An Interview With Anna Hyder

After hearing that her cancer had become malignant, Bill and Anna agreed to do a series of interviews. Over six hours were spent together last fall. This excerpt was chosen for this occasion in fond remembrance of Anna, her wit, and her Southern charm.

BH: What would you like to talk about today, Anna?

AH: Well, I think I want to tell you more about me.

BH: Okay, great!

AH: We've talked about the organization and Dr. Rolf and folks that we know, and I think you all ought to note that you might want to know about me.

BH: Absolutely.

AH: Most people don't know me in the Rolf Institute, or in Boulder, beyond the time that I've been in Boulder. They know very little about my background. I come from a family that valued education and have been very involved in the church. I graduated from a small Lutheran college in North Carolina. It recently has been voted one of the ten best schools in the United States for its size by *U.S. News and World Report.* I went to Lenoir Rhyne College. It is named after two gentlemen, Lenoir and Rhyne, two good German Lutherans...

BH: Of course.

AH: ...and I got an AB Degree. Not a BA—an AB Degree in History. Actually an AB Degree is the same thing as a BA, but my college did it that way.

BH: What kind of history did you like?

AH: It was basically U.S. History—U.S. and Western Europe. And, I graduated with honors. I also graduated with a teaching certificate. In my first year out of college I taught high school courses in sociology, economics, and American government.

BH: Ah.

AH: And, I taught in one of the...it is considered one of the best educational systems in North Carolina, the Charlotte Mecklanberg school system. So, I taught a year, hated it! Oh, it was just excruciating! All those subjects, homeroom with 10th grade kids, I drove an hour across town—I mean it was ridiculous! But, anyway, I taught a year of school and after that I decided that I would go back into church work. I had spent three, actually four of my summers while I was at college working for the church. I had been involved in working in homes for the aged and inner city day camps in Brooklyn and New Jersey—Hoboken, New Jersey of all places. So I was kind of involved in that kind of social work aspect.

I got a job in New Jersey as a church worker and for the next seven years—I think it's about five to seven years, I forget—I was a director of Christian education and youth ministry in the Lutheran Church. And here again, the Lutheran Church is very involved in quote education, in terms of religious education. So I did that for about five years in New Jersey and Florida.

Then I did social work for one year and a half. I worked for the Charleston, South Carolina Department of Health. I worked in their birth control clinic, and I worked at the medical university in their M & I Clinic—Maternal and Infant Care Clinic. I loved working there! I frankly lost that job, was dismissed because I did not have the credentials. I did fine in terms of performance, but I had no credentials and they needed somebody with credentials to keep their government funding.

So after that, I...

BH: You were stunned, I guess.

AH: Oh, absolutely stunned. And I certainly understood the predicament they were in, and I wasn't about to go back to school. So, I just happened to find—you're going to laugh at this—I got a job in a proctologist's office of all places. He hired me only because I had some smarts and I had a degree in history. He wanted to write a book on the history of proctology. I thought it was funny, and I thought well, it's a job and I'll do it.

BH: Why not? Right.

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AH: I thought, "This guy's nice." And he was willing for me to learn what I wanted to about anatomy. So I was his insurance clerk, and I was his examining room assistant. Now I want to tell you, I learned stuff. He had me reading books; he had me looking at polyps and things, you know. I loved it! And, at this time I decided I had to do something else and I had to deal with some personal issues. That's when I went to Florida for the workshop called Gestalt with Rolfing. That's how I eventually met Bill Williams and Tom West, and they in turn got me my job as a model and Dr. Rolf's secretary during that time. That was my background.

So, I did social work, I did all kinds of teaching in the church. You know, one of my assignments in the church was this huge congregation in Florida that had 1200 people in it, and all kinds of schools from two years up to the elderly. It was a huge educational system. They did not have parochial schools, but they had what most churches would call "schools of religion". I was in charge of that whole system.

BH: My!

AH: It was something. ... I did a good job! And, in that large church in Lakeland, Florida, was when I had trouble with my structure. And, then somebody told me that if I didn't deal with the structural stress in my body I was going to be basically in a wheel chair very quickly. That's why I started looking for different kinds of employment that required me being less on my feet, less activity physically, and I began looking for Rolfing. I didn't even know the word, Bill, but I knew if I saw it, I'd recognize it. And, I did, of course.

BH: How old were you when you got polio?

AH: I was two years old.

BH: Oh, so you almost always had ...

AH: Almost always walked this way. I always had to deal with that part of my being. You know, the aftermath of polio has always been in my memory.

BH: Is it a painful thing, the aftermath?

AH: It was for me psychologically. It was devastating for me psychologically! And, you know, I didn't go around devastated, but it was very difficult for me. I can remember before I went to school, it was psychologically hard.

BH: Yeah. Before you went to kindergarten?

AH: Oh, I didn't go to kindergarten because we didn't have kindergarten. There was no such thing. I lived in a very, very small town and my mother did not work. She intentionally provided a kindergarten setting for my brother and me. She basically was our kindergarten teacher, and she did that intentionally. She had heard of kindergarten. She knew that there were certain things to prepare children for school, and she went about doing that. So, my brother and I did very, very, VERY well in school from day one.

BH: So, two smart kids. Your brother is older or younger?

AH: Younger. He's eighteen months younger. I have one other brother who is fourteen years younger.

BH: Your mother's name is Sarah, huh?

AH: Yeah, almost.

BH: So, you grew up in a smaller town.

AH: I grew up in a small town, much like Boulder—Hickory, North Carolina—until I was about eight years old and then we moved to a large city, much like Denver—Charlotte, North Carolina. Then when I finished high school I went back to Hickory to go to college. Now my entire family lives in Hickory.

BH: So your two brothers still live there?

AH: No. Jim, the older brother, lives in Charlotte. He's the president of Washburn Printing and Graphics. And, my other brother is in Hickory and he's the corporate C.P.A. for Carolina Mills.

BH: I would guess, therefore, that you've called on your brothers for background information in your growing expertise in your various jobs at the Rolf Institute.

AH: Well, actually, no, not really. I've called on all that experience with the church and school system and the social work. Printing and graphics and that eye for print is in my family. Jim is in printing. My dad was a newspaper pressman in one of the largest papers in the Southeast, and some other family members have been in printing and graphics. So, that's my background. For years I feel I prepared to come to the Rolf Institute. You know, a little social work, a little bit of educational administrative work—you know, all that stuff. Even in Dr. Banoff's proctology office I found out I loved anatomy—just loved it! He'd send me home, Bill, with proctology books, and I'd read 'em.

And, I loved working with patients, you know. Even when some of them were so sick—I loved working with them.

BH: Well, I'm sure your social work training gave you the appropriate attitude for dealing with so many different kinds of people who came through Rolfing.

AH: It was real good experience—invaluable experience. And it was a very satisfying time in my life.

BH: And, I guess the social work, in that context, would have definitely

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been dealing with people of different economic backgrounds.

AH: Yeah. Yeah, it was different economic backgrounds, you're right. Lots of poor people, some middle class people, even some upper class people came to the Health Department at that time wanting abortion information—and could get it nowhere else. So, they would come very quietly to get that information from us.

So, in a nut shell, that's some of my background. You know, when I got to the Rolf Institute, Bill, I'll have to tell you, I thought to myself, "Ahh. This is where I belong. This is where I can use my skills and talent and creativity to the max". And, that was true for many years.

BH: That's true for many people, too.

AH: It was exciting to think that I could assist in that process of Rolfing getting established, the Institute working well ... the classes working well ... getting Rolfing out there in the world in some way. So, it was very exciting.

BH: And, it worked.

AH: And, it worked, yeah, as good as we could do it. We did our best. We did our best, Bill.

BH: Anna, what else would you like to say about yourself?

AH: I love, love, love, love children. I would love to have had some children. I would love to have had a family and that just did not happen for me, for whatever reason, it doesn't matter.

I consider myself to be very domestic and to be something of an artist. I've only recently acknowledged that I am something of an artist.

BH: What is your medium?

AH: Oh, I think it has to do with, well, not only graphics and printing, but color selection and coordination. I've helped some people do some decorating of their homes and done very well with that. Fabric, color, and texture definitely are my mediums—fabric probably as much as anything. I don't draw well, I don't paint—I don't do those kinds of things. But I certainly can put color together, in terms of paper and fabric and furniture, etc.

BH: A whole person in the Rolf Institute.

AH: Well, thank you. Thank you.

BH: Who managed to stay somewhat intact.

AH: Yes, yes, somewhat intact. And, I reckon that's a good bit about who I am.

BH: That is a good bit about who you are.

AH: My favorite place on earth is Hawaii.

My favorite book these days is *Holographic Universe*. I just read it, by Michael Talbot. It's probably one of the most important books I've ever read.

BH: Really. I don't know it.

AH: Oh, *Holographic Universe*—you just must read it! It's been especially important to me these days.

I have just recently discovered Tony Hillerman and think he's not half as good as Agatha Christie. I love detective mystery novels. Sometimes I'm an avid reader.

So ... Those are funny things. I'm not a vegetarian. I love coffee and good wine—everybody knows that.

BH: I didn't know that. I didn't know you like good wine.

AH: And, you know what? I love to cook. I'm not especially good, but I love to cook.

And, I'm half finished with my Christmas shopping.

BH: Well, I can't say that. I could say it, but it wouldn't be true.

This gives me and us, the world—the collective us—more of a context to put your comments in next time ...

AH: By the way, can I tell you one more thing to end this off?

BH: Please do.

AH: One of the happiest days of my whole life was last July when I got the Distinguished Service Award. That was one of my happiest days.

BH: Yeah, that was great. It was great for me because I was just delighted to see everyone there give you a standing ovation.

AH: Boy, wasn't that somethin'!

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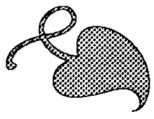

My deepest thanks to Bill Harvey for his time and heartfelt consideration in producing this special piece in Anna's memory. May her words and spirit remain with us always.

—Katy Snyder
Editor, *Rolf Lines*