

## The Physical Intellect Workshop with Rachel Zahn by Lisa Trank

On October 10, 1992, Rachel Zahn held a workshop in NYC entitled The Physical Intellect. Rachel lives in Paris and is an Alexander teacher (ACAT, 1968), an Ericksonian psychotherapist and a performance coach. She is also completing her Ph.D. in Intercultural Communication, specializing in the psychology and physiology of "high performance" and is a consultant to artists, psychologists and business executives. The workshop was designed to establish an experimental dialogue between the thinking and the sensing mind and to establish a bridge between what she refers to as the two cultures of mind- dominated bodies and body or feeling-dominated minds.

As a group, we focused on the creative act: what is it, how do we get to it and how do we develop a means-whereby to call on it and sustain it as a reliable energy source. Within this discussion we talked about biological cognition, patterns of systemic and reductionistic thinking and combining theorization with psycho-physical awareness. Rachel guided the exchange so that within the structure of an intellectual format we were able to pay attention to how an idea or thought could change, how the energy in the room was a physical entity contained within the idea and how a thought could reach a resolution or restructure itself into

*(Continued Page 4)*

## The Alexander Technique - An Approach to Pain Control

by Judith C. Stern, M.A., P.T.

*(The following is an excerpt from an article published in the Chronic Pain Association's newsletter, Lifeline, Summer 1992. It is printed with the permission of the author. For copies of the complete article, contact Judy Stern, 31 Purchase St., Rye, NY 10580, #914-921- 2400.)*

Tom was injured in 1969 lifting a heavy object. The injury seemed minor but the pain persisted. Over the course of the last 20 years, he had had four surgeries in a vain attempt to alleviate the pain. Acupuncture, hypnosis and other treatments were tried. Nothing helped. Tom was 45 years old, married and the father of a 10 year old son. He worked for IBM and led an incredibly productive life despite his limitations. His limitations, however, were enormous. He could drive only to and from work, worked at a standing desk, (sitting was impossible due to pain), and could not participate in any extracurricular activities. His daily pain was so great he could not sit with his family for dinner. He managed his pain with analgesics which barely got him through his days.

.....(Paragraph describing Technique omitted in this excerpt.).....

Tom began taking two lessons a week, along with one physical therapy session to guide him gently into increased physical activity. The lessons were remarkable. Tom had spent the last 20 years divorcing his mind from his body to cope with his daily pain. His skill at mind-body separation was excellent. Twenty years of suffering had made him an expert at blocking his pain experience. Now I was asking him to focus on this connection but in the opposite way. I wanted Tom to be acutely aware of his discomfort and to use it as a feedback mechanism to become more effective at using the technique. It worked! Tom became facile at reconnecting his mind to his body as I taught him what it could be like to sit, stand, and move in a different way.

Tom studied the Alexander Technique for almost a year. Some of his significant milestones during that time were:

**At Three Weeks:** 1. The pain in one leg practically disappeared. 2. He sat with comfort for most of Thanksgiving dinner with his family. **At Three Months:** 1. He no longer took any pain medication. 2. He was able to sit at a regular desk at work. 3. He no longer wore a back brace. 4. He was able to walk two miles each day without pain. **At Four Months:** 1. Pain was no longer the central theme of his life. 2. He could control his pain by practicing the principles of the Alexander Technique. **At Nine Months:** 1. He was coaching his son's Little League team. 2. In his own words, he was fully experiencing life as "normal."

## NOTES FROM THE TCP

By Kim Jessor

As fall term comes to an end, I reflect on how rich and full it has been. This year, as part of our Director Review procedure, I am visiting all the classes to observe. So far, I have been impressed by the high quality of the teaching going on in our program. It is a pleasure to watch the teaching/learning process unfold in a way that I can't do while actively teaching a class.

In October, the ACAT faculty and volunteer faculty honored Pamela Anderson at a party at Lori Schiff's and celebrated her contributions as former Director of Training.

This fall, we welcomed 5 new candidates to ACAT. They are: Kele Baker, Teva Bjerken, Sara Grindle, Betsy Hulton and Mike Willis. Our January class will include Linda Kuehne, Roberto Mainetti, Ned Stroh and Nanette Walsh.

On our faculty, Daniel Singer has become a senior teacher this term. Annette Cantor has returned to volunteer and new volunteer faculty are Mary Jane Findley, Jean Rashkind and Deborah Gladstein.

Our warmest congratulations to recent graduates Susan Arthur, Victoria Hyatt, Lauren Jones, Frances Robertson, Lynn Shapiro and Laura Smith!

We continued our informal student performance assemblies this term with appearances by Pat McGinnis and Valerie Resh. Pat sang songs from Chess and the Meadowlark, Valerie played a Debussy piano prelude, and together they sang a duet from Lakme. Afterwards, they shared their perspectives and answered questions on how the Technique is affecting their music. They spoke about how they practice, warm up, deal with stagefright and apply the Technique to performance.

Visiting guest teacher Ellen Barlow presented a workshop for the candidates. Ellen is a practitioner of Body-Mind Centering, who specializes in working with Gymnastik and Physioballs. In a room filled with large inflated red, yellow, orange, green and blue balls, we explored the reflexes, righting reactions, and equilibrium responses through sitting, rolling, and moving in various ways on the balls.

On December 1st, in conjunction with World AIDS Day, ACAT presented a program of AIDS education. We met to inform ourselves, and to look at issues that potentially affect us as Alexander teachers. We began with a presentation from a health educator. This was followed by a panel discussion with faculty members Deborah Gladstein, Samie Ogus and Lori Schiff, who spoke about

(Continued on page 4)

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

By Lauren Schiff

Dear Judy,

Another year has gone by .... I have been thinking about you a lot these days. Reflections on ACAT and teaching always come with images of you - the brightness of your eyes and the sparkle that intensified when you were teaching or discussing the AT and all that comes with it.

At the Board we have been looking at ACAT with eyes on the present and future of the training program and of our profession.

*Looking at the present in the training course:* The faculty has initiated a consulting relationship with psychotherapists to assist us in deepening our understanding of the training process and its psychological effect on individual as well as groups of trainees.

Kim and Joan have started a series of discussions in the faculty meetings to review our methods of teaching in the training course: including verbal, hands- on instruction, discussion in reading groups, and approaches to working with mixed level classes.

Through the Barbara Kent Fund, we have been able to sponsor presentations by visiting teachers and practitioners of other modes of psycho-physical education. The next scheduled visitor to the Training Course will be Mrs. Ruth Murray from the Carringtons' training course in London. She will be here in February.

*Looking to the future:* We are considering the means for strengthening our role as a well established school for training teachers and for supporting the graduates and members of ACAT.

We are creating a new brochure and informative materials about the TCP, initiating a series of announcements and/or advertisements in specific journals for the Training Course, and considering ways and means to bring the Alexander Technique to the general public.

Recent AT information bytes for the public include ACAT graduate Joan Arnold giving a brief demonstration of the AT on CBS This Morning and a mention of the AT in the Nov/Dec edition of Walking Magazine. Writers and researchers continue to contact ACAT for information about the AT. We do the best we can to provide accurate information and then hope that it will be presented accordingly. ACAT graduate and PR professional, Joanne Howell, has been tremendously helpful in this area of our work.

Through the assistance of the Judith Leibowitz Fund, we

(Continued on page 4)

## Interview with Mrs. Ruth Murray by Lauren Schiff

During the early part of this past August, I attended the refresher course for Alexander teachers that Walter and Dilys Carrington present annually in London.

Along with taking the Carringtons' course and the course in voice work for Alexander teachers offered by Glynn MacDonald, I had private lessons with Glynn, Peggy Williams and a teacher who was completely new to me, Ruth Murray.

Ruth was assisting Walter and Dilys in the refresher course, and as I later learned, she has been assisting in their training course for many years. She also teaches privately at Lansdowne Road. In the lessons I had with her I found her to be very thoughtful, patient and kind. Her hands and a few simple guiding words conveyed a sense of clarity and quietness that cleared the way for my thoughts and actions.

During the few days of the refresher course Ruth met briefly with me for an informal interview. With her permission, what follows are her responses to my questions regarding teaching the Alexander Technique to the general public and to trainees.

### **RUTH MURRAY: INTERVIEW August 6, 1992**

The interview took place at 18 Lansdowne Road in a teaching room at the Constructive Teaching Centre, home of the Carringtons' training course.

**Q:** What brought you to the Alexander Technique and how did you get into training teachers?

**A:** I developed adolescent arthritis and was in a great deal of pain. By the time I was 35, the recurring arthritis was virtually crippling me. I was seeing an osteopath regularly and had tried everything I could to relieve the pain.

On the recommendation of a friend I came to Lansdowne Road and by extreme good fortune became a pupil of Dilys Carrington. After a very short time my back became stronger and the pain much less. I did not really know why.

Gradually I talked to Dilys about joining the training course. I was seriously thinking it was time for a change and as the Technique had improved my life considerably I really wanted to understand "the secret" and possibly pass it on.

I never really considered working from home and when I qualified in 1980 it seemed very natural to work with Walter and Dilys, and luckily that is how it has been.

**Q:** Have you ever worked with any other teachers?

**A:** We run a refresher course, so in that context, yes. But I have not worked in any other school.

**Q:** Do you always teach for 30 minutes, and have you taught half hourly lessons since qualifying?

**A:** Yes, always. Walter Carrington once said to us that if you can't get anything through in half an hour you are not likely to do better in three quarters of an hour or more, but it does vary, and some teachers prefer longer.

### **TEACHING A PUPIL**

**Q:** How do you teach inhibition?

**A:** When to introduce the idea that it is possible to consciously inhibit the reaction to a stimulus must vary. How we choose to do this will be one of the most important aspects of the teaching. I find as a general rule to get the pupil to "slow down", or "become quiet" is readily understood. I would like to say here that direction cannot be separate from this moment in the teaching. This "withholding of consent" is gradually allowing an understanding of what it is they do not want, and it is part of the teaching that grows with the experience of each lesson.

**Q:** When teaching pupils do you ever ask what they are thinking or feeling in a given moment?

**A:** It is not part of the teaching, but occasionally it can be appropriate.

### **REGARDING GROUP CLASSES**

**Q:** Do you teach groups?

**A:** Yes, groups of students is part of my work at Lansdowne Road. I do not tend to do group work with the public as I have really very little time, but it can certainly be valuable.

**Q:** If you were observing a student (from the training course here, where you know the students) what elements would you look for as indications that good teaching was going on?

**A:** With my hands on the teacher I look for the ability to release and direct. Really as simple as that. The hands improve as does the direction.

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*(Continued on page 4)*

*(The Physical Intellect continued from page 4)*

to explain why I often come up against my own thought process as if two opposing forces were trying to make sense of one another. Throughout this and later discussions, Rachel brought the group back to the physical and emotional levels of attention occurring with the intellectual level.

In this workshop, I came to realize (with the easeful verbal guidance of Rachel's observations) that my 'habit' of thought is not really that at all - it is more a habit of amassing knowledge and not necessarily making the next step of formulating that knowledge into my own thought process. This workshop allowed me to experience at many different levels of experience, thinking as an active, alive and flexible energy. Even when I didn't understand the content of what was being discussed, I understood what was being exchanged by the transference of energy, listening and allowing the sounds of the words, the physical and emotional content within them to affect me. This bridging the gap between thinking and sensing was another illumination of the many applications of the Alexander Technique. To quote Frank Pierce Jones in *Body Awareness in Action*, "No matter how well a theory is constructed, it does not become valid until it has been put to the test of experience - to sensory verification."

Even though a conclusion was never reached as to what the creative impulse is and the way to access and sustain it, the group discovered, through a process mirroring the ideas of inhibition, direction and the means-whereby, that any creative act encompasses the entire organism. The afternoon was one of delving into what is essential to the development of Alexander teachers - namely, the ability to follow a path of active thought into easeful movement - guiding its way, but not dictating its outcome. Rachel's presence was of a gentle teacher, who provided a framework to explore and an enormous base of knowledge and insight into the workings of group dynamics and mind-body thought processes. The experience left me with a feeling of what the salons of Paris in the 1920s must have been like, but with a marked difference. This was a gathering to discuss ideas, but there was attention to the psycho-physical experience as inherent in thought. I left late that afternoon feeling happily deluged with concepts, feelings and a strong yearning for more of the same. I strongly urge a continuance of this kind of format and exchange to be an ongoing part of our Alexander community at ACAT. This tangible experience of my physical intellect has been and will continue to be invaluable to my training as a writer, a future Alexander teacher. I am grateful to Rachel Zahn and the other participants in the workshop for their many and deeply layered wisdoms.

*This winter Lisa Trank is in her 7th term of training at ACAT. This workshop was part of her Approved Independent Study.*

## Not Body-Work!?!

by Helene Weisbach

*(Excerpt from The Alexander Technique: A Tool for Transformation)*

When I was recently invited to write an article on the Alexander Technique as a part of a series on "body-work" my reaction was: "Wonderful, an opportunity to explicate my position as to why the Alexander Technique is not 'body-work.'" I quickly realized that this was too negative an approach and, instead, intend to assert here that a more apt designation for the Alexander Technique is 'mind-work,' i.e., to stress its mental and developmental aspects.

Traditionally referred to as "psycho-physical reeducation in the use of the self," the Technique is, by definition, "body-mind work." Its practice demonstrates the unitive nature of the human experience. Because of the separatistic, dualistic nature of the language at our disposal, it does seem necessary to linguistically align oneself. I hope the reader will come to understand by reading further that my accent on the mental is not merely aesthetic but functional.

*Editor's Note:* Helene goes on to describe AT for potential students emphasizing its educational nature. She explains what it is, how its taught and what its goals are. For copies of the article, contact Helene at 1335 W. Thorndale, Chicago, IL 60660, phone #312-275-6236.

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## Research Project

by Diane Young

Last spring I received a grant from the New York Cardiac Center Fund to survey existing current research projects which focus on the effects of relaxation and reeducational therapies in their relationship to increased cardio-vascular functioning. Emphasis was placed on hypertension, but there was also a section of the paper devoted to the importance of the mind-body relationship in the healing process. I included a short expose on the Alexander Technique which, of course, is of special interest to me. I enjoyed introducing the concept of "reeducation" as opposed to "relaxation" to these readers, since many of them have not previously considered the influence and importance which such a shift of attention can reveal. I very much appreciated the opportunity to interface the medical community in this way. To date, the response has been quite positive, which inspires me to continue in this direction. I encourage you all to explore possibilities for bringing our work forward into the so-called mainstream. Please check out the paper from the ACAT library at your leisure, and give me feedback if you'd like.

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## News from the Center

**Dr. John Austin and Pearl Ausubel (ACAT, 1975)** will present a lecture regarding their research paper entitled "Enhanced Respiratory Muscular Function in Normal Adults after Lessons in Proprioceptive Musculoskeletal Education without Exercises," on January 27th at 8:15pm at the Dalton School Auditorium, 108 East 89th Street. There will be time for questions and audience discussion. This event is open to Alexander Teachers, Trainees, Students and to the general public.

**LIBRARY** - Recent acquisitions include: Video on the CBS This Morning segment - Alternative Approaches to Back Pain, includes approximately 1 minute on the Alexander Technique and features Joan Arnold (ACAT, 1988) working with Dr. Bob Arnot on sitting.

**Eleanor Rosenthal (ACAT, 1975)** - On November 17th, Eleanor participated on an "alternative therapies" panel as part of a "focus group" at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Physical Medicine, the national association of physiatrists. Also, she was interviewed for the Japanese magazine SOLA; the article will appear in the January 1993 issue. Her biography will appear in WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN WOMEN (18th Edition).

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS** - the ACAT Annual membership meeting will be held Sunday, March 7 from 2-4 pm in Room 401 at the Elaine Kaufman Cultural Center, 129 West 67th St., NYC.

**Kim Jessor (ACAT, 1981) and Lori Schiff (ACAT, 1987)** ran the NYC Marathon for their 2nd year. Both improved their times and continued to find the Technique invaluable in making this possible.

**Rebecca Flannery (ACAT, 1987)** held a Body Harmony Workshop for teachers of the Alexander Technique.

The Alexander Technique by **Judith Leibowitz and Bill Connington** sold all 5000 copies of the first British edition by the Sovereign Press. A second edition of 10,000 is in preparation and of those 7000 have been ordered in advance by a book club.

The ACAT class of June 1992 gave ACAT a colorful collection of pillows for use in table lessons. Thank you!

**Charlotte Okle (ACAT 1987)** sends greetings from Hong Kong. She says, "Its impossible to describe what life is like here, but believe me, there is NEVER A DULL MOMENT."

Reminder to ACAT graduates - You are eligible to join STAT.

## A Workshop Announcement

By Pamela Anderson

The title is Psyche and Posture: Exploring Some of the Psychological Issues in the Alexander Technique. The leaders are myself Pamela Anderson, former Director, ACAT Teacher Training Program and Max McDowell, PhD, CSW, Analytic Candidate in Training, C. G. Jung Institute, NYC.

The dates are Feb. 27, 1993 from 1 - 5pm for students in training - open to candidates in any training program (for ACAT students, AIS credit may be available) and March 27, 1993 from 1 - 5pm for teachers of the Alexander Technique. The location is 26 West 9th St, Apt. 9B, NYC, 10011. The fees are \$45 per person for students and \$50 per person for teachers. A \$25 deposit is required by Feb. 1, 1993 mailed to P. Anderson, 16 Park Terrace, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043.

We are limiting the class size to six people so we encourage you to sign up early. Any questions, please call Pamela at (201) 744-7737.

**Course Description:** In the Alexander training, our tools for inner growth and change are awareness, inhibition and direction. This often leads to a more expansive posture as well as corresponding psychological viewpoint. During this process though we may find ourselves becoming moody, emotional, even somewhat depressed. This knot of unwelcome feelings, its corresponding attitudes, expectations, and beliefs in Jungian terms may point to a complex. In this workshop, we will discuss what complexes are, both conceptually and experientially, and begin to explore how they may interfere with freer usage and experience of our physical self. This awareness of complexes can increase insight and may lead to increased self awareness in both the student and teacher roles. Increased awareness of complexes can lead to greater psycho- physical freedom and enrich our Alexander process.

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