

JUDITH LEIBOWITZ

(1920 - 1990)



Judith Leibowitz died on December 28, 1990. She died as she lived: as a heroine. A transcendent courage guided her life, leading her to achieve the pinnacle of her profession.

The story of her fight with polio is well known to us. We can only imagine the physical and mental reserves that were necessary to teach herself to walk

again. This tumultuous struggle for freedom continued throughout her life up until the moment of her death.

A paradoxical mix of iron will and gentle spirit, she strove to help bring about an exquisite balance in others. She did this with her hands, her words, her example.

She laid her hands on soft, or they pushed beyond the resistance. There was no feeling of their limits -- of where they began and ended.

Innovative in the profession, she was one of the first to teach group classes. Yet she always stressed that nothing could replace private lessons. She pioneered what she called her "energy work", but admonished if inhibition and direction were forgotten.

Her presence will be felt throughout generations of teachers. They will lead their students through processes that she developed. They will use certain words, perhaps not knowing why. They will be her words.

She can remind us. To remember to begin at the beginning. To remember to experiment. To remember to struggle. To remember that in the struggle there is the essence of the experience.

And to remember that ACAT was so much of her life. That her teaching is with us, and will stay with us -- to ignite our spirits to swirl to ever mounting heights.

Bill Connington
January 10, 1991

On behalf of Pearl and the rest of Judy's family, I would like to thank all of Judy's friends for sharing this time of grieving with us and for the love and support that you have given Judy over the years. Judy gave a lot of herself to many people, and I am sure that Judy enriched all of your lives. Judy also loved all of you. But as I said at Judy's and Pearl's 70th birthday party, just a couple of months ago, in the end we are judged not by how much we love, but by how much we are loved by others.

Judy was loved by many people, and not the least by her nephew, me, and by her niece, my sister Laura. Judy did not have any children of her own and she adopted Laura and me as if we were her own children. Laura and I not only loved Judy, but we also admired her courage and her independence and her many accomplishments. She was a fighter to the very end. In the end, Judy accepted death with the realization that she had lived a full life and had much to be proud of. She said that she had accomplished many of the things that she had set out to do, but that there were also many things still left undone. This is the saddest part, because except for the cancer that ravaged her body, she was young in spirit when she died. It is comforting to think, as my three-year old daughter said yesterday, that "we shouldn't be sad because Judy will grow up again and be happy and we will all see her again." For the time being, however, Judy's spirit is all that is left; but her spirit burns bright in all of us, indeed, in so many of us, that this keeps her alive even in death.

Fred Ausubel
December 29, 1990

AS WE REMEMBER JUDY

We remember and honor Judy by contributing our love and energy to the Technique she taught so well. She guided us to a clear and joyful experience of the Alexander Technique. It was her wonderful inspiration that brought so many of us to a lifelong commitment to the Technique. To support the continuation of her work through teaching is a great tribute to Judy. To continue training teachers of the Alexander Technique will radiate her love. To support the work she began at the Center will nourish her dream to extend the Alexander Technique into greater public awareness.

(Continued on p. 5)

What Does the Alexander Technique Mean to Me?

by Judith Leibowitz

(Reprinted from The Alexandrian, Vol. I, No. 1)

Over my years of teaching the Alexander Technique, I find there are certain aspects I am stressing more and more. I know that much of what I say you have already heard, but maybe some of it will be heard with "new ears," or in the light of new experiences that you have had.

Essentially, the Alexander Technique is a method, by which one can become aware of and change habit. Usually a person comes into the Alexander Technique because of a problem one has been unable to deal with. One studies a while, and perhaps learns to change or handle the situation, and may even discontinue studying. But one has now also opened the way to further change, and so may continue studying on his own. Change is a constant occurrence, yet not completely outside our realm of control. The excitement of the Alexander Technique is that one is offered a way to take over and control change to some extent -- that one is given a means whereby one can deliberately and consciously make some choices. One doesn't have to be always conscious and aware and studying oneself -- how boring! It is that learning to use this method gives one the possibility of choosing the next step -- whatever it may be. Let me point out here that we don't know where we are going, we only know where we have been. And while much is learned or experienced on an unconscious and subliminal level, true control comes from conscious choice.

Now let us come back to defining the Alexander Technique. Simply, it is a method for changing habit. It is the ramifications of change that are so complicated and difficult and thrilling. To change a habit one must first know the habit to be changed. Then one must have a means to change, and a direction in which to go. And this study brings into sharper focus all sorts of awareness -- kinesthetic, visual, intellectual, conceptual, sensory, tactile, philosophical, etc. One is dealing with the whole psycho-physical entity, and let us not forget the soul!

I think by now you have some insight into the means which bring about this constant growth, but I want to mention what is unique in the Alexander Technique. First, there is the inhibition of the habitual response -- there is no way of experiencing the new until one has stopped the old. Then, there is the poise of the head on the spine which allows for the total lengthening of the spine in every movement and which facilitates the anti-gravity responses. And finally, conscious direction which defines the poise of the head and lengthening of the spine, and gives a tool for realizing these conditions.

Each teacher teaches out of his or her own background, special interests, and biases. I am

WALKING TALL

By Joan Arnold

(Reprinted with permission from New York Woman, April 1990)

Judy Leibowitz, a master teacher of the Alexander Technique, has been honing her skills for forty years. Leader of the small innovative group that founded the American Center for the Alexander Technique (ACAT) at 67th Street and Broadway, she helped develop the program that, since 1968, has trained 133 teachers. The Technique is a way to improve posture and change habits that get in the way of efficient movement. Releasing downward pressure of the head on the spine, say Alexander adherents, allows for lighter, easier movement, fuller breathing and clearer thinking. The Technique's best-known successes are in the relief of chronic back pain.

Leibowitz's struggle with polio motivated her to study the Alexander Technique, and her need for frequent lessons motivated her to teach it. "I need my daily fix, just as a diabetic needs an insulin shot," says the five-foot tall sixty-nine-year-old. Paralyzed from the waist down at the age of fifteen, Leibowitz spent a year in a nursing home trying to recapture, through physical therapy, the use of her legs. Doctors predicted that she would never walk--- "Nobody told me that, luckily," she says. Graduating from bed to braces to crutches, she emerged with a severe limp and a body tensed and armored from the effort.

Her mother, who had heard of the Technique's success with polio victims, encouraged Leibowitz to try

(continued on p. 5)



Judy working with Steve Glassman

eternally fascinated with the means offered by the Alexander Technique for exploring and developing the human potential. With each student I go on a never-ending, new, exciting, and thrilling voyage of discovery .

RECOLLECTIONS

"Meeting Judy changed the course of my life. I met her in California at the home of Maya Clemes, my first Alexander teacher. Judy gave a lecture-demonstration to Maya's students. I was exhilarated by her presentation, and afterwards I asked if I could have a lesson with her, and were there any openings in the NY training. She said no to both questions. The next day though, Judy gave me a call saying she would be willing to give me a lesson, after the lesson she said I am going to get you into the training. A month and a half later, I was on the plane moving my life to New York.

Prior to her death I was doing a lot of thinking about Judy and what a powerful influence she had been in my life, as I imagined she had been in other's as well. . . . I began thinking of Frank Capra's movie, "It's a Wonderful Life" and Jimmy Stewart's character, how he felt cheated in some way by his life, and then had the opportunity to see what a positive and powerful effect he had on the people he knew. . . . I told Judy about this image. I thanked her for her presence and influence in my life, and I said that I hoped she realized how important she is and had been in so many of our lives."

Pamela Anderson

"Judy Leibowitz was such a simple woman. Her manner was subtle, unassuming yet very powerful. She was one of the great educators. She said one day, that her illness with polio had been a blessing in disguise, for without it, she would never have developed herself as she had been forced to do. Then she said, "You see, we just never know, so all we can do is stay present."

As for her lessons, I studied with her for 15 years, mostly 2 times a week. Those lessons were unlike any

others I've had in that the balance of the experience was so wide in scope. I experienced myself in every way at once. With other teachers, I would learn a great deal emotionally - or in body mechanics - or about anatomy - or about a particular habit but one area was emphasized. With Judy, the remarkable thing was the unity of what one learned. She didn't teach a subject - she taught what she was. The core of who she was came through her hands and her being. All who knew her will mourn her death."

Beret Arcaya

"Your words come
back with the memory
of standing with you
facing the mirror .

"See the space above your head."

Honored teacher and role model,
your words have stayed with me.

The foundation you gave so many years ago has encouraged and supported continued growth and clear direction.

Being in your home has always been a gift. Your wit and talent as a sculptress surprised and delighted me.

My family and I were deeply moved to visit you once again this thanksgiving, witnessing your strength and dignity, your joy and compassion.

We thank you, Judy."

Saura Bartner

(Continued on p. 4)

Some of Judy's Professional Highlights

- 1950 Trained as an Alexander teacher with Lulie Westfeldt. Had additional lessons with Alma Frank.
- 1952 Began her private practice. Travelled to England to study with Alexander.
- 1954 Second voyage to England to study with Alexander.
- 1964 Co-Founded the American Center for the Alexander Technique with Deborah Caplan, Frank Ottiwell, Joyce Suskind and Barbara Callen. This was the first Alexander training program in the United States.
- 1966 The Center began to train students. She was on the Senior Faculty from 1966 through 1990.
- 1968 Invited by John Houseman to join the new Drama Division of The Juilliard School, where she worked with many leading actors. Faculty 1968 through 1990.
- 1990 Co-authored a book on the Alexander Technique with Bill Connington, published by HarperCollins Publishers.

Throughout her career, Judy introduced and taught the Alexander Technique at leading universities and theatre companies.

(Recollections continued from p. 3)

"Way back when being an Alexander teacher could be a bit lonely and very scary, I had Judy Leibowitz at my side. Her use of the Technique was so real, so courageous and so intelligent that she gave me a much needed sense of reality about my work. Judy, you will always be by my side and in my heart."

Deborah Caplan

"To the tune of "It's Gonna Be A Great Day," I wrote these lyrics in '78 or '9, while in the training with Judy, and the class sang it for her."

*When you're back an' down, there's no real need to frown,
You can go forward and up!*

*Energy goes 'round, from your head to the ground,
When you go forward and up!*

*Judith is your guru, she's saying to you,
"You're shooting up!" up, up, up,*

*So if you're back an' down, inhibit that ol' frown,
And send it forward and up!*

Ron Dennis

"Judy Leibowitz was a remarkably courageous and dedicated teacher. Her enthusiasm for the Technique was boundless, and she masterfully extended her students' possibilities until they, too, seemed boundless.

Judy's encouragement led me to enter the Training Program. Her belief in my work led to my teaching it at Juilliard. I am profoundly indebted to her.

We have lost Judy as a teacher, friend, and advocate of the work, but her influence is not lost. It continues because it pervades the life and the teaching of everyone who loved and respected her. Rest easy, Judy."

Lorna Faraldi

"Judy Leibowitz, my friend and mentor, quietly, with her hands and heart, taught me about myself in a deep and unjudging way.

Judy had a unique way of being there - trusting and believing in me, until I trusted and believed in myself. She encouraged me to consider becoming a teacher. In the mid '60s, she arranged back to back lessons with another student and we practiced putting hands on each other on the table. I was so terrified and upset by these experiences that I told Judy I could never do this. I couldn't deal with touching and being present in that way, I just couldn't do it! Gently she assured me, over a period of time, not with her words so much as with her being. Judy seemed to believe in

me so much that I began to believe her. I trusted her, and if she said I could do it, well, maybe I could. That was nearly 25 years ago. Judy was there every step of the way: training, assistant teaching, taking my first class, directing the TCP and retiring from that position . . . always quietly telling me I was OK. We agreed that we were on this exciting path together and she always said how nice that we never would have to be bored with our lives.

Judy taught me to have the courage to risk, to open to new experiences, to welcome and trust change physically, emotionally and as time went on, spiritually. That was Judy's gift and I am grateful for having had her in my life for all those years. I love her and carry the fruits of her teaching and personal influence in the very fiber of my being. I will miss her. And yet, her spirit shines brightly in my life."

Barbara Kent

"When I first met Judy 20 years ago at the Center, I was concerned about how she would receive me, coming from another training. She welcomed me and encouraged me, that was her style.

Judy, I will always remember those moments in our lesson when what you were teaching, I was learning, your face would light up and glow. That light still shines."

Sarni Ogus

"Meeting Judy Leibowitz and beginning lessons with her as I did in 1954, before "holistic" and other allied concepts had anything like the currency they have today, was to have a whole new world lovingly revealed. I shall always be grateful to Judy for her compassionate and objective guidance to my new life and will remember her with love and infinite gratitude."

Frank Ottiwell

"Few people have an opportunity, in their lives, to affect the large number of people Judy affected. Of course, she had an effect on the teachers she trained and the students and trainees who have studied with them. But also, because of her role in establishing the Technique in America, Judy had a profound effect on the lives of many people who have never heard of her or the Alexander Technique. They are the people our students interact with: the patients of the psychiatrist who is able to resume his practice because his incapacitating back pain is gone, or the audience member who has a profound experience watching one of the Juilliard actors Judy trained. It's hard to imagine where American Alexander work would be today if it weren't for Judy Leibowitz, but it's clear that the vast number of people who've benefitted from it would be

very much poorer. And now that she's gone, the rest of us will also be poorer; I'll miss her, both as my teacher, and as a very good friend."

Eleanor Rosenthal

"In 1956, I considered giving up music conducting until I met Judy Leibowitz who gently touched my bodymind and changed my life. During those beginning lessons, I felt like a little girl trying to please her good mother when I continually asked her 'Am I doing this right or wrong?' After a quiet pause, she replied softly smiling, 'You are just doing!' Perplexed, I continued to 'just do,' and let go of a history of expectations.

After several months, I experienced waves of emotions during our lessons. 'Am I going crazy?' 'No,' she replied, 'perhaps you need to see a psychotherapist!' What a relief! We both laughed and continued the lesson.

She was very patient, demanding and caring while training me to become an Alexander Teacher. Although my journey took a different path twenty years later, Judy's teachings, interpretations of the Alexander Technique and her emphasis on the use of the Self have greatly influenced the integrative work I do today. Her healing hands are imprinted in my soul.

Ilana Rubenfeld

(WALKING TALL continued from p. 2)

it several years later. She was working as a chemist when she heard the work described, and, she says, "It went against my scientific background. [To me] the mind and the body were separate entities. I started to study just to keep my mother from nagging me."

The Technique gradually enabled her to disentangle her muscular distortion and move with much more ease. "If I was walking in the street and dropped my glove, I couldn't pick it up because I had nothing to lean on, and with the Alexander Technique I am able to bend without needing any extra support." Though Judy greets me at her apartment door with a cane and makes her way around her spacious apartment with a limp, everywhere around us the sculptures she has made of animals and people leap, lean and extend from tabletops and windowsills. Her view is of Lincoln Center, where she teaches acting students at Juilliard the technique originally developed in the 1890s by Australian actor F. Matthias Alexander to regain the use of his voice. "Actors have to be available to all different kinds of movement," says Leibowitz, "and they have to be able to deal with a character distortion without hurting themselves. William Hurt, Kevin Kline, Kelly McGillis and Robin Williams have all passed under her magic touch.

She gently uses her hands to encourage students

to free neck tension and while they stand, sit, walk or speak, prompts them to attain freer movement by picturing it. A masseuse will use her hands to move tension through tight muscles, a chiropractor will realign bones displaced by trauma or muscular imbalance, the Alexander Technique alters movement patterns by retraining how people think when they move. "When I put my hands on somebody, I feel where the tensions are," she says, "but I also suggest with my hands how the person can release that tension.... Having a physical disability, I'm constantly working against my own organic muscular imbalance." By teaching this originally private work in groups, and by developing a set of procedures that apply to the full range of human movement, she has elaborated on Alexander's basic precepts.

Though the Technique's principles are simple and clear, application to individuals is complex and varied. One client tells a story familiar to victims of acute back pain. "I had gone to an orthopedist who X-rayed this and that and gave me a diagnosis of low-back syndrome. I started reducing my activities and thought, 'I'm too young for this.'" After hearing an Alexander success story, she went to Leibowitz with skepticism that turned to confidence: "She put her hand right where my back problem was." After regular lessons, she is now free of back pain.

Leibowitz survived a bout with cancer last summer and continues chemotherapy treatments with a full weekly schedule: sixteen hours at Juilliard, six hours at ACAT and twelve private sessions. She has coauthored, with Bill Connington, *The Alexander Technique*, to be published this August, that describes the Technique's basic theories and her own inventive teaching procedures.

Leibowitz cautions all who ask that the Alexander method does not directly cure disease. "The healing aspects grow out of changing conditions that are negative and destructive in the way the body is being used," she says. "We're not healers. We're teachers."

(AS WE REMEMBER JUDY Continued from p. 1)

Please support Judy's work promoting and developing the Alexander Technique. Make a donation to ACAT's Judith Leibowitz Fund. The Fund was established in May, 1982 on the occasion of Judy's retirement as Director of the Teacher Training Program. Judy served as Director from the program's inception in 1964 through 1981. The Fund was established in honor of her accomplishments with the goal of funding research and development, public relations and general promotion of the Alexander Technique in the U.S.

In deep appreciation of Judy's service to and direction for ACAT, ACAT has contributed \$1,000 from our 89-90 operating surplus to the Judy Leibowitz Fund. Please join us with your contribution. Make checks payable to ACAT - JL Fund and send to ACAT, Attn: Kathy Miranda, 129 W. 67th St., NY, NY 10023.

NEWS FROM THE CENTER

On Saturday, February 2, 1991, ACAT Alumni, Faculty and Candidates will gather to honor and celebrate the gift of love we shared with Judy. This memorial service will be held 2:00pm at Beret Arcaya's Loft, 810 Broadway, #2.

CONGRATULATIONS to Allison Caudill Holt, Jean McClelland, Beth Pierik and Robin Schiff, the TCP Graduating Class of December 1990. CONGRATULATIONS to Jeanne Barrett for becoming ACAT certified. We wish their teaching days to be long and fruitful.

The TCP welcomes 13 new students this year. Sarah Gamble joins us from Aileen Crow's Training. Sandra Bernard, Elizabeth Buonomo, Laurie Currie, Cathy Hazeltine, Fern Kushner and Stephanie Winters started training in September. Nina Aledort, Jacque Bell, Sandra Colozzi, MaryBeth Hraniotis, Patricia McGinnis and Lisa Trank started training this January. Welcome!

We also welcome Rivka Cohen to the Faculty. Rivka brings 28 years of teaching experience and at least 8 years of experience with training teachers of the Technique. The ACAT faculty and candidates can look forward to an enriching and powerful experience as Rivka shares her skills and her energetic "Back and Up."

The hunt for space continues. We came close this fall to finding a new home. With our limited resources, we are looking for a situation with another Non-Profit with whom we could share space and costs. Help us keep up the search. If you know of any opportunities or if you want to know our requirements, please contact Lori Schiff.

???? Also about sharing space with ACAT -- if ACAT had classrooms available to rent to Teachers during the afternoon and early evening hours, would you be interested? We are trying to open options for the Training program and to the membership. ??? Let us know what options interest you. ??? Call the Center.

The library continues to grow and with Judy's passing, we are very interested in documenting her work. If you have any notes, tapes, stories, pictures, etc. that document Judy's words, thoughts, hands and teaching skills, please share with ACAT by sending a copy to the ACAT library. Under consideration is a project to make edited video or audio tapes available.

Ron Dennis has resigned from his duties as Executive Director. He is directing his talents in the Atlanta Center for the Alexander Technique. We feel confident that this is forward and up for Ron. Although we will miss his NY presence, we will continue to have his advice and counsel as he will be on the ACAT Board of Advisors. More about Ron in the next newsletter.

The present ACAT staff are: Pamela Anderson, TCP Director, Kim Jessor, Dean of Students, Melanie Nevis, TCP Coordinator and Kathy Miranda, Executive Director. This year we are busy with the re-accreditation process. We documented ACAT's who, what, when, where and why in an Analytic Self-Evaluation Report and we are preparing for the On-Site visit in February. Also, public interest continues to grow. We responded to over 1000 inquiries this past year. Hope you were the recipient of a referral or two.

BENEFIT TO MEMBERS! If you feel a little foggy when the thought is about condyles and clavicles or if you want to polish your ability to visualize complex concavities and convexities, we've got the solution for you. ACAT members may audit Judy Trobe's Anatomy/Kinesiology Class. The class meets on Tuesday morning; first term is devoted to HNB, second to Lower Limb, third to Upper Limb. The charge is \$150 per term (or \$100 if you stay for the Hands-on part of the class and assist as a volunteer.) Space is limited so please call the Center for the details. That will be simple!

DO YOU KNOW WHERE? ACAT is out of touch with these alumni. Can you help us find:

Elizabeth Adamson (1979 Grad)
Marsha Bate (1977)
Maneco Bueno (1984)
Michelline Charron (1975)
Lori Schneiderman DeWan (1983)
Barbara Lachman Grant (1981)
Ivy Green (1975)
Ofer Kamron (1984)
Lisa Rope (1982)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! March 3rd is the Annual membership meeting. Look for your 1991 membership package to arrive in a few weeks.

Applications are currently being accepted for the September '91 term. Prospective applicants should contact the Center for details. Reminder - Financial Aid available for candidates who qualify, also, ACAT is authorized to accept foreign students who qualify.

Kim Jessor, spent 7 weeks this summer studying Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body Mind Centering (BMC), part of a 4 summer training program. She finds it a wonderful compliment to the Alexander Technique, and intends to do a workshop for Alexander teachers specifically applying BMC to our work. Call her for more information.

THANK YOU Jaye Miller for your beautiful contribution of the calligraphic memorial notice.

American Center for
the Alexander Technique, Inc.®
129 West 67 Street
New York, N.Y. 10023



N. Brooke Lieb
856 West End Ave #1B
New York NY 10025