

cataracts a few years ago. Here I opted for surgery, which was smooth and quick, with plastic lenses that go in folded up through a tiny incision that heals fast. I now have 40/20 vision.

These three episodes – particularly the leg and eye issues – have allowed me to experience firsthand the emotional and cognitive changes that arise from very basic physical deficits. This reinforces my

otherwise theoretical knowledge that body and mind form a mutually dependent couple. What affects one affects the other. I have to say that the effect of this on my practice has been to increase the level of empathy I can project. It is one thing to be sympathetic, but when clients comes in limping and I say I know how they feel, they can tell that it really is true. This helps build the kind of bonding that make a successful

therapeutic relationship. (See, I remember that piece of jargon.)

Taken all in all, it has been a good ten years as a Rolfer. Being used to living frugally, the lack of enormous income does not bother me. Intellectually and occupationally it has all been very gratifying. I am glad and proud to be able to identify myself as a Rolfer.

A “North of 60” Rolfer

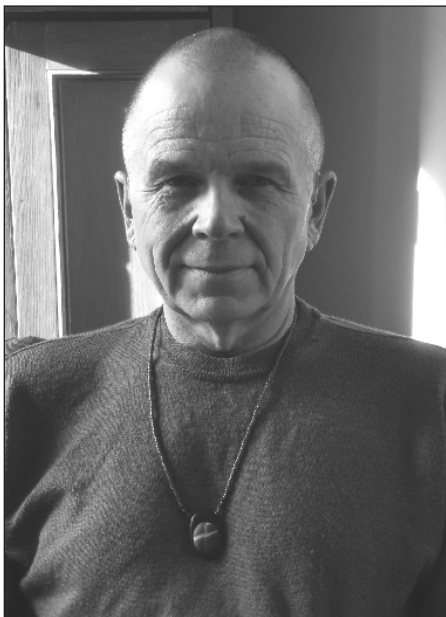
By Norman Holler, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

Wherever you go there you are.
Kermit the Frog, uttered somewhere on
Sesame Street circa 1971

Well, in 2008, here I are, a Rolfer in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. After thirty-four years of, for the most part, experiencing myself and collecting my mail here, I am still slightly surprised, amused, grateful, and most definitely pleased about my circumstances.

We all have to start somewhere in order to get to where we are. Sometimes we spin our tires along the way, or bump ourselves into walls (often of our own making), and seem to be going nowhere. But I accept that those bumps and spins are often integral to our process. Sometimes we find a channel, or Tao, that carries us along, almost in spite of ourselves. And sometimes we just need to get out of our own way in order to move along our path. I'll need a few more years to sense whether I am sinking, floating, or being swept along for a ride. It seems pretty good though. But illusion and delusion play strong suits, and the mind is so gullible. Whatever the story, my working background had something to do with my getting here. Optician, smelter worker, Chrysler assembly-line worker, stevedore, road builder, bridge builder, industrial first aid, ambulance service EMT, whole foods store operator, masseur, thespian, Rolfer. All woven into a life with loves, two children, drama, chaos, bliss, angst, and many magic moments.

Some time out at Esalen served me well. Three, then nine months of washing dishes, and doing “personal work” while there, were big in my life. A particular month-long



workshop entitled “Emotional Sobriety for Children of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Parents” (I guess that includes all of us), with Dr. Alan Hunt, was a major factor in helping me find a way of honestly meeting myself so that I could honestly meet others. I will be forever grateful to the spirit of Esalen, and Dr. Hunt.

I also took a leave from The Yukon to live and practice Rolfing® in Rome, Italy for a year and a half. I had done my Advanced Rolfing training there in 1996, and felt confident at the time that I could “make myself happen” in the “Eternal City,” if I were to return. Lyn, my mate of twenty years, and I went back in 1998. I set up my practice there, albeit skating on an “edge” of being legal, and drew from the common well of resourcefulness and adaptability

that all humans possess. I went to check my “edge,” and because I believe we all need to step out of the comfort of familiarity, take risks, integrate our successes, and embrace our failures, lest we turn into, or forever remain, spiritual pudding, Vini, vidi, vici – I did.

I feel blessed to find myself doing the work that I do, and living here. Really, the best aspect of this work is that many really fine and beautiful beings come to see me. I teach them. They teach me. We teach what we need to learn. I make a comfortable enough living working three to four days a week. I brought cross country skiing into my life about fourteen years ago, and it has been one of the most significant life-changing features in my life. Skiing has allowed me to experience joy in ways that I could not have imagined. Skiing, then road and trail cycling in the summer, has brought me into a relationship with the seasons, the stars, the skies, the weather, and myself, in ways that I might have easily missed. Those times out of doors in all sorts of weather have served me well with many good thoughts, a seemingly more enlivened spirit, and a body that has more vitality than it might otherwise have found. That is good.

Whitehorse is the capital city of Yukon, or The Yukon, as many of us still like to say. The population is now around 24,500, with the total Yukon population being around 33,000, with a territorial landmass 50,000 square miles larger than California's. This last season we had 1,056 paid members in the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club. The club has over sixty kilometers of groomed trails, and the system is considered to be in the top five across Canada. I'll sometimes go

for a ski at 2:00 in the morning if I happen to wake up, the temperature is about - 5 C, and I know that the trail groomers have been out (I've been a groomer for six years). It's such joy to be out at that time on perfectly groomed trails. I feel blessed. I go to many good thoughts on those trails.

The word Yukon means Great River in the Gwich'in language. Whitehorse is near the headwaters of the Yukon River, which is 3,700 kilometers (2,300 miles) long, emptying into the Bering Sea. Salmon swim those long miles, basically without eating, to come here, spawn, then die.

Whitehorse is a very good place to live. Yukon is a spectacular place to live. The three northern territories, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, have their southern boundaries at the 60th parallel. So "up here" we often say that we live "North of 60." And while it doesn't happen as much as it did when I moved here, occasionally you might hear someone say "I've been 'Outside,'" meaning that they had been out of the territory.

On the third Saturday in June there is a 270-kilometer international bicycle relay race from Haines Junction, Yukon (located just outside Kluane National Park) to Haines, Alaska, on the coast. The course goes through glacier-scraped mountain passes, vast stretches above treeline, and river valleys. Last year there were 1,237 riders. I've done the event (I try not to call it a "race" lest my inner race-demon take over my soul) ten or eleven times in the four-person category. It's such a blast, in spite of sometimes having to fight through snow and winds on the summit, and the occasional grizzly bear sighting. Most often though, the weather is brilliant, and the bears keep their distance. Last year our team name was Live Now Die Happy. This year it will be Live Now Die Later. Two years ago I named it, Carpe Diem Memento Mori. Do you see a theme?

Lyn and I bought our first house together six years ago, and I created a space for my studio in it a short while later. It's a very good downtown house. It works really well for both of us. My studio is great. Our kitchen is great. Our yard is a treat. I could die happy here. But I'm in no hurry. I have jokingly quipped to some of my clients, "I wonder how many people are going to come and see me as a ninety-three-year old Rolfer™, so that I can pay the mortgage." Heart-touchingly, some of my clients have



"Strong Man" art piece, by Isaac Iqouluq, an Eastern Arctic artist (photographed by John Davis), at Norman's session room entrance.

said "I will." May I serve them well.

I'm grateful to all of my "life teachers" who have helped me to find my way to this place in my life. One of them was Bill Smythe, who was the instructor in my auditing phase in Boulder. Two things that he said have stuck with me, and I revisit them often. One of the stories, (or myths), was about how Mr. Takahashi, the man behind modern Aikido, would be attacked by five or six of his students in his dojo, and he would dispatch them all to the floor in a few seconds. His students would say "Sensei Takahashi, how is that you never lose your center?" To which he would reply, "Oh no, I lose my center very often, but I come back very quickly." That "landed" somewhere in that deep place that wants to put me on track. And the other gem was his comment about acupuncture: "It is not so much about where you put the needle, but more about where you are when you put the needle in".

Another "life teacher" was my friend and colleague, Tara Detwiler, who emphasized the importance of meeting clients without a fixed agenda. In other words, meeting them where they're at. That jived with my psyche. I check into that place often. Yet sometimes I miss that meeting place when I get lazy, or clumsy. Hopefully less than I used to.

Life teachers, experience, bumps, spins, pragmatism, "free rides", lots of work, and a willingness to step out of my comfort zone, have brought me to a place where I'm

pretty okay about most things in my life. Do I have regrets? Of course. Have I made mistakes? Often. Do I carry optimism? Always! And through it all I feel that I offer a good service to my community through the work that I do, and add something positive to the collective spirit. It's the least I can do for a place that has served me well. Life is good. Here I are. I am pleased.