well as feedback from student evaluations. Each senior faculty presented her approach in terms of structure and content, and shared her favorite ideas. We discussed ways of creating more flow or connectedness between each class over the course of the week and term. An idea emerged to develop a teacher trainer's manual, which would compile this information as a resource for all of us.

Before ending, the faculty gave input to the Board regarding what we feel are ACAT's most pressing needs in terms of fundraising. We are planning a fundraising event in conjunction with ACAT's 30th birthday in 1994.

Much was accomplished on this retreat. We drew the broader picture of ACAT's past, present and future. We articulated how the parts, our individual classes relate to the totality of the three year training process. We investigated the psychological aspects of training, and we responded to student feedback. Most importantly, we took the time to be together and to deepen our communication with each other. I was struck by the sense of supportiveness and community among the faculty, and by our strong commitment to our work at ACAT. We were in unanimous agreement that we would like to make the retreat an annual event. On this note, we adjourned for the summer, looking forward to where next year will take us.

Notes from the Chair By Lori Schiff

Kim Jessor and I, and several members and graduates of ACAT attended the recent Annual General Meeting of NASTAT in Chicago. The meeting was quite successful in terms of including interesting classes with some of the teachers from different training courses around the country (including ACAT alumna Missy Vineyard) as well as the business meetings and the delightful presence of Max Alexander, A. R.'s son.

In terms of the business, some of the big issues had to do with the approval and reapproval of training courses, the vote to accept Guidelines for Professional Ethics and the current activities regarding regulation and legislation in the bodywork field. NASTAT reported on all of this in detail in the most recent newsletter.

For all of us as teachers and trainees, the legislation that is being encouraged by the American Massage Therapy Association is potentially problematic. State by state laws are being enacted requiring massage therapists to be licensed by departments of health services within the state. Since we are teachers and do not practice massage therapy this should not affect us. However, the definitions of massage therapists as stated in some of these laws are not so clear.

If we are not specifically exempted from massage licensure in the text of these laws, there is potential for being labelled as someone who does "hands on" soft tissue work, and thereby practicing without a license and being subjected to whatever penalties are levied in a given state.

NASTAT has formed a legislation committee to look into this matter. Whether you are a member of NASTAT or not, this could affect you. If you have any information or ideas about the legal environment in your state, please let us know. Cynthia Knapp, the new President of NASTAT, is heading the committee and I have joined the committee as well.

All of the work that NASTAT is doing affects us as teachers in private practice. Some of the work that NASTAT does in terms of overseeing the quality of training courses affects ACAT directly. If you are a member of NASTAT, please take the time to consider the proposals and amendments that members are recommending. We will try to have at least one regional meeting to discuss NASTAT issues before the next annual meeting in June of 1993. There *will* be ACAT members attending so you can be represented by proxy at the annual meeting if you are unable to attend.

Style and Substance in Teaching the Alexander Technique

by Robert Lee Cohen
ACAT, Class of 1991

Before applying to be trained as an Alexander teacher, I investigated several training programs. I chose ACAT for two reasons: its clear focus on the Alexander Technique, and its large faculty. I wanted that clear focus (rather than a program covering "related disciplines" such as dance and martial arts), along with the broad perspective that comes from working with a number of different teachers. The variety of teachers gave me a chance to examine which elements are essential to the Technique, and which are expressions of various individuals or schools.

Subject Matter, Principles and Tools of the Alexander Technique

In my first year at ACAT, Ron Dennis posed the question, "What is the subject matter of the Alexander Technique?" After several weeks of interesting discussion, Ron proposed his own answer: that our subject matter is "hygienic movement".

In my view, starting from that premise, we use the subject matter of hygienic movement as a vehicle for cultivating the principle of non-interference. Inhibition and direction, then, are tools for practicing that principle. This formulation offers a context for observing the process of teaching and practicing the Technique. It can also provide a focus for discussions of how the Alexander Technique relates to other disciplines, whether educational, therapeutic, or spiritual. One can examine how the principle and corresponding tools are applied to subject matters other than hygienic movement.

What About Primary Control?

Primary control -- that certain dynamic relationship of head/neck/torso that we cultivate through inhibition and direction -- is sometimes cited as the Alexander principle. I see it, rather, as one very important biomechanical function among several which govern in the realm of hygienic movement.

During my training, I frequently asked faculty members about the role of primary control in the teaching process. The clearest response came from Judy Leibowitz, who said that a teacher might accomplish everything with hands only on the head and neck, but it would probably take much longer that way. She said learning can be speeded by intervening elsewhere as well.

Few teachers were as direct as Judy, and some seemed uncomfortable with the question. I often got the impression that it was not considered fitting to admit being interested in anything other than primary control.

(I have just noticed that "primary control" has the same initials as "politically correct".)

To use a non-ACAT example -- someone whose orientation was indeed clear, though different from Judy's -- there was a workshop in which Marjorie Barstow adhered rigorously to the words, "Let my neck be free, let my head lead forward and up, let my whole body follow." She emphasized the beautiful simplicity of the Technique and answered almost every question by saying, "If we just think these directions . . ." I have been told that her approach is not always so strictly formalized. But to me, at least on that day, she seemed to be saying that no further explanation was necessary. Primary control, strictly defined, was everything.

Bruce Fertman, who was trained by Marjorie Barstow, has given workshops that explored primary control more open-endedly. I won't attempt here to summarize his multifaceted ideas, but through them I have gradually come to the view that while primary control is our main gateway to reorganizing our movement patterns, it is not the only one. True, we begin with it and perpetually return to it as an indispensable reference point. But I believe concepts such as groundedness, opposing directions, spaciousness in the joints, and elements of anatomy and biomechanics can be taught without contradicting the concept of primary control.

Primary means first; it does not mean only. As Judy Leibowitz said, "It's based on . . . maintaining the poise of the head on the spine; but that's an oversimplification because one shortens the spine not only because one compresses and presses the head down, but because one makes movement in such a way that the spine is compressed."

Styles of Teaching the Alexander Technique

The concepts of the Alexander Technique can be conveyed through many different verbalizations and procedures; teaching styles reflect specific choices in these areas. F.M.'s comment is fascinating: "Don't teach how I teach; teach what you know." I hope to learn more about the lineage and styles of the various training programs.

I recently studied for six months with an English trained teacher whom I shall refer to as ETT. ETT's teaching style offered interesting comparisons to the ACAT style in the areas of primary control, choice of hands-on procedures, and attitude towards pain.

ETT's approach was intensely focused on primary

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control. The following comments stood out: "Everything I do must be to help you learn about primary control. . . . If you tell the pupil they can move their hips, you are abandoning primary control; the hips must be free only *because of* the primary control." This represented a very strict definition of primary control, and it contrasted with a general ACAT willingness to deal with mechanical factors if they arise in the course of moving.

ETT chose to use hands-on procedures that were more fixed and repetitive than is the norm at ACAT. There were no spirals, diagonals, or curves; all movements took place within what Bruce Fertman calls "the forward and up corridor".

I think every Alexander teacher finds some balance between two basic elements of a lesson: (1) the direct giving of a new kinesthetic experience from the teacher to the pupil, and (2) the teacher's guidance of the pupil in developing her/his own process for applying the Technique in daily activities. In my opinion, it is the balance between the two that makes an Alexander lesson different from a therapeutic manipulation or an exercise class.

With my ACAT experience as a point of reference, I perceived ETT's approach as being strongly oriented towards the former element. For example, most ACAT teachers allow the student considerable opportunities to initiate their own movement, with the teacher's hands guiding the directional quality. In contrast - at least when working with me - ETT almost always used his hands to control the entire movement through space as well as the directional quality. There were many movements that would have been mechanically impossible for me to execute without manual help (such movements occupying a smaller place in the typical ACAT repertoire). Another common procedure in ETT's class involved sudden, unexpected pushes from behind to test whether the student was sufficiently "back and up" to avoid being startled or budged. While ETT's approach did provide new kinesthetic experiences, I find that the ACAT approach provides them in a context more conducive to carryover into daily life.

Teacher-inflicted pain was not a major issue for me in my ACAT training. In general, the Alexander Technique was presented as a gentle, non-invasive process. On one occasion, my neck was jammed during a swift movement, but the teacher explained that that was an accident and helped me release my momentary tensing reaction. In contrast, on two occasions when I experienced sharp pain under ETT's hands, I was told that much worse things than this have happened, and that sometimes we need to experience pain in order to grow. My perspective is that the gentler approach is more conducive to growth.

Ways of Talking About the Technique to Laypersons

Before entering ACAT, I was a licensed massage therapist, frustrated with my inability to give my clients the means for significant change. When I got involved with the Alexander Technique, my enthusiasm led me to strenuous efforts to explain to people how the Technique is NOT massage, NOT about posture, NOT a form of exercise or therapy, and so on.

Bill Connington's excellent article "Answering Questions About the Alexander Technique" (ACAT News, Autumn 1988) encouraged me to simplify my approach. I love Bill's concise definition: "The Alexander Technique is a method for changing habits which produce tension." For me, that sums it up elegantly; but when I tell it to a layperson there are usually difficult questions about habits and tension.

In Pamela Anderson's Professional Issues class, we were each required to produce a one-sentence definition of the Technique. After learning that Pamela introduces herself to people as a postural therapist, I began to think about people's need to hear things in terms they can understand. Perhaps it isn't a crime to speak of posture?

My current one-sentence definition is: "The Technique is a re-education method that teaches you how to change faulty postural habits and movement patterns, and replace them with healthier ways of using your body." Too wordy, I know. And if a prospective landlord asked about my line of work, I would probably use Pamela's phrase.

Now I am teaching a 10-week introductory course (one hour a week, ten students per class) in the Alexander Technique at a local Y. In addition to the responsibility of using my hands properly, there is the staggering challenge of organizing the conceptual material within the time limits.

The "simplicity" of those teachers who have been practicing for decades looks like Nirvana to me right now. I wonder what it feels like to them.

The Physical Intellect With Rachel Zahn Saturday, September 26, 10 - 5:30pm

Rachel Zahn (ACAT, 1969) has developed an application of the Alexander Technique to intellectual process. She will discuss ideas for improving student->teacher communications by organizing resistance, negotiating change and understanding the learning process. She will use psycho-physical exercises as congruent examples. Contact Kathy Miranda (201) 861-7179 to register. \$75 for Teachers and \$50 for Trainees.

Fixation and the Fear of Change: Parallels between Personal and Organizational Growth

by Mary Cox

Part II - Continued

(The first part was published in the Spring 1992 Issue of ACAT News.)

Ironically, in some cases this has meant supporting a person or a group through the process of decaying and dying. The acceptance of decay and death is also the acceptance of change. Dying is a different kind of moving and the one we understand the least so we resist the hardest. For me, both personally and in my professional work with others, change is accomplished by dissolving, lifting off, clearing away, the fixated defensive reactions which have become habits, and the way forward with this is through calming fear, supporting exploration, encouraging adventure, and affirming new accomplishments.

I do not wish to deny the value of tradition, customs, routines, and rituals. These all have their place in providing a structure from which movement can be encouraged and supported. Structure provides a base, a foundation, a place to return to when pioneering adventures temporarily fail, and a place to rest in until energy and resources are sufficiently restored to support new explorations and new constructions. But the structure must never be mistaken for the real world, for the life process itself. That would be to create an illusion and a world apart. A puddle will support life (and death) but only for a limited period as compared with a pool which has an inlet bringing in fresh water and an outlet to allow flow and exchange, which in turn brings in new resources. I suppose we might ask, rather unglamorously, is my life, my organization, a pool or a puddle?! The basic structure that provides that place of calm, of support, of encouragement and affirmation, is the structure of HUMAN RELATIONSHIP. We can see this throughout the history of mankind, in social relations and groups - marriage, the family, the community, and in political, commercial, and religious groupings in which people come together to support and further develop their creative endeavors. Unfortunately these same groupings that were designed to nourish and support growth sometimes become structures that impose upon and limit personal identity and creative expression. Ritual and routine become revered and forbid re-organization. Effort both conscious and unconscious becomes targeted on maintaining and preserving the existing structure at the expense of the well-being and growth of the individuals for whom the structure was created in the first place.

The creative challenge is to manage the inevitable tension between conservatism and change, between preservation

and pioneering. To accomplish this requires, among other things, trust, in self, in others, and in the life process. This trust is born out of experiencing the overall holding capacity of a human relationship that is grounded but not fixed, is supportive but not possessive, is protective but not imprisoning.

I see organizations very similarly to how I see individuals. They are conceived, they get born, they go through infancy, through toddlerhood, childhood, even adolescence, and with all the attendant teething troubles: rebellions, and regressions to dependency and the heroic struggles for autonomy. Sometimes they even accomplish maturity! And they grow old and die, to be replaced with new organizations, that have new ways, new structures, new values, that are born of their own time. Some of us don't like the supermarket replacing the village grocer, or the European Economic Community replacing the national powers, but to hold on to the past is no way to shape the future.

There is no right way to be, or right way to do it, either for an individual or for an organization. Fixations are protective but primitive defenses that people regress to under real or apparent threat, including the threat of uncertainty. The goal is to help a person or a group feel safe enough. That is, help them to feel that their essential self, their identity and integrity, is sufficiently respected and cherished that they do not need to return again and again to those early basic defenses. Instead they can feel prized and free - free to be what they are, and in being what they are they become free to grow and change.

Mary Cox is a Certified Clinical Transactional Analyst and a Provisional Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst.

Living Urs Crafts

Living Earth Crafts, makers of fine body work tables, has recently engaged Urs Sauer, currently a 2nd year candidate at ACAT, to be a local sales representative. They have reached an agreement that will allow Urs to sell tables at discounted rates. Living Earth Crafts will send three tables to ACAT as demonstration models.

If you or a colleague are interested in more information about the tables or about the discount, call Urs Sauer or Elizabeth Buonomo at (201) 816-0556.

News from the Center

ACAT in London! August 3-6, graduates Joanne Howell, Bill Connington, Marta Friedland, Carolyn Serota, Lori Schiff, Jaye Miller and Sheldon Berkowitz attended the Carringtons' Refresher Course for teachers and Glynn MacDonald's course on voice and the Alexander Technique for teachers.

Congratulations to Glynn MacDonald (a.k.a. the Wizard of Ahs) on her new position as Chairwoman of STAT. Glynn is a Carrington trained teacher and a specialist in working with the voice and the Alexander Technique.

Insurance Network - A couple of Alexander teachers have been satisfied with their Mutual of Omaha health policies obtained through agent Jeffrey Marmelstein. His number is (914) 365-0016.

Ron Dennis (ACAT, 1979) attended the NASTAT AGM, where he gave his "Breath As Postural Process" presentation, originated and premiered at ACAT. Then on to NY for the ACAT graduation on June 18, where he presented a tribute and gift to Pamela Anderson on the occasion of her "retirement" from the Training Directorship. In early July, Ron gave lecture-demonstrations on three successive days at the 1992 National Biennial Convention of the American Guild of Organists, held in Atlanta.

Ann Waxman (ACAT, 1984) taught a week long course in the Music Department of the University of Akron and taught classes in July at Sweet Briar College in Virginia.

Kim Jessor (ACAT, 1981) completed a summer training course in Body-Mind Centering in Northampton, Mass.

ACAT Teachers - Just a reminder you are eligible to join STAT. Contact them to receive an application.

Fran Robertson (9th Term ACAT candidate) has created a computer file of all the books and articles in the ACAT library. This file, indexed by title and author and subject matter, will be available to those candidates and members who wish to browse or perform a 'key word search' for all those articles with similar subject matter!

Kathy Miranda (ACAT, 1990) served on the other side of an ACCET re- accreditation process. She was part of the On-Site Examination Team reviewing the education and training part of the Dale Carnegie program's offered by J. Neil Dwyer and Assoc. of Sarasota, Fl.

ACAT Brochures - A classic brochure is still available to members at \$.25 a piece. It's a self-mailer with a special place for your own business card. Also, we discovered that you can get business cards with self adhesive backs to make the process simpler.

SKELETON DISCOUNT - For orders of 5 or more ACAT will receive a 30% discount on either of the John Hopkins model skeletons. There is, of course, the 18-inch which retails for \$89.50 and there is also a 35-inch which retails for \$225. To receive the discount, place your order with Melanie Nevis. Cost will be retail less 30% plus postage and handling. Exact figures will be available as soon as the full order is completed.

RECENT MEDICAL LITERATURE - Dr. John Austin's research article has been published by Chest Medical Journal. ACAT has reprints of this article for \$2 to ACAT members and \$3 each to non-members.

RECENT REFERENCES: The Alexander Technique has been mentioned and Jessica Wolf (ACAT, 1977) quoted in "How, When and Why You Walk the Way You Walk" in the August issue of Glamour Magazine. There is an article, Performance Patterns by David Lindsay in the Summer issue of RACQUET.

Studio Sublet - available 9/1, 103rd and RSD. Call Ron Dennis (404) 841-0386.

Professional Space - Laura Masone of Fitness Masters trains exercise instructors and is interested in sharing space with Alexander Teachers. The 400 sq.ft. location is @ 72nd and Broadway. She is willing to rent hourly or for longer periods. Daily hours are available as well as some nights and weekends. Her # is 721-2357.

For Women Practitioners - Elaine Retholtz and Phylis Bloom, Licensed Acupuncturists, have space to share at 5th Ave and 20th. Their space has private rooms with tables, a shared waiting room. The rate is \$60/day, less for multiple days per week. Fr, Sa, Su and Mn available. Call 675-8084 or 675-1164.

Flag Pond Medical Clinic in Flag Pond, Tn. is looking for an AT Teacher. Call Kathy Miranda for details.

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ACAT is the only
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Summarized Minutes from the ACAT Annual Meeting

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

This report was given by Kathryn Miranda.

The 90-91 school year resulted in a surplus of \$7,396. ACAT's Funds at the end of the fiscal year were \$30,000 in the General Reserve Fund, \$10,000 in the Judith Leibowitz Fund, \$5,000 in the Barbara Kent Fund and \$12,000 in Operating Funds (includes a Checking and Savings Account). A copy of ACAT 90-91 Financial Statements is available to the membership upon request.

ACAT was granted re-accreditation for the TCP for an additional three years. This has proven to be a valuable process.

Student Loan Program is in its fourth year and going strong.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

This report was given by Lauren Schiff.

For the present ACAT is financially in the black and high standards are maintained in the Training Program. For the future, we are considering ways to expand public relations for the Center and the TCP. The space search is continuing, however the market is still quite expensive relative to what ACAT can afford.

REPORT FORM THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE TCP

As Pamela Anderson is on leave this year, Kim Jessor who has been Acting Director since September gave this report.

The Director's job has been divided into two positions, the Director and the Dean of Students and Admissions. Joan Frost has been the Dean this year. Thanks were given to Pamela, Melanie Nevis and Ron Dennis for their help in this transition.

New supervision procedures were implemented last year as a result of ACCET recommendations. Both the Director and the Faculty found the observations and self-evaluations informative and valuable.

New to the Senior faculty are Inez Zeller and Judith Lakin. New to the Associate Faculty is Brooke Lieb.

Each term we have processing and discussion time for the trainees. The responsibility for facilitating this process is being shared among interested faculty who take turns meeting with the trainees.

A faculty retreat is being planned for June '92. Hopefully this will give faculty time and space to work more in depth together.

PRESENTATION TO BILL CONNINGTON

For his dedication and service to ACAT, the Board presented to Bill a small gift as a token of our gratitude.

PRESENTATION BY MICHELLE ARSENAULT

Michelle discussed her work with school children in kindergarten, 4th and 5th grades. She has created and implemented 'working concepts' based on scientific models that relate the Alexander Technique principles to the children. She is working with the children both individually and in groups and has 40-50 hours of videotape. She is constructing a series of 13 lesson plans for AT teachers for use in the classroom.

NEW BUSINESS

Reminder that the NASTAT Board has no ACAT members. Please consider getting involved.

We are creating a Fund Raising Committee to develop funds for an ACAT home and general operations. The Fund has received several hundred dollars in contributions and several offers from volunteers to kick-off this project.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

All Board nominees were elected by general consent. They are Lauren Schiff as Chairwoman of the Board for a 5 year term, Rebecca Flannery as a Director for a 3 year term and Connie Serchuk as a Director for a 2 year term.