

Co-Laborare

An Interview with Pedro Prado

by Duffy Allen, Certified Advanced Rolfer

In May of 2004 I began a fascinating journey, serving as an assistant for Pedro Prado in a Unit III course in Boulder. The time I spent in this task marked a profound shift in my own perspective on teaching and on the work. Pedro brings his entire being to the role of teacher and Rolfer, which then evokes the same in the community around him; in this case, the students, class clients and myself. The process piqued my interest in the personal history of a person with this capacity to enlist others in a common goal, as well as the history of the projects he has helped to launch; the ABR, the Ambulatory Project, and his current research projects. While this article is technically called an interview, Pedro took off running with my simple queries – “How is it that you received Rolwing® and became a Rolfer,” “What was it like to be the first Rolfer in South America,” and “How did the ABR get started?” As a result, the following discourse will be presented largely without interruption in order to better allow Pedro’s own natural flow of thought to emerge for the reader. Thanks also to Heidi Massa for her helpful suggestions in the formulation of this document.

I got my bachelor’s degree in clinical psychology in 1971, then graduated as a psychologist in 1973. I started working right away. Those days the field of Psychology was evolving rapidly. The ideas of Wilhelm Reich were giving place to a body-oriented psychotherapeutic approach. Some classical paradigms were being challenged and an important discussion around the body-mind connection was taking place. The holistic paradigm was emerging and so was our focus.

Let’s remember I was in my twenties then. The counterculture movement was booming, the human potential movement was taking shape. As part of the counterculture movement I was experimenting with my own person, seeking to open myself to new experiences, get rid of repressed feelings, connecting with my emerging self. Therefore, I was body and soul immersed in this context, experimenting and trying to think about the experiences as well as going through deep personal transformation simultaneously.

I was working in a neo-Reichian approach. I had an important teacher then. Dr. José Angelo Gaiarsa, who started his research in the domain of Jung, then expanded into

the Reichian realm and went beyond Reich. He claimed that Reich brought the unconscious to the body, making it visible, touchable. We could after Reich “put our hands” on the “psychological attitudes,” as they are more or less structured in what he termed a “character.” Armoring was a concept that Reich introduced and later changed into “muscular character armor.” With Dr. Gaiarsa I could experience my own somatic emotional organization and, more than this, I got started in learning bio-mechanics.

Dr Gaiarsa had developed a theory that stressed the role of gravity in the maintenance of one’s balance, and explained the role of proprioception in keeping balance. He expanded the notion of psychotherapy to include prophylactic perspective. In his theory, the emotional flow would be coincident with the lack of armoring and with the availability to perceive the environment and oneself. Therefore, by giving more possibilities of movement and sensation one could expand the body image and the construction of the ego, with more possibilities of adaptation to the spontaneous life forces that would emerge constantly, getting to a more adaptable being. And this all happening in a gravitational context.

So, you see the first notions of structure and of movement in gravity were laid out for me even before I got “Rolfed.”

Throughout this time, I continued to be puzzled by the use of verbal interpretation that was current in psychotherapy in this transition period. It would be said that body/mind are one, that changing one is changing the other, but, after the tensions were softened up and the catharsis had happened, the psychologists wanted to interpret the experience... As if not taking the premises of unity all the way in. One school had a mental, interpretative, physically distant activity, while another had physical interaction and a prophylactic perspective, rather than a therapeutic approach. For me, the need to combine both showed inconsistency in the premises laid out by each approach.

This discrepancy intrigued me a lot and shook my parameters. I was trying to find what was “underneath” and interpret the hidden conflicts and repressed emotions as well as trying to see them in the organization of the body itself. We then learned to track processes where we’d undo these tensions and teach people to sense themselves and to grow in their perception of being through the soma. I got stuck in the variety of approaches. I was losing my way in the work...

It was then that Dr. Gaiarsa invited Jim Hrisikos, a Greek Rolfer from California to come to Brazil and “Rolf” a group of people in his practice. This was in 1979. I remember Jim coming to our 5th session and reporting that Ida Rolf had died the night before...

I went through the experience and so much appreciated the degree of freedom I experienced. And I knew there was more than simply the improved performance in sports that I experienced. But I had no words for the experience. It was unconscious but deeply transformative. This approach seemed more organized than the “confusion” I felt myself in professionally, and so I decided to study Rolwing.

It took me a year to get ready. Being the first one in South America to want to study Rolwing posed the Institute some difficulties. The office didn’t have parameters as to how to evaluate my prerequisites, how to organize my admissions process. And what if I did not pass? What to do with me, once I would have flown halfway around

the world to get trained? So, I worked with the Institute in a trustful way.

The training itself was an adventure. It happened in a phase of my life in which I was exploring new frontiers. I did my auditing with Jim Asher in Boulder, and my practicing with Neal Powers in the first New York School class. I became friends with Rosemary Feitis and Louis Schultz who were organizing the class and witnessed their good heart and the amount of work it took them to get this first class rolling.

What was more important than anything else was how much more there was to the work than I expected. Rather than a set of structured techniques that I was aiming to use in my psychotherapy practice, I found a paradigm that went beyond psychology. Though I was already dealing with the "body-mind" concepts professionally and personally, Rolfing brought me an essence. And that essence was to deal with the whole man in a unified field. And again gravity comes in as the factor that provides context for this fact. More than all I loved the fact that the Rolfing theory was so opened in relation to the possibilities of human manifestation. No interpretations, no expectations, just observation of the manifestation. This fit my ontological perspective on the human nature very well. I felt good.

It was during my auditing phase that I had my first "sense" of being a pioneer. My classmate, Betty, invited me for a sweat lodge ceremony. I was not familiar with the Native American tradition at all. I knew nothing about it. But, I bought some tobacco, some cloth, and made the string pouch and went to the ceremony. In the middle of it I had an inner sensation and mentioned that I was honored to be participating in that ceremony and that I was making a bridge to the South, from the North. I had no idea of the depth of this, but it happened then. And, it comes back to my mind every so often... Huauh! It's been a long time since I've thought about this! This sure was an unforgettable evening. Up in the mountains, Sugar Loaf, the fire, the whistling to the four directions, the sweat, the group. I didn't know what I was studying, nor how would I use it, but this deep consciousness emerged then.

And I sure found that there was a lot of work to do in order to make it true!

Back in Brazil, at first I started Rolfing some

of my psychotherapy clients, but soon I switched totally to Rolfing. I made a lot of public appearances. From the most mundane to the most scientific (from TV shows, magazine articles to formal psychology conferences). Countless hours on the telephone and in social gatherings talking about Rolfing. Definitely all my senses were "on" and looking for opportunities to spread the word. But, at the same time I was representing a point of view that was new, and that there was much curiosity around it. I was "with the flow" then.

Soon a first group of new Rolfers came in (Nilce, Neuza, Nelson, Miriam, and Marion were the first generation of Brazilian clients that then became Rolfers). When they graduated we knew we had a task to develop as a community. We were all far away from the source of the work, so we needed to nourish each other as we had an identity that made things different than in the USA. This consciousness soon made us work together. First in simple things, like organizing a workshop, or beginning to conduct local selection for future candidates, sharing the public appearances. The few of us were wearing all the hats simultaneously or in turns. The growth of Rolfing in Brazil was organic. We'd adjust ourselves to the needs, solving problems and creating solutions. This was true locally and in our relationship with the Rolf Institute.

When there were 13 of us, we decided to create the ABR (Brazilian Association of Rolfers) as a non-profit association charged with carrying out the expansion of Rolfing in Brazil. The first headquarters of the ABR was in the garage of my practice, with a part-time secretary, then a full-time bilingual one, then a second one, then a bigger house where the ABR used two rooms, and finally its own house that can host the school, the membership association and the Ambulatory Clinic.

A couple things were clear from the start: we needed to grow in numbers and keep the quality. We contracted for the translation of Rosemary's (1989) and of Ida's (1996) books, and I did the technical revision and wrote the Introduction to the Brazilian edition.

There was a deep belief that this was a group work, not a one-man show. In fact, in some moments of crisis I would think, "If this is to be MY project, then I should make it different" but, this is not MY project. I just have a role in this project, which is

every Rolfer's project and that will have the face of everybody. My thing then was to try to bring up this consciousness, or find it where it was already available. And, if it didn't work ... It just didn't work... For as much as I'm involved with it, and that my learning and commitment to this work grow, the communitarian growth of it depends of the group, and I can only do what I can do. And many souls that have this broad perception joined the group. And we're all growing in it and in ourselves as we move along.

Q: Pedro, you have such a deep sense of community, as is evidenced by this sentiment. Would you be willing to speak about your experience at the time of the split with the Guild?

A: When reading this piece, I thought about the times when the Guild thing happened and those guys left... I felt so betrayed but had to keep my center. I could not understand how people would fight rather than keeping the bigger ideal in their hearts. I was shaken to my roots and accepted that that's what they needed to do. Went inside and, although I was very close friends with Emmett, Peter - whom I had assisted - and Richard Stenstadvold, I thought that I should stay with the Institute as the "center" for a universal spreading of the work, and not join a personal school.

But, the big thing is not only to bring Rolfing to Brazil and nourish its growth, it's also to keep the connection with the source and help develop Rolfing in a broader way. Help develop the science and the international community.

Q: Could you say more about your personal development during this period?

A: I always continued to develop myself as a professional. I loved my practice as well as studying and teaching. (During my psychotherapist days, I taught at the University for ten years). It was a natural process to follow the track to become a Rolf Institute Instructor (1991), later a Rolf Movement Instructor (1995) and eventually an Advanced Rolfing Instructor (2002). As well as to collaborate with the international faculty for the evolution of the curriculum and to help create an internationally cohesive institution.

Brazil itself has played a role in this, as, being farther away, it served as the springboard for a couple pilot projects, that eventually were shared with the international

curriculum. In my very first solo class, with **Lael Keen** as my assistant, we used **Rolf Movement** to embody the Rolfling concepts. **Then,** Vivian Jaye and I taught a principle-based class that served to frame both **Movement** and Manipulation Rolfling. This led to the **Brazilian Educational Project**, in which we started teaching from the principles in basic classes; teaching from thinking rather than from protocols. This gave space to use intervening movement sessions and then have the students practice in non-formulistic decision-making strategies. These were important pieces in the discussion around Movement work versus structural work; and formulistic versus non-formulistic approaches. We ended up in a dual certification program that foresaw that there was no separation between these perspectives. Our community is totally cross-trained. Our creation goes also into the pre-training, where we're using myofascial release as an entry-level training to Rolfling education.

An organic development of our school is also taking place. We now have a number of instructors in all levels of the teaching of Rolfling and can act as a local faculty, which expands the potential for Rolfling, teaching and creating. Maintaining the international relationship has not always been easy. Here in Brazil we have undergone many financial crises. Our currency has fluctuated against the US dollar and our political climate has changed repeatedly. Fortunately, as we grow we solve these problems. Now we have classes taught in Portuguese and paid in local currencies. Administration is stable and the international relations are good. We have produced some research and some academic theses. We're growing slowly but steadily... over the past 23 years we have developed a community of Rolflers, a school and a research center.

In the early stages of a community lots of attention is needed to lay the foundation, set up procedures and establish policies that make it more universal rather than an artifact of particular personalities. This takes in a lot of respect for others while at the same time retaining the vision and the acquired experience. It takes clarity on the ideal mixed with a humbleness around power and a belief that the creation is collective, so everybody brings a piece of the truth, which is not in any particular person, but in the collective. This makes the soil fertile for development.

A good example of this is the creation of the São Paulo Clinic.¹ It was an idea that some young Rolflers had after an ABR annual meeting.

In Brazil there is always "something" pending in our awareness around the class system and the social differences that don't allow many that could benefit from the work to really have access to it. It's a crazy guilty feeling, a need to love and attend, along with a certain rage within... So the question "what can we do for this reality?" is always in the air and leaves us in a very impotent space. Each of us, working in isolation, seeing maybe a couple of cases a year, cannot have much impact on it.

Then some young Rolflers who had experienced some clinical work, and some of the boredom that this isolation brings, suggested that they meet as a group to work as they had in the classroom situation. They'd see several clients at the same time, share their body readings and strategies, and support each other through the processes. Paula Mattoli, Bia Pacheco, Marcia Cintra and Bea Whitacker were the pioneers of this project. They invited me to help as Faculty. I'd go weekly and supervise the work. We'd have lunch together, talk about the cases and then go into the working room. The clients were those that wanted to get Rolfling but could not afford it in the traditional setting of a private practice.

We soon realized that the potential of this project went beyond friends sharing their vision on the work. It had a potential to serve the ABR, the school and research perspectives, all in an intricate and fertile relationship.

The ABR provides an Institutional backup, gives credibility, some secretarial support and, in turn, provides a unique service to society and generates a data bank. The school provides continuing education in an authentic clinical setting. The Rolflers could exchange the different learning they have received from different instructors. Unit II students have the chance to observe their future colleagues at work.

In five years of existence, more than 500 clients have been seen, and more than 25 Rolflers, 15 students and three local and four international instructors have participated in it. This is a real alive project that comes from the base up, rather than from a "follow the leader" concept.

Also from the bottom-up necessity we are developing our questionnaires for the Ambulatory Clinic. We needed to have procedures and protocols that would go beyond the personal style of each Rolfler. The data on clients should be organized in such a way that another Rolfler could step in and be able to follow up on the client's process. We all well know that as a science Rolfling is way in its infancy and far away from having procedures that are standard and designed to serve what we say we do. In our trainings, each instructor has had a different form to follow when receiving class clients. We felt the need to create and develop a common language.

So, out of the need of uniformity and of the healthy need to know what it is that we're doing, those forms have been developed and reflected upon. We say we're having a holistic approach, but what is it in the initial interview that reflects looking for information across the taxonomies (physical, emotional, spiritual, energetic)? Where does the client come from? How do we evaluate our work? Which techniques serve which kind of goals? What are we collectively doing?

For me, this is the healthy spirit of research. Curiosity with methodology! Paula Mattoli and Yeda Bocalleto did a first round, putting together all the different forms used, and then registered their evolution and monitored a first manual tabulation with quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results registered in the forms. We currently have an Initial Interview, the Rolflers' Report and the Clients' Report.

A Data Bank was generated from the data gathered in this way. So the basic ground for "thinking" has been established, and data can be cross-referenced and different research projects can happen now.

It works like a cooperative, but is an official branch of the ABR. It created its own by-laws and means of procedure. It's then a self-regulated entity. Very alive!

While all of this was happening, I felt it was time for me to go back to school and deepen my studies. While the creation of the ABR, the maturing of the Rolf Institute and my private practice and teaching career were taking out all my time, I myself was also feeling kind of isolated in this small world, sort of locked into our Rolfling navel. So going back to school at 50 felt like a teenage adventure. I joined the Psychosomatic

Department of the Clinical Psychology program at the PUCSP (Pontificia Universidade Católica De São Paulo) in a doctoral level graduate program.

Coincidentally the work I was doing with Peter Levine (I assisted him and eventually started teaching for the Foundation of Human Enrichment as well) brought me to reason and make links between Rolfing and the psychological field. The work with trauma in the Rolfing context also had a deep impact in this moment of my clinical practice.

I've always paid a lot of attention to the nature of Rolfing as a process. Tracking the client's goals and adapting techniques to attend to their process has always been a part of my style of being with people. I also think that the Psychobiological perspective present in these processes has never received enough attention from us and that frequently Rolfers slide back into the "body as a biomechanical object" approach. It's as if it takes time and deep personal transformation on our own part for us to really change the paradigm we're working from.

Ida's ideas provide us with the notion of gravity, structure and function. This in itself makes possible being-in-the-world of a different quality. From unconscious change to the conscious use of freedom we have a big range. Lots of changes in the body/person happen and lots of physical changes get discarded soon after a successful series. How do we deal with meaning and consciousness and not fall back into the interpretative psychodynamic approach? How to use this essential teaching (integration of the structure in gravity) and still honor the need of a conscious participation in the process and deal with this resource, already present in some of our teaching charts but not actually followed through?

If we don't build into our process the need to engage the psychobiological realm, we don't create the possibilities for the client, and the work doesn't actually get developed to this end. So, unless we engage it at the very beginning by including from the initial interview and follow up on it in the client's and Rolfer's perspective later in the process, we won't develop a means of procedure that will systematically include this dimension in the work.

I'll then try to see what's happening around this in the work that was developed in the Sao Paulo ambulatory. What did people do

regarding the psychobiological perspective? How did they follow through? How did Rolfers and clients perceive this dimension? What techniques were used? With what results? And by analyzing these questions through data gathered systematically, we can try to help evolve the consciousness of this dimension in the Rolfing practice. Questions in this way lead at the same time to elements that were not in the consciousness and help to evolve the work.

The project turned out to be "active research," one that is being done while the data are being collected.

For this to happen, the existing literature had to be reviewed. But not everything was in place. There were missing issues of *Rolf Lines* in all libraries (RISI, ABR and mine). The first task was to get it all together, then to organize a list by title, author, issue and pages. Here it was about orchestrating a joint venture (Yeda, Hulda, Carolina on one end, Karna and myself finding issues of magazines around the world) and from there came the simple idea, "Why not turn this into a virtual Library?" Add key word tagging and everybody could benefit by being able to actually find the pertinent material within our existing literature.

The premise is the same: we have to start where we are and build from this. It will not be "that simple," nor cost "that little" but, donations are coming in and I'm organizing different study groups for this task. We'll study and come up with the key words, then share them with other study groups and revise the job. It looks like it'll be like building a net for studying with this task, then spreading it around and hopefully wait for the evolution of the Rolfing culture.

In a recent Boulder Unit III class I taught, assisted by Duffy Allen, we used the ambulatory forms systematically, and at the end of the class students had to make case presentations. The results were great. Because a reasoning system had been established, the students' reflections on the processes were more mature. Some of these case studies could easily be published. Other faculty colleagues showed interest and also did this. So this procedure may well grow and help us create a new level of clinical and research procedure around the world.

Duffy and I also used a World Health Organization - Quality of Life questionnaire

with the 50 clients involved in this class. We used the abbreviated form (26 questions). This questionnaire has been validated in 20 languages! The results were incredible. They were all significant in both physical and psycho/spiritual domains. The concept of health the authors embrace is not the one of lack of illness, but of increased quality of life. We may well be finding language that may help us observe and communicate the results of our work. Again, instructors in four different continents are considering using the WHO questionnaires in Unit III classes, and the São Paulo Ambulatory Clinic will start using this form as well.

Not that I consider myself a mature researcher, but Rolfing needs to know what it does and to communicate it to the world. I've had enough experience of it in myself and with my clients, students and class clients to have empirically verified its benefits. Now its time for some methodology ... and collectively I think we can start a new era in the development of Rolfing and in the communication of its results to the community and also claim a well-deserved space in science.

I see now that my main work has been devoted to organizing the work of others, helping in whatever dimension I can, with contents, methods, and nourishment... And, as I go through it I form myself and enjoy the process, which IS bigger than I am, and keeps adding dimensions to my consciousness! □

NOTE

1. Paula Mattoli, "Reflection on the São Paulo Ambulatory Project," *Rolf Lines*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 5-7; and Pedro Prado, "The São Paulo Ambulatory Project; Educational and Institutional Perspectives," *Rolf Lines*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 8-10.