

Thoughts on the Advanced Training from Certified Advanced Rolfers™

A Better Rolfer, a Better Communicator, and a Better Person

Bob Alonzi

The Advanced Training (AT) taught me many things. What I learned there made me a better Rolfer, a better communicator and a better person.

I learned to be efficient and effective in the application of my work. I reconnected with the joy and excitement experienced by my clients as they were changing and becoming aware of their bodies and (in some cases) their souls. I found new satisfaction in actively listening to my clients and utilizing their stories as another way to see structure. And later, as I practiced what I learned, I found a change in how I saw each person who came for work. Now, each client was there to teach me something new about being a Rolfer. It was no longer me alone applying my skills to an individual. It became teamwork as we merged to effect change.

I learned and developed an enhanced focus on both the client and my role as Rolfer. I no longer worked *on* a client; instead, I worked *with* him or her. My AT taught me about spinal mechanics, principles, assessment, and creative interventions, all of which have been put to good use. My knowledge of structure and function grew in depth, as did the sessions I provided my clients. My ability to explain and articulate complex structural issues and pattern formations enhanced my hands-on and functional work.

As for being a *better person* . . . my sense is that seeing my clients as teachers humbled me. I felt the strength in two people working towards a common goal. From that unity of purpose my role as Rolfer became more defined, my expertise more relevant, and my heart more open to a shared humanity.

A Gift Greater Than I Could Have Imagined

Deborah Weidhaas

The first half of my AT was in November 1996. The final half was in February 1997.

The senior Instructor was Jan Sultan. I was one continuing education (CE) unit short of fulfilling the requirement to attend, but I had submitted a request-for-waiver to the Rolf Institute® of Structural Integration (RISI) and was accepted into this class. It was strange not to receive my certificate on the last day of class like everyone else, but I received it in the mail about a month or so later.

The two most obvious influences on my practice were actually not the most potent or valuable to me, but they bear mentioning. (I'll tell you these obvious ones first and save the best for last.) The first is that AT lessened the length of my sessions to a consistent seventy minutes, including client in-and-out the door. Case in point: I had a client who was doing quarterly tune-ups with me. He was very upset to learn that he would be paying the same fee, but his session would be only seventy minutes (he was used to ninety minutes or more). He told me he wanted me to do a potpourri of stuff at the end of those seventy minutes to warrant the session fee. I suggested he just try it, and see how it goes. He agreed. When he came in for the session, we finished in sixty-five minutes, at which point I said, "So would you like a little potpourri of Rolting SI for another twenty minutes?" He said, "No, I got it." He was experiencing that state of being complete, unified, and integrated for today. The second obvious influence is that the AT increased my client flow. When class reconvened for our second half, in February 1997, Jan asked how many of us had experienced more clients after the first half. About 40% of the students raised their hands.

Now for the most powerful and valuable influence on me, which is easiest described as: every square peg and round hole went together; all my ducks got in a row; all pistons were in place, fully firing. It happened instantaneously, and that moment, literally, shifted who I am – and *how* I am – with this work.

This is how it happened: I did a practice session on another Rolfer. During the session I was really clear about where I was

working and what I was doing. However, the client (Rolfer) kept saying: "Yes, that's it; get that rib; you have to get that rib; no you're not on the rib; yes, that rib has been bothering me forever; good, yes, get that rib; you have to get that rib." It was a fairly constant monologue for most of the session. I stayed present until our session was professionally completed, and then I wandered off, away from the group, to be with myself.

I plopped myself in a chair. Within two seconds, an assistant instructor was crouched down in front of me. A second later, Jan was there too, asking, compassionately, "What's going on?" I told him about the rib monologue. I told him I wasn't working with the rib. I told him I was working at the central dome of the diaphragm, and I know I was working there because when I work with something very specific, anatomically, my systems flash the anatomy picture in my mind and show me exactly where I am and what I'm doing. I said, "How am I supposed to make sense of this?"

Jan said, "Forget what the client says. Trust your systems."

Instantaneously, I felt myself become completely clear; everything went into place and fit immaculately. There aren't even words to describe what I felt happening and what became present within me. It was like everything coalesced and came in up under me as support, foundation, and knowing.

One of the things I cherish about our RISI faculty is that when we go into practice sessions, they turn on their radar and launch their antennae. They are watching, feeling, and perceiving within the whole room. I have experienced this with no other individual or organization from which I've done classes, and, because of this, in my AT, they were on me the minute I sat down. Then, Jan gave me a gift greater than I could have imagined.

On Doing the AT More Than One Time

Bruce Schonfeld

My experience is that, after the Basic Training (BT) in Rolting® Structural Integration (SI), the AT is the educational cornerstone of our CE offerings. AT offers an opportunity for depth-submersion into the art and science of Rolting SI. It invites us to deepen and widen our critical thinking, technique, and overall clinical skills. The AT is a place to show up with a beginner's mind; to take a look at the

inner workings of our process and practice in the company of other students grappling with the same issues. In comparison to the field of psychotherapy, AT is the closest thing we get to supervision after the BT. In general, supervision is a good thing, especially for a profession whose practitioners, for the most part, work by themselves in relative isolation.

Like so many things done for the first time, the good student is focused on 'getting it right'. There are a lot of expectations and/or pressures that inform this mindset. I believe there are psychological advantages to re-taking the AT because, for one thing, it's as though the pressure is off. Off, or at least reduced. Already anointed, the second-time student has a first opportunity to relax into his or her learning style. I think the concept of relaxing into one's learning style is important: it provides an opportunity to make SI your own. Having already passed the 'test', the student can pursue points of interest from a place of familiarity, keeping both the map and the territory in mind. Students are primed to take the reins of their educational process and can pay special attention to and investigate the things that call to them the most.

In my view, if the objective of the first AT is to be a good student to the material, the objective of the second AT is to be a good student to yourself and to make the training your own. (Of course, it's not that black and white.) The Latin root of the word educate is *educere*, which translates into 'lead out'. The implication is that education itself is a leading-out process from what already exists within. Perhaps the humble and focused student is poised to listen within, to listen to the teachers, to listen to class colleagues, and to relax into his or her learning style, and 'lead out' what lives in his or her personal depths. *(I also want to acknowledge that taking the AT a second time is a privileged position. The comments herein are not intended to be confrontational or inflammatory.)*

I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know

Linda Grace

When I took the AT the first time, in 1989, I was really needing it. My Roling buddy and I had repeated the Ten Series with each other four or five times to see what we could wring out of it, and we had wrung it dry. I had trouble getting the money for this first AT – and the taxes and the house payment

– but I didn't feel I had any choice: I needed to know more. Since I didn't know what I didn't know, I couldn't really articulate the questions I had, but I knew that my performance of the Ten Series had not reached the performance level of the skills I had had in other endeavors. Not only that, clients had been showing up with more and more difficult issues, and I was tired of referring them out. I also remembered one of the AT teachers on a panel at a Membership Conference saying that repeating the Ten Series without doing advanced work was harmful. I was having some physical troubles of my own; so I believed that.

I managed to get to Berkeley, sort of hoping for a little vacation from hard problems and hopefully enjoying working less. However, in my class we had plenty of hard problems. I'll never forget the instructors' models. They were hard problems. One quit in the middle, and the other made a spectacular recovery from a most difficult problem. I'll never forget my classmates – how different they were from one another. As usual, when estimating what a person is capable of based on appearance, I was often wrong. The best ones had the complete package, the integration especially.

When class was over, I went home and went back to work, and then went to the Membership Meeting in Boulder a few months later, where I saw a lot of the twelve people from my AT. I was stunned when some of my classmates said that they pretty much did things the way they had before the class. In contrast, I knew I was a much better problem-solver and integrationist, and my clients told me that when they came in for tune-ups and Advanced Series. One business problem I created after that first AT class was interesting to me. In my zeal to have more Advanced Roling clients, I filled my practice with them and realized that these clients were leaving after about five sessions and I had to double the speed of my recruitment of new clients. Nowadays I try for a balance between advanced work and basic clients.

After that first AT, fast forward to the end of summer five years later. I had taken my first three-week-long vacation and returned home to my practice. I really wasn't ready to go back to work, and I felt burned out. This scared me. I couldn't afford not to start back to work, and I certainly couldn't afford to go to Giza Pyramid and sit, as one burnt-out Rolfer had told me he did. I began to kind of flounce around looking for energy and focus, and in the mail I found

an announcement of an AT in Burlington, Vermont a month later, during fall leaf season. One of my favorite teachers was leading the class, with the added attraction of Ron Thompson as the assistant. I called the class coordinator, who got me a place to stay where I could trade the Advanced Series for rent, and I would pay only half price for the class, since I had taken it before. I did work at this second AT class, as I filled out the class so that it was an even number. It was just the right amount of work in just the right environment, with inspiration on all sides, including that I got some great work for myself.

As in the earlier AT course, I came home on two weekends during the class and worked a ton, made the house payment, and caught up with my family. An amazing time was had integrating the old with the new, and getting deeper into the body and psyche. I had taken a lot of movement and cranial classes in the time preceding this second AT, and these accelerated the new learning. Bonus: besides its natural beauty, Burlington is the home of Ben and Jerry's ice cream!

Experiencing Many of Our Advanced Roling Instructors

Jason Brhelle

When you repeat the AT as an auditor (rather than practitioner), you pay only half the tuition but you don't work on any students or clients. This was totally fine with me my second time around, since I learn by watching. One of the best aspects of auditing was being able to float around the class watching the instructors teach at the various tables when the students needed help.

I recommend to every Rolfer who has done the AT to go back and audit with instructors you would like to learn from. It was a fantastic experience for me. It was nice not having the pressure of working on clients and trying to absorb all the new information. I had taken lots of classes with Jan Sultan. I loved hearing the Ida Rolf stories, and learning from him has always been a great experience. I audited five years after doing my first AT, and having practiced what I had learned over the years helped: it allowed me to take the material to a deeper level and understand it better.

Since the trainings are all so different, I think it helps to be familiar with the teachers you will be learning from. Jan and

Jon Martine were a great combination for me, since I had taken many trainings with each of them. I especially appreciated how Jon incorporated lots of nerve work into the training. I enjoy learning from the original teachers too, and over my years as a Rolfer I've tried to take as many classes with the 'old timers' as possible. Soon they will be gone, and I worry about losing the history they have to share. Roling SI is such an amazing modality and I feel like it will take lifetimes to understand it better.

The AT from Two Different Stages of My Practice

Anne Hoff

I first took the AT about three years into my practice: the minimum threshold. I hadn't planned to do it so soon, but RISI was scrambling to find a coordinator for a Hawaii class that was in the works but not coming together, so I took it on and had a few months to get my last CE units completed as well as manage all the local logistics.

The AT was taught by Jim Asher, who I knew from my Unit 3, and Sally Klemm, who had been one of my Rolf Movement® practitioners. As the coordinator I had a lot to do, which was sometimes a distraction from the learning environment, but it was a pleasure to host a training that brought together colleagues from various parts of Europe and the United States, and introduce them to Hawaii. I will always remember Sally's model, a Hawaiian man very immersed in his culture, who wore a *malo* (the traditional loincloth historically worn by Hawaiian men) for sessions, rather than Western underwear, and who each session greeted each of us nose to nose, sharing *hā* (breath) in the ancient manner of greeting. So not only did our common profession bring together Rolfers from various countries, the sacred nature of our work of helping others meet their pain allowed us precious and immediate contact with the deep culture of Hawaii.

I learned some really good things from the lectures and demos, but what helped me the most in this AT was the individual table assistance as I was working with my clients. There, it felt like the instructors really could meet me where I was, not to demo a technique as might happen in a weekend workshop, but to help me grapple with my edges of understanding. This individual mentorship helped me immensely as I returned to my practice.

In 2015, nearly twenty years into my practice, I started another AT as an auditor. In particular, I wanted to study with Jan Sultan, one of our key lineage holders. I also knew I would benefit from learning from co-instructor Valerie Berg, as female Rolfers help me understand how to do the work with a female body. Valerie is also a movement geek, and since I haven't done the Rolf Movement® training yet, I feel the need for more exposure to that perspective. In this second AT, my experience is quite different. I'm coming from a place of confidence in my work, and a lot of prior CE workshops, so joint mechanics is not Greek to me, the material is landing more easily, and I'm feeling the pleasure of both *I know what I know* and *ooh, here's something I don't know*. My big takeaway so far is that I work harder and longer than I need to. I now aspire to shorter and more efficient sessions. And in taking an AT again rather than more fast-paced workshops, I'm basking in the pace of the training, long enough to allow time for digestion and integration, practice during the breaks, and a return for more in the spring with fresh questions.

New Levels of Understanding Roling SI . . . With Tax-Deductible Travel – It's All About Working with the Systems

Allan Kaplan

I took the AT for the first time in 1991, three years after my BT. I was hungry for info, the instructors were ones I wanted, and the logistics worked out well for me. This was one of the first classes where Jan Sultan and Jeff Maitland were brainstorming the Principles of Intervention, and one of the last that covered the 'Recipe' and the 'old' Advanced Five Series in detail, so there was a lot of dialogue about the ideas, and the class was a laboratory for their synthesis. It was a potent environment for learning, because we were all exploring it all.

The following summer, I continued with a "post-advanced" training Jan and Jeff gave in New Mexico, which was sort of a review for me of the Principles and associated ideas. And the next year, I followed-up with sitting in on the lectures of the AT they taught in Seattle. After that, I was pretty saturated, and I kicked back and let the info percolate for a number of years.

I met Peter Schwind in the mid '90s, when he came twice to Santa Fe, New Mexico to

teach, and I was inspired to be on the lookout for future opportunities to study with him. When 1998 rolled around, things in my life were such that I was due for a break, and the idea of heading to Europe for an AT redux with Peter and Jeff sounded like just the ticket. I had a lot of objectives in mind for my European sabbatical, one being that I wanted validation and feedback on my work, so I opted to work with models during the class. I also wanted to immerse myself with other Rolfers and stew with the collective, getting insight by observing, tuning my seeing, and get a good jolt of inspiration from the experience. And last, but certainly not least, I wanted to get out and travel. As I'd never been to Europe, this was a perfect, tax-deductible way to get there and do it. After the first half of the class in Italy ended, I had a chunk of time to tour around. The second half of the training was in Munich, and I visited friends in Berlin, and took a jaunt through Switzerland and France after class. This training set the precedent for my future CE: foreign trainings enable tax-deductible world travel. It's hard to beat.

If I could work it, I'd retake the AT periodically. I think it's sound practice to acquaint oneself with the roots every so often, as it's easy to go on autopilot and get complacent. Being with the brethren, challenged, is a refreshing experience, and it can catalyze jumps to greater understanding and skill. These days, it seems as though there are so many interesting adjunct modalities available for CE that many 'younger' practitioners I encounter have lost sight of what distinguishes Roling SI, having melded together their own synthesis of stuff. The AT is partly a refresher, as well as a way of being bumped up to new levels of understanding of what Roling SI is. It was interesting, in my ATs, to meet Rolfers who had been in practice fifteen or twenty years who had done little to no Roling classes in that time, and see how blown out of the water they were throughout the training, with review and new material.

Me, I get concerned over the future state of Roling SI. As our elders become elderly, and take more of a backseat in our organization, what will happen to our heritage? If Rolfers forsake Roling CE for the latest, greatest modality to come down the pike, will the essence of Roling SI be diluted, or disappear? The AT is a great refresher, as well as a powerful stimulus to growing our art.