

# A Memoir of Byron Gentry and His Notes

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Linda Grace

**ABSTRACT** *Linda Grace reflects on the Byron Gentry notes from an early class with Ida Rolf (published in this issue), the friendship of Gentry and Rolf, and the development of Rolfing® Structural Integration since this early process.*

In 1983, twenty-eight years after Byron Gentry D.C. wrote this description of Dr. Ida Rolf's 'Processes', I walked into the old Rolf Institute® on Pearl Street and immediately saw huge dual portrait of Dr. Rolf and Dr. Gentry, including his large scoliosis and his beautiful Rolf 'Line', though it took me a few weeks to appreciate the Line in the scoliosis. Obviously painted from a photograph, the two were also clearly friends and colleagues. From my entry that day I went on into the main room and began my first class at the Rolf Institute, the class now called Unit II. It was led by John Lodge and Ron McComb, with Megan James and Annie Duggan leading the movement part of the class. John Lodge in particular was a friend of Dr. Gentry, and I remember his speaking of Gentry's esoteric practices. One which stuck with me was in the "Building a Rolfing Practice" talk. Dr. Gentry, having built a new big building in Oklahoma City, began to visualize a huge green flashing light above his building, calling all to come and receive his healing work. He soon had a full practice.

Today in 2019, while reading Gentry's notes, I have a sense of brushing off

mammoth bones, a little shiver that here lie giants, shimmers of ancient processes come to life though without any hint of Gentry's judgement or tweaking, a laying out, practically an homage to the Process, though I would find in 1989 that he did have a judgement.

That finding in 1989 was when I ran into Dr. Gentry when we had both come to a Membership Conference. I had read these notes of his years before without much context, along with reading several other Process reductions over the years. I was happy to meet him and mostly wanted to thank him for a telephone consultation I had several weeks after my first class. In that consultation call, he advised me to take apple cider vinegar, and it worked to rid me of a nasty cold I had gotten fleeing Boulder with more questions than answers in a snowstorm. Also, I wanted to thank him for the brief peaceful acknowledging ceremony he had only hours before conducted at our meeting, sending Dr. Rolf back to rest in the afterlife. Why? It seems we call on her too much, and he felt she just wanted to go and rest, so he came to do the ceremony. After the thanking, naively I asked, "Is it so different now, this work?"

**Reading the notes, there is a resonance of things to come, and a certain knowledge that we don't miss some things written or alluded to. For instance, we now talk about goals of the standard basic Ten Series of Rolfing work. Here there is a sense of goals of each of the processes, though not so enumerated and codified as later, and there is some sense of how the "operator" must use their judgement on what is held and how to work with that.**

He said, "It was really rough and ready, it is much more sophisticated now, as it should be."

We were interrupted by a friend, he was very popular.

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In this writing, Dr. Gentry displays his learned mechanical style of naming parts and actions, no hint of all the esoteric ingredients that comprised most of John Lodge's lectures and that we know Gentry liked. Instead, Dr. Gentry wrote, "[This technique] deals chiefly with parts that have significant gravitational significance." An effect of insignificant parts which are not weight-bearing means arm work is not much admitted to the descriptions here in this paper. Definitive arm work had to sneak into Rolfing process as more people like me showed up with significant arm issues and began to point that out to their "operators." As a marker of the importance of the arms, fascinating in retrospect to some of us, my 1983 class had one of its only process lectures on the arms, a breakthrough for process lectures in that class and for arm work in Rolfing techniques. Ron McComb lectured, noting that the arms did not play a part in early processing, and the spiraling and drag of the arm tissues reflected issues of the rest of the body. If we care to, Gentry's paper tells us how to produce the old-style palms backward arms.

My 1984 certification class with Jan Sultan and Jim Asher had more about the work itself and less of esoteric talk in lectures. As in present-day classes, one could still recognize the ideas noted by Gentry. By that time, there was already a deepening of anatomy study and consideration of layers. Also, there was a deepening approach to the correlation of what the surface anatomy showed and what palpation and

movement revealed, because the teachers were more verbal and able to tell what was happening while they were working, more in the direct way of Gentry's paper. Certainly the considerations of the paper were there, but not the posturing of the body while being worked on. Pillows were okay now but not okay in Gentry's paper. There was more emphasis on getting deeper into the body's personal foibles of organization through indirect work, which in itself began to allow a greater effect of work with less pain. Also, the more sophisticated work of Sultan's interior/exterior model began to be revealed in the still somewhat derivative leg work taught in 1984, as well as niceties of models of the head and neck from Sultan and Asher. It would be interesting to go into the more recent contributions of the second generation of Dr. Rolf's chosen teachers, including the sophisticated patterning throughout and how it refers to the olden ideas, but that is for another day.

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